American Heart Association
Rapid Impact Research Award

Key Dates

RFP posted:	Nov. 3, 2025
ProposalCentral open:	Nov. 20, 2025
Proposal deadline:	Thursday, January 22, 2026
Awards notification	March 2026
Award start date:	April 1, 2026

Important Notes:

- Proposals must be received no later than 3 p.m. Central Time on the deadline date. Early submission is encouraged. The American Heart Association does not accept late proposal submissions, grant extension requests, or have an appeals process.
- Before beginning an application, review the eligibility and requirements that apply to all Association research awards on the Application Resources page.
- 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. Applicants can prepare required documents in advance; refer to the Application Instructions (PDF). All submissions require the signature of a designated institutional representative.
- Applicants must be American Heart Association 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.

Purpose

The American Heart Association continuously seeks innovative ideas to address the most pressing issues impacting cardiovascular and brain health. To that end, the Association is pleased to announce the Rapid Impact Research Award program, which will support early and mid-career investigators proposing innovative research that aligns with the Association's mission. Novel basic, clinical and/or population health proposals are invited in the following three priority areas of research.

- Sudden cardiac arrest/resuscitation science
    - Despite decades of research and notable public health efforts, the poor survival rate for cardiac arrest has remained relatively unchanged for decades. Research is needed to address knowledge gaps that exist in many areas, including but not limited to: understanding of the underlying causes of SCA; detection, prediction and response to SCA; and survivor health outcomes and quality of life.

- Cardiovascular Kidney Metabolic Syndrome
    - A framework for addressing poor health outcomes related to the interconnectedness of cardiovascular, kidney and metabolic diseases, broadly defined as Cardiovascular Kidney Metabolic Syndrome, has only recently developed. The complexities of CKMS are extensive and not well understood, leaving major knowledge gaps that hinder progress for this condition (Ndumele et al., Circulation 148: 1606-1635, 2023). Applications relevant to any aspect of CKMS are invited.

- Stroke and/or vascular dementia
    - Stroke remains one of the leading causes of death in the United States and globally. Vascular dementia, a term that encompasses a number of vascular-related issues (including stroke) that adversely impact cognition, is the second most common form of dementia. Areas of interest for this funding opportunity include but are not limited to: improved mechanistic understanding; therapeutic and/or lifestyle opportunities for improved outcomes; diagnostic assessment; risk prediction; and earlier detection of disease (for vascular dementia).

Applicants will be asked to indicate alignment of their proposal with one or more of the topic areas listed above.

Equitable health for all is a core value of the American Heart Association; all applicants are encouraged to incorporate this vital perspective into their proposals. In addition, the Association believes that including individuals of all backgrounds is an essential component to driving its mission. We strongly encourage applications by individuals who have faced special challenges or obstacles to their careers and those who have experienced varied and non-traditional career trajectories.

Eligibility

- At the time of proposal submission, the applicant must hold an MD, PhD, DO, DVM, DDS, DNP, or equivalent post-baccalaureate doctoral degree.
- This program is limited to instructors, assistant professors, and associate professors. Holding a full-time faculty/staff scientist position equivalent to one of these listed positions is also acceptable.
- Neither full professors nor individuals in research training or fellowship positions are eligible to apply.
- Applicants cannot be holders of an American Heart Association research award at the award start date – April 1, 2026.
- Investigators who currently hold NIH K99/R00 or R01 or equivalent grants are not eligible to apply.
- The Association will permit an Awardee to concurrently hold an NIH K award (other than K99/R00) if there is no budgetary overlap.
- The awardee must devote at least 10% effort to the award.

Budget

$50,000 per year including 10% institutional indirect costs.

The award may be used for salary and fringe benefits of the principal investigator and collaborating investigator(s), consistent with percent effort, 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.

Award Duration: Two years. No-cost extensions are not allowed, and the awards are non-renewable.

Total Award Amount: $100,000

Restrictions and Other Award Characteristics

- An applicant may submit a maximum of one Rapid Impact Research Award per deadline.

Required Documents and Page Limits

Applicant:

1. Proposed Research Plan (5 pages)
2. Applicant Biosketch (5 pages)
3. Research Project Environment Form (DOC) (2 pages)
4. Budget Justification Form (DOC) (2 pages)
5. Literature Cited (4 pages)
6. Vertebrate Animal Subjects (if applicable, no page limit)

Third Party Personnel:

1. Collaborating Investigator's Biosketch (5 pages)
2. Collaborating Investigator's Letter (5 pages)
3. Consultant's Letter (5 pages)

Proposals will also require the following items to be entered into form fields in ProposalCentral. They are listed here for applicant awareness:

- Abstract
- Non-Scientist Summary
- Budget

Peer Review

Peer review for this program will be conducted using a distributed peer review approach (PDF) (Merrifield and Saari, Astronomy and Geophysics, 50, 4.2, 2009). This is also known as the Mechanism Design Proposal Review Process.

Distributed peer review relies on the principles of a traditional peer review panel: academic integrity, rigor, transparency, and a desire to advance the best science. As opposed to traditional peer review, distributed peer review capitalizes on the expertise of the applicant pool and incentivizes timely review in fairness to all applicants. Additionally, this peer review mechanism exposes applicants to new ideas and could foster new potential collaborations.

All applicants who submit a proposal will be required to serve as a peer reviewer within

this program and will be assigned 8-10 proposals for review. By agreeing to the program terms at the time of proposal submission, the principal investigator agrees concurrently to serve as a peer reviewer within this program and meet all peer review expectations and requirements. Principal investigators must declare conflicts of interest within five (5) business days of receipt of peer review assignments. PIs will only be assigned proposals for which they do not have an institutional or individual conflict; PIs (reviewers) are bound by all other requirements associated with peer review. PIs will be provided ~30 days to complete review and scoring of the proposals to which they are assigned.

Only peer reviewers who disclose their conflicts in the timeline stated above, complete their assigned reviews, and record their scores by the assigned due date will in turn have their own proposal evaluated for advancement. Brief written critiques to include bulleted strengths and weaknesses are required. Principal investigators who have not completed their reviews nor submitted their scores by the stated deadline will have their proposals withdrawn and returned as not in compliance with the program announcement, and they will not receive scores should any have been completed for their proposal. Peer review will require submission of scores using ProposalCentral; there will be no peer review panel discussions or meetings. All other Heart Association Peer Review processes apply.

Peer Review Scoring Criteria:

The American Heart Association DOES NOT permit peer reviewers to use large language models (LLM – e.g. ChatGPT) or artificial intelligence tools to generate and/or edit content in critiques. Uploading any portion of a research proposal into a large language model or an artificial intelligence tool to assist in writing a critique of the proposal is explicitly prohibited as it is a violation of the American Heart Association's Peer Reviewer Certification Statement (PDF) (to include confidentiality, non-disclosure, and conflict of interest).

To judge the merit of the proposal, reviewers will score proposals according to the following criteria. The Association uses a 1-9 score scale and Peer Review Guidance. Reviewers are required to provide brief, bulleted written feedback on each proposal reviewed.

Non-Scientist Summary:
American Heart Association Mission: *To be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.*

- How well written is the Non-Scientist Summary in explaining to a non-scientist audience the research proposed and its importance?
- Does the Non-Scientist Summary adequately explain the major health problem being addressed by this study?
- Does it provide specific questions and how the project will address them?
- Does it provide information on the overall impact of this work and the potential advances in the field?
- Does it relay how the proposal supports the mission of the Heart Association?

Investigator:
Investigator (applicant): Is the investigator appropriately trained, productive, and well suited to carry out this work? Is the work proposed appropriate to the experience level of the principal investigator (applicant) and other researchers? Does the investigative team bring complementary and integrated expertise to the project (if applicable)? Does the investigator have a record of diligence, commitment, and productivity that warrant support?

Environment:
Does the environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Does the proposal benefit from unique features of the investigative environment or subject populations, or employ useful collaborative arrangements?

Significance:
Does this study address an important problem in cardiovascular and/or cerebrovascular research that is a barrier to a world of longer, healthier lives? Does the science accelerate the application of scientific knowledge to enhance and treat cardiovascular and/or brain health in one of the targeted areas (Sudden Cardiac Arrest\Resuscitation Science, Cardiovascular Kidney Metabolic Syndrome, or Stroke and\or Vascular Dementia? If the aims of the proposal are achieved, how will scientific knowledge or clinical practice be advanced? What will be the effect of these studies on the concepts, methods and technologies that drive this field?

Approach:
Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well-integrated, well-reasoned and feasible (as determined by preliminary data) and appropriate to the aims of the proposal? Does the applicant acknowledge potential challenges and problem areas and consider alternative tactics and mitigation?

Innovation:
Is the proposal original and innovative? Does the proposal develop or employ novel concepts, approaches, methodologies, tools, or technologies for this area?

Impact:
Does the proposal have a high probability of sustained and powerful influence in one of the targeted areas - Sudden Cardiac Arrest\Resuscitation Science, Cardiovascular Kidney Metabolic Syndrome, or Stroke and\or Vascular Dementia? 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? How does this proposal ensure that the resulting award will produce significant impact to the field? Proposals for research funding will be assessed for their potential impact on the American Heart Association Mission, and on the applicant's ability to effectively describe the proposal and its potential outcomes to non-scientists.