

# 2018 Merit Award

## Application Deadlines

**Letter of Intent (required) - Tuesday, August 15, 2017**

View the [LOI Instructions](#)

**Full Submission Deadline (for invited applicants only) - Monday, November 6, 2017**

**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.*

The AHA anticipates funding TWO Merit Awards in 2018.

## Statement of Purpose

To fund highly promising investigators with stellar track records of accomplishment, demonstrated by federal or equivalent funding [NIH, AHRQ, HRSA, etc.] from multiple sources and excellent publication records with accelerating impact, who have the potential to move a field of science forward with creative approaches that are aligned with the mission of the American Heart Association.

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, and must describe the capacity of the investigator's work to transform public health policy.

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

- Likelihood of transforming and advancing the future of CV and stroke science.
- Potential to move their research into emerging and/or difficult areas of inquiry, being consistently at its forefront.
- Ability to develop new tools and methods that support creative experimental approaches to questions, encompassing concepts or techniques from other disciplines.
- Capacity to forge links between disparate disciplines.
- Strong track record of collaboration with other distinguished scientists across disciplines.
- Evidence of great promise for future original and innovative contributions.
- Demonstrated commitment to the mission of the American Heart Association and to advancing the ideals and guiding principles through volunteer service.

AHA Merit Awardees are considered to be AHA ambassadors in terms of strong scientific achievement but also in terms of positive advocacy, volunteer service and commitment to AHA's science and mission related activities. This advocacy may be demonstrated by:

- Active involvement in local or national level AHA committees and activities
- Consistent championing of AHA's mission to build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke
- Vision to assist the AHA in becoming a catalyst to achieve maximum impact in equitable health and wellbeing

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. The application must include a summary of the applicant's proposed work in terms that can be readily understood by lay members of the review panel.

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 seeks and strongly 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 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.
- Be the principal investigator on multiple active, national peer-reviewed research awards of at least three years' duration, such as an NIH R01 grant, at the time of application. 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 I765)
- 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 H1B 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

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

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 why the AHA should invest in your proposed vision for the future in terms of:

- Likelihood of transforming and advancing the future of CV and stroke science.
- Potential to move your research into emerging and/or difficult areas of inquiry, being consistently at its forefront.
- Ability to develop new tools and methods that support creative experimental approaches to questions, encompassing concepts or techniques from other disciplines.
- Capacity to forge links between disparate disciplines.
- Strong track record of collaboration with other distinguished scientists across disciplines.
- Evidence of great promise for future original and innovative contributions.
- Demonstrated commitment to the mission of the AHA and to advancing the ideals and guiding principles through volunteer service.

Identify and list your 15 best papers.

Applicants must submit a biosketch (limited to 5 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)

Applications will be reviewed by scientists and non-scientist reviewers. Content should be written so that it is understandable to non-scientists, as well as to scientists who may not have specific expertise within the proposed topic area.

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.

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The application must include the following documents:

1. A summary of the applicant's major research achievements. (*Not more than one page*) This should be written so that a non-scientist reviewer can readily understand the summary.

2. A summary of the applicant's ongoing and planned research program and a statement of why the AHA should support the applicant's research. *(Not more than eight pages; references and up to one page of figures are counted toward the eight-page limit)*

This section should build upon the letter of intent by focusing on how the proposed research would:

- transform and advance the future of CV and stroke science.
  - move into emerging and/or difficult areas of inquiry, being consistently at its forefront.
  - develop new tools and methods to support creative experimental approaches to questions, encompassing concepts or techniques from other disciplines.
  - forge links between disparate disciplines.
  - allow for collaboration with other distinguished scientists across disciplines.
  - generate original and innovative contributions.
  - assist the AHA in becoming a catalyst to achieving maximum impact in equitable health and wellbeing.
3. Summary of the applicant's past efforts in support of the AHA programs and initiatives and plan for future service as an ambassador in support of the AHA mission if selected as a Merit Awardee. *(not more than one page)*
  4. Two references will be required from those selected to submit a full application.

## Eligible Sponsoring Institution

American Heart Association research awards are limited to U.S.-based 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.

## Peer Review Criteria

Since this award mechanism is intended to fund individuals rather than specific projects, peer review criteria focus primarily on the investigator, his/her record of accomplishments, his/her potential to transform and advance the future of CV and stroke science and support the mission and strategic values of the AHA.

Review criteria include:

### **Impact to AHA Mission:**

How does the applicant relate to and support the mission of the American Heart Association to *build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke*, as evidenced by past involvement and future plans? Is the proposed research of high impact to the mission of AHA? How will the applicant and/or the proposed research will assist the American Heart Association in becoming a catalyst to achieving maximum impact in equitable health and wellbeing?

### **Investigator:**

Is the candidate established as an accomplished investigator in the fields of CV and/or stroke

science? How does his/her record of accomplishment (including funding and publications) demonstrate the future ability to transform the field? Does the candidate have a strong track record of collaboration with other distinguished scientists across disciplines? Does the candidate have a history of volunteer service and commitment to the American Heart Association?

#### **Innovation and collaboration:**

Is the research direction described by the candidate likely to lead to the development of innovative approaches and significant contributions? Does the research 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? Does the applicant describe the ability to develop new tools and methods that support creative experimental approaches to questions, encompassing concepts or techniques from other disciplines? Does the research proposed have the capacity to forge links between disparate disciplines?

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.

## 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 years = \$1,000,000 per award
- Budget can cover costs such as 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.
- Awarded investigators will be expected to participate in various AHA events, including (but not limited to) Scientific Sessions and other scientific conferences, as well as speaking engagements, local activities, etc.
- An individual may hold more than one AHA award concurrently, but may only hold one career development/recognition award (Career Development Award, Established Investigator Award, Merit Award).
- Strategically Focused Research Network personnel may hold individual AHA awards.

## Interim Reporting

Assessment of annual progress reports to include research findings, abstracts and publications, and participation in AHA activities. Progress reports will be reviewed by AHA volunteers and staff.

## Evaluation

Publications, citations by others, ability to attract ongoing research funding, other awards/advancement, and demonstrated commitment as a volunteer ambassador for the AHA.