

Edward N. & Della L. Thome Memorial Foundation Awards Program in Age-Related Macular Degeneration Research

Invited Full Proposal Guidelines

2025 Grant Cycle

<p>Submission Deadline Tuesday, December 17, 2024 12:00 PM, Eastern Time</p>	<p style="color: #000080;">Terms of the Award Application Instructions</p>
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Award Summary	
Award Amount and Duration:	\$500,000 (\$250,000 per year) for 2 years; awards do not cover indirect costs.
Award Dates:	April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2027
Eligibility:	Independent investigators working in non-profit academic, medical or research institutions within the United States.
Research Focus:	<p>Research along the preclinical research spectrum that aims to move basic science insights toward solutions, techniques, and tools that can be transferred to clinical practice in the near term. Research may be carried out using cell or animal models of disease, samples of human or animal tissues, or computer-assisted simulations of drug, device or diagnostic interactions within living systems.</p> <p>Exclusions: Basic research and clinical trials</p>

The Thome Foundation Awards Program in Age-Related Macular Degeneration Research is a two-step proposal process. After the Initial Proposal phase, selected applicants are invited to submit a Full Proposal.

The Full Proposal process requires an online submission. The Full Proposal consists of an Online Application, Application Cover Sheet (with signatures), Research Project Summary and Performance Sites, Non-Technical Overview and Summary, Promotion of Positive Research Culture, Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest, ten-page Research Proposal, Project Milestones and Research Plan Table, Budget and Justification Forms, Applicant Biosketch, Co-Investigator Biosketch(es) (if applicable), Department or Division Head Letter, and Letter(s) of Collaboration (if applicable).

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Notification to Applicants

Applicants will be notified of the final funding decisions in March 2025.

Award Period

April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2027

Size of the Award

Up to five \$500,000 two-year grants (\$250,000 per year) will be made to independent investigators working in nonprofit, academic, medical or research institutions within the United States. Awards do not cover indirect costs.

Program Overview and Statement of Purpose

The Edward N. & Della L. Thome Memorial Foundation was created in 2002 to advance the health of older adults through the support of direct service projects and medical research on diseases and disorders affecting older adults. In keeping with the Foundation’s mission, the goal of the Awards Program is to support translational research that will lead to improved therapies for individuals suffering from age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

In 2022, the Thome Memorial Foundation, Bank of America, N.A. granted Health Resources in Action (HRiA) funding to oversee the continuation of its programs in AMD and Alzheimer’s Disease Research. HRiA works with a Scientific Review Committee to select the proposals that best align with the mission of the Foundation and the goals of the program. HRiA is a non-profit organization in Boston that advances public health and medical research.

Research Focus

Successful research proposals should fall along the preclinical research spectrum such that they can be “carried out using cell or animal models of disease; samples of human or animal tissues; or computer-assisted simulations of drug, device or diagnostic interactions within living systems”.¹ These projects are intended to move basic science insights towards solutions, techniques, and tools that can be transferred to clinical practice in the near term. Funding areas include, but are not limited to:

- 1) The discovery and testing of small molecule, genetic, and other therapies directed at promising targets associated with AMD
- 2) Local drug delivery systems and neuroprotective strategies
- 3) New imaging modalities or computational studies that improve treatment strategies and outcomes

Basic research, research that is not directly linked to a clinically relevant biomarker or clinical endpoint, or research studies that align with the NIH definition of a clinical trial² are outside the scope of this Program.

¹ Preclinical Research Definition: <https://ncats.nih.gov/translation/spectrum>

² <https://grants.nih.gov/policy/clinical-trials/definition.htm>



Eligibility Criteria

1. Applicants must submit an Initial Proposal and be invited to submit a Full Proposal.
2. The administrative lead applicant must hold a faculty appointment at a non-profit academic, medical, or research institution in the United States.
3. PIs must be independent investigators with demonstrated institutional support and specialized space and facilities needed to conduct the proposed research.
4. Applicants and key personnel may not have funding for a similar project.
5. Individuals who are current Thome Foundation Awards Program in Age-Related Macular Degeneration Research awardees at the time of Initial Proposal deadline are not eligible to apply for the 2025 grant cycle.
6. Each PI may only submit one application.
7. Institutional nomination is not required.
8. United States citizenship is not required; visa documentation is not required.

Eligibility is not limited to those investigators currently working in age-related macular degeneration research; scientists who have conducted research exploring the biologic causes of related disorders and/or similar translational research programs are encouraged to apply.

Key Personnel, Definitions

- Principal Investigator (PI): One principal investigator (Applicant) must be identified as the lead or administrative PI of the award who will be responsible for all grant reporting and fiscal management. The lead or administrative PI will be the main contact for budget and report management.
- Collaborators: Collaborators may share Award funding.

Concurrent, Pending, and Post-Award Funding

Please note that if a Thome Memorial Foundation award is made, neither the Institution nor the awardee may accept funding that results in an overlap of funding for the Thome Memorial Foundation project. If the work proposed in the Thome Memorial Foundation proposal is funded by another source before the Thome awards are announced, the applicant must notify HRiA at ThomeAwards@hria.org and withdraw the application immediately.

The sponsoring institution must accept responsibility for the scientific, administrative, and financial management of the overall project including any subcontracts involved in the project.

Diverse and Inclusive Research

To promote and enable diversity in biomedical research, the Thome Memorial Foundation is committed to awarding researchers of all backgrounds, including racial/ethnic groups that are underrepresented in science. The National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health have established that individuals from the following groups are underrepresented in science: Blacks or African Americans, Hispanics or Latinos, American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders. Applicants that identify as a member of these groups are encouraged to apply.

The Thome Memorial Foundation seeks to support scientific leaders who are dedicated to creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive research environment and promote positive research culture. Such efforts will not only help to advance scientific discovery through diversity of thought but also maximize the impact of biomedical research funding. Applicants must speak to their commitment to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, and positive research culture within the application.



Please see the University of California, Irvine site for helpful guidance:

<https://ap.uci.edu/faculty/guidance/ieactivities/>.

Consistent with current NIH policies³, funded clinical research must include women and minority groups as well as a rationale that speaks to composition of the study population. Any exclusions within the study population need to be described and scientifically justified. Race is a social construct and should not be used as a proxy for biology or genetics.

Review Criteria

The Scientific Review Committee will use the following criteria to evaluate full proposals:

Significance, Innovation, and Impact

- The proposed research seeks to improve therapies and therapeutic strategies for individuals suffering from AMD
- The proposed research seeks to move insights from basic sciences toward clinical treatment/practice in the near term
- The proposed research is creative and addresses a critical scientific or therapeutic barrier/roadblock that will open a new avenue for AMD therapeutic strategies

Research Project

- The proposed work is based on sound precedents and a clear rationale
- The objectives of are technically feasible
- The research methodology is realistic and sufficiently powered
- The proposed work suggests next steps upon the finding of positive, negative, or null results
- The timeline is comprehensive, activities described are related to the project completion and enhance the effectiveness of the scope of work. Institutional approvals are indicated where appropriate and will be received prior to the funding start date. The timeline indicates clear roles for key personnel
- The budget is realistic and appropriate

Applicant & Co-Investigators

- The Applicant's background and experience is well-suited for completion of the proposed work
- Co-Investigator roles are well-defined and aligned with the background and skills necessary for the successful completion of the research
- The Applicant's commitment and contributions to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment and promoting a positive research culture
- The Applicant's professional and personal experiences to help build a diverse STEM workforce

Proposal Writing Tips

Applicants should take serious consideration of the comments provided from the Initial Proposal review. Applicants are strongly encouraged to prioritize good grantsmanship in writing their applications. *The writing of the proposal will not be directly assessed*; however, it is recognized that clarity of the writing enhances the ability of the reviewers to reflect upon how the proposal aligns with the review criteria.

The Review Committee is composed of a multi-disciplinary group of professionals such as biotech executives and academic researchers with expertise in AMD and pharmaceutical development and the ability to assess a wide range of proposal topics.

Characteristics of a well-written proposal are reflective of the following practices:

³ NIH Grants and Funding: Inclusion of Women and Minorities as Participants in Research Involving Human Subjects.

<https://grants.nih.gov/policy/inclusion/women-and-minorities.htm>



- Funding via non-governmental agencies should be tailored. Make sure the proposal is reflective of the program goals and review criteria;
- Tell the story and sell the proposed work. Make sure the background outlines why the proposed questions are important to answer and why the proposed approach is promising;
- The language should be understandable to a general scientific audience. When jargon must be used, it is clearly explained, and complex technical points are put in context;
- Any other personnel included in the project should be clearly justified;
- Don't fall victim to proposing to complete too much work. Reflect on the timeline of the work to ensure it can be feasibly completed;
- Provide enough time to obtain feedback and allow for proofreading prior to submission.

Applicants are encouraged to seek feedback on their proposals within their institutions and externally. Examples of successful proposals can be found in the grant-writing tip sheets for NIH research grants. Institutions and colleagues may also be willing to provide examples of well-written and successful grant applications.

Suggested Resources

Secrets to Writing a Winning Grant: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03914-5>

NIH grant writing tips:

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/ep/Tutorial.html>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/funding/grant-writing-and-application-process/grant-writing-tips.shtml>

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/write-your-application.htm#Important%20Writing%20Tips>

Terms of the Award

Please download the Terms of the Award from <https://hria.org/tmf/ThomeAMD> for information on use of the grant funds, indirect costs, payment schedule, reporting schedule, and other Awardee and Institutional requirements.

Frequently Asked Questions may also be found on this site.

Please continue to the next page for Application Instructions.



Instructions for Invited Full Proposal Application

Full Proposal Online Submission Deadline:

**Tuesday, December 17, 2024
12:00 PM, Eastern Time**

***NOTE:** Invited applicants to the Full Proposal received an email with a link to access the online application. Please contact ThomeAwards@hria.org if you have misplaced this email.*

Online Portal:

Use the following link to BEGIN the full application process:

Return to a SAVED application: https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_738?SA=AM

Before beginning the online submission, download and save the “Thome AMD 2025 Full Proposal Application Forms” and the “Thome AMD 2025 Budget and Other Support Form.” These forms will be required for the uploaded documents. They are available here: <https://hria.org/tmf/ThomeAMD>.

Online Application Form:

The following sections must be completed within the online application form:

- Institutional Tax ID Number
 - Eligibility Quiz: Applicants must confirm that they meet the eligibility requirements as stated in the Guidelines
 - Applicant Data (review and update): Institution, Contact Information, Demographic and Educational Background Information, ORCID identification number (if available)
 - Key Personnel (review and reach out to ThomeAwards@hria.org to request changes)
 - Research Project (review and update): Project Title, Keywords, Project Summary, Non-Technical Summary, Non-Technical Overview, Experimental System(s), Key Tools, and Techniques to be Utilized
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement
 - Research Classification* (review and update)
 - Research Area* (review and update)
 - Attachments: Two uploads are required. See instructions below.
 - Application document (PDF) – Please name as “LastName, FirstName.pdf”.
 - Budget and Other Support Form – Please name as “LastName, FirstName_Budget.xlsx”.
- Download the Application Forms and Templates: <https://hria.org/tmf/ThomeAMD>

**Research Classification and Research Area are used for administrative tracking purposes only and are not used in the scientific review.*

Attachment Document (PDF)

Instructions: The document includes some of the same information that is submitted in the online form. However, the proposal sections listed below must be combined and converted into **ONE PDF** file for upload to the Online Application. Name this document LastName, FirstName.pdf (for example: Smith, Jane.pdf).

The required application form templates for the following sections can be found in a separate MS Word document located at <https://hria.org/tmf/ThomeAMD>.



Include all items in the following order:

1. **Application Cover Sheet:** The Cover Sheet is the first template provided in the Application Forms. It must be completed and signed by the Applicant and the Office of Sponsored Programs or the Institutional Officer administratively responsible for the oversight of the project.

The signature of the Applicant on the Cover Sheet will confirm their responsibility for obtaining any required human subjects (IRB), animal use (IACUC), or institutional equivalent approvals. In addition, the Institutional Officer's signature will confirm that all eligibility requirements have been met. Endorsement by the Institutional Officer confirms that the Institution will commit to appropriate oversight if the project is funded.

2. **Table of Contents:** Follow the order of the Table of Contents provided in the Application Forms and fill in the page numbers for each section.
3. **Research Project Summary & Performance Sites:** Complete the form according to the instructions. The Research Project Summary will be posted on our website if the project is funded (*maximum of 300 words – must include the project's broad, long-term objectives and specific aims*).
4. **Non-Technical Overview and Non-Technical Summary:** Prepare a lay-language description of the proposed research that can be understood by the general public. *These statements should match the text in the corresponding field for online submission.*
5. **Promotion of Positive Research Culture:** Include a description of your commitment and approach to improving research culture. *This statement should match the text in the corresponding field for online submission.*
6. **Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest:** Applicants must disclose potential conflicts of interest, including the nature of the conflict.
7. **Research Proposal (maximum of ten pages, not including references cited):** Outline succinctly the nature of your proposed project and its relevance to AMD.

Proposal Format:

- Include at the top of each page the Principal Investigator's full name, degree(s) and Institution.
- Arial size 11 font must be used in the text of the research proposal section.
- Any figures, graphs, tables, or pictures must be included within the ten pages. For these visuals, the minimum is an 8 point-font size.
- Use single spacing within paragraphs, double spacing between paragraphs. Margins on all 4 sides must be at least ½ inch wide.
- Appendices are not permitted. However, References Cited should be added to the Proposal (*not included in the 10-page count*).

Proposal Components:

- 1) Background and significance (discuss project impact on AMD and how the project contributes to improving current therapeutic strategies or revealing new therapeutic approaches for individuals suffering from AMD);
- 2) Specific aims;
- 3) Preliminary data (if available);
- 4) Research design, experimental methods, and analytical plan;



- 5) Research limitations and contingencies;
- 6) References cited (not part of page count).

8. **Project Milestones and Research Plan Table** (Use provided Word template - maximum 1 page): Create a summary table, based on the specific aims of the project which describes the proposed milestones and benchmarks. The successful completion of these activities will form the basis of measuring achievement of the project goals. Please include specific data, methods, and benchmarks that will demonstrate achievement of the milestone. Quantitative benchmarks must include statistical methods including sample size justification. Note: 1) All personnel and collaborations should be related to the achievement of the milestones; 2) Please include a milestone that describes plans for dissemination of results. (May be identical to the table included in the Initial Stage Proposal if no changes.)
9. **Budget and Other Support Form:** Complete this form for the two years of the project. Total support from the Thome Foundation is \$500,000 (\$250,000 each year for the two-year award). Please note that overhead (indirect costs) will not be covered by the award. The Budget Template must be (1) included in the PDF for committee review and (2) uploaded separately as an Excel document to be used in expenditure tracking if the grant is funded. Please ensure that the numbers you have entered are identical in both formats or we will not be able to process the application. Template is downloadable here: <https://hria.org/tmf/ThomeAMD>.

Please include all current, pending, and completed support regardless of relationship to the current Thome AMD request in the “Other Support” tab. The Edward N. & Della L. Thome Memorial Foundation does not support overlapping aims. Should overlap exist, the pre-existing funded aims should be provided along with a detailed explanation of how this overlap will be resolved. If no overlap exists, please state as such.

10. **Biographical Sketch of Principal Investigator (maximum of five pages):** The most current NIH Biographical Sketch Form must be used. Please include information about all current, pending, and completed funding support on the Budget Form tab called “Other Support”.

If applicable, Co-Investigator Biographical Sketch(es) should be included.

11. **Department or Division Chair’s Letter (forwarded to the Applicant for upload):** This letter must address the applicant’s qualifications to conduct the proposed research independently as well as note the space and equipment available for the completion of the project. If the applicant is Chair of his/her department, a letter of recommendation from the Dean should be submitted.
12. **Letter(s) of Collaboration (if applicable):** When applicable, letters confirming the availability of resources outside the Applicant’s institution or letters confirming any significant collaboration may be included (forwarded to the Applicant for upload). These are not additional letters of recommendation.

Important! Out of fairness to applicants who adhere to the guidelines, applications that do not conform to the stated application procedures or that contain more than the specified number of pages or letters will be rejected. Applications that are not properly organized will be rejected.

HRiA is committed to making our resources accessible to everyone. If you require an accommodation or service to access our resources, please contact Program Staff.

Direct any Questions to Program Staff:



Email: ThomeAwards@hria.org

