

Eligibility

1. I have a PhD and was appointed as Instructor (a faculty position) following my fellowship training. Am I eligible to use Instructor as my first faculty appointment?

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 are considering the tenure track Assistant Professor appointment to be the first independent faculty appointment.

If your institution can confirm in writing at the time of application that you will be appointed an Assistant Professor by the funding start date (and can provide verification in the event the Award is offered), then the Smith Family Foundation will accept your application. If not, then you should wait to apply in future grant cycles when Assistant Professorship is established.

2. Are leaves of absence counted towards the three-and-a-half-year ceiling?

No. If you were not working during a specific period, you would not include that time when determining your eligibility. The Department or Division Chair should confirm both the duration of the leave of absence and applicant eligibility via the Applicant Independence/Institutional Commitment Form.

3. I am currently an Associate Professor. May I apply for this grant?

Typically, Associate Professor is not a first faculty appointment. However, if this is your first faculty appointment following completion of fellowship training and you meet the eligibility requirements for the PhD or MD (page 2 of the Application Guidelines), we will accept an application from you.

4. I have two private sector awards at \$150,000 each. Would this preclude me from applying?

Applicants are ineligible if, at the time of application, they have combined federal and non-federal funding totaling \$350,000 or more in direct costs in either of the first two years of the three-year Smith Award. This figure refers to external funding only and not an Applicant's start-up package, other intramural support, or the Smith Award.

5. If I have \$350,000 or more in direct costs during the first year of the Excellence Award and nothing in the second year, will I still be eligible?

No, you are not eligible.

6. If I have been designated as a "short-term" PI on an R01 that was originally awarded to someone else who has left the institution, would I be eligible?

As long as you did not write or compete for this award, you would be eligible if the direct costs allocated to you from the R01, combined with your other federal and non-federal funding, do not total \$350,000 or more during either of the first two years of the Excellence Award.

7. May I submit a project that involves human subjects?

Although clinical trials are outside the scope of this program, basic research involving human subjects, data, or samples would be eligible.

8. My project involves modeling the impact of different diseases on different populations and how this affects healthcare decisions. Would this be considered “biomedical research?”

The Excellence Awards support traditional laboratory/bench research and do not support health services research.

9. My project involves the development of research methods. Is this eligible?

Methods proposals must have a strong focus on a biological question. Such proposals are only eligible if they originate in a biological question for which the appropriate technology is missing.

10. May I list collaborators or a Co-PI on this submission?

Collaborators may be included on your online application, but the Excellence Awards Program does not recognize a Co-PI or Multiple PIs.

11. Shall I include the C.V. of a collaborator?

Do not append a C.V. for a collaborator but please list collaborators on the online application form. If you are invited to submit a Full application, that person should include a brief letter of collaboration and describe the expertise that s/he is bringing to the project.

12. If I am offered the Award but cannot accept it, may it be transferred to a collaborator or other individual significantly involved in the project?

No. The Excellence grant can only be awarded to the Applicant who originally submitted the grant.

Application Instructions

1. Is a traditional research proposal required at the Initial Proposal stage?

No. Please follow the instructions as stated in the Application Guidelines and on the Application Forms. Do not include any supplemental materials.

2. How can I incorporate figures, graphs, tables, or pictures into my Initial Research Proposal?

Figures, graphs, tables, or pictures are not required. If they are included, they must fit along with the specific word limits in a text box no larger than a single page. Specific instructions are provided on the application form. Reviewers do not expect to see figures in an initial stage proposal, and unclear or illegible ones are viewed unfavorably.

3. May I include supplemental materials such as letters of recommendation?

No. Supplemental materials will be removed.

4. Does the Full Proposal budget page reflect the actual cost of the project or only what is requested from the Smith Family Foundation?

This page summarizes what is being requested from the Excellence Awards Program. If the project uses additional support from other sources, those amounts should be noted in the section labeled “Other Support,” on the Budget Template form.

5. Must we commit a certain percentage of time to the Excellence project?

The Program does not require that a specific percentage of time be allocated to the project. Although salaries requested for the Excellence project must be in proportion to the percent effort on this project, percent effort may exceed the amount of salary support requested.

6. Are subcontracts allowable costs and where do we note these expenses on the budget worksheet for the Full Proposal?

The PI is allowed to pay subcontractors including collaborators. Budgets for all subcontracts must be itemized in the relevant Subcontract tabs in the budget worksheet.

7. Is graduate student tuition an allowable budget expense?

If the graduate student has a significant role on the proposed project, tuition may be charged as a personnel expense.

8. Is there a Biosketch format that I should use?

Applicants must use the most recent NIH Biographical Sketch form,
<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>

9. What is the difference between the “Authorized Institutional Representative” and the “Institutional Officer to Receive Funds?”

The Authorized Institutional Representative is responsible for research oversight and is often in the Office of Sponsored Programs. This person signs off on the application to ensure that you and the Institution have met the eligibility requirements. The Institutional Officer to Receive Funds is typically the Fiscal Officer and receives award payments, prepares fiscal reports and oversees other financial requirements of your grant.

10. Are Letters of Recommendation required in the 2026 Full Proposal?

No, Letters of Recommendation are not requested or required for the Full Proposal. Unsolicited Letters of Recommendation will not be considered by the committee. The Applicant Independence/Institutional Commitment Form should not be repurposed as a Letter of Recommendation.

11. Are the headings mentioned in the Full Proposal Research Proposal section required or may other section names be included?

These sections are required but other subheadings may be added if you wish.

12. If my project has Collaborators, do I need to include Letters of Collaboration?

Yes, if your project includes Collaborators, please include one Letter of Collaboration per Collaborator. These letters must confirm the availability of resources outside the Applicant’s institution and confirm any significant collaborative relationship, either within or outside the Applicant’s institution. These are brief letters (up to one page) addressing the collaboration. These are not letters of recommendation.

Online Submissions

1. Do I also mail a paper copy of the PDF upload?

No, please do not mail a paper copy.

2. Where do I get an ORCID ID number?

Smith Family Awards Program for Excellence in Biomedical Research
Frequently Asked Questions, 2026 Grant Cycle

Please visit <https://orcid.org/> to register for an ORCID ID. You are not required to provide an ORCID ID to submit your Smith Excellence application.

Additional Questions

1. Who were the successful applicants from the previous grant cycle?

Please see the listing of “Award Recipients” at <https://hria.org/tmf/Smith>.

For answers to any issues not covered in the program guidelines or the FAQs, please contact SmithExcellence@hria.org.