Smith Family Foundation: Odyssey Award
A program of the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation

Initial Proposal Guidelines

Initial Proposal Deadline:
Tuesday, January 5, 2021
12:00 Noon, U.S. ET

2021 Grant Cycle

Award Period: October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2023

Up to five $300,000 two-year awards will be made to independent junior faculty in nonprofit academic, medical, and research institutions in Massachusetts as well as at Brown University and Yale University.

Applicants no longer need to be internally selected and nominated by their institutions.

The Smith Odyssey Award supports promising junior faculty with the potential to transform their fields through their research. In order to ensure that the strongest research candidates from eligible institutions are able to apply, the Smith Family Foundation is piloting a two-stage application process in which the institutional nomination process is eliminated, and any eligible candidate is invited to submit an initial proposal. Applicant eligibility must be verified by the institution’s Office of Sponsored Research or the initial proposal will not be considered. There is no limit on the number of applicants from a given institution. The Scientific Review Committee will select a subset of initial applicants to invite to submit full proposals.

Research projects must be conducted at the site within the School/College or other 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).

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

Junior investigators that are beyond 4 years from their appointment to Assistant Professor and have not yet received tenure are eligible to apply for this award. There is an upper eligibility limit at 9 years past the first independent faculty appointment. Those investigators with tenure, or who are beyond the 9-year limit, are ineligible to apply for this award. Eligible applicants must have less than $750,000 per year in combined federal and non-federal funding in direct costs, excluding the institutional start-up package and other intramural support.
The Smith Family Foundation: Odyssey Award is managed by The Medical Foundation at Health Resources in Action (HRiA). HRiA is a nonprofit organization in Boston that advances public health and medical research.

**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 new 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.**

**Research Focus**
The two-year Award supports established 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.

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 October 1, 2021. Applicants must have received their first independent faculty appointment on or between October 1, 2012 and October 1, 2017.

We understand that there is a continuum of independence at many institutions beginning with emerging independence at the Instructor level. However, in order to level the playing field and ensure that all applicants have only one window of eligibility, we are considering the 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.

**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 (10/1/21 - 9/30/22 or 10/1/22 - 9/30/23) 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**
Investigators are ineligible to receive this Award if they have secured a combined total of $750,000 or more in direct costs from combined federal or non-federal grant sources, including any funds they receive notification of securing on or prior to August 1, 2021. Notification of funding after August 1, 2021 will not impact eligibility for a Smith Family Award. It is the responsibility of all applicants to contact LCarver@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.

Please note that 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 Smith Odyssey project. 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 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

**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:

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

**Proposal Writing Tips**

Applicants are strongly encouraged to prioritize good grant writing in drafting their applications, in order 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.
- Concise/essential background, hypotheses, aims, experiments, and analysis plan are connected with clear logic, and key choices are justified.
- The novel and innovative aspects of the work are clearly explained and put in context.
- For applicants in crowded fields, the proposal makes clear how the study will bring a fresh perspective.
- Goals and metrics of success are well-defined.
- The impact of the work and how it will drive a new direction of research and/or lead to a fundamental advance in basic biology or a substantial advance in translational biology should be clear.
- 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: [https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03914-5](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03914-5)

NIH grant writing tips:
Notification to Applicants
The online application system will notify applicants once the upload is received. Final notification to Award Recipients will occur in late September 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 Process
The Smith Family Foundation: Odyssey Award is a two-stage proposal process. Applicants submit an Initial Proposal by the designated deadline. Invited applicants will be asked to submit Full Proposals due in May. Funding begins on or about October 1, 2021. The online application system will notify applicants once the application is received and will be used to communicate with applicants about the status of their applications.
Application Instructions

APPLICATION DEADLINE
Tuesday, January 5, 2021 (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:

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. Key Personnel: Co-Investigator/Collaborator information (if applicable)

4. Research Project Information: Project Title; Key Words; Research Project Summary; Non-Technical Summary; 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 following documents and forms listed in items A-F must be combined and 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 Face Sheet as Page #1.

   Document Upload

A. Application Face Sheet: The Application Face Sheet must be completed (type all information). The Face Sheet is the first page of the Document Upload.

B. Table of Contents: Follow the Table of Contents and number ALL pages consecutively. The Table of Contents is page 2 of the Document Upload.

C. Research Project Summary, Performance Sites, Non-Technical Overview, and Description of Novel Research Direction (Template C): Complete this form according to the instructions at the
D. **Research Proposal**: Please briefly describe your proposed study in 1-2 pages. A maximum of 2 pages is permitted, **exclusive of a bibliography of references**.

Within the 2-page limit, include these sections:
1. Background and significance of the proposed research
2. Summarized preliminary data (if available)
3. Goal of the proposed project and specific aims
4. Overview of research design and methods
5. Potential limitations and how these will be addressed

Research Proposal Format:
- The Applicant’s full name should be included at the top right of the page. The name is permitted in the margin as long as it does not exceed the standard paper size.
- Arial 11 font and size must be used in the text of the research proposal section.
- Use single spacing within paragraphs, double spacing between paragraphs, and at least one-half inch margins on all four sides.
- Any figures, graphs, tables or pictures must be included within the research proposal page-limit. For these visuals, the minimum is font-size is Arial 8.
- Appendices are not permitted.

E. **Applicant Biosketch**: Use the latest NIH Biographical Sketch form, maximum of 5 pages ([https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm))

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 the biosketch, exclusive of the biosketch page limit, to address any apparent overlap or lack thereof.

F. **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 October 1, 2012 and October 1, 2017, and will have less than $750,000 in combined federal and non-federal funding in direct costs 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)**.