Alzheimer's Association Research Fellowship to Promote Diversity (AARF-D) Program

*Competition objectives:* The Alzheimer’s Association Research Fellowship Award to Promote Diversity Program is up to three years (minimum 2 years) intended to support exceptional scientist from underrepresented groups working in Alzheimer’s or related dementias research and who are engaged in their post-graduate work (i.e. postdoctoral fellows) and before they have their first independent faculty positions (i.e. Assistant Professor). The objective of this award is to increase the number of highly trained investigators from diverse backgrounds whose basic, clinical and social/behavioral research interests are grounded in the advanced methods and experimental approaches needed to solve problems related to Alzheimer’s and related dementias in general and in health disparities populations. The Alzheimer’s Association recognizes the need to increase the number of scientist from underrepresented groups participating in biomedical and behavioral research. The Association anticipates that by providing these research opportunities, the number of scientist from underrepresented groups entering and remaining in biomedical research careers in Alzheimer’s disease will increase.

The Alzheimer’s Association feels strongly that the mentoring and involvement of researchers from diverse backgrounds and perspectives is essential to engaging cutting edge ideas and thinking in addressing scientific gaps for Alzheimer’s and related dementias.

*Funding and award period:* Each Alzheimer’s Association Research Fellowship to Promote Diversity award is limited to $175,000. A total of $155,000 will be awarded for costs related to the proposed research for up to three years (minimum 2 years) for direct and indirect costs. Requests in any given year may not exceed $60,000 (direct and indirect costs). Indirect costs are capped at 10 percent (rent for laboratory/office space is expected to be covered by indirect costs paid to the institution). The Principal Investigator must commit to a 50 percent effort toward the proposed project each funding year.

The remaining funds, $10,000 to the applicant and $10,000 to the primary mentor, will be awarded upon successful completion of the three year (minimum 2 years) program. These additional funds are to be applied to sustaining ongoing research in the Alzheimer's field and will be awarded through the applicant's and mentor's institutions. Successful completion of the program includes, but is not limited to, reaching all of the demonstrable benchmarks listed. **Please note:** A total of $5,000 over a three year period not to exceed $2,500 per year (if you request the full $2,500 for 2 years and are requesting a 3 year award you will not be able to request travel funds for one of those years) must be allocated to support registration and travel to the annual Alzheimer’s Association International Conference (AAIC), a condition of the award.

**Application:** The mentor should be experienced in conducting Alzheimer's and related dementia research and in mentoring junior investigators. The application must include a
2-3 page statement from the selected mentor that includes information on his/her research qualifications and experience as a research supervisor, commitment to the applicant. This statement will be a significant part of the application review. The application must also include information to describe the mentor's research support relevant to the applicant's research plan and the nature and extent of supervision and training that he/she will provide during the period of the award. The primary mentor must agree to provide annual evaluations of the applicant's progress for the duration of the award, as required for the yearly progress report. Only one primary mentor can be included. Additional team members who might function as mentors can be listed as key personnel.

The full grant application for the AARF, AARF-D, AACF and AACF-D programs consists of the following:

1. **Statement of Mentorship - 2-3 pages**
   Written by mentor to outline plan for the individual’s training.
   - the mentor should be experienced in conducting Alzheimer’s and related dementia research and in mentoring junior investigators.
   - the mentor should include information on his/her research qualifications and experience as a research supervisor, commitment to the applicant (this statement will be a significant part of the application review).

2. **Statement of Commitment – 2 pages**
   Written by applicant to highlight their interest in Alzheimer’s and related dementia research)
   - information to describe the mentor’s research support relevant to the applicant’s research plan and the nature and extent of supervision and training that he/she will provide during the period of the award.
   - the primary mentor must agree to provide annual evaluations of the applicant’s progress for the duration of the award, as required for the yearly progress report.

3. **Area of Research – 3 pages**
   Written by mentor and applicant; Summary of the specific area of research and project that applicant is pursuing.
   - The experimental design and methods, technical procedures, instruments, characteristics of human subjects and animal populations, recruitment and retention plans, model systems, data management, quality control and analytic procedures are to be discussed as appropriate to the proposed investigation. Preliminary data/results that support the hypotheses or research strategies chosen should be discussed in this section.
   - A brief justification of the experimental design selected should be included, in addition to the alternative strategies considered during the development of the project plans. Brief justifications or arguments supporting the choices of instruments, methods or models chosen will be helpful to reviewers. Outline the plans for data management, quality control and analysis.
- Mention alternative strategies where appropriate. If relevant to the project and nature of the research work, discuss plans for sharing data, samples or resources with other investigators. Describe any significant collaborations that are beyond the budget of this proposal and have not been previously described. All references, figures and photographs must be included in the FIVE pages allowed for this section. Use the reference style that is most common in the major journal(s) discipline, specialty or sub-specialty.

4. Available Resources & Budget Justification - 2 pages
Template and instructions located under the WorkPlan and Other Attachments link. A total of $5,000 over a two-three year period not to exceed $2,500 per year (if you request the full $2,500 for 2 years and are requesting a 3 year award you will not be able to request travel funds for one of those years) must be allocated to support registration and travel to the annual Alzheimer’s Association International Conference (AAIC), a condition of the award.

5. Biosketch – 4 pages each
A biosketch should be included for both the applicant and mentor.

6. Letters of Reference
Limited to 3 letters and no more than 3 pages each. A letter of reference from the mentor is not necessary as they are submitting a statement of mentorship.

Mentoring selections may include early-career researchers and/or mid-career scientists who choose to shift into Alzheimer’s and related dementia research. The applicant and proposed mentor must specify a mechanism for ensuring effective mentoring. The application should contain a plan for and an evaluation strategy of the mentoring process for enhancing diversity in the professional research workforce. Specific benchmarks are outlined below and considered by the Alzheimer’s Association as critical for the development of early-career investigators. A successful mentorship plan should include some of these benchmarks but should not be limited to these alone.

REQUIRED benchmarks:
● Attendance at an Association-sponsored event for new investigators at the Alzheimer’s Association’s International Conference (AAIC)
● Acceptance of an abstract at AAIC
● Mandatory documentation of hours spent on face-to-face mentoring
● Citation of specific exercises of mentorship such as supervision of manuscript writing and submission or grant writing and submission
● Specific instances of the facilitation of networking, introductions to colleagues and/or inclusion in discussions at scientific meetings
● Submission of funding proposal(s) to other funding agencies, including Alzheimer’s Association, National Institutes of Health or National Science Foundation, Medical Research Council (UK), Canadian Institutes of Health Research, etc.

SUGGESTED benchmark (not required)

Submission of an application to the National Institute on Aging’s Summer Institute

**Eligibility:** Please note, individuals applying to the program will be accepted from postdoctoral fellows with full time positions at their respective institution. **Individuals who have a position of an Assistant Professorship or above are not eligible.** For individuals who are at non-academic institutions, please contact the Alzheimer's Association at grantsapp@alz.org to verify your eligibility.

**Specific for the AARF-D program,** eligible applicants are faculty members who have been determined to be scientist from underrepresented groups in biomedical and behavioral research on a national or institutional basis. The Alzheimer's Association will require documentation to support the faculty member's underrepresented status at their institution. Applicants in the United States will be subject to the definitions as stated by the National Institutes of Health:

1. Individuals from racial and ethnic groups that have been shown by the National Science Foundation to be underrepresented in health-related sciences on a national basis. The following racial and ethnic groups have been shown to be underrepresented in biomedical research: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders. In addition, it is recognized that underrepresentation can vary from setting to setting; individuals from racial or ethnic groups that can be convincingly demonstrated to be underrepresented by the grantee institution should be encouraged to participate in this program.

2. Individuals with disabilities, who are defined as those with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

3. Individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds who are defined as:
   - Individuals who come from a family with an annual income below established low-income thresholds. These thresholds are based on family size; published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census; adjusted annually for changes in the Consumer Price Index; and adjusted by the Secretary for use in all health professions programs. The Secretary periodically publishes these income levels at HHS - Poverty Guidelines, Research, and Measurement. For individuals from low income backgrounds, the institution must be able to demonstrate that such participants have qualified for Federal disadvantaged assistance or they have received any of the following student loans: Health Professions Student Loans (HPSL), Loans for Disadvantaged Student Program, or they have received scholarships from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the Scholarship for Individuals with Exceptional Financial Need.
   - Individuals who come from a social, cultural, or educational
environment such as that found in certain rural or inner-city environments that have demonstrably and recently directly inhibited the individual from obtaining the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to develop and participate in a research career.

Applicants must submit a Letter of Assurance letter printed on the hiring institution letterhead with the current date, signed by an authorized institutional official (i.e. Grants and Contracts officer) that states you have been determined by your institution to be underrepresented in the above areas at the time of Letter of Intent (LOI) for verification. The Alzheimer’s Association reserves the right to require additional documentation to help confirm the applicant’s eligibility. **Non-US Applicants in addition to the letter must provide official documentation from their institutional materials, such as, website, manual or other legal documentation that indicates their eligibility for this program.**

**Ineligibility:** Although it is unlikely that individuals will have current Alzheimer’s Association awards, applications from currently funded investigators who are delinquent in submitting required reports and other deliverables on active grants. Investigators that have previous Alzheimer’s Association awards closed as ‘Incomplete’ are not eligible to apply without exception. **This policy will be strictly adhered to with no exceptions.**

**Deadlines and award dates:** Letters of Intent must be received by 5:00 PM EASTERN STANDARD TIME, September 26, 2016. Letters of Intent will not be accepted after this date. No exceptions will be made.

Applications must be received by 5:00 PM EASTERN STANDARD TIME, November 11, 2016.

Scientific and technical review will be conducted from November through December 2016. The second-level review by the Medical and Scientific Advisory Council will be conducted during January 2017. Funding will be awarded by January 30, 2017.

**Applications will be reviewed with special attention to:**
- Quality and nature of the training to be provided and the institutional, departmental, and mentor-specific training environment, this includes available resources to support the applicant in their training (30 percent)
- Quality and emphasis of applicant and originality of the research plan (40 percent)
- Significance of the question being studied, quality of the work plan and the impact-risk of the proposal (30 percent)

**Mechanism of award, reporting requirements and allowable costs:** The mechanism of the award is an individual research grant; this award is made to the individual and managed by their institution. Significant emphasis will be on the mentor and letters of reference provided in the application. The mentor is expected to contribute a statement regarding commitment to the applicant. The maximum allowable
duration is three years (minimum 2 years). Annual scientific progress and financial reports are required from both the applicant and the mentor throughout the award period. **Continuation of the grant over the awarded duration is contingent upon the timely receipt of scientific progress and financial reports as well as a mentor’s report outlining progress toward meeting required benchmarks.**

**Budget:** A “budget summary” for the proposed research project is required and must be submitted with the application and within the allowable two-page limit. However, if the application is to be awarded, a more detailed budget will be required and must be approved before the disbursement of funds. **Your budget must not exceed the maximum amount of the award, $155,000 ($150K for direct research and $5K for travel) and may not exceed $60,000 (direct and indirect costs) in a given year.** A total of $5,000 over a three year period not to exceed $2,500 per year (if you request the full $2,500 for 2 years and are requesting a 3 year award you will not be able to request travel funds for one of those years) must be allocated to support registration and travel to the annual Alzheimer’s Association International Conference (AAIC), a condition of the award. Indirect costs are capped at no more than ten percent (10%). The remaining funds, $10,000 to the applicant and $10,000 to the primary mentor, will be awarded upon successful completion of the three year (minimum 2 years) program and should not be included in your budget.

**Allowable costs under this award:**
It is required that most of the funds awarded under this program be used for direct research support.

- Purchase and care of laboratory animals
- Small pieces of laboratory equipment and laboratory supplies (purchases over $10,000 require prior approval)
- Computer equipment if used strictly for data collection (require prior approval)
- Travel (up to $5,000 max over 2-3yr award to travel to the annual Alzheimer’s Association International Conference (AAIC), a condition of the award)
- Salary for the principal investigator, scientific (including post-doctoral fellows) and technical staff (including laboratory technicians and administrative support related directly to the funded project)

**Direct Costs not allowed under this award include:**
- Tuition
- Computer hardware or software for investigators
- Rent for laboratory/office space (should be included in the indirect costs)
- Construction or renovation costs
- Facilities fee

**For more information:** Contact grantsapp@alz.org or call 1.312.335.5747 or 1.312.335.5862.