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Grant Guidelines

Fibromyalgia Research Grant Guidelines & Application Request for Applications

Amount: Up to \$85,000

For a One to Two Year Grant Period

Deadline: March 1, 2026

Total Funding Allocation: Up to \$270,000 (U.S. dollars)

Welcome!

Please read through the sections below and if you have any questions, email me (Kristin Thorson). My role is to assist potential applicants and facilitate the grant review process.

Be sure to review the applicant requirements so that you understand our policy on overhead expenses as well as large equipment/salary expenses. To provide you with guidance regarding the types of projects AFSA funds, please see our [Projects Funded](#) page. It's important that your proposal does not overlap with any ongoing projects funded by AFSA.

If you are uncertain whether your proposed project falls within AFSA's research-funding goals, email AFSA a [brief](#) Letter of Intent (LOI). All LOIs should be in PDF format; see the last section for details.

Investigative teams (PIs and Co-PIs) may only submit [one](#) application for this RFA. In addition, any researcher who is currently part of the investigative team for an ongoing AFSA study is ineligible to apply for this RFA, unless the current AFSA project will be completed before March 1, 2026.

Completed applications, which include a signed Conditions of Award, should be emailed to me as a PDF attachment by the March 1, 2026. However, you may submit your proposal before this deadline date to speed up the review process. I look forward to working with you.

Kindest regards,

Kristin Thorson
President and Founder of AFSA
kthorson@afsafund.org

Priority Areas for Research Funding

Proposals submitted for review should be relevant to AFSA's fibromyalgia (FM) research grant priorities. Also, proposals must be clinically focused, patient relevant, and cannot overlap with ongoing AFSA-funded studies.

- Test therapeutic interventions or agents for reducing key FM symptoms.
- Evaluate/identify peripheral and central biological mechanisms responsible for causing FM.
- Identify/develop diagnostic measures that can be used in a clinical setting, preferably using blood or other easily accessed biofluids. This does not include brain imaging techniques because of cost and barriers with implementation.

All proposed studies must be **clinically focused**. AFSA does not fund rodent studies. Keep in mind that proposals to test expensive treatment modalities that are not usually covered by insurance could hinder your "patient relevance" score. The same holds true for testing hypotheses that apply to a small subset of FM patients. Also, AFSA is not interested in funding research projects comparing FM to ME/CFS, Long-COVID, or other chronic illnesses. Funds are limited and our focus is strictly FM.

Please note, AFSA does not fund the following types of studies:

- behavioral interventions
- psychosocial assessments
- self-help or lifestyle change strategies
- movement therapies (e.g., any form of exercise)
- surveys
- studies involving rodents

Grant Application Requirements

Potential applicants for AFSA funding should meet the following requirements and budget constraints:

Principal Investigator (PI) Requirements: The PI must be fluent in English and be the coauthor of at least one project published in a peer-reviewed English language medical journal. If applicant resides outside the United States, please indicate the budget in U.S. dollars. Please be aware that PIs residing in certain countries are ineligible to apply (contact AFSA if you have questions regarding this restriction).

The PI must be a board certified “M.D.” or “D.O.”, or a Ph.D. with applicable basic science research experience. All Ph.D. applicants must team up with an experienced FM clinician (M.D., D.O., or N.P.) for assessment of human subjects. In fact, all applications must include at least one clinician team member (with biographical sketch) who will be responsible for assessing all study participants. Applications that do not satisfy this requirement will not be reviewed.

PIs and co-PIs may only have their name on one grant application. Also, any researcher who is currently part of the investigative team for an ongoing AFSA study is ineligible to apply for this RFA, unless the current AFSA project will be completed before March 1, 2026.

Participant Assessments: The 2016 ACR “survey” criteria for diagnosing FM may be used for screening study participants, but a thorough physical exam is required to confirm the diagnosis and assess pressure pain thresholds. FM participants cannot have other chronic conditions that cause multisite pain. We only fund research studies on “primary” FM.

Institutional Overhead: No overhead or other indirect costs will be paid and should not be included as part of any grant request. Also, beware that substantiative equipment costs, as well as salaries for the PI and other team members, may jeopardize project funding.

Almost all AFSA’s revenue comes from FM patients, which is why we do not pay for overhead expenses. Our awards are intended for the collection of preliminary data needed to assist investigators with obtaining larger sums of money from the NIH or similar financial institutes. AFSA is happy to send an email to your institution or grants officer explaining why we do not allow overhead expenses and to ask them to waive their overhead requirements.

Sample Size Justification: The methodology used to determine the required sample size of participants for the proposed study must be provided. In addition, applicants must demonstrate the ability to recruit the required number of participants quickly to avoid project delays.

IRBs: An application may be submitted with an institutional review board (IRB) pending, but the IRB must be approved before the project can be funded. If you have an approved IRB, please include it as a separate attachment with your application.

Tag-On Project Proposals: All funded projects must be capable of testing one or more hypotheses and, if possible, without reliance upon another funding source. However, tag-on grant proposals to government-sponsored projects (such as the NIH and similar agencies) are acceptable if the following two conditions can be met for the AFSA portion: (1) it is designed to test a specific hypothesis or meet a specific aim, and (2) has a clearly defined budget with justification.

If a tag-on project is being proposed, the applicant must explain how the AFSA section fits into the overall scope of the project and why it is important. Also, due to the special nature of tag-on projects, the applicant should provide additional description of the full project (aside from the AFSA portion). This information should be included in the "Main Body" section of the application (see the application instructions for more details).

Project Timelines: All grants awarded by AFSA are for one time only. The PI should demonstrate the ability to complete the project within one to two years of being funded. If an applicant is considering a two-part project or a study that requires more than two years to complete, please consult AFSA before submitting such a proposal.

Grant Review: Only applications that meet AFSA's requirements and fall within one of AFSA's priority areas for funding will be sent out for peer review. Funding decisions are made before the end of July. If you are uncertain about any of our application requirements, contact AFSA before applying. Also, if you are not sure whether your project idea addresses one of AFSA's research priorities, an LOI is strongly recommended.

Conditions of Award

Prior to filling out AFSA's application, please review the Conditions of Award to make sure you meet our requirements. Download the PDF below.

Conditions of Award

Grant Application and Instructions

In addition to the Conditions of Award, please download the instructions and PDF file below. Use your word processor for the Main Body of the application (Project Description and CVs) and then convert it to a PDF file. A complete application includes our Research Grant Forms, the Main Body, and Conditions of Award – All compiled into one PDF.

Instructions for the Grant Application

Research Grant Forms

Submissions must contain three completed sections: the Research Grant Forms, the Main Body, and the Conditions of Award. Please compile all three sections into one PDF before submitting to AFSA.

You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader to download and use all PDF forms.

Guidelines for a Letter of Intent (LOI)

An LOI should be submitted if you are uncertain whether your proposed project qualifies for AFSA funding. It should be submitted before **December 15** and consist of a one-page synopsis of your proposal (attachments may be added if deemed necessary). Understandably, investigators may not have all the details worked out at this stage, however AFSA encourages applicants to include the following six components in their LOI:

Study investigators: Name of principal investigator, degree, and area of specialty, and the names and degrees of primary people involved in the study. If this study is performed within an institutional environment (such as a university, hospital, or research center), please identify the institution.

Study hypothesis: This consists of a one-sentence statement with supporting sentences as that may include references, clinical data, or whatever else has led you to your hypothesis.

Study goals or objectives: Please specify what you hope to prove by conducting your proposed study. Just one to three sentences.

Study design: Identify the study population(s), duration of study, and primary testing methods to be used.

Estimated budget: Include a total dollar amount (in U.S. funds). AFSA realizes that this budget figure is only an estimate. The maximum award size is \$85,000 in U.S. funds. Contact AFSA if you are considering a proposal for a larger sum of money. Exceptions to the one-time maximum award amount may be made on a case-by-case basis.

Patient relevance: Describe how your study could potentially lead to the improved well-being of patients with FM. Please be specific and be certain that your project proposal offers something “new” in the field of FM. Keep in mind, AFSA does not fund studies related to behavioral, psychosocial, self-help, movement therapies, or rodent studies.

All LOIs should be submitted in PDF format to:

Kristin Thorson

kthorson@afsafund.org

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To remain unbiased, we do not accept endorsements, advertisements, or pharmaceutical industry grants.

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