

Research Announcement **Opportunity and Bridge Funding Research Awards**

Introduction

Autism Speaks will accept and review proposals for New Investigator Opportunity Awards and Established Investigator Bridge Funding Awards three times during each calendar year as described in the Research Announcement.

Autism Speaks supports all areas of biomedical research that will advance its research mission, including but not limited to: human behavior (language, communication, social interaction), neurobiology (anatomy, development, neuro-imaging), neurocognition, neuropathology, neurotoxicology, human genetics/genomics, immunology, endocrinology, model organisms, and molecular and cellular mechanisms.

In addition to these established areas of investigation, proposals for new and much needed studies in gastroenterology, epidemiology, and in translational research that apply the results and insights obtained from basic and clinical research studies to the diagnosis treatment of autism spectrum disorders are especially encouraged.

I. New Investigator Opportunity Awards

Investigators with no current or previous federal grant support (USA or Canada) and who have a recently reviewed NIH, NSF, CDC or other similar federal grant application that scored in the **top 15 percentile** (or equivalent) but was not funded are eligible to apply for a three-year grant of up to \$150,000 per year based on the federal agency review of the unfunded proposal. An amount not to exceed 10% (inclusive) of the total pilot study award shall be used for Sponsoring Institution's indirect (overhead) costs. Awards by this mechanism are one-time only, non-renewable grants. Subsequent grant applications must be submitted in response to other Autism Speaks RFAs.

Applications for opportunity awards must include in the research plan a concise summary and justification of the research in the unfunded federal grant application (or parts thereof) that is being proposed for support as well as revisions and/or responses to significant criticisms in the federal agency review. The proposed research must be consistent in scope with the requested budget. The applicant also must submit the original federal agency review and percentile score (or equivalent) of the unfunded proposal that is the basis for this application (see "Appendices" below).

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated for their relevance to Autism Spectrum Disorders, scientific merit and response to the reviewers' concerns expressed in the federal agency review of the proposal, and justification of the need for immediate funding to initiate the research project.

Awards

Autism Speaks will make a number of opportunity awards to new investigators determined by its available financial resources. An amount not to exceed 10% (inclusive) of the total award shall be used for Sponsoring Institution's indirect (overhead) costs. All awards are one-time, non-renewable grants. Applicants are restricted to one lifetime Opportunity award as Principal Investigator.

II. Established Investigator Bridge Funding Awards

Investigators who have been federally funded to do autism research (US or Canada), and whose first submission of a renewal application scored in the top 25 percentile (or equivalent) but was not funded, are eligible to apply for up to \$100,000 in bridge funding under this solicitation. Subsequent submissions of an un-funded proposal beyond the first renewal application are NOT eligible for bridge funding under this announcement.

Applications for bridge awards must include in the research plan a concise summary and justification of the research in the unfunded federal grant application (or parts thereof) that is being proposed for support, a summary of research accomplishments to date, revisions and/or responses to significant criticisms in the federal agency review, and justification of the scope and need for the requested bridge funding. The applicant also must submit the original federal agency review and percentile score (or equivalent) of the unfunded proposal that is the basis for this application (see “Appendices” below).

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated for their relevance to Autism Spectrum Disorders, scientific merit and response to the reviewers’ concerns expressed in the original review of the proposal, and justification of the need for immediate funding to continue the research project.

Awards

Autism Speaks will make a number of bridge funding awards determined by its available financial resources. An amount not to exceed 10% (inclusive) of the total award shall be used for Sponsoring Institution's indirect (overhead) costs. All awards are non-renewable grants for one year. Applicants are restricted to one bridge funding award as Principal Investigator in any three year period.

III. Application for Opportunity or Bridge Funding Research Awards

Eligibility

Only investigators holding full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty appointments or equivalent full-time non-tenure track appointments at accredited academic, medical or research institutions are eligible to apply. Each applicant is limited to one Opportunity or one Bridge Funding application per calendar year as Principal Investigator, but may participate without restriction on other such applications as a co-investigator or collaborator.

Proposals Using Post Mortem Tissue

Proposals using post mortem tissue must provide documentation that the necessary tissue is or will be available at the research site at the time of the award. Proposals without proper documentation will be returned without review. Investigators desiring to obtain tissue from the Autism Tissue Program should go to www.atpportal.org for information, application instructions and due dates.

Proposal Preparation

Proposals should be written in 11 point Arial font with 1-inch margins all around. Use of smaller or difficult to read fonts may result in the proposal being returned without review. Autism Speaks also reserves the right to return without review any proposal that in its judgment is not in compliance with its rules and procedures for proposal preparation and submission, is not responsive to its research goals, or exceeds its funding limits or available resources.

A typical proposal will include the following sections:

- Abstract (maximum 300 words) and Key Words; must be intelligible to a knowledgeable lay person or non-expert, and must describe the project goal(s) and/or hypothesis, specific aims, research methods, expected results and significance/relevance
- Research Plan (maximum 10 single-spaced pages) should concisely summarize and justify the research in the unfunded federal grant application (or parts thereof) that is being proposed for support by Autism Speaks, and should contain all relevant and necessary information for review including:
 - Specific Aims
 - Background and Significance (Summarize critical proposal revisions and/or responses to reviewer comments at the beginning of this section.)
 - Preliminary Data (optional)
 - Experimental Plan and Methods: Use **boldface type**, underlining or *italics* to indicate significant revisions based on reviewers' comments.
- Bibliography with complete literature citations including titles and all authors
- Budget for each year of the project, and a cumulative budget if more than one year of funding is requested (Opportunity Research Awards only). The following costs are allowed:

Personnel Costs (not to exceed the percent effort committed to the proposed project)

1. Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator salaries and benefits not to exceed a total of \$50,000 per year
2. Postdoctoral fellow and/or graduate student stipends and benefits (NOTE: Tuition reimbursement is NOT allowed.)
3. Research technician salary and benefits

Project Costs

4. Research supplies, services and related expenses
5. Essential equipment (not to exceed \$6K per year or \$12K total)
6. Data analysis and publication costs

Justify personnel costs, project-dedicated resources, services and equipment and any unusually costly expenses or travel

- Description of relevant facilities and necessary on-site and off-site resources
- Letters of Collaboration or Agreement
- Brief Biographical Sketch of Principal Investigator in NIH format not to exceed 3 pages each; indicate education, professional appointments and honors, total number of peer-reviewed publications, and complete citations (including title) of publications directly relevant to the proposed research
- Current and Pending Support: indicate funding source, total award amount, award duration (inclusive dates), and project title; briefly describe currently funded research projects and clearly explain any overlap with the proposed research including the extent to which the projects are redundant or complementary
- Human Subjects and Animal Welfare Certifications must be documented with a copy of an official letter of approval (or equivalent for non-US applicants), which identifies the Principal Investigator, project title and date of approval, and is signed by the Review Committee Chair or equivalent responsible institutional/government official. Prior certification for another project cannot be substituted, but can be officially amended to include the proposed project. IRB and IACUC certifications are NOT required to submit an application, but are required before an award will be made. Rules governing human subjects (IRB) and animal welfare (IACUC) certifications for both US and non-US institutions can be found at <http://grants.autismspeaks.org/research/tandc.htm>.
- Appendices: NO publications of any kind are allowed. **The original federal agency review and percentile score (or equivalent) of the unfunded proposal must be**

submitted in the “Exhibits” section of the application. Other appendix materials such as critical photographs, instrument descriptions or other technical materials requiring special formatting can be submitted as *text*, *jpeg* or *pdf* files in the “Exhibits” section of the application and referenced in the Research Plan.

Submission of Proposals

IMPORTANT! Only proposals electronically submitted through the Autism Speaks Grants Administration System at <http://grants.autismspeaks.org/research/login.asp> will be accepted for review. Applicants should refer to the Grants Administration web site for specific requirements and instructions about electronic proposal submission. A successful electronic proposal submission will be confirmed by a system generated email notification to the applicant. Proposals submitted by regular mail or by email will be returned without review. **Opportunity and Bridge Funding proposals are due on March 15, July 15, and November 15 of each calendar year.**

A Letter of Intent is **NOT** required to submit an Opportunity or Bridge Funding Research application; however, the applicant must log on to the Grants Administration web site and complete other pertinent information in the LOI field (proposal title, RFA, grant term and key words) before submitting an application.

Review and Selection

Proposals will be evaluated by a review committee of active and experienced investigators in the research areas of the proposals. The review committee will meet in April, August and December to evaluate Opportunity and Bridge Funding proposals submitted by March 15, July 15 and November 15 respectively, and will recommend funding selections to the Autism Speaks Scientific Affairs Committee for approval.

Payment of Awards

Awards will be paid annually and will be contingent upon registration in the Autism Speaks Grants Administration System of an official authorized to act for the institution receiving the award, and upon acceptance of the Autism Speaks award terms and conditions as described at <http://grants.autismspeaks.org/research/tandc.htm> including receipt of all required certifications.

Funding for award years 02 and 03 (Opportunity Awards only) if any will be contingent upon submission by the principal investigator of a satisfactory annual project progress report and a financial statement showing expended and unexpended funds through the Autism Speaks Grants Administration System. Unexpended funds in excess of 20% of the annual award must be satisfactorily explained before those funds can be rolled over into the next year of the grant. In addition, an investigator may request a one-time, six-month no-cost extension from the termination date of the award in order to complete necessary work (including data analysis and preparation/submission of manuscripts for publication).

Please address questions about proposal submission using the web-based Grants Administration System to Ms. Susan Kravitz, Grants Administrator by telephone at 609-430-9160, Ext. 23 or by email at: skravitz@autismspeaks.org. All other questions should be addressed to Dr. Charles D. Liarakos, Director of Scientific Review at: cliarakos@autismspeaks.org.