

Western States Affiliate Postdoctoral Fellowship Program Description

Award Activation: January 1, 2012

Program Description, Eligibility and Peer Review Criteria

Objective

To help trainees initiate careers in cardiovascular and stroke research while obtaining significant research results under the supervision of a sponsor or mentor; supports individuals before they're ready for some stage of independent research.

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 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:

- Meet institutional requirements for grant submission.

At the time of award activation, the applicant must:

- Have doctoral degree, including M.D., Ph.D., D.O., D.V.M. or equivalent.
- Have no more than six years postdoctoral research training or experience. Time spent in clinical training is excluded.

Sponsor

It's important for the new fellow to receive wise counsel and direction from an established investigator interested in the conduct and progress of the research project during the research

training period. Each fellow must have a sponsor.

A fellow must have substantial involvement in preparing the application, understanding that the sponsor will play a significant part in guiding the applicant.

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
- F1 - student visa
- H1-B Visa - temporary worker in a specialty occupation
- J-1 Visa - exchange visitor
- O-1 Visa - temporary worker with extraordinary abilities in the sciences
- TN Visa - NAFTA Professional

Exception: Postdoctoral fellowship applicants outside the United States at the time of application must provide visa documentation prior to award activation.

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

Location of Work

The award may be completed at any accredited institution in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah or Washington.

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.

Budget/Annual Award Amount

Trainee Stipend/Salary:

Stipend is on a sliding scale based on the number of years of relevant postdoctoral clinical and research training and experience post terminal degree. Relevant training includes relevant postdoctoral research training or expertise and clinical training such as internship and residence. Time spent as a student or in pursuit of a degree is excluded. To determine the appropriate stipend, determine the number of years of postdoctoral training or experience the applicant will have completed at activation date.

Example, if you have one year, 10 months experience, you fall within the one-year range.

Year Stipend

0-1 year - \$34,000
1-2 year - \$37,000
2-3 years - \$40,000
3-4 years - \$42,000
4-5 years - \$44,000
5-6 years - \$46,000
6-7 years - \$48,000
7+ years - \$50,000

Institution may supplement stipend.

Fringe Benefit: An additional \$4,000 annual departmental allowance is provided to help defray the fellow's training-related expenses, such as medical insurance, travel to scientific meetings, and the fellow's research supplies and equipment.

Indirect Costs: Does not allow indirect costs, dependent allowance or tuition.

Total Annual Award Amount: \$38,000 - \$54,000

Award Duration: Two years; may submit an application to compete for a third year of funding, if eligible.

New applications are allowed in the final year only. This is a new, competitive application, not an application for renewal.

Peer Review Criteria

To judge the merit of the application, reviewers will comment on following criteria. Please be sure to address these in your proposal. Each criterion will account for a third of the overall score.

Criterion 1 - Evaluation of the Investigator

1. Does the trainee have potential for a research career?
2. Are the trainee's career plans specified in the application?
3. Is this supported by the trainee's academic record and the assessment provided by the three letters of reference?
4. Does the trainee have prior research experience and/or publications?
5. Is there a clear rationale supporting the need for the proposed training?
6. What is the sponsor's assessment of the applicant?

Criterion 2 - Sponsor/Training Plan and Environment

Sponsor/Training Plan

1. Is the mentor an independent investigator?
2. Does the mentor have the experience to direct the proposed research training, as evidenced by a track record regarding productivity, funding and prior trainees?
3. Does the mentor have adequate current funding to support the fellow's project?
4. Does the mentor provide a comprehensive training plan that will facilitate the applicant's progress towards his/her research career goals?

Environment

1. Does the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success for the training experience?
2. Is there evidence of institutional commitment?

Criterion 3 - Evaluation of the Proposal

1. **Significance:** Does this study address an important problem broadly related to cardiovascular disease or stroke? What will be the effect of these studies on the concepts, methods and technologies that drive this field?
2. **Approach:** A new fellow may not have had adequate time to generate preliminary data. Applicants can present preliminary data generated by the sponsor. The assessment of preliminary data, whether generated by the sponsor or the applicant, should be put into perspective so that bold new ideas and risk taking by beginning investigators are

encouraged rather than stymied.

Are the conceptual framework, design, methods and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, well reasoned, feasible (as determined by preliminary data or the expertise available in the mentor's and/or collaborator's laboratories) and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?

3. **Innovation:** Is the project original?

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

- This award is not for individuals of faculty/staff rank. (Exception: M.D. or M.D./Ph.D. applicants with clinical responsibilities who hold a title of instructor or similar due to their patient care responsibilities, but who devote at least 75 percent effort to research training.) Awardee must devote full-time effort to research or activities related to research.
- Candidates may not hold a postdoctoral fellowship while enrolled in a graduate training program.
- Postdoctoral fellowship awardees must resign an award if promoted to a staff or faculty position.
- At the time of award activation, the fellow cannot be pursuing a doctoral degree. Applicants in this situation should be referred to the AHA predoctoral fellowship.
- Awardee may not hold another association award concurrently.
- The fellow cannot hold a comparable award as a source of supplementation.
- An applicant may submit only one affiliate 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.
- Postdoctoral fellowships are awarded for two years. The Western States Affiliate allows a maximum of three years of AHA postdoctoral fellowship support per individual.
- Sponsor may have no more than two AHA-funded postdoctoral fellows at any time.

- At the time of award activation, the applicant may not have more than six years postdoctoral research training and experience. Time spent in clinical training is excluded
- 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.