

Alzheimer's Association World Wide FINGERS Network Funding Program (ALZ WW-FNFP)

Program Objective:

The World Wide FINGERS (WW-FINGERS) Network launched in 2017 as the first global network of multidomain lifestyle intervention trials for dementia risk reduction and ultimately prevention. Studies that participate in the WW-FINGERS network aim to apply, test and optimize the FINGER-like model to reduce risk across the spectrum of cognitive decline in different geographical, cultural and economic settings in individuals at greater risk as they age. In order to succeed in providing broad accessibility to and representation of the global community, there is a significant need for seed funding and opportunities to advance a WW-FINGERS network study. The WW-FINGERS network is a collaboration led by the FINGER Brain Health Institute and the Alzheimer's Association. To support the expansion and opportunity for advancing this research, the Alzheimer's Association is launching a pilot funding program for multimodal behavioral intervention studies that incorporate at least 3 domains. The Alzheimer's Association WW-FINGERS network funding program (ALZ WW-FNFP) will provide initial / startup funding and/or opportunities for ongoing studies to initiate studies that expand multimodal interventions and/or add/leverage unique opportunities that enhance the study. This will be a competitive funding program and all submissions will be reviewed.

Program Overview:

The WW-FINGERS Network includes over 40 countries to date with varying access to the infrastructure and funds needed to run a trial that evaluates a multi-domain intervention. The ALZ WW-FNFP is open to international multi-domain lifestyle intervention proposals that are in need of financial support (up to USD\$500,000 total for up to 3 years). The Alzheimer's Association recognizes the needs of each study may be varied and the costs to conduct the study may also be varied; we anticipate most requests to be in the USD\$200,000-\$400,000/ year range. The support needed for each study will differ by the infrastructure and resources at each site, and is open to requests that range from start-up costs for infrastructure development, for pilot studies, for supplemental support for ongoing and/or newly established studies or for work that aims to add-on new measures or assessments (i.e. biomarkers) measures.

Funding and award period:

The Alzheimer's Association has invested over USD \$12,000,000 to fund multidomain lifestyle intervention trials internationally and the ALZ WW-FNFP will continue to grow this commitment.

As the scope and duration of funding will differ with each individual site, it is anticipated that funding will range from USD\$200,000 up to a maximum grant amount of USD\$500,000. Project duration is up to 3 years. Each study is limited to one unique award through this program's first iteration; with potential for follow-on funding.

Awarded projects will be evaluated on progress toward specific milestones; continued disbursement of funds is dependent on demonstrated progress toward key milestones.

Although broadly speaking each study site will have unique needs and considerations, there are some common core aspects that should be incorporated into the study budget. This includes the salaries of key personnel that will assist in moving the overall initiative forward; the costs associated with administrative set up, necessary supplies and the initiation of ethical approvals.

Allowable costs under this award include:

- Small pieces of laboratory equipment and laboratory supplies (purchases over \$10,000 require prior approval, even if included in the project proposal budget).
- Computer software if used strictly for data collection and/or analysis.
- Salary for the principal investigator, scientific (including postdoctoral fellows) and technical staff (including modest administrative support).
- Research supplies needed for the proposed studies.
- Support for travel to scientific and professional meetings, not to exceed \$2,500 in any given year.
- Open access publications fees are appropriate and reasonable for the project budget.

Not allowable as direct costs under this award include:

- Computer hardware or standard software (e.g. Microsoft Office, mouse monitor, computer parts)
- Laboratory equipment such as freezers, ultracentrifuges, RT-PCR, Microscopy/imaging equipment
- Service contract fees of equipment
- Construction or renovation costs
- Tuition
- Rent for laboratory/office space
- Expenses such as Data Network Recharges and Computing and communication device support services
- General liability insurances, such as GAEL
- Wire and currency exchange fees
- Salary and/or compensation for Alzheimer's Association Staff or current members of the Alzheimer's Association Medical and Scientific Advisory Group (MSAG) and the International Research Grant Program (IRGP) Council. A complete list of MSAG and IRGP Council members can be found on our website alz.org/grants.
- Institutional overheads associated with staff time
- We reserve the right to decline any charge that is an institutional feed and/or service charge.

No indirect costs are allowed. Expenses must be reported in US Dollars.

Eligibility:

The ALZ WW-FNFP is open to international (non-U.S.) researchers conducting multi-domain lifestyle intervention studies. Interested applicants should contact Emily Meyers at easmeyers@alz.org to arrange initial discussions with the Alzheimer's Association team. For a study to be eligible, it must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Trial is active (in recruiting participants, implementing intervention and/or ongoing follow up); Data collection is harmonized with the WW-FINGERS Network; The trial is funded; OR
- Research teams are actively working to advance trial planning, protocol development or explore proof of concept within the local setting; trial is funded.
- Studies that are actively working to advance a WW-FINGERS trial within their country/population; trial is not funded

The Principal Investigator of the project must be a full-time faculty member or full time paid employee of the organization submitting the proposal.

Note: Investigators that have received Alzheimer's Association funding for a related or other study and are currently delinquent in submitting required reports or have awards closed as "Incomplete" are not eligible to apply. For questions about eligibility, please contact the Alzheimer's Association at grantsapp@alz.org and note that you are seeking clarification regarding the WW-FNFP program eligibility.

Submission Process:

Pre-Submission Inquiries will be accepted at any time. Please use the template provided and include the following:

- Describe the status of the project and what is being requested
- Overview of the geographical location of the study (cultural, economic, sites, etc.), expertise of the study team, information on the population to be engaged and community that will be involved, and a high level description of the proposed intervention.
- Describe future plans or long-term goals of the initiative (i.e. are there opportunities for federal funding, for partnership, other ways for sustainability, etc).
- Level of study as defined by the above criteria and Kivipelto et al (2020) *Alzheimer's & Dementia*.

Please send the pre-submission form to grantsapp@alz.org.

Pre-submission Inquiries will be welcome at any time; following pre-submission inquiries, applications will be invited for those that meet the program objectives. Proposed deadlines will be discussed with teams invited to submit full applications.

Overview of Submission Process

Summary:

Pre-submission inquiries are welcome at any time and will be reviewed by the Alzheimer's Association with appropriate experts to evaluate the eligibility, feasibility, and potential impact of a proposal. Successful pre-submission inquiries will be invited to submit a full application, with deadlines discussed with applicant PI. Full applications will be reviewed by an expert group and panel for consideration to make recommendations to the Alzheimer's Association

If a submission is not accepted, the application is allowed one resubmission.

Pre-Submission Inquiries:

Pre-submission inquiries are welcome at any time via the Pre-Submission Inquiry Form, which collects information on

- The applicant team (PI, team, expertise)
- The proposed study (name; country; status of study; brief descriptions of the work plan, overview of population)
- Overview of budget
- Other relevant information.

Full Application:

For those invited to submit a full application, additional materials will be required. Templates, instructions and application deadlines will be provided following approval of the pre-submission inquiry.

Review Criteria:

Applications will be reviewed by the Alzheimer's Association and a select panel of experts with special attention to:

- **Significance and rationale of the population/question being studied**
 - Is this population/question unique to ongoing WW-FINGERS studies?
 - Does the proposed study harmonize data with other WW-FINGER studies?
- **Quality of the proposed trial**

Examples of questions and issues, which the reviewer might consider include, but are not limited to:

 - How well does the proposed study align to the WW-FINGERS studies?
 - Is the overall plan of work appropriately paced in relationship to the requested budget and stated duration of the project?
 - Is the design of the study well considered?
 - Are the plans for data analysis appropriate?
 - Has the applicant demonstrated awareness of the limitations of the methods of data acquisition and analysis?
- **Quality and adequacy of available resources and budget**

Examples of questions and issues, which the reviewer might consider include, but are not limited to:

 - Will the available institutional resources and facilities support the completion of the project?
 - Is there a supportive research milieu of experienced investigators and technical expertise? Does the applicant have the necessary equipment, instruments, populations, animals, samples, reagents, assays, analytical methods or other technical supports available for the conduct of this project?
 - What additional resources are required to complete this project satisfactorily?
 - Does the applicant present a reasonable strategy to acquire the necessary resources?

- Is the budget well justified and are the requested funds appropriate?
- **Study team expertise**
 - Does the applicant and if appropriate his/her co-workers have the required experience and scientific or technical training to carry out this research project?
 - Does the applicant have experience, which suggests that he/she can successfully lead a research team? If not, are there adequate backup scientific and management personnel?
 - Is there a milieu of senior investigators and technical expertise that can help foster this research effort?
 - Does this proposed project introduce or recruit any new investigators to this line of research?

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. Your budget must not exceed USD \$500,000.00 (**direct costs only. Indirect costs are not allowed**) across all years. The maximum duration is up to 3 years.

Each project aim/work package should have a clearly defined budget associated, as projects may receive only partial funding.

Deadlines and Award Timeline

All applicants must first complete the Pre-Submission Inquiry. If submissions are approved, the Applicant will receive information to submit a full application through Proposal Central.

Pre-Submission Inquiry Surveys completed by **July 1, 2025** will be considered for this round of invited proposals. The timeline is outlined below:

- The Pre-Submission Inquiry Survey can be completed at any time.
- Submission of full applications will open: June 30, 2025 (ProposalCentral.com)
- Application Deadline: July 31, 2025
- Application Review: August – December 2025
- Award Notifications by January 15, 2026

For those invited to submit a full application, the full application must be received by 5:00 PM EST, July 31, 2025. Applications will not be accepted after this date. No exceptions will be made. No hard copies or emails will be accepted.

Award announcements will be made by January 15, 2024. For more information contact grantsapp@alz.org

It is imperative that you proofread your application before submission; you will not be allowed to make any changes to the application after the deadline or once applications are under review.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure and verify that:

- The application is submitted by the receipt date/time deadline. Once submitted, you will receive a confirmation email from proposalcentral.com that your application was successfully submitted. If you do not receive a confirmation, click the Proposals tab and under the “Status” column, make sure it says Submitted and not In Progress, which indicates you have not yet submitted your application.
- The application is complete and accurate before submission. Only a single copy of an application will be accepted. We do not require signatures at the time of submission. The signature page provided is for use should your institution/organization require signatures; we do not override any institutional policies and/or procedures. Please do not submit the signature page with your application.
- Revisions, additional materials, and/or reference, manuscripts, appendices, etc., are not allowed and, if attached, will be removed from your application.

Multiple and overlapping submissions:

Multiple submissions from one applicant is not permitted. This includes multiple submissions from the same group and/or collaborators. Overlapping submission with an existing Alzheimer’s Association award is not allowed. Investigators who currently have an active Association grant may apply for this program if the projects are distinctly different; overlapping funding is not allowed.

Additional information:

Ethical/regulatory approvals and reporting requirements

If awarded for funding, the Alzheimer’s Association requires that any necessary ethical and/or regulatory approvals are kept current, and may require specific reporting throughout the lifetime of the award. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Human participants/ volunteers ethical assurances

Human participants/ volunteers ethical assurances are not required at the time of application. Investigators have up to 90 days after receipt of their award notification to submit these documents. However, the Alzheimer’s Association encourages investigators to initiate their certification applications on a schedule that recognizes that approvals at many institutions can take more than 90 days. We will accept only certifications that apply specifically to the funded project and must include the name of the awardee. An award letter will not be issued unless the appropriate certifications are in place and include the name of the awardee within the 90 days from award notification. The same applies for animal ethical approvals, if applicable.

Semi-Annual scientific and financial reports

Interim Scientific and Financial Reports must be submitted semi-annually at the end of each reporting period as long as the grant remains active. Final Scientific and Financial Reports must be filed within 90 days of the grant’s end date. All reports must be submitted electronically via proposalcentral.com. The Financial Report must be approved and signed by someone with financial authority in the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at the recipient’s institution.

Recruitment efforts for clinical studies

Projects involving human participants must address the appropriate inclusion or exclusion of individuals in the proposed research project and describe recruitment efforts to represent the community in which the study is planned or being conducted. Prior to distribution of funding, the researcher must provide a description of their recruitment plan and efforts to ensure representation of their community.

Financial responsibility

Funding is awarded to the institution and/or organization, not to the individual principal investigator. The principal investigator or a first-degree relative cannot be listed as the signing official or financial officer, or have checks sent to their attention if awarded.

Review Process Overview

All proposals are subject to a multi-stage peer-review process carried out through an online system. In the first stage, applications are reviewed and rated by a minimum of three peer scientists with expertise in the proposed area of research. Reviewer conflicts of interest include (but are not limited to):

1. The reviewer trained, trained with or was trained by the Applicant.
2. The reviewer published with the Applicant in the last four (4) years. This excludes workshops or large consortia (e.g., ADNI, IGAP).
3. The reviewer has been a co-investigator on a grant application or award with the Applicant in the last four (4) years.
4. The reviewer has a conceptual difference of opinion with the Applicant that will prevent a fair review.
5. The reviewer will receive financial benefit from the Applicant receiving an award.

The second stage includes further review and discussion of the proposal, which will be carried out by an invited external reviewers who are experts in the field to ensure fairness and equity in the initial review procedures and to make funding recommendations to the Association. Final recommendations from the review panel are shared with the Medical and Scientific Advisory Group (MSAG) and with the Alzheimer's Association for final approval in a coordinated manner. This multi-stage process is central to our award decisions and is designed to ensure both scientific rigor and fairness in the review of all submitted applications.

Appeals of scientific peer review

To maintain a fair and rigorous review system, the Alzheimer's Association has a process for appeal of funding decisions. Appeals will not be considered for the letter of intent stage. Regarding applications, an appeal is intended to address extraordinary circumstances. Appropriate reasons for initiating an appeal might include:

- Evidence that a reviewer has an undeclared conflict of interest.
- An egregious error or misunderstanding in the review process.
- Active malfeasance or demonstrable lack of due diligence.



The appeal process is not intended to provide a mechanism for routine protest of failure to receive a grant.

If an applicant believes an extraordinary circumstance has contributed to failure to receive funding, the principal investigator may send a two-page, double-spaced formal letter of appeal (Word document) to grantsappeals@alz.org. Any supporting documents included must be submitted as a PDF. **Appeals must be submitted within 2 weeks from the date your application outcome notification is sent.** Notification of action on the appeal will be made via email, usually within 90 days of the appeal deadline.

Nondiscrimination and harassment statement

Alzheimer's Association is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and discrimination. Alzheimer's Association strictly prohibits harassment and discrimination based on race; creed; color; religion; sex; sexual orientation; national origin; ancestry; age; Veteran status; citizenship status; marital status; physical or mental disabilities; pregnancy, gender identity or expression (including transgender status); genetic information; and any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law.