New Investigator Research Grant to Promote Diversity (NIRGD)

**Competition objectives:** The New Investigator Research Grant to Promote Diversity in Alzheimer’s research is a two-year award to investigators who are currently underrepresented at academic institutions in Alzheimer’s or related dementias research. The objective of this award is to increase the number of highly trained investigators from diverse backgrounds whose basic, clinical and social/behavioral research interests are grounded in the advanced methods and experimental approaches needed to solve problems related to Alzheimer’s and related dementias in general and in health disparities populations. The Alzheimer’s Association recognizes the need to increase the number of underrepresented scientists participating in biomedical and behavioral research. The Association anticipates that by providing these research opportunities, the number of underrepresented scientists entering and remaining in biomedical research careers in Alzheimer’s disease will increase.

The purpose of this program is to provide underrepresented new investigators with funding that will allow them to develop preliminary or pilot data, to test procedures, and to develop hypotheses. The intent is to support early-career development that will lay the groundwork for future research grant applications to the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation and other funding agencies and groups, including future proposals to the Alzheimer’s Association. All NIRGD applications must target defined areas of focus outlined in this Program Announcement (see Section II).

**Funding and award period:** Each NIRGD award is limited to $100,000 (direct and indirect costs) for up to two years. Requests in any given year may not exceed $60,000 (direct and indirect costs). Indirect costs are capped at 10 percent (rent for laboratory/office space is expected to be covered by indirect costs paid to the institution).

**Eligibility:** Applicants must be Assistant Professors or above at their respective institution. For individuals who are at non-academic institutions, please contact the Alzheimer’s Association at grantsapp@alz.org to verify your eligibility. Eligibility to apply for this grant competition is restricted to investigators who have less than 10 years of research experience after receipt of their terminal degree. The 10-year period applies to the date of submission of the grant application. Adjustments for career interruptions can be made. Applicant must contact the Alzheimer’s Association regarding any possible exception (grantsapp@alz.org). These would include, but are not limited to, family leave, military service, and major illness or injury. It is the responsibility of the applicant to point out and document such interruptions within their application.

Specific for the NIRGD and MNIRGD grant programs, eligible applicants are faculty members who have been determined to be underrepresented faculty in biomedical and behavioral research on a national or institutional basis. The Alzheimer’s Association will require documentation to support the faculty member’s underrepresented status at their institution. Applicants in the United States will be subject to the definitions as stated by the National Institutes of Health:
1. Individuals from racial and ethnic groups that have been shown by the National Science Foundation to be underrepresented in health-related sciences on a national basis. The following racial and ethnic groups have been shown to be underrepresented in biomedical research: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders. In addition, it is recognized that underrepresentation can vary from setting to setting; individuals from racial or ethnic groups that can be convincingly demonstrated to be underrepresented by the grantee institution should be encouraged to participate in this program.

2. Individuals with disabilities, who are defined as those with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

3. Individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds who are defined as:
   - Individuals who come from a family with an annual income below established low-income thresholds. These thresholds are based on family size; published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census; adjusted annually for changes in the Consumer Price Index; and adjusted by the Secretary for use in all health professions programs. The Secretary periodically publishes these income levels at HHS - Poverty Guidelines, Research, and Measurement. For individuals from low income backgrounds, the institution must be able to demonstrate that such participants have qualified for Federal disadvantaged assistance or they have received any of the following student loans: Health Professions Student Loans (HPSL), Loans for Disadvantaged Student Program, or they have received scholarships from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the Scholarship for Individuals with Exceptional Financial Need.
   - Individuals who come from a social, cultural, or educational environment such as that found in certain rural or inner-city environments that have demonstrably and recently directly inhibited the individual from obtaining the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to develop and participate in a research career.
   - Disadvantaged background (C1 and C2) are most applicable to high school and perhaps undergraduate candidates, but would be more difficult to justify for individuals beyond that level of achievement.

Applicants must submit a letter printed on the hiring institution letterhead, signed by an authorized institutional official (i.e. Grants and Contracts officer) that states you have been determined by your institution to be underrepresented in the above areas at the time of Letter of Intent (LOI) for verification. The Alzheimer’s Association reserves the right to require additional documentation to help confirm the applicant’s eligibility. Non-US Applicants in addition to letter must provide official documentation from their institutional materials, such as, website, manual or other legal documentation that indicates their eligibility for this program.
Applications for a New Investigator Research Grant (NIRG) and New Investigator Research Grant to Promote Diversity (NIRGD) will be accepted from postdoctoral fellows and other junior faculty members (for example: Instructor, Research Associate Scientist, etc.) who can provide a letter of employment verification indicating you will have a full-time faculty position of an Assistant Professor and above by the award date should the proposal be in funding range and funded.

The letter of employment must be uploaded to your application, printed on the hiring institution letterhead, signed by an authorized institutional official (i.e. Grants and Contracts officer) and must indicate that the position will be activated by the grant award date. If the anticipated position is not activated by the award date for any reason, any offer of funding will be withdrawn. There will be no exceptions. In the event your application is funded, you will be required to provide an official letter on organizational letterhead, signed by an institutional signing official, stating you will have a full-time faculty position of an assistant professor and above.

Please note: If the applicant institution does not have an Assistant Professor position, the letter of employment should include sufficient information to allow the Alzheimer’s Association staff to evaluate the eligibility of the applicant.

Ineligibility: The Alzheimer's Association will not accept new grant applications from currently funded investigators who are delinquent in submitting required reports and other deliverables on active grants. Investigators that have previous Alzheimer's Association awards closed as ‘Incomplete’ are not eligible to apply without exception. This policy will be strictly adhered to with no exceptions.

Deadlines and award dates: Letters of Intent must be received by 5:00 PM EASTERN STANDARD TIME, September 25, 2015. Letters of Intent will not be accepted after this date. No exceptions will be made.

Applications must be received by 5:00 PM EASTERN STANDARD TIME, October 30, 2015.

Scientific and technical review will be conducted from November 2015 – January 2016. The second-level review by the Medical and Scientific Advisory Council will be conducted during January 2016. Funding will be awarded by January 2016.

Applications will be reviewed with special attention to:
- Significance of the question being studied
- Applicant information
- Quality of the work plan
Mechanism of award, reporting requirements and allowable costs: The mechanism of the award is the individual research grant. The maximum allowable duration is two years. Annual scientific progress and financial reports are required. Continuation of the grant over the awarded duration is contingent upon the timely receipt of scientific progress and financial reports.

Budget: A "budget summary" for the proposed research project is required and must be submitted with the application and within the allowable page limits. However, if the application is to be awarded, a more detailed budget will be required and must be approved before the disbursement of funds. Your budget must not exceed the maximum amount of the award, $100,000 or $60,000 per year.

Allowable costs under this award:
It is required that most of the funds awarded under this program be used for direct research support.

Allowable costs under this award include:
- Purchase and care of laboratory animals
- Small pieces of laboratory equipment and laboratory supplies
- Computer equipment if used strictly for data collection
- Support for travel to scientific and professional meetings not to exceed $1,000 per year
- Additional support for travel expenses necessary to carry out research planned not to exceed $1,000 per year
- Salary for the principal investigator, scientific (including post-doctoral fellows) and technical staff (including laboratory technicians and administrative support related directly to the funded project)

Direct Costs not allowed under this award include:
- Tuition
- Computer hardware or software for investigators
- Rent for laboratory/office space
- Construction or renovation costs

For more information: Contact grantsapp@alz.org or call 1.312.335-5747 or 1.312.335.5862.