

Charles A. King Trust Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Program

Office Hours

January 14th, 2025, 11AM ET

[2025 King Office Hours video recording](#)



Introductions



Who We Are



Kim Lezak, Ph.D. (she/her)
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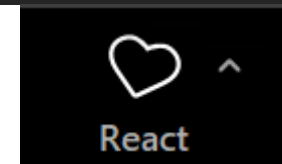
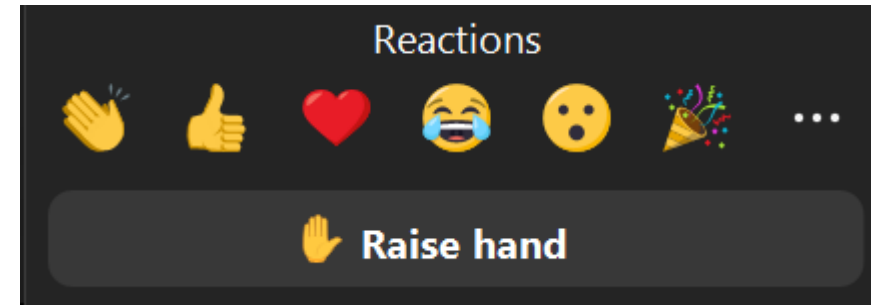
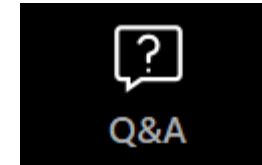
Meeting Etiquette



- Please hold questions until the end of the presentation

OR

- Use the “Q&A” feature to ask or upvote questions
- *The moderator might ask you to unmute or clarify a question, but you are welcome to decline!*
- Mute yourself when not speaking
- To speak, use the “**raise hand**” feature
 - Wait for the moderator to invite you to speak
 - Do NOT “jump in” or interrupt others



Agenda



- Program Overview and Application Requirements
 - Program Mission & Research Focus
 - Program Overview
 - Changes from 2024
 - Eligibility
 - Budget Guidance
 - Review Criteria
- Lessons Learned and Helpful Tips
 - Pitfalls to Avoid
 - Application Tips
- Q & A

Program Mission

The King Trust was established to support and promote the:

“investigation of human disease and the alleviation of human suffering through improved treatment”.

King Trust Fellowship Program

To provide funding to Massachusetts based postdoctoral fellows and clinical scientists in the mid to late stages of their research training to help them achieve their goals of becoming independent investigators in biomedical research.



Diverse and Inclusive Research

To promote and enable diversity in biomedical research, the King Trust is committed to awarding researchers *of all backgrounds*, including racial/ethnic groups that are underrepresented in science.

The King Trust seeks to support the next generation of scientific leaders who are dedicated to creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive research environment, and who contribute to the wider research community and promote positive research culture.

Research Focus



There are two separate, but linked programs:

- **King Trust Basic and Preclinical Science Award Program**
 - Proposals in the basic sciences seek to increase our understanding of the underlying biological processes relevant to human health and disease. Preclinical sciences seek to move findings from basic research towards clinical application.
 - This includes research projects involving patient derived tissue, samples or data; or using cell culture or animal models seeking to understand basic science questions
- **King Trust Clinical and Implementation Research Award Program**
 - Clinical or implementation research funded by this program support *human* studies
 - Includes physiological research, behavioral science and health education research, translational research (the application of bench research to patient care), epidemiological research, health services and policy research, outcomes research, and research about healthcare delivery and population health, regardless of specialty or discipline.

Additional funding from the O'Brien Trust and Fortin Charitable Foundation supports research focused on **cancer or vision.**

Program Overview



Amount & Duration: Ranging from \$194,100 to \$215,000 total over 2 years (inclusive of 10% fringe allowance and flexible allowance of \$25K per year, indirect costs not allowed)

Award Dates: Oct 1, 2025 – Sept 30, 2027

Application Deadline

Award Start

March 5th, 2025

August

October 1st, 2025

September 30th, 2027

Award Notifications

Award End

Changes from 2024 Program



- Focus
 - O'Brien Trust funding has expanded focus from "blindness" to support projects related to "vision"
- Eligibility
 - Expanded guidance and caps on eligibility related to concurrent funding
 - Proposal resubmission allowance and review guidance

Resubmission Response (if applicable, maximum of 300 words)

For project resubmissions, please provide a high-level description of the issues that were raised previously by reviewers and how those concerns were addressed in the current proposal. This should not be a point-by-point rebuttal but rather a summary of how the new application addresses key issues raised by the reviewers, including changes to the overall hypothesis, specific aims, and if new preliminary data were added.

Changes from 2024 Program cont.



- Application Requirements
 - Shortened letters of recommendation
 - Mentor – 3 pages
 - All other letters – 2 pages
 - Allowing a total of three mentors, not four (primary mentor and 2 co-mentors)
 - Requesting info on publication contributions
 - Changes to proposal order

Postdoctoral Publications: Please list all peer reviewed research articles (review articles not allowed) that have resulted from postdoctoral work. Bold your name and list your contributions to the work (e.g. conception or design; acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data; creation of software or tool used in work; drafted or edited manuscript).

Reference	Contribution	Publications Senior /Last Author (lab the work originated in).

1. Cover Page
2. Table of Contents
3. Eligibility, Research Experience, Career Trajectory
4. Contributions to the Research Community and Promotion of Positive Research Culture
5. Research Project Title and Summary
6. Non-Technical Summary
7. Project Ownership Plan
8. Proposal
9. Research and Career Development Plan
10. Program Budget and Other Support
11. Applicant Biosketch
12. Mentor Biosketch

- a. Resubmission Response (if applicable)
- b. Background
- c. Specific Aims
- d. Preliminary Data
 - Aim 1, Aim 2, etc.
- e. Research design, experimental methods and analytical plan
 - Aim 2, Aim 2, etc.
- f. Research limitations and/or potential pitfalls
 - Aim 1, Aim 2, etc.
- g. Human Subjects (if applicable)
- h. References



Eligibility



By October 1, 2025

- Postdoc (or equivalent) or clinician scientist with a doctoral degree (MD, MD/PhD, PhD, DO, DMD, PharmD, DPT...)
- Conducting mentored non-independent research in the states of **Massachusetts**.
- **Postdoc Research Experience (excluding pauses for extenuating circumstances):**
 - Without clinical training
 - 3-6 years full-time postdoctoral research experience
 - Commit 90% protected time to research
 - With clinical training
 - No more than 6 years full-time postdoctoral (or equivalent) research experience
 - Commit 70% protected time to research
 - Must have completed residency and clinical training. Award support may not overlap with fellowship support.
- **Publication:** By March 5th, must have at least one peer reviewed research article from postdoc work (co-author is fine). Submitted or in-press must be publicly available as a pre-print.
- Must apply under guidance of a Mentor (1 applicant per mentor)

Eligibility cont.



- **Concurrent Funding:**

- Cannot hold concurrent Career Development Award, including NIH K, KL2 or other equivalent award at the time of application.
- Cannot have other funding totaling more than \$100K (applicants without clinical responsibilities) or \$150K (applicants with clinical responsibilities) in direct costs, during the first year of the award.
 - Does not include the King Award itself, or awards designed to support loan repayment

Example 1: Clinician Scientist

- Foundation Award (1/1/2023 – 12/31/2025)
 - \$110,000 direct costs
- Young Investigator Award (7/1/2024 – 6/31/2026)
 - \$55,000 direct costs

NOT ELIGIBLE

Example 2: Clinician Scientist

- Really Cool Fellowship Award (8/1/2023 – 7/31/2025)
 - \$150,000 direct costs
- Foundation Award (1/1/2025 – 12/31/2025)
 - \$90,000 direct costs
- NIH Loan Repayment Program (7/1/2024 – 6/31/2026)
 - \$60,000 direct costs

ELIGIBLE

Budget Guidance



Flexible allowance of \$25,000 per year for 2 years

- Funds can be used at the discretion of the Award Recipient for a variety of purposes:
 - E.g. research supplies, salary supplementation, lab technicians, travel, coursework, caregiver support, equipment, publication costs, study participants, and/or core services.
- Flexible allowance may not be used for indirect costs or institutional overhead (Rent, Telephone/Fax/Internet, etc...)

Program Budget and Other Support

Applicant Name (PI)			
Current Salary – Please report the Applicant's current total compensation. We request this information to fully understand the institutional commitment to the applicant.			
Additional Mentor Support – Please describe if and how the mentor will supplement the Applicant's salary and/or research related costs if awarded.			
Flexible Allowance Justification – Please provide detailed explanation for the proposed use of the \$25,000 flexible allowance per year of support.			
Item	Budgeted Amount		Justification
	Year 1	Year 2	

Review Criteria

Research Proposal

- Contribute to understanding of causes of human disease to help improve treatment
- Originality, impact and creativity
- Hypothesis is novel and/or builds on current knowledge and references relevant literature
- Aims are well conceived and necessary to inform hypothesis.
- Research methodology, data collection, and analytical plan are feasible and appropriate to the proposals aims
- Resubmitted proposals have addressed past critiques.

Applicant

- Proposed work builds on applicant's prior research and has potential to contribute to professional training and growth towards independence.
- Career trajectory demonstrates increasing independence
- Applicant has demonstrated commitment and contributions to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment, contributing to the wider research community, and promoting positive research culture.
- Applicant's experiences help build diverse STEM workforce

Research and Career Development Plan

- Includes relevant benchmarks to complete work
- Includes learning opportunities for skill development as appropriate
- Mentor's role in the Applicant's research and career development clearly outlined
- Relevant research dissemination, networking, and funding application opportunities outlined
- Applicant will have appropriate opportunities to supervise

Mentor and Support

- Mentor has experience mentoring or has built a team to enable success of the applicant in advancing their career.
- Mentor demonstrates commitment to supervise and train Applicant, provide financial support necessary and clear project ownership plan
- Training environment is sufficient to enable completion of proposed research
- Mentor speaks to importance of proposed research and how it will help Applicant secure independent role
- Letters of recommendation attest to the importance of the proposed research, and that the proposed work will complement and build upon the applicant's background in achieving their goals

Common Pitfalls to Avoid



- Unclear impact/significance
- Feasibility of the approach, lack of detail, lack of pitfalls and alternate approaches
- Appropriate use of sample size and statistics
- Poor grantsmanship: jargon, abbreviations, no clear hypothesis
- Interdependent or exploratory Aims
- Relevance and rigor of publication record
- Unclear contribution to career development/training
- Lack of detailed and personalized mentoring plan
- Lack of experience or lack of plan to address gaps in experience
- Lack of detail in letters of recommendation

Application Tips



- Make sure your proposal reflects the review criteria and program goals
- Tell the story and provide explicit reasons and statements regarding why your approach is promising and helpful for your career trajectory. Recruit the right team: Include appropriate collaborations and/or shared mentorship if it benefits the project
- Include relevant preliminary data
- Be realistic (in timeline, budgets, methodologies, etc.)
- Avoid jargon and abbreviations; should be understandable to scientific generalists
- Be concise and clear (make it easy to read!)
- Point out pitfalls, include contingencies, mention sample sizes and statistics
- Seek feedback (internally, externally, and across disciplines)

Specific Quotes



- **Impact/Significance/Hypothesis:** “The proposal is largely technical in nature and could be strengthened by addressing why the work is important/significant or how the findings will advance scientific knowledge about the topic.”; “The proposal could be strengthened with more information about the overall biological question/goal and hypotheses”; “The applicant should clearly articulate the hypothesis within the proposal.”; “The rationale regarding the proposed assays and analyses should be provided to support the impact of the work.”
- **Approach/Methods:** “The proposal could be improved with further description of the number of experiments and statistical analyses.”; “The proposal could be strengthened by including more description regarding interpretation of the results and extrapolation to the larger biological process.”; “the proposal should mention methodologies, power calculations, or considerations of rigor and reproducibility”; “The experimental plan needs more details regarding expected results and alternative approaches.”; “The aims are largely dependent on the outcome of the previous one.”; “The proposal is exploratory in nature, and more rationale is needed why these studies are relevant for the question at hand.”; “Rationale for why x would affect y is underdeveloped.”
- **Feasibility:** “A major concern is that too much work is being proposed and that each Aim may only be superficially addressed.”; “The applicant proposes to utilize XXX statistical analysis, however, this does not seem feasible given the number of participants/samples included in the project.”; “The applicant has proposed a large body of work to complete, however no mention is made regarding other support provided by laboratory personnel.”
- **Experience/Publications:** “The Applicant should clarify whether they have any experience with the proposed techniques, and if not, how they will learn.”; “There is limited record of papers directly relevant to the proposed research so the proposal could be improved with some discussion of how limited experience will be addressed.”; “The applicant is a middle author on a publication with many co-authors and it is unclear what their role was in this study.”
- **Career Trajectory/Development Plan:** “The proposal could be improved by providing more explanation of how this work will help the Applicant transition into an independent career.”; “The role of the mentor and plans for transition to independence is not clearly laid out in the career development plan. Some other details are lacking.”
- **Mentorship:** “The mentoring plan outlined should include more personalization and detailed description; potentially regarding how the current research will set the stage for future independence.”; “It would have been a good idea to enlist a co-mentor so that the Applicant is sure to get sufficient guidance.”; “The extent of involvement of the co-mentor is not fully delineated - it is unclear to what extent they will be involved and in what capacity.”; “It should be clearly outlined the new techniques and background(scientific field) the Applicant will be learning and why it is important for completion of the work and their research trajectory.”
- **LOS:** “The LOS could be improved by expanding upon the Applicant’s strengths, skills, and traits that would make them a standout leader as an independent investigator. The LOS could also be improved by directly attesting to the importance of the proposed research.”; “The other letters of reference could be improved with more personalized and extensive information.”
- **Contributions to the Research Community/Promotion of Positive Research/DEI:** “The DEI/STEM statement was fairly generic and could have been improved with more specific details.”; “The applicant’s describes support for the idea of contributing to the research community and promoting positive research culture, however there is not too much involvement explicitly mentioned.”

Questions?

Program Website:

<https://hria.org/tmf/king/>

Please send eligibility questions specific to your unique situation to our program inbox.

Contact Us:

KingAwards@hria.org



Questions and Answers

Updated from the live Office Hours session

Answers to Common Questions



Location or Employment

I have the Title of Assistant Professor/Research Scientist/Instructor, am I eligible? 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. 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.

My previous postdoc experience was from a lab outside of Massachusetts. Am I eligible? You are still eligible if you completed your post-doc experience outside of Massachusetts or the United States. You are required to work in a Massachusetts academic or medical research institution at the time of the award.

I was a postdoc for a year in the lab where I got my PhD. How does this influence eligibility? 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.

Do I need to be a US citizen or permanent resident to apply? Do you need visa documentation? You do not need to be a US Citizen or have US residency to apply. Visa documentation is not required by HRiA, but applicants are encouraged to check with their institution for internal requirements.

Answers to Common Questions cont.



Publications

Am I eligible if I have a paper from a previous postdoc? What if I am a co-author or have a BioRxiv pre-print that is under review?

Yes, publications from prior postdoc positions and co-author publications count towards eligibility, however competitive Applicant's typically have a first-author publication from their current postdoc lab. Applicants with a publication in press or submitted for review will be considered eligible if the article is 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.

Should publications be related to the research I am proposing in the application? Publications that count toward eligibility don't have to be related to your application. They just need to be from postdoctoral research to be eligible

Reviews do not count toward eligibility but what about systemic reviews with meta-analysis? Yes, these types of publications count toward eligibility because they are not simply descriptive.

Can we update our publications after submission? No, submissions are considered final.

Answers to Common Questions cont.



Funding

Does current funding supported by a mentor's grant (e.g. R01) count as concurrent funding? No, current funding support provided by a mentor or other researchers grant does not count toward concurrent funding limits. Only funding where you are the PI (or co-PI).

Are you eligible if you have a K award submitted and scored but not yet awarded by the time of application submission? Yes.

Applicants with pending applications to the NIH and/or other funders are encouraged to submit proposals to the King Trust. Applicants should check concurrent funding restrictions for existing awards and are encouraged to contact program staff to confirm eligibility. Applicants must withdraw their proposals if, before the funding start date of October 1, 2025, they receive a Career Development Award or equivalent, and/or receive an award that increases direct costs above the allowable limits stated above, during the first year of King Award Funding.

Am I eligible if I have received or am supported by a T32, K00, or F32? Yes, these are not Career Development Awards. However, these may not be held concurrently with a King Award. Applicants must also be sure that they do not have combined funding above the limits stated in the Program Guidelines.

I have a Career Development Award that ends in June of 2025 so it won't overlap with the award. Am I eligible? No. Applicants may not hold a concurrent Career Development Award, including an NIH K, KL2 Award, or equivalent award from private sources, at the time of application or award.

Answers to Common Questions cont.



Application Components

How do we include information on collaborations or shared mentorship? We do not allow letters of support, however there are several ways in which collaborations and shared can be conveyed in the applications (career development plan, biosketch, proposal itself, mentor's letter).

How are letters from co-mentors handled? What else is required of co-mentors? If you have a co-mentor, they should write the third letter of recommendation. If you have two co-mentors, you can choose one to write a letter, or they can write a joint letter. Your primary mentor should also describe your mentorship plan within their letter of recommendation. Co-mentor biosketches should also be included in the application.

Do co-mentors have to be from my institution or from Massachusetts? No. You may have a secondary mentor/collaborator outside of MA.

Do you have examples of what a specific Career Development plan looks like? Yes, please see the example Career Development Plan posted to our website.

May I apply to both the Basic and Clinical programs in the same year? No. Applicant's should submit only one application per year.

Can two postdocs from one lab apply for the fellowship? No, only one applicant per primary mentor can apply.

Answers to Common Questions cont.



Other

Will we receive reviewer comments if we are not funded? Yes, if available, all applicants will receive reviewer feedback.

What will happen if someone moves to another job within the fellowship timeline? King awardees that receive a new job (industry, independent faculty position), or move to a lab outside of Massachusetts after the award has started will be required to relinquish their award.

It looks like the recent success rate for the program has decreased. Can you comment on that and the anticipated success rate?

The success rates decreased because the awards are now significantly larger than they were in years past (and thus fewer awards can be distributed). We cannot comment on the anticipated success rate because this is dependent on both the number of applications that we receive and the amount of funding available to support awards (which depends on multiple factors).

Answers to Common Questions cont.



I joined my postdoc in 20XX but took time away for parental leave. Am I eligible? For specific eligibility questions, please contact us to confirm eligibility.

How to calculate your research experience: when emailing program staff, please include a filled-out table such as the one below to show your total research time.

Dr. Smith's postdoctoral research experience

Start Date	End Date	% Research Effort	Position or Pause in Research	
July 2014	July 2015	100%	Postdoc research year	12 mo
July 2015	June 2018	0	Medical residency	
July 2018	June 2021	0	Fellowship in Medical Subspeciality – clinical training	
July 2021	December 2021	100%	Research Fellowship	6 mo
January 2022	February 2022		Family Leave	
March 2022	Sept 30, 2025	100%	Fellow in Basic Science lab	3yr, 7 mo

Dr. Smith is **eligible**. They have a total of **5 years, 1 month** of full-time postdoctoral research experience by the funding start date.

Common Questions cont.



Dr. Li's postdoctoral research experience

Start Date	End Date	% Research Effort	Position or Pause in Research	
	2014		MD	
	2017		PhD	
2017	January 2019		Residency	
Feb 2019	Feb 2020	100%	Postdoc Fellowship	1 yr
March 2020	May 2020		COVID related lab closure	
June 2020	October 2023	100%	Postdoc Fellowship	3yr, 5 mo
Nov 2023	Dec 2024		Family leave	
Jan 2024	Sept 30, 2025	100%	Postdoc Fellowship	1 yr, 9 mo

Dr. Li is **not eligible**. They have a total of **6 years, 2 month** of full-time postdoctoral research experience by the funding start date.

Office Hours Recording

[2025 King Office Hours video recording](#)