

Postdoctoral Fellowship

AHA forms and instructions are updated for each deadline. Check the **Supporting Documents** for the program to be sure you have the most up to date information.

Application Deadline: Friday, February 10, 2017

Award Activation: July 1, 2017

*The application must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. Central Time in **Grants@Heart** on the deadline date. The application will be submitted to the designated grant officer, who will submit it to the American Heart Association (AHA).*

Program Description, Eligibility and Peer Review Criteria

Success Rates

Objective

To empower postdoctoral trainees who are not yet independent with individualized, mentored assistance and training to initiate careers in cardiovascular and stroke 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.

Disciplines

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

Target Audience

- At the time of award activation, the candidate must hold a post-baccalaureate Ph.D. degree or equivalent.
- At the time of award activation, the candidate may have no more than five years of postdoctoral research training or experience (excluding clinical training).
- The awardee will be expected to devote at least 80 percent of full-time work either to research or to activities pursuant to independent research (instead of administrative, clinical, or teaching responsibilities).
- This award is not intended for individuals of faculty rank.
- At the time of award activation, the awardee may not be pursuing a doctoral degree.

Sponsor

It is imperative that the fellow receive counsel and direction from a sponsor who is an established investigator invested in the progress of the project.

A fellow must have primary responsibility for the writing and the preparation of the application, understanding the Sponsor will play a significant part in providing guidance to the applicant.

AHA does not require but strongly encourages institutions to develop and use Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for AHA training programs. IDPs provide a structure for the identification and achievement of career goals.

The trainee's career goals, as stated in Part A - Personal Statement of the fellow's biosketch, and the sponsor's training plan must be complementary to one another and focused specifically on the individual. A standardized training plan will not be viewed favorably.

Citizenship

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

- U.S. citizen.
- Permanent resident.
- Pending permanent resident (any resident who has an approved I-765 form and has submitted an I-485 application with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services).
- E-3 Visa - specialty occupation worker.
- F1 Visa - student.
- 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 – North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) professional.
- G-4 Visa - family member of employee of international organizations.

Applicants are not required to reside in the United States for any period before applying for American Heart Association funding.

An awardee must maintain one of the designations listed above throughout the duration of the award.

Note: A Postdoctoral Fellowship applicant who is outside the United States at the time of application must provide visa documentation prior to award activation.

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 applications to the AHA's Institute for Precision Cardiovascular Medicine, and applications from Veterans Administrations employees.

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

Budget

Annual Stipend Matches NIH sliding scale, as follows:

Postdoctoral Stipend levels for FY2017

Years of Experience	Stipend
0	\$47,484
1	\$47,844
2	\$48,216
3	\$50,316
4	\$52,140
5	\$54,228
6	\$56,400
7 or more	\$58,560

+ \$1,000 per year for health insurance

Project Support

\$3,000 per year, in addition to the stipend. (No limit on any line item (travel, computer, equipment, etc.).

International travel is permitted and does not require prior AHA approval.

Award Duration

Two years May apply for a second two-year award. All eligibility criteria apply.

Maximum of four years of Association postdoctoral fellowship support per individual.

Total Award Amount

\$103,320 - \$125,120

Restrictions

- An applicant may submit only one Postdoctoral Fellowship application per deadline.
- A postdoctoral fellow may hold only one AHA award at a time.
- An awardee must resign the fellowship if promoted to a staff or faculty position.
- An AHA Postdoctoral Fellow may not hold another AHA award concurrently. However, the awardee may submit an application for a subsequent AHA award during the last year of the project, and must resign the Postdoctoral Fellowship if another AHA award is activated.

- The awardee may not hold a comparable award as a source of supplementation. An applicant who receives AHA funding, but has an ongoing training grant from another source, may defer the start of the AHA award up to six months in order to complete the existing fellowship.
- The applicant may submit the same or similar application three times (the original plus two resubmissions). The same or similar application submitted the fourth time will be administratively withdrawn.
- The sponsor/co-sponsor may mentor no more than two AHA-funded fellows (pre-doctoral and postdoctoral) concurrently. Fellows who are part of an AHA Strategically Focused Research Network are excluded.
- Submission of an application to the AHA with identical or significantly similar content as a submission by another investigator is prohibited. Also, the submission of an application to the AHA with identical or significantly similar content from a sponsor to a grant program and his/her fellow to fellowship program is prohibited. In such cases, both applications may be removed from funding consideration. If a grant application is submitted by the sponsor of a fellowship application, both applications may be funded if there is no duplication of aims.

Peer Review Criteria

An applicant is prohibited from contacting AHA peer reviewers. This is a form of scientific misconduct and will result in removal of the application from funding consideration and institutional notification of misconduct.

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

Criterion 1 - Evaluation of the Investigator (Postdoctoral Fellow)

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

Because the trainee receives only a stipend from the award, additional research support for the proposed project MUST come from the sponsor's laboratory. Therefore, the proposed project will likely be related to the sponsor's funded research. The sponsor should clarify the role that the applicant played in the development of the proposal, the relationship of the proposed project to ongoing research in the sponsor's laboratory, and how the project will contribute toward the training and career development of the applicant.

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 trainee's project?

4. Does the mentor demonstrate familiarity with the applicant's career and developmental goals and provide a comprehensive training plan that supports 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

This section should provide a research project summary no longer than five pages: A carefully planned, systematic study aimed at clearly answering a question in cardiovascular and/or stroke health research. It should be completed in collaboration with the proposed supervisor(s) and be written in general scientific language.

Note: It is not the project per se that is being assessed. The project should be viewed as an integral part of the candidate's development as a researcher.

A new fellow may not have had adequate time to generate preliminary data. Applicants may 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.

1. Is the proposed project appropriate for the candidate, given his/her education, experience and interests? Is the project the right balance of challenge, importance of the research question, and feasibility in relation to the candidate's experience and training?
2. Does the proposed research project summary:
 - o Include the specific hypothesis of the research and describe the candidate's role on the project;
 - o Provide a concise account of the subject matter, an overview of each part of the research plan, specific project aims and the methodology;
 - o Reflect the significance of the project.
 - o For all applications that include vertebrate animals or human subjects, applicants must explain how relevant biological variables, such as sex, are factored into the research design, analysis and reporting. Furthermore, strong justification from the scientific literature, preliminary data, or other relevant considerations, must be provided for applications proposing to study only one sex.
3. **Impact:** How does this project address the mission of the AHA, and how likely will this support enhance PI career development in the area of cardiovascular diseases and stroke?

Interim Reporting - AHA requires both the awardee and sponsor to submit annual progress reports that include narrative description of accomplishments related to research and training, as well as an inventory of any abstracts and publications produced.

Evaluation of Program

Publications, citations by others, awardee's advancement to a postdoctoral fellowship, appointment to a faculty position and/or other evidence of career progression, contribution of Association support to career advancement.