

2024 Established Investigator Award

Important Notes:

- Proposals must be received no later than 3 p.m. Central Time on the deadline date. Early submission is encouraged.
- Before beginning an application, review the eligibility and requirements that apply to all AHA research awards at [AHA Application Resources](#) page.
- All proposals must be [submitted electronically via ProposalCentral](#). The system will open eight weeks prior to the application deadline to complete your proposal and upload documents. You can begin to create your documents now; please refer to the [AHA Application Instructions \(PDF\)](#). All submissions require a signature from a designated institutional representative.
- Applicants must be [AHA Professional Members](#) at the time of application. This must be done online. Join or begin the membership process well before the deadline.

Required Pre-proposal Deadline:

Thursday, October 5, 2023

Invited full proposals due by Thursday, January 11, 2024

Purpose

To support established investigators who are in a rapid growth phase of their career, have established records of accomplishments and continue to show extraordinary promise. The investigator's career is expected to clearly benefit from the EIA award. Candidates will have a demonstrated commitment to cardiovascular or cerebrovascular science disciplines that support the AHA's mission to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives, as indicated by funding and publication history and scientific accomplishments. Candidates should propose an innovative\ novel research direction that challenges existing paradigms and employs novel concepts, approaches, or technologies.

Eligibility

At the time of application, must have:

- MD, PhD, DO, DVM, or equivalent doctoral degree
- Full-time faculty/staff scientist position or equivalent.
NOTE: At the time of award activation must have an appointment at the associate professor level or equivalent (including, but not limited to, research associate professor, research scientist, staff scientist, etc.) and be no more than 15 years since first faculty appointment.
- History and current evidence of substantial extramural funding

Mandatory Pre-proposal

Application for this award requires a pre-proposal (letter of intent), limited to two (2) pages. AHA will contact applicants with the highest-rated pre-proposals and invite them to submit a full application. The pre-proposal should briefly address the following points.

Describe the investigator's competitiveness in terms of:

1. Demonstrated commitment to the study of cardiovascular and/or cerebrovascular disease and scientific innovation.
2. Independence as assessed by publications, research funding, and impact of scientific work as a principal investigator.
3. How the award will enhance the investigator's rapid career growth phase.

In addition to the pre-proposal, upload:

- A list of the PI's 15 most impactful and/or foundational publications that are relevant to the proposed research focus or this program in a .PDF document. When selecting, consider those which are foundational papers that support your research program; those that are most cited; and for more recent publications, those in the most high-impact journals or that you predict will elicit the most citations. (2-page limit)
- A document that details the PI's last five years of research funding (1-page limit)
- NIH biosketch (5-page limit)

Applicants are also required to complete the following sections in ProposalCentral:

- Project Summary - Write a concise description or abstract describing the work proposed. This should be as brief as possible, since you also will be required to upload a separate LOI document. Note: This field will not accept any special characters or keystrokes (e.g., β , π , etc.).

- Non-Scientist Summary - Enter a description of your project that is written to be understood by non-scientists. This information may be reviewed by people who do not have scientific or medical backgrounds. Be clear and avoid technical and scientific terms, when possible. When formulating your lay summary, it might help to imagine that you are explaining your work to a new acquaintance who does not work in the science field. NOTE: It is incumbent upon the applicant to make a clear link between the project and the mission of the AHA.

No reference letters are to be supplied with the initial LOI. Three references will be required from those selected to submit a full application.

Abbreviated Proposal (if selected to submit)

The Established Investigator Award invited proposal is limited to eight (8) pages and should:

- describe and summarize past research accomplishments,
- outline the impact of the investigator's previous research accomplishments,
- demonstrate the potential of the EIA to provide new directions and innovations beyond that covered by other current funding,
- clarify how this proposal differs from other funded projects, or how these funds will be used to expand upon other projects,
- explain how this award will contribute to the applicant's rapid career growth and the potential for significant impact to the AHA mission, and
- broadly discuss projected research directions that would be pursued with the EIA.

The proposal should not contain detailed protocols or focus heavily on the design or interpretation of individual experiments.

Budget

Award: \$80,000 per year, including 10 percent indirect costs (Indirect costs are not to exceed \$7,273 per year)

Aside from the cap on indirect costs, there is no limit on budget categories. Funds may be used as the principal investigator deems necessary, in accordance with institutional and AHA policies.

Budget items may include:

- salary and fringe of the principal investigator, any collaborating investigators, and other participants with faculty appointments
- salaries of technical personnel essential to the conduct of the project
- supplies
- equipment
- travel
- volunteer subject costs
- data management
- publication costs

While no specific minimum effort is required for the EIA program, the time committed should align with the proposed project. Special consultative services from individuals may be requested, provided the circumstances are fully described in the application. International travel is permitted without prior AHA approval.

Award Duration: Five years; non-renewable

Maximum Award Amount: \$400,000

Restrictions

- Past EIA awardees are not eligible to reapply to this mechanism nor submit more than one proposal per cycle.
- Applicants for an EIA may hold an additional AHA research grant such as a Strategically Focused Research Project, IPA and/or TPA but cannot hold a career development/recognition award at the same time (i.e. Career Development Award or Merit Award).

International Applicants - Did you know?

For ALL research programs – including fellowships – applicants are not required to reside in the United States for any period before applying for AHA funding. However, AHA 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. Acceptable visa types and additional information may be found [here](#).

Use of Large Language Models and Generative AI in Proposals & Peer Review

Applicants:

The AHA permits the use of a large language model (LLM – e.g. ChatGPT) or a generative artificial intelligence tool to create and/or edit content in research proposals submitted for funding. This information must be disclosed at the time of submission. Disclosure of this information does not impact peer review. Should this information not be disclosed accurately, and use of these tools is identified, the proposal may be administratively withdrawn.

Peer Reviewers:

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

Biosketch Addition: Inclusive, safe, diverse environment

All applicants (excluding fellows) are to include a statement in the Personal Statement section of their biographical sketch that explicitly states how they contribute to a safe, inclusive, and diverse work environment. In addition, mentors on Fellowships, Career Development Awards, and Diversity Supplements should complete recognized training specific to sexual and gender-based harassment.

Change to AHA Open Data Policy

For awards beginning in FY 23-24, the AHA has modified its Open Data Policy to align with the NIH's new timeline for data sharing, effective for proposals submitted to the AHA after July 1, 2023. More on AHA Open Science Policies can be found [here](#).

Revised AHA Open Data Policy: *The AHA requires certain applicants to include a data sharing plan with the proposal. Any factual data that is needed for independent verification of research results must be made freely and publicly available in an AHA-approved repository as soon as possible, and no later than the time of an associated publication or the end of the award period (and any no-cost extension), whichever comes first.*

* Existing awards are subject to the policy in place when the award agreement was signed. If a new award agreement is required (e.g., change of PI, change of

institution) award is subject to policies in place at the time the agreement is signed.

Supporting Rheumatic Heart Disease Research

The AHA is helping to support a broader approach to research funding focused on Rheumatic Heart Disease. To that effect, the AHA is committing to funding research in this specific area across all scientific disciplines (basic, clinical, and population) within any current AHA programs. No additional pre-proposal or proposal materials are necessary outside of individual AHA program criteria; awardees will be designated from the existing applicant pool within each program.

Peer Review Criteria for the Established Investigator Award

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

To judge the merit of the application, reviewers will comment on the following criteria. Fully address these in your proposal.

Generally, the candidate and the innovativeness of the proposal are being evaluated. The first two of the following criteria must be met to be competitive. The remaining factors enter into deliberations, but the relative weight given to each may differ from case to case.

1. Innovative, novel research direction described in the abbreviated application. Is the research direction described by the candidate likely to lead to significant contributions? Does the candidate pose an innovative research direction that challenges existing paradigms or critical barriers to progress in the field? Does the candidate propose to develop or employ novel concepts, approaches or technologies? Does this research direction address an important barrier to achieving a world of longer, healthier lives?
2. Applicant's demonstrated commitment to cardiovascular or cerebrovascular diseases: Has the research program of the candidate focused on the impact of basic or applied science to cardiovascular or cerebrovascular disease? Does the applicant indicate a clear commitment to cardiovascular/cerebrovascular research in the proposed studies? Do the proposed studies illustrate this commitment?

3. Investigator Independence: Independence is assessed by publications and financial support as a principal investigator. Is the candidate established as an independent investigator?
4. Investigator potential: The investigator's potential for career growth should be assessed by several factors. These include the applicant's number, quality and independence of publications in peer-reviewed journals, previous professional accomplishments, and relevant experience. Do the reference letters and department head letter support the conclusion that the candidate's career is in a rapid growth phase? Is it likely that the investigator will have an impact on the field?
5. Prior and current independent national-level funding: Does the candidate's track record of funding provide evidence of independence? Does the candidate's current funding demonstrate a rapid phase of growth? Has the candidate held independent national awards, such as an NIH R01 and/or equivalent? (e.g., VA Merit Award, NSF Grant, or PI of a project on a Program Project Grant from NIH). NIH "K" series awards are not considered equivalent to R01. Note: To encourage submissions from clinical investigators, epidemiologists, and translational scientists, individuals with significant funding support from national-level peer reviewed clinical and multicenter trials and/or other clinically oriented grants will be considered (e.g., U01, UL1, and equivalent awards).
6. Award impact on career development: Impact should be assessed based on the letters from the department head and references. Is it clear that the award will propel the career development of the candidate?
7. 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 scientific environment, or subject populations, or employ useful collaborative arrangements? Is there evidence of institutional support?
8. Impact: Applications for research funding will be assessed for their potential impact on the AHA Mission, and on the applicant's ability to effectively describe the proposal and its potential outcomes to non-scientists. This potential impact assessment will be based primarily on the Summary for Non-scientists. This assessment will be factored into the Impact peer review criterion, which will account for 5-10% of the overall priority score.