

2024 Merit Award

Important Notes

- [Supporting Documents](#) lists the required uploads for each program.
- View the detailed [Applications Instructions \(PDF\)](#).
- Each applicant must be an AHA Professional Member. Join or renew when preparing an application, [online](#), or by phone at 301-223-2307 or 800-787-8984. Membership processing takes 3-5 days; do not wait until the application deadline to renew or join.
- [ProposalCentral](#) will open for submission approximately two months prior to each program's deadline.

Application Deadlines

Letter of Intent (required): Thursday, July 13, 2023

[View the LOI Instructions](#)

Full Submission Deadline (for invited applicants only): Tuesday, September 5, 2023

[Instructions for invited full submissions](#)

Applications must be received no later than 3:00 p.m. CDT on the deadline date. The system will shut down at 3 p.m. CDT. Early submission is encouraged. Your institutional Grants Officer (GO) has the final responsibility of submitting your completed application to the American Heart Association. It is important that you check with your GO for his/her internal deadline. All submissions require a signature from a designated institutional representative.

Purpose

To fund investigators with stellar track records of accomplishment, demonstrated by federal or equivalent funding [NIH, AHRQ, HRSA, etc.] from multiple sources and excellent publication records with substantial impact, who have the potential to move a field of science forward with creative approaches that are aligned with the mission of the American Heart Association: To be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.

This award supports exceptional scientists with established track records of success, who propose novel approaches to major research challenges in the areas of cardiovascular disease and cerebrovascular disease that have the potential to produce unusually high impact. This competition will enable AHA to further develop and strengthen the community of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular researchers and bring innovative approaches to basic, clinical, population and translational studies through funding a variety of disciplines. Applications are encouraged from all basic disciplines as well as epidemiological, behavioral, community and clinical investigations that bear on cardiovascular and stroke problems and must describe the capacity of the investigator's work to transform fundamental scientific understanding, clinical practice, and/or public health policy.

Awarded investigators are expected to demonstrate a combination of the following attributes that distinguish them from other highly competent scientists in their field:

- Likelihood of transforming and advancing the future of cardiovascular disease and cerebrovascular disease science.
- Potential to move their research into emerging and/or difficult areas of inquiry, being consistently at its forefront.
- Ability to develop new tools and methods that support creative experimental approaches to questions, encompassing concepts or techniques from other disciplines.
- Capacity to forge links between disparate disciplines.
- Strong track record of collaboration with other distinguished scientists across disciplines.
- Consistent with AHA's commitment to fostering growth of new and developing investigators, all applicants **MUST** incorporate the naming of at least one full-time fellow (predoctoral or postdoctoral) for the duration of the award term. Additionally, applicants must name at least one early-career faculty member (up to and including assistant professor) whose career should be meaningfully enhanced by their inclusion in the proposed studies.
- Evidence of original and innovative contributions to science.
- Demonstrated commitment to the mission of the American Heart Association and to advancing the ideals and guiding principles through volunteer service.

AHA Merit Awardees are considered to be AHA ambassadors in terms of strong scientific achievement, and also in terms of positive advocacy, volunteer service

and commitment to AHA's science and mission related activities. This advocacy maybe demonstrated by:

- Active involvement in local or national level AHA committees and activities
- Consistent championing of AHA's mission to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives
- Vision to assist the AHA in becoming a catalyst to achieve maximum impact in equitable health and wellbeing

The research does not need to be described in the detail that would be expected in an NIH R0-1, since the track record and expectations of continued excellence of the investigator are the primary award criteria. The application must include a summary of the applicant's proposed work in terms that can be readily understood by lay members of the review panel.

This investigator competition places no restrictions on the number of applications from any eligible institution. It is anticipated that the competition for these awards will be extremely keen.

Candidates with outstanding records who have shown evidence of significant originality and accomplishments are encouraged to apply.

AHA seeks and strongly encourages applications from women and members of minority groups that are under-represented in biomedical sciences.

Target/Eligibility

It is anticipated this award will be given to applicants with the following or equivalent credentials:

- PhD and/or MD (or the equivalent).
- Tenured or tenure-track professor (exceptional associate professors may be considered) at an eligible nonprofit U.S. institution or, if at an eligible institution that has no tenure track, hold an appointment that reflects a significant institutional commitment at the time of the application deadline. (Federal government employees are not eligible.)
- Principal investigator on multiple active, national peer-reviewed research awards of at least three years' duration, such as an NIH R01 grant, at the time of application. Mentored awards, career development and training grants do not qualify.

At the time of application, must have one of the following designations:

- U.S. citizen
- Permanent resident
- Pending permanent resident. Applicant must have applied for permanent residency and have filed form I-485 with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and have received authorization to legally remain in the U.S. (having filed an Application for Employment form I765)
- H1-B Visa - temporary worker in a specialty occupation
- J-1 Visa - Note: You must have an H-1B or equivalent by the award activation date. If the H1B or equivalent is not received by the award activation date, the award must be relinquished.
- O-1 Visa - temporary worker with extraordinary abilities in the sciences
- G-4 Visa - employee of international organizations and NATO family member
- TN Visa - NAFTA Professional
- E-3 Visa - specialty occupation worker

Awardee must meet American Heart Association citizenship criteria throughout the duration of the award.

Letter of Intent (LOI) - Required

View the [LOI Instructions](#) for more information.

A letter of intent (LOI), limited to three pages, will be required. AHA will contact applicants with the highest-rated LOIs and invite them to submit a full application. Applicants will receive no reviewer feedback on letters of intent. The LOI should briefly address the following points.

Describe why the AHA should invest in your proposed vision for the future in terms of:

- Likelihood of transforming and advancing the future of cardiovascular disease and cerebrovascular disease science.
- Potential to move your research into emerging and/or difficult areas of inquiry, being consistently at its forefront.
- Ability to develop new tools and methods that support creative experimental approaches to questions, encompassing concepts or techniques from other disciplines.
- Capacity to forge links between disparate disciplines.
- Strong track record of collaboration with other distinguished scientists across disciplines.
- Evidence of original and innovative contributions to science

- Demonstrated commitment to the mission of the AHA and to advancing the ideals and guiding principles through volunteer service.

Upload a list of your 15 most impactful and/or foundational publications that are relevant to the proposed research focus or this program in a pdf document (limited to 2 pages). When selecting, consider those which are foundational papers that support your research program; those that are most cited; and for more recent publications, those in the most high-impact journals or that you predict will elicit the most citations.

Upload your biosketch (limited to 5 pages).

Upload a one (1) page document addressing these specific criteria:

AHA Ambassadorship: Positive advocacy, volunteer service, and commitment to AHA's science and mission-related activities. This advocacy maybe demonstrated by:

- Active involvement in local or national level AHA committees and activities
- Consistent championing of AHA's mission to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives
- Vision to assist the AHA in becoming a catalyst to achieve maximum impact in equitable health and wellbeing.

No reference letters are to be supplied with the initial LOI. Two references will be required from those selected to submit a full application.

Eligible Sponsoring Institution

American Heart Association 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.

Applications will not be accepted for work with funding to be administered through any federal institution or work to be performed by a federal employee, except for Veterans Administrations employees.

Budget

- Awards are for a five-year period

- \$200,000 annually for 5 years = \$1,000,000 per award
- Budget can cover costs such as PI salary/fringe; salaries/fringe of lab personnel; other expenses such as laboratory costs; animal costs; human subject recruitment/reimbursement; travel; publication costs, etc.
- Indirect costs are limited to 10 percent of the annual award total

Important Conditions

- Awarded investigators are required to devote at least 75% of their total effort to research. An appropriate effort must be devoted to the work related to this award. Applicants with administrative responsibilities or other duties inconsistent with this time commitment may apply but must reduce those other commitments to be appointed.
- At the time of the submission deadline, applicants must hold a qualifying position at the institution where the research will be conducted.
- Awarded investigators will be expected to participate in various AHA events, including (but not limited to) Scientific Sessions and other scientific conferences, as well as speaking engagements, local activities, etc.
- Strategically Focused Research Network personnel may hold individual AHA awards.
- The American Heart Association permits the use of a large language model (LLM – e.g. ChatGPT) or an artificial intelligence tool to generate and/or edit content in research proposals submitted for funding. This information must be disclosed at the time of submission. Disclosure of this information does not impact peer review. Should this information not be disclosed accurately, and use of these tools is identified, the proposal may be administratively withdrawn.