

Deborah Munroe Noonan Memorial Research Fund

Bank of America, N.A., Trustee



2026 Application Guidelines and Instructions – Initial Proposal

Submission Deadline Thursday, December 4, 2025 12:00 PM ET	Terms of the Award Application Instructions
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Award Summary	
Award Amount and Duration:	\$160,000 (\$80,000 per year) for 2 years (inclusive of up to 20% indirect costs)
Award Dates:	September 1, 2026 – August 31, 2028
Eligibility:	Who: Nonprofit organizations and academic organizations working with children and adolescents with chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional disabilities. Where: Organizations that are located within the geographic area of interest. See Eligibility Criteria for more details.
Program Focus:	Pilot, research, and evaluation projects that seek to improve the quality of life for children and adolescents with chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional disabilities. Exclusions: Applications with a predominant focus on fundamental aspects of phenomena without direct clinical application, device development, direct service, and primary prevention.

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Initial Proposal Stage

During the Initial Proposal Stage, submissions will be evaluated, and a subset of initial proposals will be invited to submit a detailed Full Proposal for funding consideration. Initial Proposals should speak to the importance of the problem or need and originality of the project. Please review the following guidelines and instructions for additional details on the submission requirements.

Program Overview

The *Deborah Munroe Noonan Memorial Research Fund*, established in 1947 by Frank M. Noonan in memory of his mother, continues its proud tradition of supporting improvements in the quality of life for children and adolescents with disabilities. The Noonan Research program welcomes proposals that support pilot, research, or evaluation projects from both nonprofit organizations and academic institutions that serve children with physical or developmental disabilities and associated health-related complications. Eligible organizations and target populations must be within the Fund's [geographic area of interest](#) of Greater Boston.

The Noonan Program supports projects that will advance the mission of the Fund. Investigators may be medical providers, researchers, staff from community-based organizations, support groups, community members, registered nurses, educators, allied therapists, and social workers that work with children and adolescents with disabilities. All applications should include personnel with research expertise as a member of the project team. U.S. citizenship is not required.

Bank of America, N.A., has retained Health Resources in Action (HRiA) to administer the Deborah Munroe Noonan Memorial Research Fund grantmaking program. Health Resources in Action (HRiA) is a non-profit organization that partners with individuals, organizations, and communities to transform the practices, policies, and systems that improve health and advance equity.

Program Focus

The Noonan Research Fund supports innovative clinical and service system research, evaluation projects, and pilot projects in the greater Boston area, designed to improve the quality of life for children and adolescents with disabilities as reflected in the target population description. Proposed projects must provide comments regarding how outcomes of the proposed project will advance health equity. **Projects should include intentional processes that integrate people with lived experience in the decisions being made and meaningfully engage them in research activities that are meant to address the inequities they face.**

“Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their

consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.”¹

Funds may be used to support personnel, participant enrollment, small equipment purchases, supplies, travel, and other direct expenses that are needed for the project completion.

A partial list of examples of past projects supported by the Noonan Fund includes:

- A. The completion of community-based participatory research, in which community partners are actively engaged in any or all aspects of the proposed project and may serve as principal or co-investigators, or collaborators on the project.
- B. The completion of a pilot project to test the feasibility and effectiveness of a program and to enable additional funding support or provide evidence to promote development or scaling up of an intervention/program/course in a clinical program, school or community-based agency.
- C. The completion of detailed, comprehensive research projects to obtain compelling research data that informs subsequent implementation of programs, courses, etc.
- D. The collection of *new* data on existing research or program development that will enable the application for larger federal or privately funded grants.

Exclusions

Proposals for basic science research will not be considered, nor will applications for capital costs such as buildings, renovations, or major equipment items. The Noonan Fund does not support direct service, primary prevention projects, or device development. Drug trials are not supported by the Noonan Research Fund.

Eligibility Criteria

All projects and applicants must meet the following requirements.

Target Population

- The target population includes children and adolescents (birth - 23 years old) with chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional disabilities who require a combination of special and/or interdisciplinary services, individualized supports, therapies, or other forms of services or supports that are of lifelong or extended duration.
- The majority (at least 60%) of project participants must reside within the Fund’s **geographic area of interest**.
- Statewide health services research projects for which the majority of participants are within this area will also be considered eligible.
- Clinical research must include a study population inclusive of women and minority groups as well as a rationale that speaks to the composition of the study population.

¹ <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/05/what-is-health-equity-.html>

Any exclusions within the study population need to be described and scientifically justified.

The Fund's target population includes infants, children, and adolescents with chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional disabilities, either continuous or episodic, which result in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the areas of major life activity (listed below):

1. self-care
2. receptive and expressive language
3. learning
4. mobility
5. self-direction
6. capacity for independent living
7. capacity for economic self-sufficiency

Applicant Eligibility Requirements

- The Noonan Program supports project personnel across a variety of settings; this includes members in community settings that work with or have programs that serve children and adolescents with disabilities (YMCA, therapeutic or educational settings, disability advocacy organizations, etc.) seeking to conduct research projects, investigators in other research areas who wish to apply their expertise to childhood disability research, and individuals that are early in their career.
- **The Noonan Program encourages, but does not require, partnerships where the lead/primary contact organization for a project is a community-based organization (CBO). This is in order to help foster partnerships between CBOs and non-CBOs in capacity building to advance health equity.** CBOs work at the local level to meet community needs. This includes social service agencies, nonprofit organizations, and formal and informal community groups, like neighborhood groups or recreational or special-interest clubs. CBOs do not include municipalities, universities, quasi-governmental organizations, or for-profit companies or businesses.
- **"Nothing about us without us"** – The project team must speak to the inclusion of people with disabilities and the intersectionality with other marginalized identities on the research team.
- Applicants must hold a position at a nonprofit institution or organization within the Fund's [geographic area of interest](#).
- The Institutional Contact responsible for the oversight of the project is required to sign off on the application form to complete the submission.
- No advanced degree is required. Project personnel may be providers, community members, educators, allied therapists, social workers, and or nurses that work with children and adolescents with disabilities.
- U.S. citizenship is not required.

Collaborations

While not required for funding consideration, the Noonan Fund strongly encourages both new and established partnerships and welcomes proposals from community-based organizations, advocacy organizations, faith-based institutions, neighborhood committees, local municipalities, academic institutions, hospitals including safety net

institutions, and non-profit research organizations. Proposals should speak to how community is meaningfully engaged in the project work and decision-making.

The Noonan Fund supports applications from project teams with diverse perspectives and that are reflective of lived experience, in order to enhance the impact of the project. Existing funding supporting the collaboration effort is not required for application. The rationale and explicit roles for each organization and project team member should be provided and included in the organization description and project timeline. Projects that integrate complementary expertise across organizations capable of addressing barriers to health and accelerating work that fulfills the mission of the Noonan Fund are encouraged to apply.

Awards will be made via a contract awarded to a single institution responsible for satisfying the administration, performance, and reporting requirements of the contract. Other collaborating organizations may be sub-contracted by the lead institution and must designate a lead principal investigator who is responsible for performance under the contract.

Project Key Personnel

- **Primary Contact of Applicant Organization:** One principal investigator must be identified as the lead or administrative contact of the award, who will be responsible for all grant reporting and fiscal management. The lead or administrative contact should be located within the Noonan Trust's geographical area of interest and will be the main contact for budget and reporting management.
- **Co-Investigators/Collaborators:** A co-investigator/collaborator should contribute significantly to the project. Funds should be distributed to co-investigators/collaborators in proportion to the effort provided towards completion of the project. Co-investigators/collaborators should be located within the Noonan Trust's [geographic area of interest](#). Information regarding involvement in the project should be included throughout the proposal.
- Roles of the Principal Investigator, Co-Investigators and Collaborators should be delineated on the **Initial Proposal Project Timeline and Milestones chart**.

Submission Requirements

All application information must be completed online and the proposal uploaded as a PDF. Please review the [Application Instructions](#) for details on submitting the application. The complete application includes an Application Cover Page, Table of Contents, Project Summary, Non-Technical Overview, Organization and Collaborator(s) Profile, Initial Proposal (two pages excluding bibliography), Project Timeline and Milestones Summary Table, and Bio-sketch/Resume/CV.

Selection Criteria

Emphasis will be placed on how the proposed project addresses the improvement in the quality of life for children and adolescents with chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional disabilities. **Priority will be given to projects that are community-led, projects**

incorporating community-based participatory research approach through meaningful partnership/collaboration, and projects focused on racial and health equity. Proposals should be centered on disability and must present a clear statement of the problem, the originality their work, and how the problem will be addressed in either a ***Pilot, Research, or Evaluation*** project.

Pilot Project –

A project that is a small-scale test of an intervention where the primary objective is to evaluate feasibility, duration, effectiveness, and/or other possible issues before implementation on a broader scale.

Research Project –

A project where the primary objective is to test specific hypotheses about health and functional abilities of children with disabilities.

Evaluation Project² –

A project that collects, analyzes, and uses data to examine the effectiveness and efficiency of a program and to contribute to continuous program improvement.

All projects will be evaluated based on:

- The potential impact of the proposed work on the intended community.
- The extent to which the proposal seeks to advance health equity³ and racial equity.
- The extent to which the proposal includes intentional processes that integrate people with lived experience in the decisions being made, as well as the research design and implementation.
- If applicable, how the proposal outlines the strength of partnerships (new or established) through clearly defined roles and responsibilities in order to fulfill the goals of the proposed work and contribute to the partnership.
- The approach actively engages the population of interest throughout the project period.
- The project can be accomplished within the funding period for a two-year award based on a proposed timeline.
- The dissemination of the findings will be shared with the community/population served and other notable stakeholders.
- The significance and originality of the proposed project.

*Each type of project will be evaluated based on the following **additional criteria**:*

Pilot Projects will be evaluated based on:

- Conceptualization of the intervention(s) to be evaluated, identified measures (structure, process, outcomes), and linkages between proposed intervention/activities, measures, and outcomes.
- The extent to which the applicant can measure feasibility, implementation, and/or effectiveness of the key intervention/activity.
- The potential achievement of relevant outcomes.

² <https://www.cdc.gov/evaluation/index.htm>

³ <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/05/what-is-health-equity-.html>

Research Projects will be evaluated based on:

- Clarity of the stated hypotheses.
- Appropriate research design, including the selection and validity of independent and control variables, and outcomes. If qualitative research, describe in detail methodological and analytical plan for the stated research question.
- The study is sufficiently powered to answer the research question or hypothesis posed.

Evaluation Projects will be evaluated based on:

- The use of a formal evaluation approach. These may include measures related to the program logic model, or a quality improvement framework.
- The extent to which the applicant can evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the program
- The potential that the evaluation will lead to program improvement

All projects will also be evaluated based on:

Applicant and/or Project Team

- The project personnel is reflective/inclusive of the population served and/or engaged in research.
- If applicable, the partnerships engaged in the work bring forward the appropriate background and skills needed to enhance project success.
- The project complements or enhances the applicant's previous and future professional work.
- Appropriateness of personnel or consultants with expertise in skills necessary for the project such as quantitative and/or qualitative data analysis.

Proposal Quality

- The team has put thought and effort into creating a professional, persuasive, and well-organized proposal that effectively communicates how the project will address the stated need or problem.

Notification to Applicants

Applicants will be notified by email upon receipt of their applications by HRiA. Initial proposals are due in December and full proposal invitations will be made in February 2026. Notification of funding status will be made by email in summer 2026.

Historical Statistics	2025	2024	2023	2022
# of Initial Proposal Submitted	26	32	13	26
# of Full Proposals Submitted	12	14	8	11
# of Two-Year Awards	3	4	2	4

One award will be prioritized toward proposals for which the lead organization is a community-based organization. Priority will also be given to early-stage investigators, including graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and assistant professors in either tenure-track or non-tenure track roles and early career professionals (less than 5 years of experience

working in the disability field) from non-academic institutions.

Terms of the Award

Please see the Terms of the Award at www.hria.org/grants/Noonan for information regarding use of the grant funds, reporting schedules and other Awardee and Institutional requirements.

Proposal Writing Tips

Applicants are strongly encouraged to practice and work towards enhancing their grant writing in drafting their applications to maximize their chances of being funded. All members of the team should be actively engaged in the preparation of the proposal. *The writing of the proposal will not be directly assessed*; however, it is recognized that clarity of the writing enhances the ability of the reviewers to follow the logical progression of the proposal and assess the impact the work will have on children and youth with disabilities, the applicant's qualifications, and their ability to conduct the proposed work.

The Review Committee is composed of a multi-disciplinary group of individuals with the ability to assess a wide range of proposal topics.

Characteristics of a well-written proposal include the following:

- Funding via non-governmental agencies is different. Make sure the proposal is reflective of the program goals and review criteria.
- Tell the story and *sell* the proposed work; make sure the background outlines why the proposed questions are important to answer, and the proposed approach is promising.
- The language should be understandable to a general audience. When jargon must be used, it is clearly explained, and complex technical points are put in context.
- Any other personnel included in the project should be clearly justified. Similarly, the composition and oversight of the team should be reflective of the project goals.
- Don't fall victim to proposing to complete too much work. Reflect on the timeline of the work to ensure it can be feasibly completed.
- Provide enough time to obtain feedback and allow for proofing prior to submission.

Cities and Towns within the Geographic Area of Interest

Abington	Hull	Norwell	Westwood
Arlington	Lexington	Norwood	Weymouth
Avon	Lincoln	Peabody	Whitman
Bedford	Lynn	Quincy	Wilmington
Belmont	Lynnfield	Randolph	Winchester
Beverly	Malden	Reading	Winthrop
Boston	Hull	Revere	Woburn
Braintree	Lexington	Norwell	
Bridgewater	Lincoln	Norwood	
Brockton	Lynn	Peabody	
Brookline	Lynnfield	Quincy	
Burlington	Malden	Randolph	
Cambridge	Hull	Reading	
Canton	Lexington	Revere	
Chelsea	Lincoln	Rockland	
Cohasset	Lynn	Rockport	
Concord	Lynnfield	Salem	
Danvers	Malden	Saugus	
Dedham	Manchester	Scituate	
Dover	Marblehead	Sharon	
East Bridgewater	Maynard	Somerville	
Easton	Medfield	Stoneham	
Everett	Medford	Stoughton	
Foxborough	Melrose	Sudbury	
Framingham	Milton	Swampscott	
Gloucester	Nahant	Wakefield	
Hanover	Natick	Walpole	
Hanson	Needham	Waltham	
Hingham	Newton	Watertown	
Holbrook	North Reading		

Application Instructions

Initial Stage Deadline: Thursday, December 4, 2025 at 12:00 PM ET
Full Proposal Submission by Invitation Only

Online Portal:

The online application portal will open for submissions on October 14, 2025. Applicants will submit their proposals in the HRiA Award Manager: <https://hria.us-1.smartsimple.com/>. Please visit hria.org/grants/noonan for detailed online application instructions.

Out of fairness to applicants who adhere to the guidelines, applications that do not conform to the stated instructions will be rejected.

The following information will be required within the fields of online submission:

☐ **Lead Organization/Individual Information**

- Tax ID of Organization (or Fiscal Sponsor, if applicable)
- Organization Name and Contact Information
- Applicant Contact, Education, and Demographic Information - This includes Applicant Institution (the Applicant's institution is the designated "Administrative or Lead" responsible for the oversight of the project), Contact Information, Demographic and Educational background information, ORCID identification number (if applicable and available).
- Institutional Officials Contact Information
 - Department/Division Chair or Organization Director
 - Authorized Institutional Representative - this individual is responsible for research oversight and is often in the Office of Sponsored Programs. This person signs off on the application to ensure that the Applicant and the Organization have met the eligibility requirements. For a community-based organization, the Authorized Institutional Representative may be the Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director or other senior leader and signs off on the application to ensure that the lead applicant and project team have met the eligibility requirements.

☐ **Project Information**

- Project Title
- Project Type
- Keywords
- Project Summary
- Non-Technical Overview

Answer the following questions in ONE SENTENCE EACH, in terms understandable to a non-specialist:

 - What big question(s) will your work answer?
 - Why does this question matter?
 - How will your work answer the big question?
- Project Population Geographical Representation

☐ **Key Personnel (Collaborators, if any)**

- Collaborator Names and Contact Information; brief description of role on the proposed project (maximum 50 words per collaborator)

ATTACHMENTS

Application Forms can be found at hria.org/grants/noonan

The following need to be uploaded in the Attachments section of the online application form.

- A. Organization and Collaborator(s) Profile (form):** Please include descriptions for the primary contact organizations and collaborators involved in the project.
- B. Initial Project Proposal (maximum of 2 pages, excluding references cited):** This includes all figures, graphs, tables, and images. The required font size for text in this section is Arial 11 with single spacing within paragraphs, double spacing between paragraphs, and one-inch margins on all four sides. Figures, legends, and tables may use a 9-10 point type. At the top of each page, include the Applicant's full name and degree(s).

Initial Proposal sections are listed below. Please keep in mind that these sections should be brief to fit within the **2-page limit** (*approximate length for each section may be used for guidance*), not inclusive of Bibliography/Works Cited:

- Background and Significance** (*up to ¾ page*) – Provide rationale for addressing the need or problem and describe how or why the proposed project provides an original, relevant solution. Link the project to available data (research literature and/or local data). Identify at least three substantial functional limitations that affect the study subjects in the inclusion criteria on the following list: self-care; receptive and expressive language; learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living; and economic self-sufficiency.
- Specific Aims** (*up to ¼ page*) – The objectives or aims of the proposed project should be clearly stated and supported by the background and significance described above.
- Potential Impact** (*up to ¼ page*) – Describe the impact of achieving the stated objectives in relation to the need or problem.
- Project Design and Methods** (*1 page*) – Provide a conceptual framework or model that guides the proposed work. Describe the study design as either a **Pilot, Research** (e.g., randomized control trial, longitudinal follow-up, cross-sectional survey, etc.), or **Evaluation** project
 - Population: Describe the study sample or proposed inclusion/exclusion criteria for project participants; include the geographical representation of the population, power analyses (if applicable) and sample size; describe plan to achieve participant recruitment goals;
 - Comparison group (if applicable): Describe the characteristics of the comparison or control group;

Consistent with current NIH policies, funded clinical research must include a study population inclusive of women and minority groups as well as a rationale that speaks to composition of the study population. Any exclusions within the study population need to be described and scientifically justified.

- c) Intervention or Program (if applicable): Provide an overview of the program or proposed intervention, including a detailed description of the activities to be conducted with the project participants or data;
 - d) Procedures, Methods, and Outcomes: Describe the specific outcomes to be measured. Include the procedures, methods (quantitative and/or qualitative) and data analytic plan (e.g., statistics, quantitative, qualitative, formative or summative evaluation) or evaluation plans for the project;
 - e) Where applicable, indicate the availability of personnel or consultants with expertise in the content area, the intervention/activity (if appropriate), or the evaluation.
 - f) Describe dissemination plan.
- v. **Bibliography/Works Cited:** May be in 9–10–point font. We do not require a specific citation format.

C. Project Timeline and Milestones Summary Table (form; 1 page): Create a summary table (no more than 1 page) based on the specific aims, that shows each milestone, the associated benchmark measure(s) of success, estimated timeline, and the project team member(s) involved (or Role if personnel is TBD); it may also include other explanatory material (including key personnel or collaborators). If no specific individual has been designated for a role, please indicate the role needed within the timeline. Please include specific data, methods, and benchmarks that will demonstrate achievement of each milestone. The successful completion of these activities will form the basis of continued funding. Note: All personnel and collaborations should be related to the achievement of milestones.

D. Applicant and Key Personnel Biosketch/Resume/CV:

- **Biosketch (Maximum of 5 pages).** Please reach out to program staff for any questions concerning the completion of the biosketch. Full information and templates for this format may be found at: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>. Include a personal statement that addresses how this project complements or enhances the applicant's previous and future professional work. Bio-sketches or short CV(s) (maximum of 5 pages) of other key personnel who have a major role in the project may be submitted.
- **Resume/CV (Maximum of 5 pages).** Please provide your resume that clearly outlines how prior experience will enhance the success of the proposed work.

Out of fairness to applicants who adhere to the Guidelines, applications that do not conform to the stated application procedures or that contain more than the specified number of pages or materials will be rejected.

Program Staff:

NoonanAwards@hria.org