



## ALF 2024 LIVER SCHOLAR AWARD

**LETTER OF INTENT (LOI) DEADLINE:** September 15, 2024

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:** October 15, 2024

**AWARD PERIOD:** December 1, 2024 – November 30, 2027

### OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Liver Scholar Award is to develop the potential of outstanding, early career scientists and encourage basic and translational research in liver biology and disease. The Liver Scholar Award provides junior faculty with support for their research to bridge the gap between completion of research training and attainment of status as an independent, well-funded research scientist. The additional research funding provided by this award is intended to enable early career scientists to successfully compete for research awards from national sources, particularly the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Investigators who hold MD, PhD or MD/PhD degrees and are pursuing a career in liver research are encouraged to apply. Individuals who are already well-established in the field are not eligible for this award. This award funds projects in basic or translational research. Clinical research projects are currently not eligible for this award.

### LIVER SCHOLAR AWARD AT-A-GLANCE

**Career Level:** Junior Faculty

**Award Type:** Research Award

**Research Type:** Basic or Translational Research

**Funding amount:** \$225,000 over 3 years (\$75,000 per year)

**Letter of Intent Deadline:** September 15, 2024

**Application Deadline:** October 15, 2024

### ELIGIBILITY

In order to be eligible for a Liver Scholar Award, the applicant must:

- 1) Be sponsored by a public or private non-profit institution accredited in the United States and engaged in health care and health-related research. Individuals employed at the NIH, FDA, and CDC are not eligible to apply.
- 2) Hold an MD and/or PhD (or equivalent degree), and a full-time faculty or equivalent position at an institution in the United States by the start date of this award.
  - a) If the applicant does not have a faculty appointment at the time of application, a letter signed by the department chair confirming that the applicant will have a faculty appointment (a) no later than the Liver Scholar Award start date and (b) for the full award cycle must be submitted.
- 3) Be within the first five (5) years of their first faculty appointment (including prior appointments in universities outside of the United States) at the start of the award.
  - a) ALF is sensitive to personal matters that impact career trajectories. An appropriately

documented leave of absence (e.g, parental leave, medical leave, long-term care of a parent/spouse/child/dependent) will not be counted toward the above five-year eligibility criteria. Applicants in this situation must reach out to ALF staff at least three weeks before the application deadline to ask for an exemption.

- b) Applicants who are outside of the eligibility time frame because of other exceptional circumstances may also request to be considered for an exemption.
  - c) Applicants requesting an exemption must reach out to ALF staff via email ([research@liverfoundation.org](mailto:research@liverfoundation.org)) at least three weeks before the application deadline to ask for an exemption. Exemptions will be provided on a case-by-case basis and must be included in the application package if granted.
- 4) Not hold or have held any similar career development award, any NIH R-, P-, or K-level grants, or any similar grant mechanisms from federal or non-federal sources at the time of application or during the Liver Scholar Award Period.
    - a) The American Liver Foundation must be notified immediately if the applicant receives another research award during the application process or during the award period.
  - 5) Be sponsored by a research mentor.
  - 6) Be able to guarantee 50% protected research time for entirety of the three years. A letter of commitment must be provided by the candidate's department/division.
  - 7) Not apply for more than one award offered by the American Liver Foundation.

Applicants who are from groups identified as underrepresented in the biomedical, clinical, behavioral, and social sciences are strongly encouraged to apply. This includes, but is not limited to, individuals from racial and ethnic groups underrepresented in health-related sciences (Blacks or African Americans, Hispanics or Latinos, American Indians or Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders, etc), individuals with disabilities, and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. See NIH's [Notice of NIH's Interest in Diversity \(NOT-OD-20-031\)](#) for a complete list and additional details.

## AWARD DETAILS

An award of \$225,000 will be provided over three years (\$75,000 per year).

### **Award terms:**

- Annual renewal will depend on scientific progress, verification of faculty status, and other received or pending research funding.
- Recipients must acknowledge the award in all publications (abstracts, manuscripts, or other documents) resulting from research performed during the tenure of this award. A copy of the publication should be provided to ALF.
- Awards cannot be transferred to another institution without prior written approval from the American Liver Foundation.
- Recipients are directly responsible to the sponsoring institution.
- Unexpended funds at the end of the award period must be returned to the American Liver Foundation.
- If the award is relinquished prior to the specified end date of the award period, unexpended funds starting from the relinquishment date must be returned to the American Liver Foundation within 60 days.
- Final award payment will be held until receipt of all final reports.
- Recipient's personal or medical leaves of absence that last longer than 4 weeks must be communicated to the American Liver Foundation.
- Award recipients agree that their photograph and a brief summary of their research project will be featured in a press release and posted on the American Liver Foundation website and

social media channels.

## LETTER OF INTENT (LOI)

A Letter of Intent (LOI) **must** be submitted to apply for a Liver Scholar Award. The LOI purpose is to allow ALF staff to estimate the number of, and plan for the review of, submitted applications.

The Letter of Intent must be prepared on the LOI PDF template found on the Liver Scholar Award [webpage](#) and **submitted via email, no later than September 15, 2024**, to:

Helene Jordan, PhD  
American Liver Foundation  
National Senior Director, Research Program Management  
[research@liverfoundation.org](mailto:research@liverfoundation.org)

## BUDGET AND JUSTIFICATION

Applicants must provide a budget **for year one using the budget template included in the Application Form**. The budget justification should be listed on a separate page, after the budget template, with an explanation for each budget item (including a description of key personnel and their role in the project).

### Allowable costs:

- Salary and benefits for principal investigator (i.e., award recipient).
- Salary and benefits for laboratory technicians or other key personnel necessary for completion of the proposed research project.
- Laboratory supplies, animals, or other materials necessary for completion of the proposed research project.
- Small equipment (excluding capital equipment) necessary for completion of the proposed research project if properly justified in the budget justification, not to exceed \$5,000 per year.
- Biostatistics, informatics, or other core facility necessary for completion of the proposed research project, not to exceed \$2,000 per year.
- Registration and travel costs to attend scientific conferences that will support the recipient's career development, not to exceed \$1,500 per year.

### Non-allowable costs:

- Indirect costs (e.g., university overhead).
- Capital equipment (i.e., equipment exceeding \$5,000 in cost).
- Salary, benefits or any other support for the mentor or department/division chair.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants will be evaluated based upon their background, their commitment to a research career, the scientific merit of their research project and the environment in which they will conduct this project.

Applications will be reviewed based on the written materials submitted. **Incomplete applications and applications that fail to adhere strictly to the instructions (including the submission deadline and page limitations) will not be reviewed.** All decisions are final.

## ANNUAL REPORTS

A scientific progress report, progress report in lay language, financial report, and budget for the following year must be sent to the American Liver Foundation before the end of the first and second award year, using templates that will be provided by ALF. Fiscal accountability reports must detail summary expenditures for each line item within each budget category.

A final scientific report, lay language report, and financial report must also be provided within 60 days of completion of the award. Annual renewal of the award is contingent upon receipt of the reports.

Following the conclusion of the award, recipients must provide an updated bibliography once a year for three (3) years listing articles published or accepted for publication that result from work performed during the tenure of the award, including after termination or completion of the Liver Scholar Agreement. A copy of all articles supported by the award and published during or after the award should be provided to ALF.

## RESEARCH AWARD GLOSSARY

**Basic Research:** Research focused on fundamental scientific investigations and usually conducted in controlled laboratory settings, with the primary goal of understanding basic biology or disease mechanisms. It aims to expand knowledge, discover new principles, and understand underlying mechanisms without specific applications towards processes or products in mind. However, the results of basic research form the foundation for translational and clinical research. This category can involve animal studies, cell culture and other in vitro studies, “omics” research, and studies using human biospecimens or human data that cannot be linked to a specific individual.

**Clinical Research:** Patient-oriented research with the primary goal of directly impacting the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, or outcome of liver disease in patients. Clinical research often involves direct contact with human subjects and aims to assess the safety, efficacy, and effectiveness of medical interventions, treatments, or diagnostics to inform clinical practice and improve patient care. Clinical trials are a common form of clinical research, and it can also include interventional, observational, epidemiological, or behavioral studies, outcomes research, and health services research studies.

**Collaborator:** An individual who works with the principal investigator in the scientific development or execution of the project. This individual would typically devote a specific percent of effort to the project and would be identified as key personnel. The collaborator may be employed by or affiliated with either the grantee organization or an organization participating in the project under a consortium or contractual agreement.

**Grant Administrator:** The staff member who oversees new grant agreements and grant payments; ensure that grants comply with relevant laws and regulations; guarantees that all required reports are submitted; and administers the grant after award.

**Indirect Costs:** Costs that are necessary to support a particular activity project or program but that cannot be easily or directly attributed to such activity, project or program. Examples of indirect costs are rent, utilities, and administrative personnel.

**Junior Faculty:** Faculty member for no more than five years at the time of the award (usually at the rank of Assistant Professor or equivalent).

**Mentor:** Senior professional who provides guidance, direction and support to the applicant. This person should have a vested interest in the career development and research experience of the applicant.

**Public Health Service (PHS) 398 Forms and NIH Guidelines:** The PHS 398 Form is the application form used to obtain federal grant support. Go to [www.grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html](http://www.grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html) to access the PHS 398 “Biosketch” Form and PHS398 Instructions that have useful tips and directions for completing a Research Plan.

**Translational Research:** Research that bridges the gap between basic research and clinical research, with the goal of translating observations from the laboratory, clinic, and community into potential interventions that improve health. Translational research can include converting basic research discoveries into practical medical interventions, therapies, or diagnostics that can then be tested in clinical research studies. For example, if basic research identifies a gene that could play a role in a certain disease, translational research could identify ways to target this gene and test their efficacy in the laboratory before moving to human testing. Translational research also investigates how results of successful clinical research studies can be translated into best practices and implemented by physicians in clinical care.

## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

### Submission Deadline

The deadline for the Letter of Intent is **September 15, 2024**.

The deadline for the application is **October 15, 2024**. Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed.

### Formatting Instructions

- 1) Download the Application Form and Application Guidelines from the [Liver Scholar Award webpage](#).
- 2) Complete the Application Form by typing responses in the fillable pdf document, obtain requested signatures, and prepare all required documents as indicated below.
- 3) Use at least half-inch margins. Do not use lettering smaller than 10 point.
- 4) Include a header with your name (last name, first name) and the name of the award in the upper right-hand corner of each page in required documents not provided in the Application Form.
- 5) Be sure to adhere to page limits and complete all sections as indicated in these guidelines. Applications that do not meet the requirements, in content or format, will not be reviewed.
- 6) **Assemble the Application Package in the order listed in the Required Documents section** below.
- 7) The completed Application Form and all required documents must be combined into and submitted as one PDF document. This document is your Application Package. Name the PDF as follows: Last name\_First name\_Liver Scholar. Your single PDF file must be no larger than 10MB (megabytes).

### Submission Instructions

- 1) Submit a Letter of Intent **via email** by September 15, 2024.
- 2) Submit your Application **online** on the [Liver Scholar Award webpage](#) by October 15, 2024 by following the steps below:
  - a) Complete the Applicant and Proposal Information in the online Submission form.
  - b) Applicants **must** select a Primary Type of Research and Primary Topic for their research proposal. Applicants can submit up to five additional topics (optional).
  - c) Upload your Application Package as one PDF document as indicated above.

- d) Click the **“Submit” button** to submit your application.
- 3) You will receive an email confirmation that the PDF was received. Check your spam folder and contact [research@liverfoundation.org](mailto:research@liverfoundation.org) if you did not receive an email confirmation.

## Required Documents

Assemble the required documents in the order below:

- 1) **Application Form:**
  - a) **Title Page** – All fields must be completed.
  - b) **Applicant Information and Required Signatures** – All fields must be completed. Indicate N/A if a field does not apply. All required signatures must be provided by the appropriate individuals. Signatures may be digital, electronic, or “in ink”.
  - c) **Applicant Demographic Information** – Complete all fields as appropriate (optional). The provided information will be treated as confidential and will not be shared with reviewers.
  - d) **Lay Summary and Abstract** – Provide a lay summary of your research along with your project’s abstract. The lay summary and scientific abstract must adhere to character limits and fit in the space imparted. Please contact [research@liverfoundation.org](mailto:research@liverfoundation.org) if you need assistance.
  - e) **Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Animal Experimentation** – All human and animal studies require IRB and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approval, respectively. Verification of IRB or IACUC approval must be provided prior to the award being granted. If IRB or IACUC approval is required but documentation is not included, please state why.
  - f) **Budget** – Provide a detailed budget **for year 1** using the template form provided in the Application Form. **Limit one page.**
- 2) **Budget Justification**– Provide an explanation for each budget item (including a description of key personnel and their role in the project). **Limit two pages.**
- 3) **Exemption** (if applicable) – Include the exemption letter provided by ALF if an exemption was granted
- 4) **Biosketch** – Provide biographical sketches for the applicant, mentor, and any other key personnel using the [current NIH biosketch format](#). **Limit five pages each.**
- 5) **Other Support** – Provide a list of all other active and pending institutional, federal and non-federal support using the NIH [“Other Support” form for the applicant and mentor](#). See the NIH [“Other Support” webpage](#) for additional information and templates.
- 6) **Specific Aims** – State the proposed project’s overall research hypothesis, objectives, specific aims, and impact of the results. **Limit one page.**
- 7) **Research Plan** – The research plan must be prepared and assembled in the following order: Background and Significance, Preliminary Results, Research Design and Methods, and References. Results of unpublished observations may be summarized using text, tables or figures and they must be included in the eight-page limit. **Limit eight pages, not including references.**
- 8) **References** –No specific format requested. **Limit 50 references.**
- 9) **Research Facilities** – The research environment should be described, including, as applicable, laboratory space, access to patients’ materials or data, animals, core facilities, consultants and technical resources (including computer). **Limit one page.**
- 10) **Candidate’s Statement** – Describe the benefits of this award to your research career, the impact your mentor will have on your research development, and your academic goals. Please also highlight your previous studies and any contributions to knowledge in this field. **Limit one page.**

- 11) **Letter of Commitment from Department Head** – A letter must be provided by the head of the candidate's department/division confirming that the applicant will have at least 50% of protected research time for the award duration. **Limit one page.**
- 12) **Letter of Support from Mentor** – A letter of support must be provided by the applicant's mentor and indicate that the mentor will be available to provide advice and guidance to the applicant during the award cycle. **Limit to one page.**
- 13) **Letters of Recommendation** – Two letters of recommendation attesting to the candidate's qualifications, commitment to liver research and quality of scientific work should be submitted with the application. The recommendation letters cannot be provided by the applicant's mentor or department head. **Limit one page each.**
- 14) **Letters of collaborations (optional)** – If the project involves collaborations, the applicant can opt to submit letters from collaborators in support of the project. **Limit one page each and no more than two letters.**