



Rheumatology Research Foundation
Advancing Treatment | Finding Cures

2026 AWARDS AND GRANTS POLICIES



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RheumResearch.org



OUR MISSION

Advance research and training to improve the health of people with rheumatic diseases.

Failure to comply with Foundation award policies will hinder an awardee's eligibility to receive additional Foundation funding. Failure to comply by Foundation deadlines and award terms and conditions, reporting requirements, and proposed time/effort commitments may result in institutional penalties for future Foundation submissions.

Definitions

The term "**Foundation**" refers to the Rheumatology Research Foundation.

The term "**SAC**" refers to the Foundation's Scientific Advisory Council. The SAC is the governing body of the Foundation's Awards and Grants program and is responsible for peer review and oversight of grant administration and policies.

The "**Conditions of Award**" is the document issued to and signed by all award recipients and their sponsoring institutions. It outlines the specific award terms and conditions.

"**Award application**" refers to the official Foundation document available as a PDF on the website which outlines the award terms and application instructions and requirements.

The term "**Grantee Institution**" as used in this policy shall mean the sponsoring institution by which the Awardee is employed or its assignee, which is responsible for administering the award, and is signatory for all matters relating to the award including use of human subjects, animals, recombinant nucleic acid, safety, and this policy.

The term "**Awardee**" as used in this policy means the principal investigator or primary recipient identified in a Foundation award, grant or contract.

Pre-Award Policies

I. Award Eligibility

Each award application includes detailed eligibility criteria. Please read this section carefully prior to preparing an application and contact staff with any questions. In addition to the award specific eligibility criteria, the following eligibility requirements must be met by all award applicants:

i. Membership: Unless otherwise noted in the application, applicants must be ACR or ARP members at the time of application. This membership must be maintained during the award term.

ii. Citizenship:

Student award applicants must be:

- Currently enrolled in LCME or AOA COCA accredited medical schools or be an undergraduate student who has been accepted into medical school, or
- Must be enrolled in at a U.S.-based accredited professional program OT, DPT, PA, NP, Nursing, Social Work, Psychology, etc. or be an undergraduate student who has been accepted into an accredited professional program, or
- Be in the process of completing fieldwork where appropriate

Applicants are eligible for the Scientist Development Award (SDA) if they hold a residency or clinical fellowship in an ACGME-accredited program, or a postdoctoral training appointment, at a U.S.-based institution at the time of application and throughout the award period.

For all other awards, applicants must be citizens or individuals who, at the time of the award, hold a faculty position in a U.S. institution and reside in the U.S., regardless of their immigration status at the time of the application.

iii. Individuals who are personally related to the applicant cannot serve as a preceptor or mentor.

iv. Individuals may not hold two active grants within the same Foundation grant category (e.g. innovative Research Awards, Career Development Awards, Education and Training Awards).

v. Individuals may not submit more than one application for the same award per award cycle.

vi. All projects must be completed within a US-based sponsoring institution.

vii. Unless otherwise stated in the RFA, individuals employed at the NIH, FDA or CDC are not eligible to apply for Foundation awards.

viii. Resubmissions: The Foundation does not allow formal resubmission of grant applications. This means formal responses to the previous year's critiques will not be accepted. Applicants may apply as many times as they'd like; however, all grant submissions will be reviewed as new applications.

ix. Administrative Review: In an effort to assist applicants in submitting complete and correct applications for peer review, all applications undergo administrative review by Foundation staff. This means an applicant may be contacted for additional information or clarification after submitting your final application. You will also be notified if for some reason your application was not submitted for final peer review. However, all applicants are ultimately responsible for the application as it was originally submitted.

x. Per the [ACR Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Key College Leaders](#), Key College Leaders (ACR President, ACR President-Elect, Foundation President, ARP President and ARP President-Elect) are not eligible to receive a new ACR, ARP or Foundation award or grant or submit a letter of endorsement on behalf of an applicant.

II. Budgeting

i. Indirect Costs: The Foundation award funds cannot be used to provide institutional support and no indirect costs or overhead will be provided. This provision excludes the Investigator Award and Innovative Research Awards, wherein up to 8% of total direct costs annually may be applied to indirect costs.

ii. Salary: The Foundation operates under the same salary cap restrictions as the NIH. For the purposes of the salary limitation, the terms "direct salary," "salary," and "institutional base salary" have the same meaning and are exclusive of fringe benefits and facilities and administrative (F&A) expenses, also referred to as indirect costs. An individual's total institutional base salary is the annual compensation that the applicant organization pays for an individual's appointment, whether that individual's time is spent on research, teaching, patient care, or other activities.

Adjustments to salary requirements for specific awards may be considered on a case-by-case basis for individuals with VA appointments.

Post-Award Policies

I. Awardee Requests

i. Award Deferral: Award recipients requesting to defer the start date of an award must submit a formal request in writing addressed to the SAC outlining the reason for deferral and listing all other support during this time. Requests must include a specific start date and may be granted or denied at the discretion of the SAC. The maximum period for deferral is 1 year from the original award start date.

ii. Concurrent Funding: The Awardee assumes an obligation to expend award funds for the purposes set forth in the original grant application and to affirm that there is no duplicate funding for these purposes. The Awardee must promptly notify the Foundation of receipt of any additional award(s) which may potentially have scientific or budgetary overlap with their Foundation award. Overlap will be assessed by the SAC. If concurrent funding is deemed allowable by the Council, the awardee may be required to re-budget their Foundation award. Please see Request for Applications for specific rules regarding concurrent funding for each award.

iii. Parental Leave: The Foundation recognizes there may be a need for Parental Leave during the award term. Please contact the Foundation directly to discuss how this request can be accommodated.

iv. Transfer of Award: Awards may not be transferred between individuals. Transfers between sponsoring institutions will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Requests should be made using the Award Transfer Request Checklist and submitted to the Foundation along with the required supporting documentation. Requests will be reviewed and granted or denied at the discretion of the SAC. Transfers to institutions outside the United States will not be granted.

v. Re-budgeting: Awardees are allowed a certain degree of latitude to re-budget within and between budget categories to meet unanticipated needs and to make other types of post-award changes. If you have any changes with approved budgeted item(s), please contact the Foundation staff. Some changes may be made at the grantee's discretion so long as the changes are less than 25% within each category. If the revisions exceed 25%, a request must be submitted to the Foundation for approval before expenses are re-allocated.

vi. No-cost extensions: A no-cost extension gives the investigator extra time to complete the scope and objectives of the project without additional funds being provided by the Foundation. Although requests may not be made for the sole purpose of spending remaining funds, you may request to expend remaining funds during the no-cost extension period. Requests for no-cost extension must be submitted in writing at least 30 days prior to the end of the award term and may be granted at the discretion of the Foundation. Awards with carry-over of 20% or less of the original award amount are eligible and extensions may not exceed 12 months. Requests for extensions for awards with greater than 20% carry-over will only be considered under extenuating circumstances and will be approved or denied at the discretion of the SAC.

vii. Carry-over: The Foundation does not restrict the amount of yearly carryover on multi-year awards; however, restrictions apply for carry-over on those awards with extended terms. A carry-over is not allowed on single year awards unless an extension has been granted.

viii. Termination of employment: Should the award recipient's employment with the Grantee Institution be terminated at any time during the award term, the recipient must notify the Foundation within 30 days of termination. The award will be suspended pending review of a formal request to transfer the award to a new sponsoring institution (see details above regarding Transfer of Award).

If the recipient fails to notify the Foundation within 30 days, the award may be terminated at the discretion of the Foundation.

II. Reporting

i. Progress Reports: Awardees of multi-year awards must provide the Foundation with annual progress reports identifying their progress towards the aims and benchmarks of their original proposals. Templates and instructions will be provided to all awardees at least 30 days prior to the due date.

ii. Publications: It is expected that the results of research supported by the Foundation shall be published as quickly as possible, consistent with high standards of scientific excellence and rigor. The responsibility for publication of results lies exclusively with the Awardee and their collaborators and may be published without prior review of the Foundation. Any publication arising in whole or in part from a research grant funded by the Foundation must acknowledge funding support by the Foundation. Please use the following language in conjunction with our logo (logo and guidelines available upon request): *Funding for this project was provided by the Rheumatology Research Foundation.*

The Foundation's support should also be acknowledged by the awardee and the grantee institution in all public communication of work resulting from the grant including, but not limited to, scientific abstracts (where permitted), posters at scientific meetings, press releases or other media communications, and internet-based communications. The Foundation is happy to provide a logo upon request.

iii. Financial Reports: For multi-year awards, a financial report is required along with the annual progress report submission, to ensure compliance with budget requirements.

iv. Final Reports: All awardees must provide the Foundation with a final report describing the completion of application deliverables. In addition, the final report must contain a final financial reconciliation by cost category indicating how funds were allocated and whether any unexpended funds remain. Templates and instructions will be provided to all awardees at least 60 days prior to the due date.

v. Unexpended funds: All unexpended funds must be returned to the Foundation at the close of the award. Recipients must submit a final report at the end of award term outlining how award monies were spent, including a financial closeout statement to be completed and signed by the Office of Grants & Contracts/Sponsored Projects. Unexpended funds must be returned to the Foundation within 30 days of submitting the financial closeout statement.

vi. Program Metrics: In an effort to assist the Foundation in tracking program outcomes, awardees will be asked to complete an online survey annually for up to five years post-award. By acknowledging acceptance of any Foundation award, the recipient agrees to participate in all efforts to track outcomes associated with their award.

Additional Policies

I. Policy on Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI): The Rheumatology Research Foundation acknowledges the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) and establishes expectations for its ethical, transparent, and appropriate use in research applications, peer review, and administrative processes.

For purposes of this policy, artificial intelligence (AI) refers to computer-based systems that perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence, including but not limited to generating text, analyzing data, summarizing information, or supporting decision-making. This includes large language models (LLMs), a category of AI systems trained on extensive datasets to generate human-like text, respond to prompts, and assist with drafting or editing written content.

i. Applicants

Applicants may use AI tools in a limited, supplemental capacity to support editing, or improving the clarity and organizations of proposals. Applicants remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of all submitted content, including errors, omissions, or ethical concerns arising from AI use. The applicant recognizes that use of AI tools increases the risk of AI-Fabricated references and bears full responsibility for accuracy and consistency of any references generated by AI tool. References should be checked diligently for accuracy and consistency with the content of the application.

AI tools must not replace or materially substitute for the applicant's intellectual contribution and must not be used to fabricate data, generate scientific analyses or conclusions, misrepresent findings, or plagiarize content. All the ideas, hypotheses, methods, and interpretations presented in the application must reflect the applicant's own scholarly work.

Applicants are required to disclose any AI use within the application, including the name of the tool and a brief description of how it was used (e.g., grammar editing, formatting, or clarity improvements). Disclosure is for transparency purposes only and will not influence review, scoring or funding decisions.

ii. Peer Reviewers

The use of artificial intelligence (AI), including large language models (LLMs), to generate, draft, edit, summarize, or otherwise assist in preparing peer review critiques is strictly prohibited.

Reviewers may not upload, input, or share any portion of an application—including proposals, data, supplementary materials, or reviewer deliberations—into any AI tool. Doing so constitutes a breach of applicant confidentiality and a violation of the Peer Reviewer Certification Statement. Any unauthorized use of AI in the peer review process may result in removal from the review panel and may affect eligibility for future peer review service.

ii. Foundation Staff

The Rheumatology Research Foundation maintains internal policies governing the responsible use of artificial intelligence by the Awards & Grants staff. Staff members are prohibited from entering confidential, proprietary, or nonpublic applicant information into public-facing or external AI tools and are required to comply with data security and confidentiality standards.

II. Awardee Assurance: Research performed under Foundation grants is the sole responsibility of the Awardee and the Grantee Institution. The Awardee and the Grantee Institution are responsible for ensuring that all research activities are conducted in a safe, responsible, and ethical manner.

III. Cancellation: Any grant may be terminated or cancelled by the Foundation upon written notice to the Awardee and the responsible Administrative Official at the Grantee Institution if in the sole discretion of the Foundation: (1) the Awardee is unable to carry out the research for any reason, (2) the Awardee or any member of his or her research team is found in an institutional investigation to have committed scientific misconduct or fraud, (3) the Awardee has failed to comply with any of the terms and conditions of this award, (4) the Foundation concludes that the Awardee has received overlap funding for the award or that the funds are not being used for the purposes originally outlined in the research protocol or (5) the IRB approval for the project has been rescinded.

IV. IRS Provision: Personnel compensated in whole or in part with funds from the Foundation are not considered employees of the Foundation. Grantee Institutions shall be responsible for issuing the appropriate IRS tax filings for all individuals receiving compensation from Foundation's funds hereunder, and shall be responsible for withholding and paying all required federal and state payroll taxes with regard to such compensation.

V. Equipment: Title to all equipment purchased with Foundation funds shall vest in the Grantee Institution provided that, for the duration of the research grant and for the period not to exceed sixty days from the termination date of the grant, the Foundation may, at its option, direct the Grantee Institution to transfer title to a new Grantee Institution.

VI. Scientific Conduct and IRB Approval: The Foundation does not assume responsibility for the conduct of the investigation or the acts of the investigator since both are under the direction and control of the Grantee Institution and subject to the institution's medical and scientific policies. Accordingly, Grantee Institution will indemnify, defend and hold harmless the Foundation, its directors, officers, agents, and employees from and against any and all liability, loss, expense (including reasonable attorney's fees), or claims for injury or damages arising out of the investigation to which the Award applies, including the acts of the investigators, but only in proportion to and to the extent caused by or result from the negligent or intentional acts or omissions of the Grantee Institution, its trustees, officers, agents or employees.

VII. Ethical Standards: All research involving human subjects, laboratory animals, and recombinant DNA techniques must show documented compliance with NIH guidelines, the same as provided by the Grantee Institution's clinical and research review board. Awardees must assure compliance with regulations promulgated by the US Department of Agriculture under amendments of the Animal Welfare Act, public law 99-198. In addition, all activities supported by a Foundation research award must comply with all applicable U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations with respect to the rights and welfare of human subjects.

VIII. Resource Sharing: In furtherance of the Foundation's mission and exempt purpose, as a condition of the Award, when resources have been developed with Foundation funds, including the Award described hereunder, and the associated research findings published and/or provided to the Foundation, these resources must be made readily available for research purposes to qualified individuals within the scientific community. This includes any remaining samples and/or biospecimens obtained during the Award Term. If the Foundation becomes aware that Awardee or Institution has unreasonably declined or demonstrated a pattern of being obstructive to requests to access these materials, including remaining samples, the Awardee and/or Institution may be excluded from or deemed ineligible for future Foundation grants or funding opportunities.

IX. Policy Revisions: The Foundation may revise the Policies at any time and shall notify current awardees and post the revised Policies on the Foundation website. In the event of any conflict between the Conditions of Award and the Policies, the terms of the Conditions of Award shall prevail.

X. The Foundation is sensitive to life and professional challenges that may arise. Applicants or awardees may contact the Foundation to request reasonable accommodations to eligibility criteria, award terms, award policies, application deadlines, extensions, etc. when needed. All requests are subject to review and approval by the Scientific Advisory Council.

CONTACT US



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