



CVI Office of Research Development  
American Heart Association: Postdoctoral Fellowship Award  
Guidebook

AHA Postdoctoral Fellowship  
Application Checklist

Please note: You must be an AHA Professional Member to submit your application. Become a member [here](#).

Document formatting requirements:

- Margins: No less than 0.75” margins
- Font: Windows users – Arial, 12-point font  
Mac users – Helvetica, 12-point font

Done	Section	Notes
	<b>Stanford PDRF</b>	<a href="#">SeRA system</a> form to work with Jonathan Gagante
	<b>Non-Scientist Summary</b>	2500 Character limit. Grade 10 level. Describe your work to people without a scientific background or medical training. Describe the major health problem you are addressing, the specific question you want to answer, the overall impact of your proposal, and how it fits in the AHA mission. Important for review.
	<b>Project Summary</b>	2500 Character limit Concise description or abstract of proposed work.
	<b>Research Plan</b>	5 pages Include: 1. Specific Aims 2. Background and Significance 3. Preliminary studies 4. Approach 5. Ethical Aspects
	<b>Applicant Biosketch</b>	5 pages NIH Biosketch acceptable Career goal statement in “Section A. Personal Statement”
	<b>Sponsor/Co-Sponsor Biosketch</b>	5 pages NIH Biosketch acceptable
	<b>Literature Cited</b>	4 pages Relevant and current literature. Limited to those cited in Research Plan
	<b>Vertebrate Animal Subjects</b>	No limit
	<b>Research Project Environment of Sponsor</b>	No limit Template provided that uses similar format as NIH Facilities & Other Resources document (attached) Include: Laboratory, Clinical, Animal, Computer, Office, Major Equipment, Other
	<b>Training Plans of Sponsor and Co-Sponsor</b>	3 pages Primary mentor plan that includes information for co-sponsor Describe research in lab, plan to develop applicant’s research capabilities, indicate other training/course

		work, separate "Instruction in responsible conduct of research and rigor and reproducibility". More information <a href="#">here</a> .
	<b>Sponsor's and Co-Sponsor's Past and Current Trainees</b>	3 pages per sponsor Table information <a href="#">here</a> . Pre- and post-docs in the last 5 years, and current
	<b>Letters of Reference</b>	3 reports. No more than 4 pages each. Submitted by someone familiar with your skills and expertise, and someone who is not involved in your current proposed research. Submitted directly to ProposalCentral. Refer to the <a href="#">AHA website</a> for more information
	<b>Optional: Collaborating Investigator's Biosketch</b>	5 pages NIH Biosketch acceptable
	<b>Optional: Collaborating Investigator's letter</b>	5 page limit

## Tips for how to write an AHA Non-Scientist Summary

Address the following points:

1. What is the major problem being addressed by this study?
2. What specific questions are you asking and how will you attempt to answer them?
3. Please **do not** list your specific aims - this is a brief overview targeted for a lay audience.
4. What is the potential overall impact of this work on the mission of the AHA?

**Note:** The AHA recommends that the lay summary be written at an *8th grade level*.

- Click on Home → Editor → Insights → Document Stats → Readability → Flesch Kincaid Grade Level to find your summary's readability grade.

### **Address the: who/what/where/when/how many/why?**

- Justify your research - predict and cover the “so what?” factor. Why does it matter?
- Give some background and context to the research. What prompted you to do it?
- Follow a logical order. This may not always coincide with a temporal order.
- Explain the impact of the work – what is going to change (especially in relation to wider society)
- Use short and simple sentences. Imagine you're talking to a high school student who's just stepped into an introductory class or a distant family member who works in an unrelated field
- Avoid jargon unless absolutely necessary
- Use first person and active voice (“we agreed” instead of “it was agreed”).
- Use positive sentences: “You will have repeat appointments at least once a fortnight”

Refer to this [article](#) for more tips

## Proposed Research Plan

### Guidelines:

- Page limit: 5 pages
- Include the following in the exact order as mentioned below. You must address all items.
  1. Specific Aims - Provide a clear, concise summary of the aims of the work proposed and the project's relationship to your long-term goals. Note the significance and innovation of your research.
  2. Research Strategy - Describe your research rationale and the experiments you will conduct to accomplish each aim. Structure as follows:
    - Significance: Summarize the background leading to the proposal and your question and/or hypothesis.
    - Concisely state the importance of your research to the field and to the mission of AHA.
    - Preliminary Studies: Include your preliminary results that show the reviewer what you propose is feasible, and to establish your experience and ability to carry out the proposed work.
    - Approach: Clear description of overall design of your study, clearly defining methods, especially if novel. Include details of statistical considerations and analysis. Include anticipated outcomes, potential problems, and alternative approaches.
- **Note:** If you are applying for only 1 year of support make sure to mention this here.
- Applications that include vertebrate animals or human subjects: Applicants must explain how relevant biological variables, such as sex, are factored into the research design, analysis and reporting. Any restrictions in population studied must be explained within this section and the page limit.
- Describe any special ethical circumstance or issue of note in the proposed research plan.

AHA Postdoctoral Fellowship  
Proposed Research Plan Outline

5-page document, including Specific Aims. Please use the below as a suggested outline and adapt to best fit your own proposal.

Format A

- A. Specific Aims:** Try to limit to 1-page at most. Include brief overview of background to appreciate the aims, knowledge gaps, and central hypothesis
- B. Background and Significance:** What is known in the field that has informed your proposal, i.e., what do the Reviewers need to know to best understand your aims and overall goal. Why is this a significant question. Limit to half a page.
- C. Preliminary Studies:** What data do you have to support your hypothesis and proposed aims and/or methods.
- D. Research Design and Methods:** For each Aim, provide: (a) rationale, (b) methods, (c) anticipated results, and (d) potential pitfalls and alternative approaches
- E. Rigor and Biological Variables:** How will analysis be statistically significant.
- F. Ethical Aspects of Proposed Research:** especially if includes patient-derived iPSCs, animals, etc.
- G. Project Timeline:** Gantt chart is a good way to show when you anticipate working on and completing major parts of your proposal to show it can be completed in the time frame of the grant. Optional, depending on space.

Format B

- A. Specific Aims:** Try to limit to 1-page at most. Include brief overview of background to appreciate the aims, knowledge gaps, and central hypothesis. What data do you have to support each specific aim and proposed aims and/or methods? Break down the preliminary studies, rationale, methods, anticipated results, and potential pitfalls are broken down for each aim.
- B. Background and Significance:** What is known in the field that has informed your proposal, i.e., what do the Reviewers need to know to best understand your aims and overall goal. Why is this a significant question. Limit to half a page.
- C. Research Design and Methods:** For each Aim, provide: (a) rationale, (b) methods, (c) anticipated results, and (d) potential pitfalls and alternative approaches
- D. Rigor and Biological Variables:** How will analysis be statistically significant.
- E. Ethical Aspects of Proposed Research:** especially if includes patient-derived iPSCs, animals, etc.
- F. Project Timeline:** Gantt chart is a good way to show when you anticipate working on and completing major parts of your proposal to show it can be completed in the time frame of the grant. Optional, depending on space.

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Provide the following information for the Senior/key personnel and other significant contributors.  
 Follow this format for each person. **DO NOT EXCEED FIVE PAGES.**

NAME:

eRA COMMONS USER NAME (credential, e.g., agency login):

POSITION TITLE:

EDUCATION/TRAINING *(Begin with baccalaureate or other initial professional education, such as nursing, include postdoctoral training and residency training if applicable. Add/delete rows as necessary.)*

INSTITUTION AND LOCATION	DEGREE <i>(if applicable)</i>	Completion Date MM/YYYY	FIELD OF STUDY

**A. Personal Statement**

Tailor this section to your specific application. Share your long-term career goals and your unique background and experiences that make you suited to carry out this proposal.

**B. Positions, Scientific Appointments, and Honors**

**C. Contributions to Science**

## Literature Cited

### Guidelines:

1. Page limit: 4 pages
2. List all literature cited in your research plan.
3. Literature citations should be marked in the text of the Proposed Research Plan. Letters or numbers can be used to mark the text, and can be a superscript or a bracket.
4. Each reference must list:
  - Corresponding mark in the Proposed Research Plan
  - Authors in the same order as they appear on the paper (list all or up to 15)
  - Full Title
  - Name of the book or journal
  - Volume number
  - Page numbers
  - Year of publication



## Required Mentor Documents

### **Primary Mentor:**

1. Biographical Sketch/Bibliography (5-page limit)

### **Secondary Mentor:**

1. Biographical Sketch/Bibliography (5-page limit)

### **Combined Mentor Documents:**

1. Mentor's List of Past and Current Trainees (3-page limit per mentor)
2. Training Plan of Sponsor and Co-Sponsor (3 pages)
3. Research Project Environment of Sponsor and Co-Sponsor (no page limit)

### **Additional:**

1. Reference Letters
  - a. 3 referees who know you and your work but are not involved in the proposal.
  - b. Each letter should be no more than 4 pages
  - c. Important: you will not be able to submit your application until all reference letters are uploaded
  - d. For more information refer to the [AHA website](#)

Research Project Environment of Mentor/Co-mentor

Guidelines:

- No Page Limit
- Only one document from the primary mentor that includes information from the co-mentor
- Similar to NIH facilities and resources
- Use the subheadings:
  - Laboratory
  - Clinical
  - Animal
  - Computer
  - Office
  - Major Equipment (already available for use)
  - Other

## Mentor/Co-Mentor Training Plan

### Guidelines

- Page Limit: 3 pages
- One document from Primary mentor that includes information for the co-mentor
- Include the following:
  1. Describe research in progress in the mentor's and co-mentor's labs.
  2. Describe the plan to develop the applicant's research capabilities. Include how applicant will become increasingly independent.
  3. Describe other related training or course work which will be required for specific technical skills or methods the applicant will be expected to master.
  4. Instruction in responsible conduct of research and rigor and reproducibility. Include formal and informal training. Formal training can be by Med255, and please describe the course details (e.g., hours, content, etc.). See [RMG website](#) for specifics Informal training includes discussions during 1 on 1 and lab meetings.
  5. Address the relationship of the research training plan to the applicant's career goals.
  6. Clarify the role the fellow played in the development of the research proposal.
  7. Provide assessment of the applicant's accomplishments, why you will mentor, how your knowledge and influence will promote career advancement, and why they will be successful with proposed project.
  8. Describe the scope and source of all funds available to the applicant, including departmental and institutional funds.

Mentor's List of Past and Current Trainees Template

Guidelines:

Primary and Secondary Mentors only

**The co-mentor is to send this document to the primary mentor to upload into the application.**

**Template 1: Table Format**

**Predoctoral Trainees of [Mentor's Name]**

Past / Current Trainee	Trainee Name (Where Training Occurred)	Training Period (Degree)	Prior Academic Degree Institution(s)	Prior Academic Degree(s)	Prior Academic Degree Year(s)	Title of Research Project	Current Position of Past Trainees / Source of Support of Current Trainees
Past	Jones, K (Harvard)	94-99 (PhD)	U. of MD	BA	94	Role of Transcription Factor X in Synaptic Plasticity	Asst. Scientist, Scripps Research Foundation

**Postdoctoral Trainees of [Mentor's Name]**

Past / Current Trainee	Trainee Name (Where Training Occurred)	Postdoc Research Training Period	Prior Academic Degree(s)	Prior Academic Degree Year(s)	Prior Academic Degree Institution(s)	Title of Research Project	Current Position of Past Trainees / Source of Support of Current Trainees
Current	Jones, T. (Cornell)	18-22	MD/PhD	18	U. of MD	Role of Transcription Factor X in Synaptic Plasticity	Asst. Scientist, Scripps Research Foundation

**Template 2: Letter format**

Must be on Mentor/Co-mentor letterhead

**Sponsor's list of trainees:**

List current number of postdocs and instructors in the lab and funding types and numbers of grants.

**Several of my current postdoc fellows and instructors are funded by various awards and grants:**

List of current postdocs and their fellowship or CDA

**Other current trainees supported by research funding:**

List of current members not listed above

**Several of my former predoctoral and postdoctoral fellows have previously received prestigious awards to support their research:**

List of fellows, their award, and the years of award

**Several of my former trainees have become successful investigators at major universities:**

List with name, current position, and institute

Budget Information

- AHA does not pay indirect costs on Fellowships
- Annual Stipend is based on the most recently published NIH scale for postdoctoral fellows

<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>Stipend</b>
<b>0</b>	\$54,835
<b>1</b>	\$55,227
<b>2</b>	\$55,631
<b>3</b>	\$57,846
<b>4</b>	\$59,780
<b>5</b>	\$61,996
<b>6</b>	\$64,297

- Health Insurance: \$11,850 per year for health insurance ("fringe benefits")
- Additional: \$3000 per year for project support, with at least \$1500 per year spent on travel to a national conference.

**Please note: The applicant will not be able to view this document. This document is for reference only. Only the referee will be able to see this via the confidential submission portal.**

## AHA REFERENCE REPORT FOR APPLICANT – PART I

*This is a confidential communication, to be completed by the person providing reference. **No more than 4 pages are allowed.** After completion, convert this form to a PDF document, and upload into proposalCENTRAL.*

**Applicant's Name:**

*Respondent's name and address information:*

1. Name (with doctoral degrees):
2. Department: Division:
3. Institution: Phone Number:
4. Dates associated with applicant - From: To:
5. Capacity at that time (teacher, supervisor, etc.):
6. Position of applicant at that time (undergraduate, teaching asst., etc.):

In the table below, rate the applicant relative to other individuals of similar training and experience with whom you have been associated. Mark every line. You may mark with an "x".

	Outstanding (upper 5%)	Excellent (upper 6-20%)	Very Good (upper 21-40%)	Good/ Avg (mid 41-60%)	Fair/Below Avg (lower 40%)	Applicant lacks the knowledge	Unable to rate
Research techniques and possibility of future success							
Knowledge in chosen field, familiarity with literature							
Written and verbal communication							
Independence							
Motivation and perseverance in pursuing goals							
Planning and conduct of research; analysis of outcomes							
Teamwork							
Imagination, originality, inventiveness							
Accuracy							
Laboratory techniques, if relevant							
Clinical proficiency, if relevant							
Overall Assessment							

## REFERENCE REPORT FOR APPLICANT – Part II

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Comment specifically on the following. Please AVOID referring to personal circumstances or attributes of the applicant: Marital status, age or gender (e.g. young, woman, man), juggling of factors such as child care or illness, and roles of the applicant outside of the professional setting (e.g. mother, husband, father).

- Why the applicant's record and accomplishments merit AHA support.
- Your past and/or current professional relationship with the applicant.
- Applicant's strengths and limitations as they relate to potential success in the chosen field.
- Descriptions of significant accomplishments and personal qualities related to scholarly achievement (including major academic strengths and weaknesses) are particularly helpful, if appropriate.
- Qualifications and traits that you consider of special significance in judging the applicant's fitness for a biomedical career, emphasizing research aspects.