



# American Heart Association and American Headache Society 2026 Innovative Project Award

[Application Instructions \(PDF\)](#)

[Required Application Documents](#)

[ProposalCentral](#)

## Key Dates

RFP posted:	July 29, 2025
ProposalCentral open:	October 1, 2025
<b>Pre-proposal deadline:</b>	<b>Wednesday, December 10, 2025</b>
Invitation to submit full proposal:	January 27, 2026
Invited full proposal deadline:	Thurs., March 5, 2026
Award notification:	June 5, 2026
Award start:	July 1, 2026

## Important Notes

- Proposals must be received no later than **3 p.m. Central Time** on the deadline date. Early submission is encouraged.
- Before beginning an application, see the [AHA Application Resources](#) page for requirements that apply to all AHA research awards. Also view AHA's research [Policies and Statements](#).
- Proposals must be [submitted electronically via ProposalCentral](#). The system will open eight weeks prior to the application deadline to complete the proposal and upload required documents. Applicant can create required documents in advance; refer to the [AHA Application Instructions \(PDF\)](#). **All submissions require the signature of a designated institutional representative.**
- Applicants must be [AHA Professional Members](#) at the time of proposal submission. [Join or renew](#) when preparing an application in ProposalCentral, or by phone at [+1-888-242-2453](#) or [972-349-5803](#). Membership processing may take 3-5 days; do not wait until the application deadline to renew or join. The AHA expects all mentors associated with training/mentored research awards to maintain active AHA membership, as well.

## Purpose

The American Heart Association and American Headache Society will co-fund an Innovative Project Award related to the effects of migraine or other headache disorders on cardiovascular and cerebrovascular health. This award will prioritize innovative approaches and high-risk/high-reward research, aligning with the commitment to advance these crucial values in health research and practice. Projects eligible for funding may span various disciplines, including basic science studies,

clinical research, and population health research initiatives. Projects are welcome to address any age, covering the lifespan, from children and adolescents to middle age and late life.

- To support highly innovative, high-impact research that could ultimately lead to critical discoveries or major advancements that will accelerate the field of cardiovascular and/or cerebrovascular research.
- Research deemed innovative may introduce a new paradigm, challenge current paradigms, look at existing problems from new perspectives, or exhibit other uniquely creative qualities.
- The Innovative Project Award (IPA) promotes unexplored ideas; therefore, preliminary data is not required and not accepted as part of the proposal. However, a solid rationale for the work must be provided. If you provide preliminary data, the application will be disqualified.

Should you include information about preliminary work, then the proposal is not innovative. You may refer to previous projects you have conducted to demonstrate that you possess a competency or technique that equips you to take on this new direction. Proposals may also refer to existing, unanalyzed datasets and the types of data they contain (e.g., geospatial, demographic, billing, molecular) that could be leveraged in conducting the proposed work, but there should be no preliminary descriptive summaries of the data itself.

- Proposed work should not be the next logical step of previous work, but should have a high probability of revealing new avenues of investigation, if successful.
- The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for clearly and explicitly articulating the project's innovation and the potential impact on cardiovascular and cerebrovascular research.
- The idea proposed here should not have been submitted in whole or in part in a previous proposal for AHA support.

## Eligibility

- **Applicant must be an [AHA Professional Member](#) at the time of pre-proposal submission.**
- AHA research awards are limited to U.S.-based non-profit institutions, including medical, osteopathic, and dental schools, veterinary schools, schools of public health, pharmacy schools, nursing schools, universities and colleges, public and voluntary hospitals and others that can demonstrate the ability to conduct the proposed research.
- Applicant must have one of the following designations at the time of proposal submission – not award start date, depending on career stage and each individual's situation. An awardee must maintain one of the designations listed below throughout the duration of the award. Please consult with your institution's grant officer.
- U.S. citizen
- Permanent resident
- Pending permanent resident (must have filed Form I-485 for permanent resident status and obtained an I-797C Notice of Action that the application has been received by USCIS and case is pending)

- E-3 Visa - specialty occupation worker
- F-1 Visa – student (for predoctoral and postdoctoral fellows only)
- G-4 Visa - family member of an international organization employee
- H1-B Visa - temporary worker in a specialty occupation
- J-1 Visa - exchange visitor (pre- and postdoctoral fellowships only; all other awardees must obtain an H-1B or equivalent by the award activation date)
- O-1 Visa - temporary worker with extraordinary abilities in the sciences
- TN Visa - NAFTA Professional
- DACA - Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
- Individuals in research training or fellowship positions are not eligible to apply.

At the time of award activation:

- The candidate must hold a post-baccalaureate Ph.D. degree or equivalent, or a doctoral-level clinical degree, such as MD, DO, DVM, PharmD, or PhD in nursing, public health, or other clinical health science.
- This program places no limit on eligibility based on career stage, academic rank or discipline. It requires only evidence of employment at a qualified institution, beyond the fellowship/training stage.
- While no minimum percent effort is specified, the principal investigator must demonstrate that adequate time will be devoted to ensuring successful completion of the proposed project.

## Budget

Award: \$100,000 per year, including 10 percent indirect costs

The award may be used for salary and fringe benefits of the principal investigator, collaborating investigator(s), and other participants with faculty appointments, and for project-related expenses, such as salaries of technical personnel essential to the conduct of the project, supplies, equipment, computers/electronics, travel (including international travel), volunteer subject costs, data management, and publication costs, etc. The proposed budget must be justified in the application.

AHA does **not** require use of the NIH salary cap.

Award Duration: Two years

Total Award Amount: \$200,000

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## Required Pre-proposal

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR BLINDING YOUR PROPOSAL

The American Heart Association continues to pilot double blind peer review for the 2026 Innovative Project Award pre-proposal review. While some identifying information will be collected within ProposalCentral, it will be for AHA use only and will not be shared with reviewers. **Pre-proposals**

**are reviewed for the proposed research idea only.** As such, the following information should NOT be included in the one-page pre-proposal upload, project summary, or non-scientist summary. **\*Additionally, do not include ANY of the following information in any file name or file description of any uploaded documents\*:**

- **DO NOT INCLUDE:** Name, Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Title, or any Institutional/Partnering Organization information in the pre-proposal.
  - **DO NOT NAME** Third Party Personnel/Key Personnel including:
    - Consultants/Collaborators
    - Mentors/Sponsors
    - Colleagues
  - **DO NOT** include language or reference to research or publications that could facilitate any identification of the investigators, institutions, third party personnel, etc.; i.e. the investigator/team/institution was the first to develop x, y, z.
  - **DO NOT** include literature cited or any references in the pre-proposal.
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## HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR PRE-PROPOSAL

1. **Log on to [ProposalCentral](#) and navigate as follows:**  
Create New Proposal > Filter by Grant Maker  
Select “American Heart Association”  
Locate “Innovative Project Award” and click “Apply Now”
2. **Title**  
Enter Title
3. **Accept Program Requirements**  
In this section, you will acknowledge you have read and understand all program requirements for the Innovative Project Award.
4. **Applicant/PI and PI Demographics**  
In this section of the application, you will provide information about yourself, your academic career, effort and professional time, demographics, citizenship, location of work for the research project and college degrees. Save each section as you complete it.

**\*\*This information will not be shared with peer reviewers.**

5. **Institution and Personnel**  
In this section, you will provide information about your institution including identifying the Grants Officer, Fiscal Officer, and Technology Officer.

These Officers must be selected from the list of registered users. Contact your institution’s grants office if you are unsure of which person to select from the list. It is important to select the correct Grants Officer, as he or she is responsible for the final submission of your LOI to the AHA.

**Third Party Personnel** -- Please provide the contact information (full name and email) for all consultants or collaborators (if applicable); **only** include this information in this specific ProposalCentral field. It should not be included in the one-page pre-proposal upload, project summary, or non-scientist summary.

**\*\*This information will not be shared with peer reviewers.**

## 6. **Project Summary & Non-Scientist Summaries, Classifications**

### a. Prepare your Non-Scientist Summary

Enter a description of your project that is written to be understood by non-scientists. This information may be reviewed by people who do not have scientific or medical backgrounds. Please be clear and avoid technical and scientific terms, when possible. When formulating your lay summary, it might help to imagine that you are explaining your work to a new acquaintance who does not work in the science field.

NOTE: It is incumbent upon the applicant to make a clear link between the project and the mission of the AHA. The lay summary will be assessed in terms of potential impact on the AHA mission; this will be factored into the overall priority score as noted in the peer review criteria.

### b. Complete the Project Summary

Write a concise description or abstract describing the work proposed. This should be as brief as possible since you also will be required to upload a separate LOI document. Note: This field will not accept any special characters or keystrokes (e.g.,  $\beta$ ,  $\pi$ , etc.).

## 7. **Science Classifications and Research Classification**

These classifications are independent of each other and will not affect the peer review of your application.

- a. Research Classification Type: Select the Research Type that best fits the research being conducted in your lab (basic, clinical, or population).
- b. Science Classification: Choose both a Primary Classification and a Secondary Classification. Current science classifications are listed on the AHA website.

## 8. **Upload One Attachment**

- a. Upload your pre-proposal as a .PDF document. **See Pre-proposal Guidelines below.** (Limited to 1 page).

NOTE: References are not required nor accepted at the pre-proposal stage and will be required if selected for a full proposal.

## 9. **Validate, Signature Page(s), and Submit**

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## **GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING YOUR PRE-PROPOSAL (one-page limit)**

The American Heart Association continues to pilot double blind peer review for the 2025 Innovative Project Award pre-proposal review. While some identifying information will be collected within ProposalCentral, it will be for AHA use only and will not be shared with reviewers. **Pre-proposals are reviewed for the proposed research idea only.** As such, the following information should NOT be included in the one-page pre-proposal upload, project summary, or non-scientist summary. **\*Additionally, do not include ANY of the following information in any file name or file description of any uploaded documents\*:**

- **DO NOT INCLUDE:** Name, Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Title, or any Institutional/Partnering Organization information in the pre-proposal.
- **DO NOT** name Third Party Personnel/Key Personnel including:
  - Consultants/Collaborators
  - Mentors/Sponsors
  - Colleagues

You are encouraged to write in third person (example: the applicant). Using "I" or "We" is allowed. Failure to comply will result in the administrative withdrawal (disqualification) of the pre-proposal.

This pre-proposal should briefly address the following points.

- Clearly and explicitly articulate the project's innovation and the potential impact on cardiovascular and/or cerebrovascular research.
  - The Innovative Project Award (IPA) promotes unexplored ideas; therefore, should you include information about preliminary work, then the proposal is not innovative. You may refer to previous projects you have conducted to demonstrate that you possess a competency or technique that equips you to take on this new direction. Proposals may also refer to existing, unanalyzed datasets and the types of data they contain (e.g., geospatial, demographic, billing, molecular) that could be leveraged in conducting the proposed work, but there should be no preliminary descriptive summaries of the data itself.
  - How your proposed project will introduce a new paradigm, challenge current paradigms, look at existing problems from new perspectives, or exhibit other uniquely creative qualities. Specifically, how this project would be a departure for you and lead to new areas of investigation.
  - Provide a solid rationale for the work.
  - Discuss new avenues of investigation that will be revealed, if successful.
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## FORMAT/TYPE REQUIREMENTS

You must comply exactly with the AHA's format/type requirements and page limits. Failure to comply will result in the administrative withdrawal (disqualification) of the pre-proposal.

- Documents must be single-spaced.  
No more than 15 characters per inch (cpi) or an average of no more than 15 cpi (cpi includes symbols, punctuation, and spaces).
- No less than ¾" page margins on all four sides.
- Maximum of 50 lines per page.
- Arial Font style, 12-point font size for Windows users; Helvetica Font style, 12-point font size for Macintosh users.
- Only Portable Document Format (PDF) files are accepted.

*Note: The ProposalCentral electronic system will reject a document that exceeds the page limit.*

Internet website addresses (URLs) may not be used to provide information necessary to the review because reviewers are under no obligation to view the Internet sites. Moreover, AHA reviewers are cautioned not to directly access an Internet site, as it could compromise their anonymity. The only place a URL may be used is in the biographical sketch as described in the instructions for that form.

The AHA has the responsibility to make final determination of conformance to format requirements and the authority to withdraw applications. This decision is final and not subject to appeal.

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## Restrictions

- AHA does not permit resubmission of a previous Innovative Project Award application.
- Resubmission of a prior application to the AHA Innovative Research Grant program for an Innovative Project Award will not be accepted.
- An applicant may submit no more than two Innovative Project Award applications per funding cycle. Each proposal to an AHA innovative program (Innovative Project Award and Transformational Research Award) must have clearly distinct aims.
- In addition, applicants to this program may submit **one** Transformational Program Award application, and one investigator-based application (Career Development Award, Established Investigator Award, or Merit Award) per fiscal year.
- The Innovative Project Award may be held concurrently with another Association award.
- Innovative Project Awards are not renewable. The award may be held more than once by a single investigator provided the projects are separate in nature and concept.
- Awards are not intended to supplement or duplicate currently funded work.
- The project submitted may have no scientific or budgetary overlap with other funded work.
- If you provide preliminary data, the proposal will be disqualified.

## Peer Review Criteria for Invited Full Proposals

*Applicants should never contact reviewers regarding their applications. Discussing the content of an application or attempting to influence review outcome will constitute a conflict of interest in the review. Reviewers must notify the AHA if an applicant contacts them.*

To judge the merit of the application, reviewers will comment on the following criteria. Fully address the following in your proposal:

1. **Innovation:** Assessment of the proposal's innovative nature -- Is the proposal innovative for the investigator and not a logical next-step? Is the proposal original and have the potential to ultimately lead to critical discoveries or major advancements that will accelerate the field of cardiovascular and/or cerebrovascular research? For example: Does the proposal challenge existing paradigms and present an innovative hypothesis or address a critical barrier to progress in the field? Does the proposal develop or employ novel concepts, approaches, methodologies, tools, or technologies for this area?
2. **Impact:** Does the proposal have a high probability of sustained and powerful influence on the research field(s) of study? How does this proposal relate to and support the mission of the American Heart Association: **to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives**? This potential impact assessment will be based primarily on the Summary for Non-scientists. This assessment will be factored into the Impact peer review criterion, which will account for 5-10% of the overall priority score.
3. **Significance:** Does this proposal address an important problem directly related to cardiovascular and/or cerebrovascular disease? If the aims of the application are achieved, will scientific knowledge or clinical practice be significantly impacted? Will there be an effect on the concepts, methods, and technologies that drive this field?
4. **Approach:** Are the conceptual framework, design, methods and analyses adequately developed, integrated, well-reasoned and appropriate to the aims of the proposal? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?
5. **Investigator:** Is the principal investigator appropriately trained and suited to carry out this work, even if a new area of investigation? Does the investigative team bring complementary, appropriately qualified, and integrated expertise to the proposal (if applicable)? All applicants (excluding fellows) are to include a statement in the Personal Statement section of their biographical sketch that explicitly states how they contribute to a safe and inclusive work environment. In addition, mentors on Fellowships, Career Development Awards, and Research Supplements should complete recognized training specific to sexual and gender-based harassment.
6. **Environment:** Does the environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Does the proposal demonstrate that resources will be available to complete the project? Does the proposed benefit from specific unique features of the environment, or subject populations, or employ useful collaborative arrangements?