

Smith Family Foundation: Odyssey Award

A program of the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation

Initial Proposal Guidelines

2023 Grant Cycle

Initial Proposal Deadline:
Tuesday, January 10, 2023
12:00 Noon, U.S. ET

Award Period: November 1, 2023 – October 31, 2025

Up to five **\$400,000 two-year awards** will be made to support pre-tenure junior faculty with the potential to generate breakthroughs and drive new directions in biomedical research.

Eligibility

- Based at a nonprofit academic, medical, or research institution in Massachusetts or at Brown or Yale University.
- Full-time, independent faculty at academic research institutions who have not yet achieved tenure or its equivalent by the funding start date of November 1, 2023. Applicants must have received their first independent faculty appointment (normally tenure-track Assistant Professor) on or between November 1, 2014 and November 1, 2019.
- Have less than \$750,000 in combined federal and non-federal funding in direct costs per year, excluding the institutional start-up package and other intramural support.
- As of the 2023 grant cycle, only two proposal submissions are permitted per applicant.

Applicant eligibility must be verified by the institution's Office of Sponsored Research or the initial proposal will not be considered. The Scientific Review Committee will select a subset of initial applicants to invite to submit full proposals.

Health Resources in Action promotes diversity of gender, ethnicity, and perspectives, among many other forms, across its grant programs. Applications from women and people from groups underrepresented in biomedical research are particularly encouraged.

Program Overview and Mission

The Smith Family Foundation is committed to effecting permanent positive change in the lives of the residents of Greater Boston, particularly individuals and families in economically disadvantaged communities. In the area of health, the Foundation supports the advancement of biomedical research and the expansion of access to high-quality health care at safety net institutions serving low-income individuals and communities of Greater Boston.

The Smith Family Foundation Odyssey Award was created in 2017 to fuel creativity and innovation in junior investigators in the basic sciences. The Award supports the pursuit of high impact ideas to generate breakthroughs and drive new directions in biomedical research. The awards will fund high-risk, high-reward pilot projects. **Projects should be conceptualized as a novel research line and a distinct and novel off-shoot from the applicant's current research. The review committee weighs this criterion heavily in making final funding decisions.** Both the applicants as well as any institutional review committees should bear this in mind in preparing/vetting applications.

The Smith Family Foundation: Odyssey Award is managed by Health Resources in Action (HRiA). HRiA is a nonprofit organization in Boston that advances public health and medical research.

Research Focus

The two-year Award supports established pre-tenure junior faculty engaged in basic biomedical research. Investigators in the physical sciences (physics, chemistry, and engineering) whose projects focus on biomedical science are also encouraged to apply. While biomedical research projects involving human subjects, data, and samples are eligible, clinical trials research is beyond the scope of this Program.

In recognition of the importance of research collaboration within the scientific community, collaboration is an additional, but not required, positive ancillary factor. These projects may involve researchers within and/or outside the applicant's institution.

Eligibility Requirements

United States citizenship is not required.

Institution

- Researchers must have their primary appointment at a nonprofit academic, medical, or research institution in Massachusetts, or at Brown University or Yale University.
- Research projects must be conducted within the entity that is submitting the application. Award funds will go to that entity. For example, if an applicant submits from Harvard Medical School, the research project must be conducted at Harvard Medical School and not at an affiliate location (such as Massachusetts General Hospital or Boston Children's Hospital).

Career stage

- Applications will be accepted from full-time, independent faculty at academic research institutions who have not yet achieved tenure or its equivalent by the funding start date of November 1, 2023. Applicants must have received their first independent faculty appointment on or between November 1, 2014 and November 1, 2019.
- We understand that there is a continuum of independence at many institutions beginning with emerging independence at the Instructor level. However, to level the playing field and ensure that all applicants have only one window of eligibility, **we consider the tenure track Assistant Professor appointment to be the first independent faculty appointment.**
- If an Applicant has been on medical or family leave, or if research was interrupted for other reasons, this period of absence does not count towards eligibility. Please address any gaps in

work history in the Personal Statement on the Biosketch. The Office of Sponsored Research must confirm the leave of absence as well as applicant eligibility.

- **Researchers may apply to the Smith Family Foundation: Odyssey Award no more than 2 times** during their window of eligibility. The second application may be a resubmission of the first with substantive changes, or a new proposal.

Current, Pending and Post Award Funding

Concurrent Federal and Non-Federal Support

- Applicants are ineligible if, at the time of application, they will have combined federal and non-federal funding totaling \$750,000 or more in direct costs in either of the years (11/1/23 - 10/31/24 or 11/1/24 - 10/31/25) of the two-year Smith Odyssey Award. This figure refers to external funding only and not an Applicant's start-up package, other intramural support, or the Smith Award.

Pending Federal and Non-Federal Support

- If notified on or prior to September 1, 2023 that they have been successful in securing federal or non-federal grant support, which, when combined with other support, totals \$750,000 or more in direct costs in either of the first two years of the Smith Award, applications to this program will be ineligible for review. Notification of funding **after** September 1, 2023 will not impact eligibility for a Smith Family Award. **It is the responsibility of all applicants to contact SmithOdyssey@hria.org as soon as any new funding is received.**
- Applicants who have pending R01s or other large applications to the NIH and other agencies are encouraged to submit proposals to the Smith Family Foundation. However, if a Smith Odyssey Award is made, **neither the Institution nor the awardee may accept funding that results in an overlap of funding for the proposed aims of the Smith Odyssey project.** To avoid conflicts if your proposal receives a funding recommendation, we strongly suggest that you do not propose the same aims and budget in different grant applications. **If the work proposed in the Smith Odyssey proposal is funded by another source before the Smith awards are announced, the applicant must notify HRiA at SmithOdyssey@hria.org and withdraw the application immediately.**

Award Selection Criteria

The Scientific Review Committee uses the following criteria to evaluate applications:

Innovation

- The project is a creative and novel research line and is *a new and distinct off-shoot from the applicant's current research*. Innovation is an essential prerequisite to a favorable score.

Impact

- The proposed research addresses an important problem and has high potential for driving new directions in research and/or generating a biomedical breakthrough in the longer-term. May be high risk.

Applicant

- The applicant has high potential to successfully carry out the proposed research. (Applicants are encouraged to propose projects in areas outside their primary expertise.)
- The Institution has demonstrated an appropriate level of commitment to her/him.

- Collaboration is an additional, but not required, positive ancillary factor.

Research project

- Hypothesis is clearly stated, based on sound precedents and a clear rationale, and supported by relevant literature. Preliminary data may be minimal.
- Objectives are technically feasible, and personnel are qualified to carry out the proposed research.
- The proposal makes sense in the context of the pertinent literature and the work of other investigators in the field of study.

Innovation Score

In addition to assigning a numeric score for overall impact, reviewers will assign a color rating for innovation that is used to guide discussion at the review meeting. This metric is based on the following criteria, **both** of which must be met to receive a favorable score:

- Is the proposed work a creative and novel research line? Does it have potential to establish a new ground-breaking direction of inquiry or research paradigm?
- Is this a distinct or novel off-shoot from the applicant's current research?

Proposal Writing Tips

Dream big. Odyssey projects must be a distinct and novel off-shoot from your current research. Reviewers do not look favorably on proposals that look and feel like a shrunken, repurposed R01. The preliminary proposal format is intended to give you the freedom to be creative and ambitious.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to prioritize good grant writing in drafting their applications to maximize their chances of being funded. The Review Committee is composed of a diverse group of researchers who can assess a wide range of biological proposals, including biologists whose work focuses on cancer genetics, the microbiome, regenerative biology, transcriptional regulation, mitochondria, neuroscience, epigenetics, and immunology. Characteristics of a well-written proposal include the following:

- Main points are communicated clearly and concisely. The big picture of what will be done, why it is important, and how it will advance the field is clear.
- The language is understandable to a general scientific audience. When jargon must be used, it is clearly explained, and complex technical points are put in context.
- Specific aims and concise/essential background, experiments, and analysis plan are connected with clear logic, and key choices are justified. Sufficient detail about the approach is provided that the reviewers can clearly understand the proposed experiments.
- The novel and innovative aspects of the work are clearly explained and put in context. Impact and novelty in the field *should not be overstated*. Reviewers typically check this.
- For applicants in crowded fields, the proposal makes clear how the study will bring a fresh perspective.
- The explanation of how the proposal is distinct from the applicant's ongoing work is clear and supported by the biosketch.

- The longer-term goals of the project are clear, including where it is expected to take the research program in 5-10 years.
- Goals and metrics of success are well-defined.
- Any scientific or budgetary overlap with other current or pending support is clearly described, including a plan to avoid duplication of funding.

Applicants are encouraged to seek grant writing advice within their institutions and externally, and to read examples of successful proposals, such as those 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](#)

[How to Gain a Competitive Edge in Grant Writing](#)

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>

Notification to Applicants

The online application system will notify applicants once the Preliminary Proposal upload is received. Notification emails and invitations to the Full Proposal Stage will be sent in early-April. Full Proposals will be due in mid-May and final notification to Award Recipients will occur in mid-October followed by an emailed Award Notification and Award Agreement. Unsuccessful applicants will also be notified at that time.

PLEASE NOTE: If the Applicant is unable to accept the Award, the Award will not be transferred to another investigator involved in the research project.

Acknowledgement of Support

The Award Recipient and Institution are encouraged to announce receipt of this Award entitled, the **Smith Family Foundation Odyssey Award** and credit financial support to the **Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation, Newton, MA.**

Publications

Publications or presentations resulting from research supported by this Award must also acknowledge support from the **Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation, Newton, MA.**

Terms of the Award

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

A listing of **Frequently Asked Questions** may also be found at this site.

Application Instructions

APPLICATION DEADLINE

Tuesday, January 10, 2023 (12:00 PM, U.S. Eastern Time)

Before beginning the online submission, **download and save the “Odyssey Application Forms” which can be found at <https://hria.org/tmf/SmithOdyssey>.**

Use one of the following links to begin or continue the application process:

Start a New Application: https://www.grantrequest.com/SID_738?SA=SNA&FID=35265

Continue a Saved Application: https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_738?SA=AM

The following sections must be completed for the online submission:

1. **Institution’s Tax ID Number**
2. **Eligibility Quiz**
3. **Application Data:** Institution where proposed research will be conducted, Applicant’s contact information and educational background
3. **Collaborator(s):** Collaborator information (if applicable)
4. **Research Project Information:** Project Title; Key Words; Non-Technical Overview; Experimental System(s), Key Tools and Techniques to be Utilized; Description of Novel Research Direction.
5. **Institutional Contact Information:** Department/Division Chair and Authorized Institutional Representative
6. **Attachment (Document Upload):** The Application must be converted into ONE PDF file, in the order noted, for upload. This document must be named LastName, FirstName.pdf (for example, Doe, Jane.pdf). Make sure all pages are numbered sequentially starting with the Cover Sheet as Page #1.

Document Upload

Application:

- **Application Cover Sheet:** The Application Cover Sheet must be completed (type all information). The Cover Sheet is the first page of the Document Upload.
- **Table of Contents:** Follow the Table of Contents and number ALL pages consecutively. The Table of Contents is page 2 of the Document Upload.
- **Collaborator(s):** Collaborator information (if applicable)
- **Initial Research Proposal:** Complete this form according to the instructions.
- **Applicant Biosketch:** Use the new, updated March 2021 form for your NIH Biographical Sketch (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>). Please include

information about all current, pending, and completed funding support on the Addendum to Biosketch form.

- **Addendum to Biosketch:** Complete this form according to the instructions. Applicants must disclose all current (active) and pending (not closed) grants and **clearly indicate any potential research or budgetary overlap with the Smith Odyssey proposal**. In cases of any potential overlap or duplication, a detailed explanation of project aims must be appended to address any apparent overlap or lack thereof.
- **Sponsored research office letter to confirm eligibility, review, and approval of the submission.** Include a signed letter on institutional letterhead from the institution's Office of Sponsored Research to confirm that the Applicant is eligible for the award, that the application has been reviewed, and that the office approves of this application. The letter must confirm that the Applicant was appointed as an Assistant Professor between November 1, 2014 and November 1, 2019, and will have less than \$750,000 in combined federal and non-federal funding in direct costs in both years of the award by the funding start date. This figure refers to external funding only and not to an Applicant's start-up package, other intramural support, or the Smith Award. If the applicant's eligibility requires confirmation of a leave of absence, the dates of the leave of absence must be stated and confirmed in the letter.

Please note: Supplemental materials are not permitted and will be removed (e.g., letters of collaboration or recommendation).