

National Scientist Development Grant Program Description

Award Activation: January 1, 2012

Program Description, Eligibility and Peer Review Criteria

Objective

To support highly promising beginning scientists in their progress toward independence by encouraging and adequately funding research projects that can bridge the gap between completion of research training and readiness for successful competition as an independent investigator.

Science Focus

Research broadly related to cardiovascular function and disease and stroke, or to related clinical, basic science, bioengineering or biotechnology, and public health problems, including multidisciplinary efforts.

Disciplines

Proposals are encouraged from all basic disciplines as well as epidemiological, behavioral, community and clinical investigations that bear on cardiovascular and stroke problems.

Target Audience

At the time of application, the applicant must

- Hold an M.D., Ph.D., D.O., D.V.M. or equivalent post-baccalaureate doctoral degree
- Meet institutional requirements for grant submission.

At the time of award activation,

- The applicant must hold a faculty/staff position up to and including the rank of assistant professor (or equivalent). Applications may be submitted for review in the final year of a postdoctoral research fellowship or in the initial years of the first faculty/staff appointment.
- No more than four years will have elapsed since an applicant's first faculty/staff appointment (after receipt of doctoral degree) at the assistant professor level or its

equivalent (including, but not limited to, research assistant professor, research scientist, staff scientist, etc.).

Citizenship

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

- U.S. citizen
- Permanent resident
- Pending permanent resident. Applicants 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 United States (having filed an Application for Employment Form I-765)
- E-3 - specialty occupation worker
- H1-B Visa - temporary worker in a specialty occupation
- J-1 Visa - exchange visitor. 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
- TN Visa - NAFTA professional

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

Location of Work

National programs are open to all affiliates.

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 other non-profit institutions 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 Administration employees.

Exception: An investigator may be allowed to request approval to conduct work outside the United States temporarily.

Budget/Annual Award Amount

Salary/Fringe: Up to \$35,000 for salary/fringe of the Principal Investigator, collaborating investigator(s), and others with faculty appointments

Indirect: 10 percent (\$7,000)

Project Support: At least \$35,000 for project-related expenses such as salaries of essential technical personnel, supplies, equipment, volunteer subject costs, publication costs.

Travel is not to exceed \$3,000/yr; international travel must have prior AHA approval

Total Annual Award Amount: \$77,000

Award Duration: Four years

Peer Review Criteria

To judge the merit of the application, reviewers will comment on the following criteria. Please be sure that you fully address these in your proposal.

- 1. Future Independence of Investigator:** Is there demonstrated evidence that the award will promote independent status for the applicant by the end of the three- or four-year award? The award is not intended to provide enhanced funding for professional personnel working on the research program of an established scientist.
- 2. Significance:** Does this study address an important problem broadly related to cardiovascular disease or stroke? If the aims of the application 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?
- 3. 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 project? The assessment of preliminary data should be put into perspective so that bold new ideas and risk-taking by the beginning investigators are encouraged rather than stymied. Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?
- 4. Innovation:** Is the project original and innovative? For example: Does the project challenge existing paradigms and address an innovative hypothesis or critical barrier to progress in the field? Does the project develop or employ novel concepts, approaches,

methodologies, tools or technologies for this area?

5. **Investigator:** Is the investigator appropriately trained and well suited to carry out this work? Is the work proposed appropriate to the experience level of the principal investigator and other researchers? Does the investigative team bring complementary and integrated expertise to the project (if applicable)?

6. **Environment:** Does the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Do the proposed studies benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, or subject populations, or employ useful collaborative arrangements? Is there evidence of institutional support as demonstrated in the department head letter?

Applicants should never contact reviewers regarding their applications. Discussing scientific 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.

Restrictions

- An investigator may not hold more than one AHA award concurrently. Exception(s): an investigator may hold two association grants (affiliate and national) concurrently if all three apply:
 - 1) There will be no more than six months remaining on the initial award.
 - 2) The projects have no overlap in specific aims.
 - 3) There is no budgetary overlap between the two projects.

An investigator may hold the Innovative Research Grant and one other national or affiliate award.

- An awardee may hold the Scientist Development Grant only once (national or affiliate). This award is non-renewable.
- The project submitted may have no scientific overlap with other funded work.
- At the time of award activation, individuals are ineligible for the Scientist Development Grant if they have been or are currently funded (extramurally) by any one award for more than one year at a level greater than \$95,000 per year in direct costs (salary and project costs).
- An SDG and an NIH mentored K-series award cannot be held concurrently.

- An applicant may submit only one AHA National application per deadline. If eligible, an applicant may simultaneously submit an application to an affiliate and to the national award program. The proposed research plan may need to be adjusted based upon different length of award and dollars available. The deadline dates may be different for each submission. If both are funded, the applicant must choose one award.

Exception: Investigator may apply for the Innovative Research Grant and another National program.

- Successful applicants who hold any postdoctoral fellowship or training award must resign that award when activating the SDG award. The SDG award serves as a first independent award; therefore, training or fellowship awards (such as the NRSA) cannot be held simultaneously.
- An applicant who is unsuccessful in a competition may resubmit the same or similar application three times (the original plus two resubmissions). The same or similar application submitted for the fourth time will be administratively withdrawn.