



Health Effects Institute

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REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS 25-2 WALTER A. ROSENBLITH NEW INVESTIGATOR AWARD

Please note that detailed instructions and all necessary application forms are available online under [Instructions and Forms](#). Please also see our [FAQ page](#) for other information about applying to HEI.

1. INTRODUCTION

HEI established the Walter A. Rosenblith New Investigator Award as a career development award to provide funding for outstanding investigators who are beginning their independent research careers. By providing financial support for investigators early in their careers, HEI hopes to encourage highly qualified individuals from a variety of disciplines to undertake research on the health effects of air pollution. A key component of the proposal and award is the mentorship plan, which outlines how awardees will interact with and learn from established experts in their field of study. Given the career-development nature of this award, HEI encourages applicants to propose bold and exciting studies that will allow them to develop as strong, independent researchers and to become innovators and ultimately leaders in their field of study. Applicants may have training and experience in any discipline relevant to air pollution.

Each award will be a maximum of \$600,000 for three years^{1,2} in total costs to support a research project led by the applicant. It is expected that the investigator will devote at least 25% of their time to the proposed research. The funds can be used to provide salary support for the investigator and for junior personnel and support staff (e.g., consulting statisticians), and for supplies and equipment. Typically, HEI receives 15-25 preliminary applications to this RFA each year, invites 3-5 applicants to submit full applications, and ultimately funds one or two awards.

HEI RESEARCH PROGRAM

Since the early 1980s, HEI's research program has addressed a broad range of questions about the health effects of exposure to ambient air pollution from motor vehicles, wildfire smoke, and other important sources. HEI seeks to fund studies that span a range of scientific fields, including atmospheric science, epidemiology, exposure science, risk assessment, social science, statistics, economics, and toxicology. In all studies, accurate characterization of exposure and appropriate statistical analyses are important. **For this specific Rosenblith RFA, applicants should clearly describe how their study is**

¹ Please note that the final contract period lasts 18 months, which includes research time (9 months), report writing (3 months), and report revisions (final 6 months). The report is due at the end of the 12th month of the final contract period.

² Note that HEI allows for a no-cost extension in case an investigator needs to take time off for family or medical leave.

relevant to one of the following three topics described in the [HEI Strategic Research Plan 2025-2030](#): the evolving transportation landscape, pollutant mixtures, or air toxics.

HEI encourages investigators to submit applications addressing these high-priority research areas. We will, however, also consider particularly innovative or high-quality applications in other areas consistent with HEI's Strategic Research Plan 2025-2030. Note that the proposed research should reflect an original investigation but may include working with data that were collected through earlier work. The proposed study should be the investigator's own study and not simply a continuation of a former supervisor's project.

Refer to HEI's website for information on studies that have been funded in recent years (see [Research Reports](#) and [Ongoing Research](#)).

Recent Rosenblith Awardees

- 2023. Rachel Nethery, Harvard University. Designing optimal policies for reducing air pollution-related health inequities.
- 2023. Yoshira Ornelas Van Horne, University of California, Los Angeles. What's in the air? Engaging Native American youth in the Northern plains to reduce air pollution.
- 2021. Lucas Henneman, George Mason University. Air pollution source impacts at fine scales for long-term regulatory accountability and environmental justice.
- 2020. Heresh Amini, University of Copenhagen. COUPH: Copenhagen Ultrafine Particles and Health.
- 2020. Joseph Antonelli, University of Florida. Robust statistical approaches to understanding the causal effect of air pollution mixtures.
- 2020. Raphael Arku, University of Massachusetts–Amherst. Urban air pollution in sub-Saharan Africa: A study of prenatal exposures, birth outcomes, and lower-respiratory infections in infants.

2. APPLICATION PROCESS AND DEADLINES

ROSENBLITH AWARD ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Scientists of any nationality residing anywhere in the world and holding a PhD, ScD, MD, DVM, DrPH, or equivalent degree are eligible to apply. By the date that preliminary applications are due, the applicant must be appointed at the Assistant Professor (USA), University Lecturer (UK), or equivalent level at an academic or research institution. The applicant cannot have held such a position for more than five years (60 months) by the date that preliminary applications are due.

Holding a tenure-track position is not required. Note that time spent on non-research activities, such as parental or medical leave, may be excluded from the period listed above.

Prospective applicants are required to contact Dr. Dan Crouse (dcrouse@healtheffects.org) to verify their eligibility before submitting a preliminary application. Applicants will not be invited to submit a full application under this award program more than twice in their career.

PRELIMINARY APPLICATION

Content of Preliminary Application

Applicants should use the HEI [Preliminary Application Form](#). For the biosketch, applicants can use the HEI form or another format as long as it is no longer than 2 pages.

An estimated total budget and study duration (2 to 3 years³) should be provided (**no budget details are needed at this stage** although budgets should be appropriate for the project duration and amount of work proposed). Before applying, applicants should familiarize themselves with HEI's [study oversight and review procedures](#), which are more involved than most grants.

Having one or more mentors is required for this career development award. Mentors should be active investigators in the area of the proposed research and be committed to the career development of the applicant. Applicants are expected to work with the mentors in preparing the application. Mentors should be listed on the Preliminary Application form. **Cover letter, mentor biosketches, and letters of support are NOT needed at this stage.**

This is an individual award and co-investigators may not be included in the application nor in the budget.

The HEI Research Committee will review Preliminary Applications and invite selected applicants to submit a Full Application.

Submitting Preliminary Applications

All Preliminary application materials should be combined into a single PDF (max size 10MB) named "*PI lastname firstname RFA xx-x Preliminary Application*." Applications must be submitted online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/X79G9Q5>. Emailed applications will not be accepted. Submissions must be received no later than **January 23, 2026**. Applicants will be informed whether they are invited to submit a full application by early March 2026.

³ Please note that the final contract period lasts 18 months, which includes research time (9 months), report writing (3 months), and report revisions (final 6 months). The report is due at the end of the 12th month of the final contract period.

FULL APPLICATION

Content of Full Application

Full applications (by invitation only) must be submitted on the [HEI Application for Research Agreement](#) (Forms F-1 to F-12), following in the general application instructions

HEI and its funded institutions are subject to the Office of Management and Budget and EPA accounting regulations. Please provide a DUNS number for your institution.

The full application should include (1) a formal proposal for a research project of up to 3 years, (2) evidence of the applicant's qualifications and outstanding research potential, (3) a mentoring plan, and (4) evidence of strong institutional commitment to the applicant.

Specific budget requirements: The project should not exceed a total cost of \$600,000, including indirect costs.⁴ Indirect costs are limited to a maximum of 30% of direct costs, excluding equipment charges and subcontracts.

Funds can be used to support the applicant's salary, to hire additional staff (e.g., postdocs, graduate or undergraduate students, or technicians), to provide project support (e.g., consulting statisticians or core facilities), or to purchase equipment and supplies. Funds cannot be used to support the salaries of co-investigators or mentors. A laboratory QA manager must be named to meet criteria in HEI's [QA/QC Policy](#). It is expected that the investigator will devote at least 25% of their time to the proposed research. Under "Other Support", please specify the applicant's time commitment to other research projects.

We recommend that investigators allocate 2 months at the start of the study period to develop and finalize their Quality Assurance/Quality Control Plan, about 3 months at the end of the study to write a final report, and the final 6 months for revising the final report in response to Review Committee and editorial comments.

Applicant's qualifications and research potential

In addition to the materials required in the research proposal, the following should also be submitted as evidence of the applicant's outstanding research potential:

1. A cover letter (maximum 2 pages) from the applicant that describes their interest in the award and how this project fits with their career goals, including information concerning their long-term career plans and how the HEI award would contribute to these plans. The letter should also include how this award will help the applicant on a pathway to independence.
2. Three recent publications and a list of all publications by the applicant.

Mentoring plan

Applicants are required to submit a mentoring plan that identifies one or more established investigators who will act as a mentor and be available for consultation during the project. The mentoring plan should describe in detail how and how often the mentors will advise the applicant throughout the study. In addition, mentors are asked to provide a letter that indicates their commitment to helping the applicant and their availability for regular consultation, as well as their research qualifications in the area of the

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proposed research and their experience in fostering the development of independent investigators. During the period of the award, the mentors may also be requested to provide periodic evidence — for example, in the form of a letter describing meeting dates, reviews of research plans, and comments on manuscripts — that the mentoring plan is being followed. Mentors are asked to sign off on progress reports indicating that they have read the report and communicated with the awardee about potential issues that arose during the study.

Institutional commitment

Applicants are required to provide evidence of medium to long-term institutional commitment toward their career. The institutional commitment should be described in a letter from the department chair, dean, or other administrative official from the applicant's current institution, indicating tangible institutional commitment to the applicant's continued career development and their research. Commitments can take many forms, such as providing laboratory space, access to core facilities, financial support for a laboratory, or paying part of the applicant's salary. In addition, it should be evident that the applicant is guaranteed at least 50% time to pursue research. If a start-up package was awarded at the time of hiring, it should be described.

Data Access Policy

Providing other researchers with access to data is an important element in ensuring scientific credibility and is particularly valuable when studies are of regulatory interest. HEI has a long-standing policy to provide access to data for studies that it has funded in a manner that facilitates the review and validation of the work. The policy also protects the confidentiality of any subjects who may have participated in the study and respects the intellectual interests of the investigators who conducted the study. Please refer to the [HEI Policy on the Provision of Access to Data Underlying HEI-Funded Studies](#).

Applicants will be expected to include a plan for data sharing and accessibility at the end of the study. Where data are provided by a third party, a process for other researchers to obtain and work with the data should be outlined.

Applicants are therefore encouraged to use only publicly available input datasets, code, and tools. If restricted resources are used, the proposal must include information on how other researchers can also access and evaluate the data. All resources developed under this RFA must be made publicly available and documented with sufficient explanation to be used in future epidemiological or health assessment research. Potential resources include data files (e.g., air pollution surfaces with uncertainties attached) or code packages. Investigators must also follow all other protocols in HEI's [QA/QC Policy](#) and [Data Access Policy](#).

Please refer to application form F-2 (table of contents) for a list of all application materials and the order in which they should be assembled.

Submitting Full Applications

Full applications for RFA 25-2 (by invitation only) should be submitted to funding@healtheffects.org (subject line: *PI last name RFA 25-2 Full Application*) no later than **JUNE 5, 2026**. Applications should be in PDF format with a maximum file size of 10 MB.

HEI will acknowledge receipt of the application. Applicants will be notified of the funding decision by mid-July 2026.

Please note that all necessary application forms are available under [Instructions and Forms](#).

See our [FAQ page](#) for other information about applying to HEI. HEI will hold a webinar for applicants on December 11, 2025. Please check our website for more information.

Contact Dr. Dan Crouse (dcrouse@healtheffects.org) if you have specific questions about this RFA or the award.

3. APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated by HEI's [Research Committee](#) and independent technical experts as described below. The Research Committee makes recommendations regarding funding of studies to HEI's Board of Directors, which reviews whether the selection process has been followed and if any conflicts of interest have been handled appropriately. The Board makes the final funding decision.

PRELIMINARY APPLICATIONS

Preliminary applications will be evaluated by the HEI Research Committee according to the following criteria: relevance to the goals of the RFA generally and to one of the three specific topics of interest listed above (i.e., the evolving transportation landscape, pollutant mixtures, or air toxics), scientific merit of the approach, experience of the applicant, adequacy of the facilities, reasonableness of the proposed budget, and plans for disseminating the results, as explained in more detail below. Rosenblith Award applicants will also be evaluated on their qualifications and research potential. The Research Committee will then invite a limited number of applicants to submit a detailed full application.

FULL APPLICATIONS

Full applications will be evaluated in a two-stage process: an external review by technical experts followed by an internal review by the Research Committee.

External review by technical experts

Applications first undergo a competitive evaluation of their scientific merit by independent scientists selected for their expertise in relevant areas. The external reviewers will evaluate applications according to the following criteria:

- **Relevance** to the objectives of the RFA and HEI's overall mission to provide high-quality, policy-relevant research. The research is designed to be useful to scientists, government officials, industry, communities, or other stakeholders and broadly applicable to other populations, regions, states, tribes, regulatory climates, and times, and/or makes important advances in scientific knowledge and methodology.
- **Scientific merit** and novelty of the study design, data collection and analysis methods, exposure generation or modeling approaches, data evaluation, and overall quality assurance.
- **Experience and competence of the research team**, including principal investigator, scientific staff, and mentors. For the Rosenblith Award, this should be within the guidelines specified in the RFA. If the application includes partnership with a community-based organization, community partners are expected to be included as part of the research team, and the research team should demonstrate a clear track record of community engagement and community relationships. Allocation of adequate effort to each team member should allow for successful implementation of the proposed research, stakeholder engagement (as applicable), and dissemination of the results.
- **Adequacy of facilities**, including (1) access to study sites, instrumentation, and relevant data sets or specimens; and (2) adequacy and validity of facilities to implement the proposed research, including laboratory space, exposure and health measurement capabilities, computing facilities, and other support necessary to deliver high-quality research (as applicable).

- **Reasonableness of the proposed budget.** Community partnerships and community engagement should be reflected in the proposed budget if they are part of the application.
- **Plans for disseminating results.** Well-developed plan for research translation to inform decision-making. The plan clearly describes how and to whom results will be shared, as well as decision-making applications for communities, government officials, industry, or other stakeholders, as applicable.

Additional criteria for the Rosenblith Award, as described in the RFA:

- Applicant's qualifications and research potential.
- Mentoring plan.
- Institutional commitment.

Internal Review by HEI's Research Committee

The internal review is conducted by the HEI Research Committee and generally focuses on the applications ranked highly by the external reviewers. The Committee discusses merits and potential concerns for all top ranked proposals and whether any issues can be resolved. They then rank the top proposals selected for funding based on the available budget for the RFA while making sure that studies funded collectively address the objectives of the RFA. HEI's process does not allow submission of revised proposals, but in some cases the Committee may postpone a decision and ask for further clarification before making a final recommendation. The Committee can also negotiate that a specific aim be dropped or expanded and that the study duration and budget be adjusted accordingly. HEI will notify applicants of the decision and provide anonymous feedback from the external reviewers.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

HEI's procedures for conflicts of interest are similar to the guidelines set forth by the [National Institutes of Health](#). Members of HEI's sponsor community are excluded from participating in RFA development, applying for support, application review, and funding decisions. A detailed conflict of interest policy can be found [here](#).

This document was posted at www.healtheffects.org in November 2025.

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