



**Rheumatology Research Foundation**

Advancing Treatment | Finding Cures

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT BRIDGE FUNDING AWARD: K SUPPLEMENT

Request for Applications  
**FY2027**



Issued  
April 1, 2026



[Foundation@rheumatology.org](mailto:Foundation@rheumatology.org)



[RheumResearch.org](http://RheumResearch.org)



# OUR MISSION

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

# Purpose

The NIH K Series and VA CDA awards provide limited resources to cover research costs, such as essential laboratory supplies or support staff (e.g., salary support for a research technician, research assistant/coordinator, or statistician), which are crucial to the successful transition of junior investigators to independent investigators. This award is designed to address the needs of these investigators and serve as a supplement to the NIH individual K series, VA CDA, or equivalent 4- or 5-year award mechanism. Applicants should propose a new project or expansion of their career development award that demonstrates growth of the aims of the initial award and an independent direction for the investigator **leading to the submission of an R award or equivalent.**

## AWARD AMOUNT

Up to \$50,000 per year  
(\$100,000 max)

## AWARD TERM

2 years

**All applications must be submitted by 5:00 pm ET on the deadline day through [ProposalCentral](#).**

Questions about your eligibility or submitting your application? Please contact Award & Grants staff at 404-365-1373 or [foundation@rheumatology.org](mailto:foundation@rheumatology.org).

# Timeline

Application Opens	Application Deadline	Notification	Award Term Begins
April 1, 2026	August 3, 2026	September 1, 2026	September 14, 2026

# Award Eligibility and Guidelines

All award recipients must abide by Foundation [Awards and Grants Policies](#) at all times. Applications must have relevance to the Foundation’s mission to improve the health of patients with rheumatic disease.

**Eligibility:** To be eligible for this award, the applicant must:

- Applicant must meet all eligibility requirements as outlined in the Awards and Grants policies.
- Applicants must be [ACR](#) or [ARP](#) members with an MD, DO, PhD or equivalent doctoral level degree from an accredited institution.

<b>ACR Members must meet the following criteria:</b>	<b>ARP Members must meet the following criteria:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicant must be an NIH K08, K23, K25, VA CDA, or equivalent 4- or 5-year award recipient. The applicant must be in years 2, 3 or 4 of their award at the time of application.</li><li>• Have earned a DO, MD, MD/PhD, or DO/PhD degree or be currently enrolled in an ACGME accredited clinical training program.</li><li>• MDs and DOs who are not licensed to perform clinical care may not apply.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicant must be an NIH K01, K08, K23, K25, VA CDA, or equivalent 4- or 5-year award recipient. The applicant must be in years 2, 3 or 4 of their award at the time of application.</li><li>• Have earned a PhD*, DSc, or equivalent doctoral degree.</li></ul>

- \* Non-MD/DOs submitting basic science projects must clearly demonstrate direct applicability to rheumatic diseases, relevance to the Foundation’s mission and demonstrate a clear future career path in the field of rheumatology.
- Previous recipients of this award are not eligible to apply.
- Applicant is not eligible to receive funding from the Foundation’s Scientist Development Award or Investigator Award during the Bridge Funding Award term.

- In addition to an excellent application, applicants must be capable of becoming independent researchers with a clear and firm institutional commitment to their career development, including a faculty position and other supporting resources.

## Foundation Strategic Plan

The Foundation seeks to support the best basic, translational, clinical, outcomes, and implementation research in rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases. Applications directly addressing the current [Strategic Plan](#) are particularly encouraged.

## Review Criteria

All applications will undergo peer review and final funding decisions will be made by the Foundation Scientific Advisory Council. Applications will be reviewed on the following criteria:

- Relevance of the proposal to the Foundation's mission to improve the health of patients with rheumatic disease
- Demonstration of progress and momentum already achieved in the early years of their career development award
- Timeline and trajectory for the duration of the supplement, including date of NIH/VA independent award submission and how the supplement will specifically provide support to achieve these goals
- Description of aims and preliminary data required to build a strong NIH R01 or VA Research Career Scientist/Merit Award application

**Please Note:** Proposed aims for R Award (or equivalent) do not have to be final and may be submitted as planned aims for project proposal. However, these aims should prove how they will serve the future application for an independent research award. It should clearly be stated what preliminary data is needed for future application, if relevant.

*Applicants will be notified of their status within one month of the application deadline.*

# Award Terms and Funding

The award term is a maximum of two years at up to \$50,000 per year; however, funding in year 2 is contingent on progress and benchmarks (e.g., preparation, submission of NIH R01 or VA RCS/ORD) submitted in the year 1 progress report. The supplement must be used for research costs associated with the recipient's NIH individual series award, VA CDA, or equivalent award, such as essential laboratory supplies or supporting staff (e.g., research technician, database assistant or statistician). Funding may not be used for the investigator's own salary support. Indirect costs are not allowed.

If an applicant receives NIH/VA or any other research award during the supplement award term, the applicant must notify the Foundation immediately. If NIH R01 funding or equivalent is received, the awardee must relinquish the K Supplement and return all unexpended funds to the Foundation.

Recipients must notify the Foundation each time they submit an application to the NIH or VA. In addition, recipients must submit annual progress reports detailing goals accomplished, additional publications, and timeline for NIH R01 or VA RCS/ORD submission.

ORCID provides a persistent digital identifier (an ORCID ID) that you own and control, and that distinguishes you from every other researcher. Applicants are required to connect their ORCID Identification Number with ProposalCentral at the time of application. If the applicant does not have an ORCID Identification Number, one should be created and connected to the application prior to submission. If selected for funding, applicant will be required to "Trust" the Rheumatology Research Foundation as an organization to optimize tracking of project metrics. For instructions on how to link your ORCID ID with your application in ProposalCentral, visit [this link](#) and scroll to page 35.

## Application Instructions

**Before starting the online application, you will be required to create a Professional Profile in ProposalCentral, if you have not already. To do so, [visit this link](#) to begin creating your account.**

All files must be saved as a PDF. Documents that do not have a required template should be formatted with ½ inch margins, 11-point Arial Font, and single-spacing (does not apply to figures and tables). All applications and documents must be written in English and avoid use of jargon.

If terms are not universally known, spell out the term the first time it is used and note the appropriate abbreviation in parentheses. The acronym may be used thereafter.

**Note:** The Foundation does not require official signature from an authorized institutional research office at the time of application. However, many institutions require an application to be reviewed prior to submission. Please check with your research office for your institution's requirements.

## Applicant/Principal Investigator

You will be asked to confirm your eligibility and provide contact information in this section.

Applicants must submit a Biographical Sketch or CV using the provided template. A [SciENCv-generated biosketch](#) will also be accepted. The biosketch is limited to five (5) pages, regardless of format.

## Abstract/Project Information

The information in this section is general information about the grant submission.

If the application is funded, the following information will be entered into the Foundation database and will become public. Do not include proprietary, confidential information or trade secrets in the description section.

- **Project Title (limit to 200 characters including the spaces):** Make your title specific and detailed. It should clearly state the topic of your proposal.
- **Abstract (limit to 2,000 characters including spaces):** Succinctly describe the hypothesis to be tested, the specific aims or global objectives of the project and the expected results.
- **Relevance to Foundation's Mission (limit 1,000 characters including spaces):** Briefly describe how your proposed project is relevant to the Foundation's mission to improve the health of patients with rheumatic diseases.
- **Patient Impact (limit to 1,500 characters including spaces):** What problem is your project aiming to solve for patients?
- **Keywords:** Choose three keywords that accurately describe the project. If the application focuses on a specific disease, please include it as a keyword.

- **Category/Classification:** The following questions will be used to assign your application to the appropriate study section. Please select one or more of the options in the online application.
  - Primary Research Material
  - Study Section
  - Primary Research Method/Area
  - Research Classification
  - Primary Biomedical/Health Research Category

## Budget & Justification

Applicants should outline an itemized budget not to exceed \$50,000. The award term is a maximum of two years at up to \$50,000 per year; however, funding in year 2 is contingent on progress and benchmarks in year 1 (e.g., preparation, submission of NIH R01 or VA RCS/ORD). The supplement must be used for research costs associated with the recipient's NIH K08/K23, VA CDA, or equivalent award, such as essential laboratory supplies or supporting staff (e.g. research technician, research assistant/coordinator, or statistician). Funding may not be used for the investigator's own salary support. Indirect costs are not allowed.

## Current & Pending Support

Applicant should list all current and pending research support, including but not limited to grants and contracts. Indicate any current startup funds. For each entry specify the overlap between the other awards, applications, and/or sources listed in this application.

## Organization Assurances

The applicant assures that the proposal is in compliance with institutional guidelines as provided by the sponsoring institution's clinical and research review boards. All research proposals including human subjects, laboratory animals and recombinant DNA techniques must show documented compliance with institutional guidelines. Copies of approval notices by the institutions IRB, IACUC and/or biosafety committees must be provided as appropriate once awarded.

# Required Documents/Uploads

## Specific Aims

Originally submitted Specific Aims page of the career development award that will be supplemented.

## Applicant Statement

Written Statement (limit 2 pages), including the following:

- Demonstration of progress and momentum already achieved in the early years of the current award.
- Description of aims and preliminary data required to build a strong independent research award application, and how this supplement extends the original aims of the career development award and will allow you to move in an independent direction toward your own line of research (Please see review criteria regarding aims on Pages 2-3).
- Timeline, milestones, and trajectory for the duration of the supplement, including date of planned submission for independent research award NIH R01 (or VA RCS/ORD), and how the supplement will specifically provide support to achieve these goals.

## Benchmarks

**Download, complete and submit the Benchmarks of Success template (see below).**

- Benchmarks of success should be included for the completion of the preliminary data needed to submit an independent VA or NIH proposal. **Timeline for the submission of an application for independent research funding is a required benchmark.**

## Letters of Institutional Support

The Department Chair must provide evidence of adequate institutional support and protected time to allow completion of the proposed work and submission of an application for independent research funding. The institution must agree to protect at least 75% of the applicant's time and effort for research. The amount of additional salary support from the institution should be stated. The letter should explicitly state how the institution will support the applicant through the process of competing for independent research support at the R01 level.

# Benchmarks for Success

Applications should include a list of benchmarks (expected status of the project at various points in time). These milestones will be used to evaluate progress and to facilitate communication between principal investigators and the Foundation Scientific Advisory Council. Benchmarks of Success should be included for the completion of preliminary data needed to submit an independent VA or NIH proposal. **Timeline for the submission of an application for independent research funding is a required benchmark.**

<b>Benchmarks</b> (Should be listed chronologically)	<b>Metrics for Success</b> (Projected end points)	<b>Expected Completion</b> (Specific dates or months into project)

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# BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Applicants should provide the following information. This information may also be requested for Co- Principal Investigator, Key Personnel, Other significant contributors, and mentors. Follow this format for each person.  
DO NOT EXCEED FIVE PAGES.

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NAME:

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POSITION TITLE:

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EDUCATION/TRAINING (Begin with baccalaureate or other initial professional education, such as nursing, include postdoctoral training and residency training if applicable. Add/delete rows as necessary.)

INSTITUTION AND LOCATION	DEGREE (if applicable)	COMPLETION DATE MM/YYYY	FIELD OF STUDY

- A. Personal Statement
- B. Positions and Honors
- C. Contributions to Science
- D. Additional Information: Research Support and/or Scholastic Performance

# CONTACT US



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Website:  
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