

Merit Award

Application Deadlines

- **The AHA anticipates funding TWO Merit Awards in 2016.**
- **Letter of Intent (required) - Sept. 30, 2015 - View the [LOI Instructions](#)**
- **Full Submission Deadline (for invited applicants only) - March 1, 2016**
- **Merit Award [Invited Applicant Instructions](#)**

Applications must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. CDT on the deadline date. The system will shut down at 5:00 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.

Purpose

To fund highly promising investigators with track records of accomplishment (demonstrated by federal or equivalent funding [NIH, AHRQ, HRSA, etc.] and strong publication records with accelerating impact), who have the potential to move a field of science forward with creative approaches.

This award will support individual scientists with a trajectory of success, who propose novel approaches to major research challenges in the areas of CV and stroke that have the potential to produce unusually high impact. This competition will enable AHA to further develop and strengthen the community of CV and stroke 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.

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

- Potential to transform and advance the future of CV and stroke science.
- Potential to move their research field into new areas of inquiry, being consistently at its forefront.
- Ability to develop new tools and methods that enable creative experimental approaches to biological questions, bringing to bear, when necessary, concepts or techniques from other disciplines.
- Capacity to forge links between disparate disciplines.
- Demonstration of great promise for future original and innovative contributions.

The proposed research direction must reflect ideas substantially different from those already being pursued in the investigator's research program or elsewhere. This award is not intended to expand a current research program's funding. Rather, the proposed direction must reflect fundamentally new insights into potential solutions, which may derive from the development of exceptionally innovative approaches and/or from the posing of radically unconventional hypotheses. The research does not need to be described in the detail that would be expected in an NIH RO-1, since the track record and promise of the investigator are the primary award criteria, but it must be adequate.

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 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 preferred applicants with the following or equivalent credentials:

- Have a Ph.D. and/or M.D. (or the equivalent).
- Hold a tenured or tenure-track position as associate professor or higher academic rank 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.
- It is anticipated that this new award will be given to especially innovative individuals whose research will have important impact, but for whom the proposed area of research would not be able to begin in a timely fashion without this funding.
- Be the principal investigator on one or more active, national peer-reviewed research awards of at least three years duration, such as an NIH R01 grant, at the time of the application deadline. Mentored awards, career development and training grants do not qualify.

Citizenship

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 I-765)
- 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 H-1B 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

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. The LOI should briefly address the following points:

- Describe how your new research efforts differ from your past research.
- Describe how your newly-proposed work will transform the field of CVD and stroke.
- How will this award impact your newly-proposed research?

- Identify and list your 15 best papers. Applicants may submit a biosketch (limited to 3 pages).
- No reference letters are to be supplied with the initial LOI. Two references will be required from those selected to submit a full application.

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

Application Submission (invited applicants only)

The application must include the following documents:

- A curriculum vitae, including a complete bibliography and a list of current research support.
- A summary of the applicant's major research achievements (not more than 250 words).
- A summary of the applicant's ongoing and planned research program (not more than 3,000 words; references and up to one page of figures are not counted toward the 3,000-word limit).
- A statement of how this AHA award will enhance the applicant's research program (not more than 250 words).
- PDF files of five selected publications that document the applicant's most important scientific contributions with a focus on the most recent five years, as well as a paragraph describing the significance of each publication.
- Two references will be required from those selected to submit a full application.
- Statement/summary of why the AHA should invest in the applicant's future research.
- Summary of the applicant's vision for the future of his/her research focus & direction.

Location of Work

American Heart Association research awards are limited to 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.

Funding is prohibited for awards at non-U.S. institutions.

Peer Review Criteria

Contacting AHA peer reviewers concerning your application is deemed a form of scientific misconduct and will result in the removal of your application from funding consideration and institutional notification of ethical concerns.

Since this award mechanism is intended to fund individuals rather than specific project(s), peer review criteria will focus primarily on the investigator, his/her record of accomplishments, and his/her potential to transform and advance the future of CV and stroke science.

- **Demonstrated commitment to cardiovascular or cerebrovascular diseases:** Does the research program of the candidate focus on basic or applied science related to cardiovascular or cerebrovascular disease? Does the applicant indicate a clear commitment to cardiovascular / cerebrovascular research in the proposed studies? Does the proposed

new direction reflect ideas substantially different from those already being pursued in the investigator's research program or elsewhere?

- **Investigator:** Is the candidate established as an accomplished investigator in the fields of CV and/or stroke science? Does his/her record of accomplishment demonstrate the future ability to transform the field?
- **Prior and current national-level awards:** Does the candidate's track record of funding and awards provide evidence for future potential to transform the field?
- **Innovative, novel research direction:** Is the research direction described by the candidate likely to lead to the development of innovative approaches and significant contributions? Does the candidate pose an innovative research direction that reflects fundamentally new insights into potential solutions? Does the new direction proposed challenge existing paradigms or critical barriers to progress in the field? Does the candidate propose transforming approaches to major research challenges in the areas of CV and stroke that have the potential to produce an unusually high impact?

Reverse Site Visit

A third stage of the review will be conducted with only the highest ranked applications and will include a "reverse site-visit" presentation to the AHA review group.

Award Amount & Duration

- Awards are for a five-year period
- \$200,000 annually for 5 yrs = \$1,000,000 per award
- Budget is designed to cover PI salary/fringe; salaries/fringe of lab personnel; other expenses such as laboratory costs; animal costs; human subject recruitment/reimbursement; travel; publication costs, etc.

Important Conditions

- Awarded investigators are required to devote at least 75% of their total effort to the direct conduct of 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.

Interim Reporting

Assessment of annual progress reports to include research findings, abstracts and publications.

Evaluation

Publications, citations by others, ability to attract ongoing research funding, other awards/advancement.

Timeline

Letter of Intent (LOI) deadline

Sept. 30, 2015

Review of LOIs to determine invited applicants	Oct. 2015
Invitations for invited applicants	Nov/Dec 2015
Deadline for full submission of invited applications	March 1, 2016
Peer review of invited submissions	April 2016
Reverse site visits with invited finalists	May/June 2016
Funding decisions	June 2016
Announcement of AHA Merit Awardees	June 2016