

2026-27 Research Fellowship Grants and Young Clinician Investigator Awards



APPLICATION GUIDELINES, INSTRUCTIONS & FAQs

As a premier funder of neurosurgical studies, the [Neurosurgery Research & Education Foundation](#) (NREF) focuses on providing fellowship funding in basic neuroscience and neurosurgical programs in North America.

Please read this document in its entirety prior to completing the online application. After reviewing the application and the information below, please contact the NREF at 847.378.0500 or via email at info@nref.org if you still have questions.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES, PROCEDURES & PROGRAM INFORMATION

General Information

- **Research Fellowship Grant** (One year; up to \$50,000)
 - Grant provides training for neurosurgery residents preparing for academic careers as clinician investigators.
 - 80% of the applicant's efforts must be devoted to research, including this project.
- **Young Clinician Investigator Award** (One year; up to \$50,000)
 - Award supports junior faculty who are pursuing careers as clinical investigators.
 - 50% of the applicant's effort should be devoted to research, which includes the completion of this project.
- **Deadline for Application** - 11:59 PM (Central Standard Time), **Saturday, November 1, 2025**
- **Period of Fellowship** - One year, beginning July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027
- **Background** - Grants may be awarded in lesser amounts depending on available support. NREF does not pay for any indirect costs related to our grant awards. For additional information, please contact NREF at info@nref.org.

Eligibility

- **Research Fellowship Grant** - Applicants must be physicians who have been accepted into, or who are currently in approved residency training programs in neurological surgery in North America.
- **Young Clinician Investigator Award** - Applicants must be neurosurgeons, no more than two years from having completed their neurosurgical residency training, and/or clinical fellowship, who are full-time faculty in North American teaching institutions.

Fellowship Funding Overlap/Duplicate Funding

- Funding for a fellowship awarded by the NREF through this program cannot be duplicated by any other outside funding source. If the individual receives funding from another source for a fellowship awarded by NREF through this program, the institution's Fellowship Program Director must notify the NREF immediately and return the fellowship funding. Notification must be sent to NREF by email at info@nref.org.

Submission Instructions

- Log in to [NREF Online Grant Portal](#).
- To apply for an NREF grant, you will need to create an account or use your myAANS.org login to access the portal.

Application Procedure

- The project proposal should be in NIH format and include the following elements:
 - Specific Aims
 - Significance
 - Innovation
 - Preliminary Findings
 - Approach

NOTE: Including these elements should not be interpreted as a guarantee of an award.

Please keep the proposal to a maximum of five (5) pages using NIH guidelines (for margins, line spacing, and font size including the following:

Margins

- Paper size no larger than standard letter paper size (8 ½" x 11")
- At least one-half in margins (1/2") – top, bottom, left, and right – for all pages

Line Spacing

- No more than six lines per vertical inch. To ensure, you can set line spacing to "exactly 12 pt.". This can be done in the paragraph settings panel in Word's layout tab.

Font Size

- At least 11 pt font size
- Recommend using one of the following: Arial, Georgia, Helvetica, or Palatino Linotype.

Please see the following link for full NIH grant guidelines: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/format-attachments.htm>

Other elements that should be included in the grant submission, but are not considered part of the five (5) page limit, are as follows:

- References
- Career Development Plan (1-page limit)
- Vertebrate Animals (2-page limit)
- Department chair letter (required for Young Clinician Investigator award)
- Mentor letter (required for Resident Research Fellowship Grant and Young Clinician Investigator Award)
- Other letters of support

Based on an evaluation of proposals from recent awardees, here are some factors to consider:

- Does the research have potential for extramural funding? Is there strong preliminary data?
- Does the project represent a new direction from existing research efforts? Is the study innovative?
- What is the societal impact and potential applications of the research? Would a positive outcome contribute to the field?
- Are the goals, objective and anticipated results clearly defined, logical and well-described in the proposal? Is the scope of the project realistic for timeframe?
- Is the research environment supportive? Does the institution offer strong mentorship?

Notification of Award

- **The foundation expects to notify applicants via email by April 15th.** However, public announcement is contingent upon receipt of written confirmation from applicants. The foundation reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to extend the date for it to provide notification of awards.

Fiscal Policies and Reports

- Fellowship grant payments will be made quarterly:
 - 25% at the start of the grant period (by July 15th)
 - 25% by October 15th
 - 25% by January 15th
 - 25% after final summary report and final accounting are received
- An interim summary report is required to be submitted by the fellow describing his/her experience along with a current accounting of funds within 180 days of the start of the fellowship.
- A final summary report is required to be submitted by the fellow describing his/her experience along with a final accounting of funds. These reports are due within forty (40) days of the conclusion of the fellowship.
- Twenty-five percent (25%) of the grant funds will be withheld until reports referenced above are received by the NREF. Upon receipt of both reports, the remaining withheld funds will be sent to the grantee institution.
- At the conclusion of the fellowship, any unexpended balance of \$100 or more must be refunded to the Foundation within forty-five (45) days together with the report of expenditures and accompanying documentation.
- All final reports must be submitted electronically to info@nref.org.
- Separate accounting of the fellowship grant funds should be maintained at the receiving institution. These accounts, with appropriate and related invoices and payroll information, must be available at all times to NREF representatives.
- The grantee may terminate a fellowship grant prior to the planned expiration date by notifying the NREF in writing and stating the reasons for termination. Unexpended funds must be returned to the NREF within sixty (60) days, together with a final report of expenditures. The NREF reserves the right to terminate fellowship grants at any time if the grantee violates the terms and conditions of the grant.

Policy on Delinquent Financial/Research Reports

- The Foundation reserves the right to deny additional grants to any institution where, after proper notification, a fellow has not submitted his/her final reports, and/or the financial officer has not submitted the final report of expenses, as required by NREF. Further, the NREF will not issue final payments to institutions until both reports are received.

Publication

- The NREF encourages publication of research findings by fellows, but requires that the NREF is cited as a source of support on the first page of the text.
- When a fellow presents a paper at a professional scientific meeting concerning research findings made during an NREF-funded fellowship, the NREF must be cited prior to beginning the presentation.
- Reprints of all papers and publications, including any electronic papers or publications, resulting from work done during the course of a fellowship must be sent to NREF, even those that appear after the fellowship has ended.
- The citation should appear in the Acknowledgements section as follows:
This work is supported by the Neurosurgery Research & Education Foundation (2026-27 Research Fellowship Grant & Young Clinician Investigator Awards).

Frequently-Asked Questions

1. **Who can apply?**
 - **Research Fellowship Grant** - Applicants must be physicians accepted into, or who are in, approved residency training programs in neurological surgery in North America
 - **Young Clinician Investigator Award** - Applicants must be neurosurgeons who are full-time faculty in North American teaching institutions and in the early years of their careers, no more than two years from the end of clinical training (residency or clinical fellowship)
2. **Does the applicant need to be a United States citizen?**
 - U.S. Citizenship is not required to apply.

3. Who should I ask to provide a letter of recommendation?

- When requesting a letter or recommendation, it is important that the writer is able to speak to your research interests and your qualifications.
- Additional letters of recommendation can be added to the application via the “Additional Documents” section in the portal.

4. How many awardees per institution are allowed?

- Usually, no more than one award per year will be given to any one institution. However, the final decision is at the discretion of the NREF Research Committee.

5. What is the award amount?

- Typically, each grant is \$40,000 but the amount may be adjusted depending on available funding.

6. What is the grant period?

- Both awards support a one-year project, starting July 1st following the award and ending June 30th.

7. Can funding be accepted from other sources?

- No. If a grant is obtained from another source for the same project, NREF funding will be withheld and given to another applicant. It is the applicant’s responsibility to notify the NREF if this occurs.

8. What is the time commitment?

- **Research Fellowship Grant** - 80% of the resident’s effort during the funding period of this grant should be devoted to research, including this project.
- **Young Clinician Investigator** - 50% of the young clinician investigator’s efforts during the funding period of this grant should be devoted to research, which includes the completion of this project, but exceptions can be considered.

9. How are applications submitted?

- Applications are only available through the **NREF Online Grant Portal**

10. What is the application deadline?

- The completed application must be submitted by 11:59 PM (Central Standard Time), November 1st.

11. Will I be notified that my application was received?

- An administrative review will take place after November 1st and applicants will receive notification via email by November 15th that their application was received.

12. When will awardees be notified?

- Notification of awards will be made by April 15th. All applicants will be notified whether or not they receive an award. The Foundation reserves the right to extend the date to provide award notification.

13. What is the policy for extension requests?

- Requests for a No Cost Extension will be considered, but are subject to approval from the Chair of the NREF Research Committee. Send requests to NREF at info@nref.org.

14. What are the reporting requirements?

- A summary report is required at the halfway point (180 days from beginning of grant period) and a final report and accounting of funds is required within forty (40) days of the completion of the grant period.

15. What should be included in the reports?

- *Interim Report Outline* – The report should address the following questions:
 - Are you on track to complete the project within the proposed budget?
 - Have you encountered any unexpected challenges, or created any unexpected benefits?
 - If yes, what changes would you like to make to the goals/objectives?
 - If yes, what changes would you like to make to the original budget?
 - As the philanthropic arm of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS), we welcome opportunities to demonstrate to the neurosurgical community and potential donors the return on investments made. Are there aspects of your efforts to date that merit publicity?
- *Final Report and Accounting of Funds* – The report should address the following questions:
 - Were the outcomes that you detailed in your proposal achieved?
 - Were there any unexpected challenges encountered, or any unexpected benefits?
 - Have the grant funds been utilized as proposed and fully utilized?
 - Do you have plans to pursue additional funding from other sources to continue your research?
 - Please describe any impact this project will have on the future of your research and the community/constituents you serve.
 - Are there aspects of your efforts to date that merit publicity?
 - The NREF would like to continually improve its grant making process. Do you have any recommendations for improving how our grants are promoted or the process in general?

16. What are the budget requirements?

- A comprehensive budget must be prepared by the applicant and sponsor indicating how award will be used. Funds may be used in part or entirely for stipend. It is NREF policy to fund only direct costs involved with research awards. Proceeds must not be used to acquire or cover fringe benefits, publication costs, or travel expenses.

17. Who is the payee?

- Awards will be made payable to the institution. To expedite the proper disbursement of awards, grant recipients must be sure to provide the correct payee information with the grant agreement.

18. What is the policy for unused funds?

- Any funds that are not used at the end of the engagement period must be returned to the NREF.

19. How is the grant administered?

- The NREF is the official administrator of the grant program. The NREF oversees the application process including receipt, processing, and organizing the review of applications.
- Applications are subject to a double review process by committees comprised of AANS members, with first evaluation by subspecialty experts and final awardee selection determined by NREF Research Committee.
- The NREF manages the financial aspects of the fellowships and the distribution of funds to the institution.