

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

**Initial Proposal Application Guidelines
2025 Grant Cycle**

<p>Submission Deadline Thursday, August 22, 2024 12:00 PM, Eastern Time</p>	<p>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:	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. Exclusions: Basic research and clinical trials

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Invited Full Proposal Deadline

TBD: December 2024

Applicants invited to submit Full Proposals will be emailed detailed application instructions. In brief, the Full Proposal Application includes the Online Application, Application Cover Sheet, Project and Non-Technical Summaries, five-page Research Proposal, Project Milestones and Research Plan Table, Applicant Biosketch, Co-Investigator Biosketch(es) (if applicable), Budget and Justification Forms, Department or Division Head Letter, and Letter(s) of Collaboration (if applicable).

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 preclinical research that will lead to improved therapies and therapeutic strategies 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 historical mission of the Foundation and the goals of the program. HRiA is a non-profit organization headquartered in Boston that advances public health and medical research.

The Thome Foundation Awards Program in Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) Research is a two-stage proposal process. Applicants must submit an Initial Proposal which will be reviewed by a Scientific Review Committee and a subset of applicants will be recommended to be invited to submit a Full Proposal. The Initial Proposal consists of an Online Application, Application Cover Sheet, two-page Research Proposal (excluding initial questions), Project Milestones and Research Plan Table, Applicant Biosketch, and Co-Investigator Biosketch(es) (if applicable). Initial Proposals will be reviewed by a scientific committee.

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

Eligibility is not limited to those investigators currently working in AMD research; scientists who have conducted research exploring the biologic causes of related disorders and/or similar 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 reporting 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 applications. Please note that the criteria listed below will be used for the review of Full Proposals and may not be applicant at the time of the Initial Proposal stage of the award cycle.

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 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 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 is committed and contributes to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment and promoting a positive research culture
- The Applicant's professional and personal experiences help build a diverse STEM workforce

Proposal Writing Tips

Applicants are strongly encouraged to prioritize good grantsmanship in writing their applications to maximize their chances of being invited to submit a Full Proposal. *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 have the ability to assess a wide range of proposal topics.

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>



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

- 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 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 proofing 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.



Application Instructions for Initial Proposal

Online Submission Deadline:

Thursday, August 22, 2024

12:00 PM, Eastern Time

Use this link to start a NEW application:

https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_738?SA=SNA&FID=35077

Go to your account page to return to a SAVED application:

https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_738?SA=AM

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

- Institution's Tax ID Number
- Eligibility Quiz
- Applicant Data: Institution, Contact, and Educational Background Information. Provide the PI's ORCID, if available.
- Key Personnel: Co-Investigator information, *if applicable*
- Research Project: Project Title, Key Words, Project Summary, Non-Technical Summary, Non-Technical Overview, Experimental System(s), and Key Tools, and Techniques to be Utilized
- Research Classification*
- Research Area*
- Attachment: A PDF document must be uploaded. See further instructions below.

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

Attachment Instructions for PDF: The documents listed below must be combined and converted into ONE PDF file for upload to the Online Application. This document must be named LastName, FirstName.pdf (for example: Smith, Jane.pdf).

A. Thome AMD Application Forms 2025 (Application Cover Sheet, Table of Contents, Non-Technical Overview, Initial Research Proposal Overview, Promotion of Positive Research Culture, Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest): The Cover Sheet must be completed and signed by the Applicant and the Authorized Institutional Representative administratively responsible for the oversight of the project. Once all signatures have been obtained, the Cover Sheet should be used as the first page of the uploaded document. Follow instructions on the template.

B. Initial Research Proposal (Maximum of two pages, excluding Initial Research Proposal Overview and references cited):

Outline succinctly:

- How the project directly contributes to improved therapies for individuals suffering from AMD.
- The research proposal must clarify how the study may improve current therapeutic strategies or reveal new therapeutic approaches.
- Background and Significance;
- Specific Aims;
- Research Design and Methods

Initial 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.
- Use single spacing within paragraphs, double spacing between paragraphs and one inch or larger margins on all four sides.
- Any figures, graphs, tables or pictures must be included within the two pages. For these visuals, the minimum is an 8 point-font size.
- Appendices are not permitted.

C. 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.

D. Biographical Sketch of Principal Investigator (maximum of 5 pages): The most current NIH Biographical Sketch Form must be used.

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

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

