

FOUNDATION FIGHTING BLINDNESS

FOUNDATION FIGHTING BLINDNESS ALAN LATIES CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Clinical/Research Fellowship Award Program in Inherited Orphan Retinal Degenerations

Application Deadline: October 15, 2016

The Foundation Fighting Blindness (FFB) is soliciting applications for **Clinical/Research Fellowship Awards (CRFA)** from clinicians with a demonstrated interest in inherited orphan retinal degenerations. The program will provide funding for post-residency clinical fellowships in inherited orphan retinal degenerations. The goal of this program is to increase the number of clinician-scientists with expertise and commitment to provide clinical care to patients with inherited orphan retinal degenerations. With this goal in mind, the program is also designed to prepare fellows for careers in academic medicine, providing critical training in an environment that fosters research to develop preventions, treatments, and cures for inherited orphan retinal degenerations.

Since the focus of the program is to promote the emerging careers of newly trained, highly qualified specialists in the retinal degenerative diseases field, the candidates will undergo a careful selection process. Applications will be reviewed for their merit based on the criteria described below by the Scientific Advisory Board of FFB. Selected applicants will be invited for an interview to primarily discuss application materials and plans for the fellowship and the future.

Eligibility

Clinicians who possess an **M.D., D.O.**, or recognized **equivalent foreign degree** by the time the fellowship starts and will be eligible for subspecialty board certification at the completion of their training program are eligible to apply for a CRFA.

- Ophthalmology residents or fellows with an interest in inherited orphan retinal degenerations could apply for both a fellowship position and a CRFA in the final year of their residency program.
- Ophthalmology residents or fellows with an interest in inherited orphan retinal degenerations could apply for a CRFA the year before applying for the fellowship position itself, allowing the applicant and institution to know about funding prior to the fellowship application.

Applications may be submitted on behalf of candidates by domestic and foreign, public and private, academic institutions, as well as hospitals and laboratories affiliated with such institutions. *In all cases, collaboration between the applicant and the fellowship mentor will be required to develop the application. If the candidate's situation is unique from what has been described here, applicants should contact Amy Laster, Ph.D., Director, Grants and Awards Programs; the FFB will work with individual applicants to address their personal situations.* Application instructions are below.

Award

Up to **three** awards are available (for this fiscal year, FY17). In general, each **one-year** award will be for a total of **\$65,000**. Budgets can be tailored to address the situations of individual recipients. Applicants funded from other sources are eligible to apply. The source and nature of this funding should be disclosed to FFB at the time of application. The CRFA may be used for costs related to fellowship training, including stipend and fringe benefits. **No indirect costs are paid.**

The Mentor's Role

As these fellowships are designed to provide advanced clinical training in the care of patients with inherited orphan retinal degenerations, identification of an appropriate mentor or mentors is essential. In addition, CRFAs must include a significant clinical or basic research component. Ideal mentors should therefore be clinicians/clinician-scientists/scientists who have an established clinical practice in inherited orphan retinal degenerations and an established research program. Scientists with an established research program can serve as a co-mentor with a practicing clinician. Mentoring for the clinical and research components of the fellowship can be provided by a single individual or a team of mentors.

Sponsoring Institution Requirements

The training environment for proposed CRFAs will also be evaluated as part of the application process. Sponsoring institutions should provide formal endorsement from the Program Medical Director of the clinical setting with which the nominee will be affiliated for the duration of the CRFA award. This endorsement should document a commitment to the proposed research training program's goals, and provide assurance that the institution intends the program to be an integral part of its research and research training endeavor. The application should include a description of support (financial or otherwise) to be provided for the program, which could include, for example, space, shared laboratory facilities and equipment, funds for curriculum development, release time for both the Program Medical Director and participating faculty. While it is not required that the fellowship program be listed with the SF Match, it is desirable that it is in compliance with the Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology Fellowship Compliance Committee (AUPO FCC).

How to Apply

Submit an **electronic** copy of the complete CRFA grant application, as either a Word document or a PDF file, text-accessible, by **e-mail** to grants@fightblindness.org. FFB will confirm receipt by email.

- Use an **Arial typeface and a font size of 11 points or larger**. (A Symbol font may be used to insert Greek letters or special characters; the font size requirement still applies.)
- Type density, including characters and spaces, must not exceed 15 characters per inch.
- Type may be no more than six lines per inch.
- Use standard letter size (8 ½" x 11") sheets of paper.
- Use at least one-half inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right) for all pages.
- All page limits specified refer to single-spaced format using the above formatting requirements.

The complete application should be assembled in the following order:

1. Application Cover Sheet

Please fill in all the required information on the provided forms and make sure all signatures are in place.

2. Letter from Chair/Head of Department(s)

A letter from the head/chair of the department(s) in which the applicant is appointed should confirm the department's willingness to support the candidate's research efforts and guarantee a significant amount of protected time for research required to fulfill the terms of the award.

3. Other Sources of Funding

A list of all current and pending funding sources, including the specific aims of each grant or award and the degree of overlap with the applicant's proposal must be included.

Recipients of CRFAs are also eligible to apply for FFB-sponsored Individual Investigator Awards and may act as Principle Investigators of new or existing modules of FFB Center Grants.

4. Mentor's Letter of Support

Each Mentor should evaluate the applicant's qualifications for the proposed research project and assess their potential for successful independent research. Each mentor must guarantee that the awardee is under no obligation to any industrial ties or obligations the mentor may have.

5. Candidate's Biographical Sketch

This should include a biographical sketch and when appropriate, a bibliography of recent publications (not to exceed **two pages**). A list of pending and current funding should also be included.

6. Mentor's Biographical Sketch

This should include a biographical sketch and a bibliography of recent publications (not to exceed **two pages**). A list of pending and current funding must also be included.

7. Research Proposals

This should include the following three components:

A. Applicant's career goals (1-2 paragraphs): A brief statement from the candidate fellow of their long-term career goals and how this training will contribute to these objectives.

B. Abstract of proposed training program and how it will help the applicant achieve their career goals (1 page max): The abstract should: state the applicant's research question(s) to be investigated; provide a brief lay description of all specific aims, including experimental approach(es); list all diseases/patient populations to be studied; and state the expected accomplishments and outcomes of each specific aim. The applicant must also state the significance of the proposed project in terms of accelerating the advancement of therapeutic and preventive approaches into the clinic, and how the proposed research directly supports the mission of the FFB.

C. Detailed Project Description (6 pages max): The level of detail in a NIH investigator-initiated research project grant application is not required by the FFB. However, applicants must include sufficient information so that reviewers can understand the proposed experiment, its soundness, feasibility and importance for advancing the study of inherited orphan retinal degenerative diseases.

The following format is suggested for the Detailed Project Description:

1. Specific Aims – 1 page
2. Research Strategy – 5 pages.
 - a. Significance
 - b. Approach (including Preliminary Studies): For each specific aim, describe the experimental design, strategies and methods to be used in the conduct of the research. Include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted as well as any resource sharing plans as appropriate. Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims. If the project is in the early stages of development, describe any strategy to establish feasibility, and address the management of any high risk aspects of the proposed work. Point out any procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to personnel and precautions to be exercised. Include any courses that you plan to take to support the research training experience.

D. Budget (use FFB Budget Form): The CRFA may be used for costs related to fellowship training, including stipend and fringe benefits. **No indirect costs are paid.**

Letters of Reference

Three letters of recommendation, from qualified individuals best able to assess the applicant and his/her potential for developing a career as a clinician-scientist, should be signed and sent directly to FFB via regular mail (a PDF copy sent by email is acceptable), separate from the candidate's application package. These should include letters from qualified sources that can assess the applicant's professional experiences in: medical school, residency program, and fellowship training period(s). The quality and depth of these letters will be pivotal in deciding the candidate's suitability.