



# 2025 Established Investigator Award

## Key Dates

RFP posted:	June 25, 2024
ProposalCentral open:	July 29, 2024
Letter of Intent deadline:	Wed., Oct. 2, 2024
Proposal Deadline (invitees only):	Jan. 8, 2025
Award notification:	March 2025
Award start:	April 1, 2025

## Purpose

- To support established investigators at the associate professor level, 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

Each Established Investigator Award applicant is required to submit a pre-proposal and other items listed below via ProposalCentral on or before **Wednesday, October 2, 2024, at 3 p.m. CT.**

### **Applicants must be AHA Professional Members.**

AHA will contact applicants with the highest-rated pre-proposals and invite them to submit a full application.

Submit the following documents:

1. A **pre-proposal** (2-page limit) that briefly describes the investigator's competitiveness in terms of:
  - Demonstrated commitment to the study of cardiovascular and/or cerebrovascular disease and scientific innovation.
  - Independence as assessed by publications, research funding, and impact of scientific work as a principal investigator.
  - How the award will enhance the investigator's rapid career growth phase.
2. A list of the applicant'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)
3. A document that details the PI's **last five years of research funding** (1-page limit)
4. 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.,  $\beta$ ,  $\pi$ , 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

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:** \$110,000 per year, including 10 percent indirect costs (Indirect costs are not to exceed \$10,000 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. AHA does **not** require use of the NIH salary cap.

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:** \$550,000

## Restrictions

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

## Peer Review Criteria

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

*The American Heart Association 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 of 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).*

**The AHA reserves the right to an initial triage, whereby a minimum of half of the submissions may be triaged.**

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.