

## **Alzheimer's and Related Diseases Research Award Fund**

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### **GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING RESEARCH PROPOSALS - 2025 -**

The Alzheimer's and Related Diseases Research Award Fund (ARDRAF) was established by the Commonwealth of Virginia (Code of Virginia, Title 51.5, Section 153) to support research into the causes of Alzheimer's and related diseases, methods of treatment, ways that families may cope with the stresses of caregiving, and the impact of these diseases on the citizens of the Commonwealth. Since 1982, the state has made an annual appropriation to the Fund and private contributions are accepted, as well.

**Four awards will be made on a competitive basis to scientists in Virginia and are limited to \$75,000 each.**

"Alzheimer's and Related Diseases" are defined as illnesses resulting from significant destruction of brain tissue characterized by a decline of memory and other intellectual functions. The related diseases are of special interest to the ARDRAF and include, but are not limited to, primary neurodegenerative dementias, such as dementia with Lewy Bodies and other Parkinsonian syndromes with dementia, vascular dementia, and frontotemporal dementias including Pick's Disease.

### **GOALS OF THE RESEARCH AWARD FUND**

Because of a commitment to program balance, the ARDRAF is intended to fund scientifically rigorous applications from a broad spectrum of disciplines that:

- Increase public understanding of Alzheimer's and related diseases and their impact on individuals, families, caregivers, and society.
- Support pilot research from a broad spectrum of scientific disciplines.
- Encourage innovative research into the causes and treatment of Alzheimer's and related diseases.
- Foster the application of knowledge about Alzheimer's and related diseases.
- Investigate the impact of Alzheimer's and related diseases on the

Commonwealth of Virginia and determine appropriate public policy.

Applicants seeking support for clinical or psychosocial research projects should include plans for recruiting subjects from both genders and all racial and ethnic groups (and subgroups) unless there is a clear and compelling reason why inclusion would be inappropriate with respect to the health of the subjects or the purpose of the research.

The ARDRAF is also committed to supporting research that aims to reduce or eliminate health disparities. There are differences in the prevalence of Alzheimer's and related diseases among ethnic groups. In addition, risk factors, diagnosis, response to treatment, caregiving, and overall quality of life may each be affected by aspects such as ethnicity and gender, as well as class and geographic location. Research that focuses on these aspects is also encouraged.

## **ADMINISTRATION OF THE FUND**

The Fund is administered by the Virginia Center on Aging at Virginia Commonwealth University. The Center is responsible for developing application procedures and review criteria, establishing fiscal controls and reporting requirements, and monitoring the conduct of investigations.

Applications are assigned to technical reviewers who represent domestic and international scientific and medical communities. A prestigious review panel convenes to analyze the feedback from reviewers, determine the funding priority scores, and make the final funding decisions.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

Applicants must be affiliated with a Virginia institution of higher education, agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia, or other not-for-profit organization exempt from income taxation pursuant to §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code located in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Private, non-profit organizations are required to attach proof of their tax-exempt status to the application form.

Collaborating entities or consultants need not meet the eligibility requirements so long as that collaboration entails minimal support. The institutional affiliations of Co-Investigators, however, must meet the same eligibility requirements as the

applicant (i.e., institution of higher education, agency or other not-for-profit organization exempt from income taxation pursuant to §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code).

**Established scientists seeking to shift their attention to Alzheimer's and related diseases, or new investigators interested in pursuing careers in this area, are especially urged to apply.**

Financial support for personnel currently receiving funding from the ARDRAF may not be requested. Past recipients considering submission of a new application to the ARDRAF are strongly encouraged to contact the administrator.

Although multiple grant applications from a single institution are permissible, Principal Investigators are discouraged from submitting multiple applications; only a single application can be funded for each Principal Investigator.

ARDRAF funding will be granted only for research permitted by all applicable federal and state laws and regulations. Applications contrary to applicable federal or state laws and regulations will not be accepted.

The ARDRAF encourages partnerships between community-based agencies/facilities and academic institutions, especially those that address community needs or promote mutually beneficial participatory research opportunities. In addition, the ARDRAF supports interprofessional healthcare and inter-departmental collaborations.

The ARDRAF also encourages investigations that have implications for addressing the goals of the **Dementia State Plan: Virginia's Response to the Needs of Individuals with Dementia and their Caregivers** developed by the Virginia Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission ([alzpossible.org/va-dementia-state-plan/](http://alzpossible.org/va-dementia-state-plan/)). If applicable, proposals should state how the study addresses Goal V, which calls for expanded resources for dementia specific translation research and evidence-based practices.

In addition, the ARDRAF encourages proposals that address the critical scientific priorities for research recommended in the ADRD report to NIH's National Advisory Neurological Disorders and Stroke Council abstracted under the Priorities ARDRAF webpage.

## **APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

The organization with which the applicant is affiliated is fiscally responsible for the Award. **The signature of an authorized official (e.g., chief executive officer or institutional grants administrator) will be required in the processing of all applications.** DocuSign and electronic signatures will be accepted for all necessary signatures in the application form.

**Note: VCU applicants who apply must prepare their applications in RAMS-SPOT and route to the VCU Office of Sponsored Programs for review and approval prior to submission.**

Please examine your application carefully to ensure that it meets all of the specifications given in these guidelines and on the application form ([VCU ARDRAF](#)). The application form includes a checklist of elements that serve as reminders of the steps and documentation that must be included when your application is submitted. **Applicants are instructed to complete and sign the checklist, and then attach it as the last page of their applications.**

Submitted applications should be combined into one (or two) files. The application form can comprise one file while the rest of the application should be assembled into a single file ordered consecutively according to the sections listed on the checklist. **Incomplete applications or those that do not adhere to the specifications given in these guidelines and on the ARDRAF Application may be returned without further consideration.**

Awards are restricted to research projects only, exclusive of training grants, conferences, or similar educational programs. The Research Award Fund is NOT intended to support a multi-year program of research, or to supplement larger, ongoing projects. Proposed research projects should be distinct activities that can be completed within one year. If there are any questions about these limitations, applicants are encouraged to discuss their projects with the administrator prior to submission.

When the proposed project is related to a separate grant or contract, the applicant

should explain the relationship and clearly identify the funding requested from the ARDRAF and amounts funded from other sources. The budget should represent only the costs and sources of funds associated with the proposed project. There must be identifiable results attributable to the ARDRAF-funded research and that research must be completed by the end of the ARDRAF award, regardless of whether the related grant has been completed.

Applicants are expected to ask for approval of their proposed research from standing human subjects, animal research, and/or biosafety committees prior to the ARDRAF submission.

**In projects where human subjects are required,** applicants must have evidence that study participants will be fully protected. A process to approve safeguards for human subjects will be required of all applicants and it is highly suggested that evidence of approval to begin enrolling subjects be submitted prior to **April 1, 2025**.

**In projects where laboratory animals are required,** applicants should provide assurance that they will be treated humanely.

**Projects that involve the use of biohazardous substances** require a copy of the biosafety submission form/registration document\memorandum of understanding granting authorization to utilize the specific agents and materials proposed in the research.

We request that ARDRAF grant applications accompany submissions to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), or Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC). Conversely, we advise that copies of submitted protocols to the IRB/IACUC/IBC accompany the ARDRAF application.

**Although IRB/IACUC/BSC documentation is accepted whenever it becomes available, for purposes of grant review applicants are expected to forward any submitted or obtained material by April 1, 2025.** This is especially important if summer salaries and/or wages are to be paid or projects with timelines requiring the full 12 months. Feasibility is an important consideration for the review panel.

## RIGOR STATEMENT

Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Notice on enhancing the reproducibility of NIH-supported research through rigor and transparency ([NOT-OD-15-103](#)) and to incorporate appropriate features into the proposed research plans. NIH has policy guidelines for Enhancing Reproducibility through Rigor and Transparency at <https://grants.nih.gov/policy/reproducibility/index.htm>. NIMH has also published guidelines for reporting elements of rigor in experimental design in applications ([NOT-MH-14-004](#)) and examples of critical elements for a well-designed study are summarized on the [NIMH website](#).

## REVIEW PROCESS

In addition to the appropriateness of proposals for funding by the ARDRAF (including the potential for subsequent funding), the suitability of the investigators, and the adequacy of the scientific environment, the criteria for review are as follows:

1. **Significance:** Does the study address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in this field? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved? How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?
2. **Innovation:** Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions? Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel to a particular field of research (or novel in a broader sense)? Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed?
3. **Approach:** Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility? Will particularly risky aspects be managed?

Each proposal will be assigned to at least two independent technical reviewers. In addition, each proposal will be assigned to a peer reviewer recommended by the applicant (see further instructions on the application form).

**If a peer review cannot be obtained because of the applicant's failure to secure prior consent and verification that a conflict of interest does not exist for any named peer reviewer, the application will be administratively withdrawn from consideration for funding.**

## **SCHEDULE**

Applicants should submit a non-binding letter of intent with a tentative title, the identities of other personnel and participating institutions, and a non-technical abstract by **December 1, 2024**. Letters on letterhead with signature affixed must be uploaded to [ARDRAF LOI](#).

Upload the completed application to the ARDRAF Application form **before 5:00 PM on March 1, 2025**. We accept DocuSign as a form of electronic signature. If not sent as one complete document, the application form pages need to be sent as a separate document, with the remaining pages combined into one or two additional files as feasible. Applicants will be notified of award decisions by **June 20, 2025**.

The funding period begins **July 1, 2025**, and projects must be completed by **June 30, 2026**.

## **BUDGET**

Awards cannot exceed **\$75,000** each. ARDRAF funding is appropriated by the state; as a consequence, applicants must agree to waive indirect costs. The budget should reflect a balanced spending approach, and may include items such as personnel, fringe, supplies, laboratory costs, etc. expenditures for equipment are limited to 10% of total costs. Travel for dissemination at professional meetings shall not exceed \$1000. Applicants are not required to provide matching or in-kind funds (identified as "Contributed Resources" on the application budget page). However, applicants should present a budget that includes requested and contributed funds sufficient to cover the expenses entailed by the work proposed.

In addition, the budget justification should adequately detail the requested and

contributed resources necessary to conduct the project. Explain why costs are programmatically necessary and show how budget lines are calculated. **A separate budget and budget justification should be provided for any planned subcontracts or sub-awards.** Applicant organizations and collaborating entities must have purchasing, personnel, and other business practices that are consistent with Federal and State laws regarding equal opportunity and proper accounting for the expenditure of funds.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

A brief status report will be required on or before **February 1, 2026**. All funds must be spent by **June 30, 2026**. A final report of expenditures is due on or before **July 31, 2026**. A final technical report (including a one-page non-technical executive summary, and a 4-5 sentence description of the project results in common, everyday language for press release purposes) will be due on or before **September 1, 2026**.

**Investigators who fail to submit final project reports in a timely manner will compromise the consideration of future applications from their home departments.**

For more information, contact the ARDRAF administrator:

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