



Autism Speaks Suzanne and Bob Wright Trailblazer Award Program 2015 Request for Applications

Autism Speaks places a high priority on innovation and has designed the Trailblazer Award to respond quickly to fund highly novel transformative projects. The Trailblazer Award mechanism supports highly novel “out of the box” autism-relevant research that open new avenues to understanding the causes, diagnosis, subtyping, prevention, treatments, and cure of autism spectrum disorders. The Trailblazer Award mechanism is designed to fund small investigator-initiated ***high risk/high impact*** projects that are potentially ***transformative, paradigm shifting, and/or will overcome significant roadblocks*** in autism research ***within a 12 month period.***

The proposed Trailblazer project:

- Must explore a **highly** novel, research idea, technique, or technology that potentially could have high impact, i.e., have the capacity to change the way we diagnose, subtype, prevent, and/or treat ASD or the way we conduct relevant research on ASD.
- Is ***not required to have preliminary data***, but must have a sound rationale supporting the need for such a project
- Should be ***considered risky, i.e.***, not likely be supported though other Autism Speaks grants programs, including pilot studies.
- May come from **newer** or **established investigators** with a demonstrated background in autism and/or from investigators in non-autism areas of research that will be applied directly to autism research. Applicants must have a ***demonstrated track record of research experience*** relevant to the proposed project.

NOTE: The relevance of the proposed research to the Autism Speaks research priority areas, described below, must be explicitly stated.

Research Mission

Autism Speaks supports global biomedical research into the diagnosis, causes, prevention and treatment of autism or its disabling symptoms. Our mission is to improve the future for all who struggle with autism spectrum disorders. In support of that mission we provide funding along the entire research continuum -- from discovery to development to dissemination -- for innovative projects that hold considerable promise for significantly improving the lives of persons with autism.

Awards

Autism Speaks will make a limited number of Trailblazer awards based on the quality of the submissions and available financial resources. Awards are limited to a period of 12 months and an amount up to \$100,000 total, inclusive of 10% indirect costs. Funds must be used for research expenses and cannot be used for equipment, travel, meeting or publication costs. Training and mentoring-only applications are not appropriate for this funding program. **Project completion must be achievable within 12 months.**

Eligibility

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. **Eligibility must be demonstrated as a part of the Letter of Intent.**

- Applicants who do not meet the eligibility criteria above (e.g., postdoctoral fellows, medical residents, clinical fellows, part-time faculty members, etc.) are eligible to apply only if the Letter of Intent section includes clear documentation from the applicant's institution stating that appointment to a full-time faculty position will be in effect by the start date of the grant.
- Applications will NOT be accepted from individuals or from proprietary organizations to support the research and development of products for profit.
- Applicants are restricted to one LOI/application per year as Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-Investigator.

Application Process

Submission will be on a continuous (rolling) basis. Submission of a Letter of Intent in the online grant system is required (see requirements below).

Autism Speaks grants and science staff will initially review each LOI for fidelity to the High Risk/High Impact purpose of the Trailblazer program and relevance to the mission of Autism Speaks. Those that are deemed exceptional in meeting the screening criteria will be invited to submit a full application.

Trailblazer applications may be submitted on a rolling basis. Applications should be no more than 8 pages in length and should include **at least** one page that clearly explains the rationale for the study. The specific aims of the application should be clearly stated along with their relevance to Autism Speaks mission. The specific research plan should be clearly stated. Please be reminded that successful Trailblazer applications must be able to accomplish its aims within the 12 month grant period. Applications will be reviewed by peer reviewers with expertise in autism and related research areas. Written critiques will be made available to applicants following the review. Resubmission will require an **explicit invitation from Autism Speaks**. Such invitations will be issued sparingly. All review decisions will be final.

NOTE: Applications or Letters of Intent that do not meet submission criteria will be returned without further review.

Preparing the Letter of Intent and Application

1. **Access to the Autism Speaks Science Grants System.** The applicant should go to <https://science.grants.autismspeaks.org> and register with your institutional email address (or log in if you have an ID). Complete your profile information. Applicants are welcome to connect their Autism Speaks profile with their ORCID profile during the LOI portion of the process however it is not required unless the LOI is accepted. See **ORCID Profiles** on the next page for more details.
2. **Complete a Letter of Intent.** Log in and click Applications at the top of the profile page or 'Go to Applications' at the bottom. Choose 'Start a new LOI or application', then 'Trailblazer...' from the Award Type drop down and finally "Start new letter of intent..." The Letter of Intent (LOI) includes two web pages.

a. Basic Information Page includes:

- i. Title: Enter less than 100 characters, spaces included
- ii. Scientific Abstract. 1500 characters, spaces included. Provide a summary of the research project to be conducted.
- iii. Brain Tissue Sources, as applicable
- iv. Resubmission – resubmissions are allowed only by invitation.
- v. Enter Key Personnel: Name expected Co-Investigators and consultants (hint: start by entering the last name). Many researchers are in our database. If you need to add someone new, you must use their institutional email address. ***It is important to enter all participants you expect, even if they change later.***
- vi. Name the Responsible Official (RO). First check the drop down list for officials from your institution already in the system. If need be, add a new person using their institutional email address. The RO will be copied on the confirmation email but has no responsibilities until it is time to submit the application. The RO can view the LOI or application at any time.
- vii. Choose the keywords which describe this project.
- viii. All this information will be available for editing/adding at the application stage.

b. Letter of Intent Form includes:

- i. Short summary of your research topic (up to 7000 characters, spaces included)
- ii. **The specific aims of the research must be clearly stated.**
- iii. PI biosketch, NIH format not to exceed 4 pages. More recent publications and those with greater relevance to the grant submission should be listed. Information on history of research funding including related current, pending and past awards should be included.
- iv. Biosketches for Co-investigators and research collaborators, NIH format not to exceed 4 pages per person. While not required, biosketches for consultants are recommended. Combine biosketches into one file for upload.
- v. Eligibility letter (optional) - Clear documentation for postdoctoral fellows, medical residents, clinical fellows, or part-time faculty members, etc. stating that appointment to a full-time faculty position will be in effect by the start date of the grant

3. **Approved LOIs.** Investigators will have **one month** from the LOI approval notification date to submit the full application.
4. **[ORCID profiles](#)** – Autism Speaks has a [policy](#) which requires all applicants and co-investigators to obtain ORCID profiles.
 - a. **Applicants** will not be able to work on their application until they have connected their ORCID profile to their Autism Speaks profile. Links in the Autism Speaks Science Grant system will make this step easy.
 - b. **Co-investigators:** All co-investigators named on the application must also connect their ORCID profile to their Autism Speaks profile. ***An application will not be reviewed until this is complete.*** All co-investigators named on an application will receive an email with instructions however the applicant is encouraged to follow up with each individual.
5. **Application requirements/Procedures:** Applications are limited to the items listed below. Although no preliminary data are required, one additional figure page is allowed containing no more than two figures and their legends. No other supporting documents

than those listed below will be accepted. All applications must be submitted online through the Autism Speaks Science Grants system.

- a. **Review/edit entries on the Basic Information Page.** Remaining items here are on the Application Form page.
 - b. **Describe what distinguishes the proposed research and makes it appropriate for a Trailblazer Award. (3500 characters including spaces)**
 - c. **Narrative on Rationale and Research Strategy** – 8 pages maximum, upload file
 - i. Clearly explain the novel hypothesis or approach and methods and resources that will be used for the research.
 - ii. Describe the research strategy and milestones. Include information on how the research design will yield conclusive evidence of success or nonsuccess of the proposed approach.
 - iii. No more than two figures (with legends) may be included in the Narrative
 - d. **References Cited** - One page allowed, upload file
 - e. **Biographical sketches** (four-page maximum each) for the PI and research collaborators. While not required, biosketches for consultants are recommended. Biosketches must be combined into one file for upload. Biosketches should indicate all active and recently completed public and private funding, including source, total award amount, award duration (inclusive dates), and project title. Clearly explain the extent to which currently funded research projects will overlap, complement and/or contribute to the proposed research.
 - f. **Letters of Collaboration** specifying the collaborator's role on the project. One page is allowed per letter.
 - g. **Budget – Complete the online budget table. Budgets are limited to a period of 12 months and an amount up to \$100,000 total, inclusive of 10% indirect costs. Funds must be used for research expenses and cannot be used for equipment, travel, meeting or publication costs. Investigator FTE salaries are capped at \$181,500**
 - h. **Budget Justification - Provide a detailed justification for each item on the budget. Include calculation(s) used.**
6. **Submission/Institutional approval** – Only an institutional official can submit the application. When the applicant is ready, they should click the 'Ready for RO' link at the bottom of the application form page. The system will send an email to the Responsible Official (RO) who will then be able to submit the application. The RO can view the application at any time. The RO can also revert the application to draft if there is anything they want the applicant to change. The applicant would then make the change(s) and click 'Ready for RO' again.

Post-award Procedures

1. The grant will commence immediately upon receipt and approval of a fully executed grant agreement and the ethical approvals outlined below, if applicable. Please note that the award will not be granted if these documents are not received by Autism Speaks within 30 days of the Trailblazer Award approval notification.
2. An additional 30 days (total of 60) will be allowed for Institutional approval documents, including IRB, IACUC, etc.
3. Autism Speaks reserves the right to make information about funded grants publicly

available. Funded research projects may be subject to data and resource sharing requirements.

Other Information

Human Subjects and Vertebrate Animal 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 as submitted to Autism Speaks** 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 (identified by project title).

IMPORTANT NOTE: IRB, IACUC or equivalent ethical certification are NOT required at the time of applying; however, such ethical certification must be submitted as soon as possible following official notification of an award. Autism Speaks will NOT issue a grant contract or any form of funding until appropriate certifications are received.

Projects using postmortem tissue must provide documentation that the necessary tissue is or will be available at the research site at the time of the award. Applications without proper documentation will be returned without review.

Contacts

Grants Administration, Online Application/Budget Questions:

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Application Development:

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