ARTHRITIS NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION®

Postdoctoral Physician Scientist Fellowship

2027 Program Guidelines, Applications Instructions, and Policies

Arthritis National Research Foundation
5319 University Drive #10022
Irvine, CA 92612
1-800-588-2873
Website: www.curearthritis.org
Email: Grants@curearthritis.org

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Program Summary

About the Arthritis National Research Foundation:

Since 1970, the Arthritis National Research Foundation (ANRF) has funded arthritis research to understand the causes, prevention and development of new treatments for osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, juvenile arthritis and related autoimmune diseases.

Our mission is to provide initial research funding to brilliant, investigative scientists with new ideas to cure arthritis and related autoimmune diseases.

About the Postdoctoral Physician Scientist Fellowship:

The ANRF is pleased to announce the release of the 2027 Postdoctoral Physician Scientist Fellowship Application. This grant aims to provide financial support to **postdoctoral clinical researchers interested in pursuing a career studying arthritis and/or related autoimmune disease**.

Grants will be **funded for 1 year and awarded up to a total of $50,000.** We invite researchers and innovators from diverse fields to submit their grant applications for this funding opportunity.

Key Dates:

October 1st, 2026	Application opens through ProposalCentral
January 8th, 2027	Deadline to submit application (11:59 PM, PT)
January-April	Grant review period
May 15th, 2027	Outcome notifications sent to all applicants
July 1st, 2027	Research term begins
June 30th, 2028	Research term concludes

Important Notes:

Applicants are limited to submitting only one application per annual cycle.

Preference will be given to postdoctoral investigators with no more than five (5) years of research training or experience since obtaining a post-baccalaureate doctoral-level degree (excluding clinical training).

This is a career development award. Applicants should expect to participate in an active cohort with the Arthritis National Research Foundation designed to help researchers meet their career goals.

ANRF will give preference to clinical studies or applications exploring basic research.

Applicants **must hold an MD or MD/PhD degree and be enrolled in or have completed a clinical rheumatology fellowship program accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education** (ACGME).

Applicants must be affiliated with, and complete all grant-funded research at, a qualified U.S. nonprofit research institution. Applicants are not required to be U.S. citizens.

Purpose and Scope

Background:

Rheumatology and immunology research are at critical junctures. Rising disease prevalence and the shortage of early-career investigators pose significant challenges. The American College of Rheumatology projects a workforce shortfall of over 4,000 rheumatologists by 2030, with the gap affecting both clinical and research capacities. Moreover, recent NIH data underscores the stagnation of new investigators entering these fields, despite an increased need for therapeutic innovation and patient care improvements.

Goal:

The ANRF postdoctoral fellowship program aims to address gaps in care by providing robust support, including financial, mentorship, and development resources, to early-career physician scientists. This support empowers fellows to advance our understanding of complex rheumatologic diseases.

Scope:

This call is for postdoctoral fellowship applications is open to all arthritis and related autoimmune disease research, including but not limited to osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, juvenile arthritis, lupus, psoriatic arthritis, gout, spondylarthritis, pediatric rheumatology, scleroderma, fibromyalgia, and uveitis (shown in relationship to autoimmune forms of arthritis).

Candidates for postdoctoral fellowship awards are qualified, promising investigators at a relatively early stage of their careers, seeking to make significant contributions in the field of arthritis and related autoimmune disease research. Applicants must hold an MD or MD/PhD degree and be enrolled in or have completed a clinical rheumatology fellowship program accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). They are required to work under the guidance of a sponsoring mentor who is committed to providing a supportive training environment and professional development opportunities. While applicants must apply for this award under the supervision of a sponsoring mentor, it is expected that the proposed research project will be independently developed and pursued by the applicant.

Sponsoring Mentor

Postdoctoral fellows must be sponsored by an investigator who is affiliated full-time with an accredited institution and who agrees to supervise their fellowship training, professional development, and career advancement. Mentors should be physicians or physician scientists in the mid-to-late career stage who actively work to research arthritis or related autoimmune disease.

Mentorship Plan:

Mentors and applicants are expected to work together prior to application submission to create and submit a mentorship plan that outlines how the team will ensure effective mentoring. A successful mentorship plan should include the following fellowship benchmarks, which are required to receive the award, but should not be limited to only these:

- Mandatory documentation of hours spent on face-to-face mentoring.
- Documentation of specific instances of the facilitation of networking, including introductions to colleagues, inclusion in discussions at scientific meetings, etc.
- Opportunities for presentation of research and critique.
- Plans to address gaps in needed skills.

Mentor Training Experience:

Mentors must show they have a background in effectively training postdoctoral fellows for success in their fields. Within the application the sponsoring mentor must provide a listing of prior mentorship experience by listing the names of all fellows currently in training and those previously trained within the last five (5) years. The following information is required to be included for each trained fellow:

- Fellow name
- Training period (start and end dates of training period)
- Fellow's highest degree and year received
- Institution (institution where the fellowship occurred)
- Fellow's current position/source of support

Mentor Letter of Support:

The sponsoring mentor must provide a letter outlining their commitment to the applicant's training and development. The letter must be submitted within the online application and specifically address the following points:

- Describe prior mentoring experience.
- Provide assurance of an academic commitment to the applicant and to the applicant's research proposal. Confirm commitment of both adequate space and facilities for the conduct of the proposed work.
- Provide assurance that the proposed project was developed primarily by the fellow and will provide a distinct research program that the fellow can independently pursue at the completion of their training.
- Describe the applicant's qualifications for the proposed research.
- Describe the applicant's potential for a successful independent career in arthritis and/or autoimmune disease research.
- Outline plans for the longer-term development and training of the applicant.

How to Apply

All ANRF grant applications must be submitted online by **January 8, 2027, at 11:59PM, Pacific Time** through the ProposalCentral website at www.proposalcentral.com. Detailed information, instructions, and the opportunity to register as a user can also be accessed through this link. If you have any difficulties, please see the ProposalCentral FAQ page or contact Altum customer support by calling 800-875-2562 or emailing pcsupport@altum.com.

In order to submit a complete application, applicants must enter information directly into the online platform and upload a number of documents. Details about required information and the materials to be uploaded are listed below. Follow all instructions and prompts. All required forms are preloaded and will be available to you upon beginning your ANRF application in ProposalCentral.

Research Plan:

The scientific content (body) of the proposal may not exceed 4 pages and must contain:

- **Specific Aims** – specific goals of the research project including relevance to arthritis/autoimmune disease (one page recommended).
- **Research Strategy** – briefly discuss how your project is significant, feasible, and innovative.
- **Experimental Design** – how the hypothesis will be tested. Include relevant methods, statistical analyses, all figures and tables.
- **Project Timeline**.

Important note: All margins in this document may not be less than 1 inch. Font size not less than 11-point Arial. No less than standard single-spaced lines. *Applications violating this guideline may not be selected for review.*

Supporting Information:

Additional items which MUST be included in the proposal. This information is separate from the 4-page scientific content limit and is not required to follow the formatting requirements of the research plan.

Page 8:

- **Career Development Plan** – discuss your future plans in 350 words or less. Include brief history of your (applicant's) association with the research institution, background leading to development of this project, etc.
- **Project Ownership Plan** – in 350 words or less, discuss how the mentor and the applicant agree upon the ownership for the project and resources generated therein. Describe what part of the proposed project belongs to the applicant, and whether the applicant has overall responsibility for and ownership of this portion of the project. Describe what portions (materials, resources, tools, etc.) of the project the applicant will take to an independent research position and use to pursue additional grant funding.
- **Related Funding** – please share if your mentor, or another senior investigator in your laboratory, has submitted, received, or plans to submit funding for research that is related to

the work proposed in this application. If they have, discuss the funding source, relation to the PI, application status, in a brief description of how the projects are related.

If there are changes to the information provided during the review process, please email grants@curearthritis.org to keep ANRF informed.

Because ANRF funds are intended to support those seeking to move on to independent research careers, it is essential that any overlap with the mentor's funding is clearly delineated in the Project Ownership Plan particularly with regard to how ANRF funds will enhance opportunities for independence.

Page 9:

- **Lay Abstract** – provide a summary for the general audience in 250 words or less. Best practice is to keep this information at or below the 7th grade reading level.
- **Scientific Abstract** –provide a technical/scientific summary in 250 words or less.

Pages 10 & 11:

- **Budget and Justification** – list all expenses (salaries, supplies, equipment, and travel) to be paid through grant funding. Justify expenses as needed. Please refer to the funding policies section of this document for a complete list of allowable expenses.

Page 12:

- **Current and Pending Support** – list of all grant support you receive or have applied to receive. Please do not include support for which you are not the PI or Co-PI, institutional support (e.g., T32 awards), or support from your mentor in this section; doing so may disqualify your application.

Page 14:

- **Biographical Sketches** – for both the PI, sponsoring mentor and any additional key personnel. Use the five-page NIH Bio Sketch format; sponsoring mentor's bio sketch should contain the other support page. Uploads may not exceed 5 pages.
- **Letter(s) of Support** – from your institution and sponsoring mentor indicating their knowledge of and support of your proposed project. Please see the sponsoring mentor section of this document for specific requirements relating to the sponsoring mentor letter of support.
- **Mentor Training Experience –** list of mentorship experience over the last 5 years. Please see the sponsoring mentor section of this document for specific requirements relating to the mentor training experience.
- **Mentorship Plan –** plan dictating how fellowship benchmarks will be met. Please see the sponsoring mentor section of this document for a complete list of benchmarks.
- **References** – complete reference with title of article.

Additional Resources:

- Documents available on curearthritis.org:
    - ANRF Grant Application Scoring Criteria
    - ANRF Grant Writing Guide
    - ANRF Grant Toolkit
- Questions:
    - In-Person: Meet the Funders at ACR Convergence; November 6-11, in Orlando, FL
    - Virtual Office Hours: December 4th
    - Email: grants@curearthritis.org
- Watch: 2023 Interview with SAB Member, Dr. Michelle Kahlenberg
- Listen: ANRF's In the Rheum Podcast on Spotify
- Website: http://www.curearthritis.org/research-grants/
- Submit: ProposalCentral

Grant Policies

How to Apply:

Applicants must apply through ProposalCentral to be considered. Applicants must set up an account in Proposal Central to be able to access the application. Any required templates are provided within the ProposalCentral Application.

Applications:

1. The Scientific Advisory Board and Board of Directors review grant proposals annually.
2. Clinical, translational, and basic/foundational studies will be considered.
3. One (1) application may be submitted per sponsoring mentor annually. It is highly encouraged that interested applicants discuss the desire to apply with their mentor. If multiple applicants from the same mentor submit an application, only the first application submitted will be reviewed.
4. Investigators must possess an MD degree and be enrolled in or have completed a clinical rheumatology fellowship program accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME).
5. Applicants are not required to be U.S. citizens.
6. Applicants must be affiliated with, and complete all grant-funded research, at a qualified U.S. nonprofit research institution.
7. Preference will be given to postdoctoral physician scientists with no more than five (5) years of research training or experience since obtaining a post-baccalaureate doctoral-level degree (excluding clinical training).
8. Applications that list a co-PI will not be accepted.
9. One (1) sponsoring mentor is allowed per application.
10. Applicants may not have, or ever had, an NIH R01 grant or equivalent.
11. Applicants may not receive more than $300,000 of funding per year at the time of award from other sources. Any other support must be for a research project that differs significantly in aims, methodology and scope.
12. Applicants may not apply for funding if they have already received a grant from ANRF.
13. Applicants may not apply to the Postdoctoral Physician Scientist Fellowship and another ANRF grant in the same grant cycle.
14. The ANRF funds 1-2 grants each year based on funding availability and number of acceptable applications.
15. An additional administrative review may be rendered to determine priority for funding when multiple proposals are received from a single laboratory, division or department.

Funding:

1. Fellowship grants are awarded for one year, for up to $50,000.
2. Partial funding may be awarded if the grantee has documentation that the remainder of the funding for proposed research has been acquired.

3. Salaries, supplies and equipment directly related to the proposed study may be included in funding.
4. Salaries funded may not exceed the NIH salary cap.
5. No more than 50% of the applicant's salary may be funded through the grant.
6. Post-doctoral researchers and graduate students "to be named" will not be funded.
7. Senior personnel (considered associate professor level or above) will not be funded.
8. Sponsoring mentor may not request salary support through this grant.
9. Overhead or indirect costs will not be funded.
10. ANRF pays awards in four (4) installments per year.
11. Justified travel to scientific meetings and trainings directly related to the proposed studies is an allowed expense.
12. Expenditures for each individual line item on the approved budget shall not vary by more than 10% and any variance within that percentage shall not materially change the scope and focus of the project. Any anticipated change of greater than 10% requires written consent of ANRF.
13. Any funding remaining at the end of the grant term must be immediately returned to ANRF. Contact ANRF at grants@curearthritis.org prior to returning any funds.

Working with Human and Animal Models:

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the use of human subjects or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approval for the use of animal subjects can be pending at time of submission but must be approved prior to funding.

Researchers are expected to follow their institution's policies when working with live subjects.

Cohort Commitments:

ANRF is committed to ensuring the success of our cohorts. Therefore, we offer several opportunities to learn more about topics relevant to navigating a successful career. When accepting the grant funding, the grantee agrees to make every attempt to attend the following events:

- Quarterly-annual cohort meetings – 1-hour meetings held virtually in July and January
- Annual Symposium – held in-person on a Saturday in March (travel and accommodations through ANRF)

Please note: ANRF provides a stipend to attend the annual symposium during funded years, any allowable costs that exceed the stipend may be reimbursed through the research grant.

Additionally, ANRF welcomes all current and former grantees into our alumni program, the Scholars Society. This community is designed to provide opportunities to continue networking, and collaboration with other ANRF alums. All grantees are automatically enrolled into the Scholars Society upon completion of the grant agreement and remain in the program in perpetuity, at no cost.

Reporting:

Grantees must complete 1 midterm progress report through their funding period at 6 months. In this report, grantees must document progress made towards their aims and any changes made to the initial proposal. Mentors must report awardees progress towards goals and benchmarks.

Within 8 weeks of the final award term ending, the grantee's submission of the following items is required:

- 1–2-page final project report
- Financial accounting report
- A copy of any publications currently in progress – accepted or in publication
- A list of any public presentations of ANRF-funded work, not limited to lectures, symposium presentations, posters, etc. Include name, location, date, and number of attendees for each event where applicable.
- A report from the mentor on the overall status of the grantee's progress towards goals and benchmarks.

In order to document the foundation's effectiveness in funding research, ANRF will continue to follow up with grantees 2 and 5 years after the conclusion of funding. At those times, grantees will be asked to submit progress reports on any additional research conducted from the original ANRF grant and share their career journey.

Acknowledgement:

Any publication or presentation resulting in-whole or in-part from this research funding shall give credit to the ANRF and the grantee will provide an electronic copy of the publication to ANRF.

ANRF requests all publications and presentations produced as a result of funding are shared in perpetuity. Presentations and publications can be shared through the research announcement form linked here or by emailing grants@curearthrtis.org.

No-Cost Time Extensions:

No-cost extensions (NCE) may be approved for grant awards at the discretion of ANRF but should not exceed 6 months. NCE requests from current grant recipients must be submitted on official letterhead via email to grants@curearthritis.org.

Transfer of Grant Awards:

Requests for transfer of awards will be accepted on a case-by-case basis. Please contact ANRF at grants@curearthritis.org for questions about transfers.

Support of a Safe Workplace:

ANRF is committed to safe work environments free from discrimination and harassment and expects the grantee institution to maintain a safe, nondiscriminatory, and harassment-free work environment

at all times. If you feel you are working in an unsafe environment, please contact grants@curearthritis.org for resources.

Applications not in strict compliance with stated policies and guidelines will be subject to administrative inactivation.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

Application:

Q I am applying for this year's grant cycle with a similar but modified proposal from my application last year. Would that be considered a resubmission or a general submission?

A No matter the content of the previous proposal, we suggest submitting the application as a resubmission. This allows our reviewers to see the changes made from previous applications based on the feedback provided.

Q My research plan has some tables that are not in 11-point Arial font, may I submit them in their current format?

A Yes, tables can be submitted in a slightly smaller font. All data in the table must be legible to the reviewers.

Eligibility:

Q Do I need to have an MD to qualify for this grant?

A Yes, at this time this award is only open to physician researchers who have completed or are currently participating in an ACGME accredited clinical rheumatology fellowship.

Q Is the grant limited to researchers based in the United States?

A Yes, all researchers must be affiliated with a US institution, but are not required to be U.S. citizens.

Q I am here on a visa and do not have a green card. Does that disqualify me?

A No, ANRF does not take citizenship into account when reviewing and awarding grant mechanisms.

Q Should I be concerned that I have previously received NIH grant funding?

A Not necessarily, ANRF policies state that applicants may not ever have had an NIH R01 grant or equivalent. However, if previous NIH funding is not an R01 grant or equivalent, and total funding is not currently above $300,000 per year, the applicant would be eligible.

Q Can I apply to this ANRF grant if someone in my lab is applying to a different ANRF grant mechanism?

A Yes, ANRF lab restriction policies are limited to each grant mechanism.

Budget:

Q Are the salaries, supplies, equipment, and travel directly related to the proposed work the only allowable costs available to request?

A Generally, yes. However, please reach out to grants@curearthritis.org with specific questions.

Q Are training costs an allowable expense?

A Yes, as long as that training is directly related to their mentoring or research goals for the project.

Q Should the support from ANRF cover all research related expenses or do I just need to mention the ones I am seeking support for?

A The budget only needs to show costs directly relating to the support you are requesting. You may add details noting what is supported through other funding mechanisms to the textbox on the budget justification page if you would like to explain further.

Q What is a person-month and how do I calculate it?

A A person month is a metric for expressing the amount of time personnel devote to a project. Information for calculating person months can be found here: https://grants.nih.gov/news-events/nih-extramural-nexus-news/2026/06/what-is-a-person-month-how-do-i-calculate-it

Mentorship:

Q My primary mentor is not an MD and/or rheumatologist. Can I submit an application with another person on my mentoring team filling that role?

A Yes, applicants may include an MD and/or rheumatologist as part of their mentoring team, even if their primary mentor does not hold that credential. It is strongly recommended to include a letter of support from that mentor outlining their role and level of involvement in the project.

Travel:

Q Can funding be used to travel to conferences?

A Justified travel to scientific meetings directly related to the proposed studies is allowable.

Support:

Q Would pending support be limited to anything I have been awarded and expect to receive, or would it include applications that are currently in review?

A Pending support would include applications you intend to submit, are currently in review, and anything awarded and expecting to receive.

Q Do I need to submit the documentation of support for other persons who support me in this grant?

A ANRF does not need to know about monetary support from mentors; only how much money in grant funding the applicant has currently and is pending.

Q Should I include a T32 grant that was awarded to me through my institution?

A No, do not include institutional support in this section. If you'd like to share this information, please provide within the biosketch.

IRB/IACUC Approvals:

Q Would it be acceptable if the IRB or IACUC application was submitted as "to be submitted" instead of "pending"?

A Yes, as long as approval for IRB is submitted by the time the grant agreement is signed it would be acceptable for the IRB to be listed as 'to be submitted'.

Questions

We are happy to help! Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or comments. Contact grants@curearthritis.org or call 1-800-588-2873 x103.

The Arthritis National Research Foundation is committed to discovery and innovation in the search for effective therapies and lasting cures for arthritis and related autoimmune diseases.