

Charles A. King Trust Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Program

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Frequently Asked Questions

Grant Cycle 2025

General

Note: Many questions are answered in the 2025 King Guidelines: www.hria.org/tmf/King

Guidelines state that a Mentor may submit only one fellowship candidate per application cycle. One of the postdoctoral fellows in our group with the same Mentor is currently funded by the King Trust. Would my Mentor still be able to sponsor me as a candidate?

Yes, you are eligible – two NEW people cannot apply from the same lab for the same application deadline.

Can my Mentor submit one fellow for Clinical and one fellow for Basic Science?

No, only one applicant per Mentor may apply per application cycle.

Is there a limit on how many applications may be submitted from one institution?

There are no institutional limitations on the number of candidates who may submit applications.

I already have a funded fellowship and am looking for research support for my project. Am I still eligible to apply for the King Trust Fellowship?

No, the two-year King Trust Fellowship supports stipend, a 10% fringe allowance, and a flexible \$25,000 research allowance. This allowance may **not** be used for institutional overhead.

How do I determine my stipend level?

Stipend levels are based upon the number of years of relevant full-time experience since completion of your doctoral degree as of the funding start date, October 1, 2025. For applicants without clinical training, this will be based upon years of full-time research experience. For applicants with clinical training, other experience such as time during clinical training programs may be considered as relevant experience. This will be determined by HRiA Staff, using applicant eligibility and research experience information provided in the application.

Publications

I have a peer reviewed publication from my previous but not current post-doc lab, am I eligible?

Yes. Publications from previous post-doctoral research experiences count towards eligibility.



After graduate school I stayed in my thesis lab as a postdoc for one year. I have a peer reviewed publication from that postdoc, but not from my current postdoc lab. Am I eligible?

If the publication is from work done during the graduate thesis, then it is not sufficient to count towards eligibility. Peer reviewed publications must be from research conducted after receiving one's doctoral degree. Competitive applicants for this award typically have a first-author publication from their current postdoc lab.

Am I eligible if I have a co-author paper?

Yes, however competitive applicants typically have a first author paper from their current postdoctoral lab.

What about papers that are not yet accepted but available as a preprint and posted on a platform like bioRxiv?

Articles in press or submitted for review will count towards eligibility only if they are publicly available as a preprint (e.g. BioRxiv). For publications in press that are not and cannot be made publicly available, please contact program staff to confirm eligibility.

Is the publication requirement the same for clinicians (who might be < 3 years into their post-docs) and PhD scientists? What if I have a publication from my clinical fellowship?

Yes, the publication requirement is the same for clinicians. Publications during clinical fellowships will be counted.

Research Experience and Independence

How do I determine completed years of postdoctoral research experience?

Example: If months of full-time postdoctoral research experience is 2 years and 10 months, check off 2 years on the Cover Page.

Should I include my postdoctoral research experience in my former lab?

Yes - all postdoctoral research experience, former and current, should be counted. However, if you spent time in the graduate lab to finish up papers, etc. after receiving your degree, this time should not be counted.

How do you count part-time research experience?

Part-time research experience is pro-rated. If you were conducting one year of postdoctoral research experience at 25% effort, then that one year will be counted as three months (12 months x .25 percent effort = 3 months). State this clearly in the Applicant Eligibility and Research Experience section and have your Mentor confirm the total years of research experience completed at the beginning of the funding period.

For individuals with clinical training, research conducted during research intensive years of clinical fellowship training where time spent on research was greater than 50% effort are counted as "full time research experience".



Do you count the time spent conducting research for a second doctoral degree as postdoctoral research experience?

No, the time spent conducting research for a second doctoral degree does not count as postdoctoral research experience.

What do you mean by “Applicants must be working in an academic or medical institution in the State of Massachusetts and have the required minimum/maximum years of experience.”? Do you mean “must be working” at the time of application or at the time of the beginning date of the fellowship?

Applicants must be present and have started their work in a MA lab by the funding start date of the program (October 1, 2025).

My institution was closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Do I have to count that time as post-doctoral research experience?

If research was interrupted for extenuating circumstances, including the COVID-19 pandemic, these months are not considered part of the full-time research experience. Eligibility extensions for COVID-19 related research disruptions are limited to a maximum of six (6) months. For example, if the Applicant experienced institutional or research lab shutdowns, visa, travel or other issues that significantly disrupted research activities, and the Applicant was not able to be productive with remote work during this time, then those months should be excluded. Any exclusions must be documented by the Mentor in their Letter of Support. However, if the Applicant was able to continue working remotely during this time, then no exclusions should be made.

I was a technician/research scientist for a year after receiving my doctoral degree. Does that time count as postdoctoral research experience?

Postdoctoral research experience is defined as full-time research after receiving one’s doctoral degree, or completion of residency or equivalent for those with a MD, MD/PhD, PhD, DO, DPT, etc. Applicants should count all time spent engaged in research in a laboratory or similar professional setting for a temporary or defined period either domestically or abroad. This can include research experiences where the applicants official title or position was not “postdoctoral researcher”.

If I have been promoted to an Instructor, am I eligible to apply?

It is recognized that many different titles are given to researchers and clinician scientists who are engaged in postdoctoral research. If the applicant is still engaged in non-independent mentored research within the eligibility window, they are eligible to apply.

I was a postdoc in a different state, does that time count?

Yes - all postdoctoral research experience, former and current, should be counted regardless of location. However, if you spent time in the graduate lab to finish up papers, etc. after receiving your degree, this time should not be counted.

If I have a gap in my research experience for which I took time off (e.g. parental leave) am I eligible?

For all applicants, if research was interrupted for family or medical leave, or for other extenuating circumstances (including COVID-19, military leave), these months are not considered part of the full-time research experience and should be excluded. Periods of



research training in a degree-granting program (i.e., study for a Ph.D., MPH, MSc, or second degree) should be excluded. All gaps in research experience must be documented by the mentor within their letter of support. You are eligible if research experience, excluding documented gaps, is between 3-6 years for those without clinical training, or less than 6 years for those with clinical training.

How do you define non-independent research?

Non-independent training positions may include the following: the candidate's research is entirely funded by another investigator's grant or conducted entirely in another investigator's assigned space; the candidate has not received a start-up package from the university; the candidate may also not be allowed by institutional policy to hire postdoctoral fellows or technical staff or be the responsible supervisor of graduate students; finally, the candidate may lack other rights and privileges of faculty such as attendance at faculty meetings.

Do you require HR documentation for parental leave? Will a letter from the supervisor suffice?

We do not require formal documentation for parental or other leave. However, your mentor must note any pauses in research experience within their letter of support.

I was a postdoc for 5 years and was then promoted to instructor position which I have held for 2 years. Am I eligible?

Most likely, no. If the applicant is still engaged in non-independent mentored research with the title of Instructor, then this time should be counted as postdoctoral research experience. In this case, that would be a total of 7 years in non-independent postdoctoral training positions.

How do I determine my eligibility if I hold a Ph.D. but do not hold an M.D.?

Candidates who hold a Ph.D. must have completed at least three years but no more than six years of postdoctoral training by the funding start date. This requirement is the same whether applicants are applying to the Clinical Research or Basic Science program. Candidates who hold a Ph.D. but have clinical training (such as clinical psychology specialties) may have no more than six years of postdoctoral training by the funding start date. Please reach out to HRiA staff (KingAwards@hria.org) to confirm eligibility.

Do I need to have United States citizenship to receive the award? If not, is visa documentation required to receive the award?

United States citizenship is not required to apply or to receive the award, nor is visa documentation. Award recipients must be eligible to receive a postdoctoral fellowship for the duration of the award period. Please check visa requirements and anticipated changes in job title, if relevant, and confirm eligibility with your Office of Sponsored Research in advance of application submission.

Is there more information to help me determine if my project would align with basic or clinical research?

The King Fellowship definitions for basic, preclinical, clinical, and implementation research mostly aligns with that of the NIH:



Basic Research¹ is defined as a systematic study directed toward greater knowledge or understanding of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and of observable facts without specific applications towards processes or products in mind.

Preclinical Research² connects the basic science of disease with human medicine.

Scientists may develop model interventions to further understand the basis of a disease or disorder and find ways to treat it. Testing is 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.

Clinical Research³ includes research with human subjects that is:

1. Patient-oriented research. Research conducted with human subjects (or on material of human origin such as tissues, specimens, and cognitive phenomena) for which an investigator (or colleague) on the proposed study directly interacts with human subjects. It includes: (a) therapeutic interventions, (b) clinical trials, (c) development of new technologies, or (d) mechanisms of human disease that can be directly linked to detection, diagnosis, progression, or severity of disease. Excluded from this definition are in vitro studies that utilize human tissues that cannot be linked to a living individual.
2. Epidemiological and behavioral studies.
3. Outcomes research and health services research.

Implementation Science⁴ is the study of methods to promote the adoption and integration of evidence-based practices, interventions, and policies into routine health care and public health settings to improve our impact on population health.

Research projects involving patient derived tissue, samples, or data; or using cell culture or animal models seeking to understand basic science questions, should be directed to the King Trust Basic Sciences category.

To determine if you are doing human subjects research, you can utilize the following:

[Decision Tool: Am I Doing Human Subjects Research? | grants.nih.gov](https://grants.nih.gov/decision-tool/)

HRiA staff will automatically reassign your application to the other program should the research be misaligned with the program under which the application was received.

Eligibility for those with Clinical Training

If I have completed medical school but not started residency, am I eligible?

No, eligible applicants must have completed clinical training required for licensing. Those with clinical training will be required to have 70% protected time for research if awarded.

¹ <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/glossary.htm#BasicResearch>

² <https://ncats.nih.gov/translation/spectrum>

³ grants.nih.gov/grants/glossary.htm#ClinicalResearch

⁴ <https://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/is/about>



I am a first-year postdoc following medical school. Am I eligible?

Those with clinical training are eligible if they have not completed more than six (6) years of cumulative full-time postdoctoral research experience since completion of residency (or similar clinical training). Clinicians in fields without formal internship and residency requirements (e.g. PhD Psychologists and PharmD applicants) may have up to six (6) years of cumulative research experience after completion of all clinical education required for licensing.

Do publications and research conducted during clinical education count as research experience/years or not? Or are they considered only as clinical years?

No, postdoctoral research experience is defined as full-time research after receiving one’s doctoral degree. Time during research intensive years of clinical fellowship training (>50%) may be counted as post-doctoral research experience. In some cases, postdoctoral research may occur after the first doctoral degree but prior to starting residency/fellowship clinical training.

How do I calculate years of postdoctoral research experience if I am a physician and want to apply?

Physicians usually complete their residency and then enter fellowship programs to obtain additional clinical training as well as research training. Most ACGME-accredited subspecialty fellowship programs last three years. When physicians or researchers with clinical training are applying for King Trust Fellowships, they must have completed no more than six years of full-time postdoctoral research experience. This requirement may be completed at any time after award of their M.D. or M.D./Ph.D. or comparable degrees.

If your career progression does not align with anything described above or provided below as examples, please reach out to HRiA staff (KingAwards@hria.org) to confirm eligibility.

Example 1:

T. Smith, MD, PhD

- 2014 MD/PhD
- 2014 – 2015 Postdoctoral research year in laboratory setting
- July 2015 – June 30, 2018 Medical residency
- July 2018 – June 30, 2021 Fellowship in a Medical subspecialty – clinical training
- July 1, 2021 – Sept 1, 2025 Fellow in a Basic Science lab

ELIGIBLE? YES. When applicants with clinical training apply, they must have completed no more than six years of full-time postdoctoral research experience by the funding start date. All postdoctoral research experience is counted towards the total. Dr. Smith has completed 1 year (2014 – 2015) PLUS 4 years, 2 months (July 2021 – Sept 2025) for a total of 5 years, 2 months postdoctoral research experience, which is within the 2025 program eligibility.

Example 2:

J. Jones, MD

- 2018 MD
- 2018 – Sept 30, 2021 Medical Internship & Residency
- Oct 1, 2021 – Sept 30, 2023 Cardiovascular Disease Fellowship – clinical training



- Oct 1, 2023 – Sept 30, 2025 Cardiovascular Disease Fellowship – research intensive

ELIGIBLE? YES. Physician scientists with clinical training must have completed no more than six years of full-time postdoctoral research experience by the funding start date. Applicants are encouraged to apply during the final year of their fellowship. Dr. Jones has completed 2 years (2023 – 2025) of full-time postdoctoral research experience.

Example 3:

J. Rodríguez, MD, PhD

- 2018 MD/PhD
- 2018 – July 31, 2021 Pediatrics Internship & Residency
- August 1, 2021 – Oct 1, 2025 Postdoctoral Fellowship

ELIGIBLE? YES. Dr. Rodríguez has had clinical training and completed medical residency July 31, 2021. Therefore, they would start counting postdoctoral research experience beginning August 1, 2021. By the funding start date of the program, they will have completed 4 full years, plus 2 months, of postdoctoral research training.

Example 4:

E. Liu, MD, PhD

- 2014 MD
- 2017 PhD
- 2017 – January 31, 2019 Medical Internship
- February 1, 2019 – October 1, 2025 Postdoctoral Fellowship

ELIGIBLE? NO. By the funding start date of the program, Dr. Liu will have earned 6 years and 8 months of postdoctoral research experience. This exceeds the maximum of exactly six years allowable. However, Dr. Liu may be eligible if 8 months of the postdoctoral fellowship was occupied by family or medical leave, or other extenuating circumstances as described in the guidelines.

Example 5:

M. James, PhD

- 2023 PhD in clinical psychology
- May 2023– September 2025 Clinical Psychology Fellowship

ELIGIBLE? YES. By the funding start date, Dr. James has completed clinical training through their clinical fellowship and is eligible under the criteria that they have completed less than 6 years of full time research experience.

Other Funding

Are you eligible to apply if you intend on applying or have a pending K?

Yes, but you will not be allowed to accept the King award should you receive a K award. If you receive a K award after your King Award has already commenced, you will need to relinquish the King Award.

If my mentor has funding like an R01, will that affect my application?

No. You may be listed as personnel and receiving support from the R01. Applicants may not receive support for project work that is already supported by their mentor’s R01.



I am on a T32 award now, am I eligible?

Applicants are eligible to apply if they are on a T32. However, due to policies regarding funding overlap, applicants will likely be required to relinquish T32 funding upon receipt of a King Award.

What constitutes a Career Development Award?

Career Development Awards are defined as awards that:

- 1) Have dedicated support for salary and may support additional research expenses;
- 2) Require a mentor;
- 3) Are designed to support the awardees transition toward independence

Some examples of Career Development Awards include the HHMI Hannah H. Gray Fellows Program and the Helen Hay Whitney Foundation Fellowship, the AHA Postdoctoral Fellowship, ASH Fellow to Faculty Scholar Award, and Simons Foundation Fellows-to-Faculty Award, among others.

Post Award and Change of Status

What if my Fellowship Status Changes?

Applicants promoted to an independent faculty position on or before the funding start date indicated in the Guidelines are not eligible to accept a King Award.

Following receipt of a fellowship, any change in academic status must be reported to HRiA Staff. It will then be determined on a case-by-case basis whether or not the fellowship can continue.

If I get an instructor position out of my current institution, can I take this funding to my next position?

Awards are made to the Institution where the named Recipient is conducting research. If the Recipient or Mentor plans on moving to another non-profit academic, medical, non-governmental or research institution during the award period, the Recipient will notify and seek approval from the Administrator to continue the Project at the Recipient's new institution.

What happens if I get promoted during my award?

The Recipient and the Mentor must notify the Administrator of any change in the Recipient's academic status at least 30 days prior to such change. If the awardee is promoted to a position that is still a non-independent mentored research position, there will be no change in the award. However, in the event of a significant change in the Recipient's academic status, including a promotion conferring independent faculty status or its equivalent, the Recipient will likely need to relinquish the award and return any remaining unspent funds.

Can the start date of the award be adjusted?

Yes, the Recipient may postpone the start date for up to three months, but the award must be activated on or before January 1, 2026.



Recommendation Letters

Is the Mentor Letter of Support confidential?

Yes, the Mentor Letter of Support is confidential. The letter will be submitted on your behalf through the online application. Please see additional instructions in the Guidelines.

What if I am an M.D. and do not have a thesis advisor to write a letter of recommendation?

The thesis advisor's letter of recommendation only pertains to candidates holding the Ph.D. degree. For M.D. applicants, please ask for a letter of recommendation from your Residency Director or someone equivalent who can comment on your training and future potential as an independent researcher.

Is it okay to submit a letter in a language other than English?

No.

Application Guidelines state that one letter should be from a thesis advisor but what if my thesis advisor is no longer available?

Please find someone who can comment on your work during your Ph.D. training. The current mentor should explain in their letter why the reference letter from your thesis advisor is unavailable. Alternatively, the applicant may provide a short letter with a brief explanation.

To whom are the letters of support/recommendation addressed?

Reference letters may be addressed to the Scientific Review Committee.

Who should write my recommendation letters if I have a co-mentor?

Within the application, only three (3) letters of recommendation will be allowed: one from the primary mentor; one from the thesis advisor, residency, or fellowship director; and one additional letter of recommendation from the co-mentor. If there are multiple co-mentors, the Applicant may choose which mentor to write a recommendation letter, or they can co-sign a single recommendation letter.

Application Questions

Where do I begin?

Please go to www.hria.org/tmf/King and download the Application Guidelines.

Do you have templates to create the PDF upload?

Yes. Applications templates are downloadable via the link above.

What is the difference between the Authorized Institutional Representative and the Institutional Officer to Receive Funds (on the Cover Page)?

Depending on the institution, the Authorized Institutional Representative (often in the Office of Sponsored Programs) usually signs off on the application to ensure that you and the Institution have met the eligibility requirements. The Institutional Officer to Receive Funds (often in the Post-Award Office) is usually the fiscal officer and receives award payments,



prepares fiscal reports, and oversees other financial requirements of your grant. Please check with your institution to determine who should sign these sections of the Cover Page.

Will the King Trust sponsor my work visa?

No, the King Trust Fellowship Awards are made to your sponsoring institution on your behalf. The King Trust does not sponsor work visas.

Do I need to write a letter to the Trust in advance of the deadline?

A letter to the Trust is not necessary prior to the submission of the application.

Do I need an eRA Commons user name for the Biosketch?

No, an eRA Commons user name is not required.

I entered the wrong tax identification number in the online application form. How do I correct this?

The tax ID number that you entered in the very first page of the online application cannot be changed. Please start a new application so that your account and application are submitted under the correct organization.

How should I proceed with the application if I have two Mentors?

Please designate one Primary Mentor to be responsible for research progress and administrative oversight. The Cover Page should contain only the Primary Mentor's information. Up to three mentor biosketches (mentor and two co-mentors) will be allowed in the application, each with no more than 6 pages. Within the application, only three (3) letters of recommendation will be allowed: one from the primary mentor; one from the thesis advisor, residency, or fellowship director; and one additional letter of recommendation that should be written by the co-mentor.

After filling it out, the Application Cover Page is longer than 1 page. Is it acceptable for the signatures to be on page 2 of the application?

Yes, it is acceptable that the Cover Page is longer than one page.

Do I need to number all the pages of the application and note these numbers in the "Table of Contents"?

Yes, please number all pages of the application and update the Table of Contents with the appropriate page numberings. It might be easiest to do this after you have merged everything into one PDF.

Should the bibliography be placed after the research proposal?

Yes, please add the bibliography after the research proposal. The bibliography/references cited are not counted towards the total page count of the research proposal.

What are acceptable uses of the Flexible funding?

Acceptable uses of the flexible funding that have been proposed by past applicants include costs for research supplies, salary supplementation, lab technician salaries, travel support, coursework, caregiver support, equipment, animals, study participants, publication fees, core services, and contractors. If flexible funding is to be used to support salary of another lab member, no more than 10% fringe costs may be applied.



Below is a list of additional resources that applicants are encouraged to explore. The table below is not an exhaustive list of available resources. HRiA does not endorse any of the listed resources.

Resource	Website
NIH OITE	https://www.training.nih.gov/
HAPPY	https://www.happythemovement.com/home
Dragonfly Mental Health	https://dragonflymentalhealth.org/
Personal Finance for PhDs	http://pfforphds.com/
KiddieCorp	https://www.kiddiecorp.com/
CIMER	https://cimerproject.org/
Leading Edge	https://www.leadingedgesymposium.org/
pdHub	https://www.pdhub.org/about/
Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science	https://aldacenter.org/
COMPASS	https://www.compassscicomm.org/leadership-development/
Leadership and Management in Action	https://www.mollygrisham.com/lmap
The Postdoc Academy	https://www.postdocacademy.org/
SciPhD	https://sciphd.com/about-us/
CIRTL	https://cirtl.net/core-ideas/
Emerge Institute	https://emergeinstitute.com/details/
Propel	https://www.propelcareers.com/
Rockwood Leadership Institute	https://rockwoodleadership.org/

Who should I contact with additional questions?

KingAwards@hria.org

Updated December 2025

