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2025 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

INTRODUCTION

The Lipedema Foundation (LF) Award Program was established in 2015 to support research aimed at improving the lives of people with Lipedema. LF is the world's largest sponsor of Lipedema research, having awarded over \$12.9 million across more than 62 research awards on topics relevant to patient needs, including etiology, pathogenesis, models, and diagnostic approaches.

These investigator-initiated awards are intended to solicit proposals that, if successful, will lead to significant advances in the diagnosis or treatment of Lipedema.

LF aims to expand the workforce of dedicated scientists and clinicians interested in bringing their skills to solve issues related to this condition. This call for proposals is soliciting high-impact exploratory research from teams of scientists, clinicians, and surgeons worldwide, regardless of Lipedema-specific training or prior experience in the Lipedema field. Preliminary data, while encouraged, is not required for a submission.

GO TO SUBMISSION PORTAL
([HTTPS://WEBPORTALAPP.COM/SP/LIPEDEMA_FOUNDATION](https://webportalapp.com/sp/lipedema_foundation))

BACKGROUND

Lipedema is a chronic condition that occurs almost exclusively in women and manifests as a symmetrical buildup of painful fat and swelling in the limbs, sparing the hands and feet.

Different from obesity, Lipedema may be associated with reduced risk of metabolic syndrome and is often resistant to dietary or exercise-based interventions.

A critical issue is the poorly understood disease biology, which for diagnosed patients results in limited treatment options that, at best, ameliorate the symptoms of Lipedema. Individuals who suffer from the disease are further impacted by the absence of diagnostic tools, as well as conflicting diagnostic practices across practitioners. Lipedema is under-diagnosed, owing to a lack of public and medical awareness of Lipedema itself, the stigma associated with excess weight, and the lack of a diagnostic test and reliance on clinical diagnosis.



Its prevalence is poorly understood, and little is known about genetic or other risk factors. Patient experiences with Lipedema suggest that the condition negatively impacts their lives over many years, and in ways that may be distinct from other related conditions. Data from the [Lipedema Foundation Registry offer](https://lipedema.org/lfr-report) (<https://lipedema.org/lfr-report>) a patient perspective on issues related to diagnosis, staging, genetics, and quality of life, and suggest testable hypotheses to guide future research. Likewise, LF has mapped out next steps in Lipedema Research with input from the Lipedema Field in our [Lipedema Research Roadmap](https://www.lipedema.org/roadmap) (<https://www.lipedema.org/roadmap>).

AWARD CYCLE DETAILS

CYCLE

LF 2025 Open Call for Lipedema Research Proposals

AWARD TYPES

Collaborative Research Award - Designed for team research that requires involvement of multiple institutions or multi-disciplinary researchers. Applications that involve current LF grantees receive priority review.

Proof of Concept Award - Designed to support development of preliminary data for highly innovative hypotheses. Open to investigators of any career stage or background. Successful awards are eligible for streamlined award renewal.

Mentored Award - Designed to support postdoctoral research experiences for candidates in non-independent mentored research training. Intended to support PhD (or equivalent research degrees) and clinicians engaged in mentored medical research.

MAXIMUM AWARD VALUES AND DURATION

- Collaborative Research Award - Up to \$250,000 over two years.
- Proof of Concept Award - Up to \$125,000 for one year.
- Mentored Award - Up to \$100,000 for two years. During the second year, applicants may apply for a third year of funding as a renewal.

Funding is competitive. Applicants are advised to submit budget proposals only for funds needed. All requested budgets will be reviewed for appropriateness relative to project aims and will require justification.

All values are stated here in USD. Applicants may justify their budget in their local currency, but any resultant award will be distributed in USD respecting the limits stated above.

AWARD DESIGNATION

Lipedema Scholars and Lipedema Fellows: Lipedema Scholars (Graduate Student) and Lipedema Fellows (Post-doc and mentored Clinical Researcher) work on the project for the duration of the award, for the majority of their time. In order to receive this award, the PI will attest to this commitment, confirming that the time of the Scholar/Fellow is primarily dedicated to the proposed project.

DEADLINES

- Application Portal Open: April 14, 2025; 12:00 PM EST
- Final LOI Submission: June 10, 2025; 11:59 PM EST
- Notification of Invitation/Declination to video call: July 30, 2025.
- Earliest Project Start Date: February 2026

Dates are subject to change at discretion of Lipedema Foundation. Registered applicants will be notified by email should these dates change.

INDIRECT COSTS

The [Lipedema Foundation policy](#) (/s/01-LF_Explicit-Provisions-Letter_v15.docx) is to allow indirect costs up to 10% of direct costs. The maximum award values are inclusive of both direct and indirect costs.

CONTACT

For questions regarding this RFP, please contact the Lipedema Foundation staff by email at awards@lipedema.org (mailto:awards@lipedema.org).

HOW TO APPLY

All applications must be submitted through the Lipedema Foundation research submission portal.

GUIDELINES

BLOOD COLLECTION REQUEST

For projects involving human participants - biosample collections (blood, saliva, etc.) are encouraged. Where possible, the samples will be housed in the LF Biorepository for genomics, future exploratory analyses, and hypothesis testing. Logistics will be solidified during contracting.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF INTEREST

In the current cycle, the Foundation will continue to prioritize awards that are oriented towards advancing Lipedema research, treatments, and care for individuals with Lipedema. All ideas are welcome, especially those that address the highest priority recommendations from the Lipedema Research Roadmap (Link to research roadmap: <https://www.lipedema.org/roadmap> (<https://www.lipedema.org/roadmap>)). You will be requested to indicate which areas of the roadmap your proposal addresses in the LOI submission.

Areas of particular interest are model systems, hormone/endocrine biology, and high throughput screening approaches. Proposals to create clinically relevant animal models should clearly justify the relationship of the proposed model to current understanding of Lipedema pathology and etiology.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

LF is open to the use of AI to enhance your work. However, we firmly believe that all professional review, critical thinking, and thoughtful analysis must be done without the use of AI.

Applicant AI Use

- Applicants may use AI tools (e.g., large language models) for this RFP. However, all use of AI, and details about how it was used, must be disclosed in the LOI and Full Application stages. This includes any images or text created by AI.
 - Example: GPT-4 was used to refine the specific aims and conclusions.
- The use of AI in the LOI and/or Full Application stages does not influence scoring.

LF AI Use

- Grants and applications are considered confidential. Therefore, LF will not analyze any submissions using any AI tool. We may use AI to summarize reviewer comments; however, individual grants will not be put into any AI models.
- All submission reviews and readings will be done by LF staff and peer reviewers. Ultimately, the decision rests with LF for LOI follow-up calls and final funding decisions.

Additional Information

- AI is generally a public forum, and your ideas are not confidential if using AI. Please enter any proprietary or confidential information into AI/LLM tools with caution and in compliance with your institution's privacy rules. It is recommended to turn off settings "sharing" or "adding to the model" to avoid disclosing confidential information.
- The accuracy of submissions and legal ownership of Intellectual Property (IP) are the responsibility of the applicant. We are not responsible for funding someone else's IP. Applicants ensure they own the rights to all IP they have disclosed in AI.

SAMPLE ACCESS

A clear and feasible approach for recruiting participants and/or accessing samples and data is essential for successfully securing an LF research award. The application forms will ask questions about how applicants hope to obtain samples (e.g., from a collaborating clinician, another lab, or an existing biorepository or registry).

Ideally, projects will have access to their own local participants/samples and data through institutional affiliations or other extramural collaborations. However, access to samples through biobanks, including LF's biobank, is possible.

LF has launched its own biobank, and some samples and data may be available for use by LF-funded investigators receiving awards during this RFP cycle. At launch in April 2025, the biobank houses some sample types including cryopreserved PBMCs, Plasma, and urine. Later in 2025, we plan to begin collecting abdomen and limb (leg or arm) punch biopsies. Lipoaspirate and other remnant material may also be available. Samples and data from both participants with Lipedema and controls will be included, though we anticipate that control participation will be relatively less common, particularly in the beginning. Samples will be accompanied by extensive survey and clinical data collected from participants and clinicians.

Other Lipedema biobanks and sample sources include:

- Lipedema Biobank of the University Hospital Zurich. Contact: Dr. Gousopoulos, epagousopoulos@gmail.com (mailto:epagousopoulos@gmail.com?).
- Leipzig Obesity Biobank. Contacts: Dr. Anne Hoffmann, anne.hoffmann@helmholtzmunich.de (mailto:anne.hoffmann@helmholtzmunich.de?) and Prof. Matthias Blüher, matthias.blueher@medizin.uni-leipzig.de (mailto:matthias.blueher@medizin.uni-leipzig.de?).
- Lipedema Biorepository at Vanderbilt Medical Center funded by LF: Ashok Srinivasan, Chief Science Officer, ashok@lipedema.org (mailto:ashok@lipedema.org?).
- Berlin Institute of Health at Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, BIH Center for Regenerative Therapies "Lymphovascular Medicine and Translational 3D-Histopathology" Laboratory Biobank. Contact: Rose Behncke, Rose.Behncke@charite.de (mailto:Rose.Behncke@charite.de ?)
- Paraffin embedded subcutaneous tissue samples from Dr. Manuel Cornely are being stored at the Institute of Clinical and Functional Anatomy. To discuss sample availability, contact Dr. Erich Brenner at erich.brenner@i-med.ac.at (mailto:erich.brenner@i-med.ac.at?) or Dr. Cornely at info@cornely.org (mailto:info@cornely.org?).

REVIEW PROCESS

Initial review of Letters of Intent will be performed by Lipedema Foundation staff and advisors in order to assure alignment with Lipedema Foundation priorities.

Letter of Intent authors who are considered for Full Application submission will be scheduled for a 60-minute video call. Foundation staff and advisors will use this time to discuss the Letter of Intent and provide feedback to guide development of the Full Application.

Full Applications will be reviewed by subject matter experts on the basis of a) experience and training of the Principal Investigator, b) relevance to Lipedema, c) scientific merit, and d) rigor of the proposed work, e) clarity of plans to access participants/samples and data, and f) alignment with LF priorities and mission.

Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the Lipedema Foundation.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Principal Investigators must be associated with a research institution and in good standing with that institution. The Investigators must be permitted by their employers to apply for this funding and manage any subsequent awards, including management of key personnel.

Principal Investigators must hold an independent position by the time of the anticipated project start date.

Postdoctoral students, including clinical fellows, may submit applications for research support through the Mentored Award program. Candidates should have received their doctoral degree or completed their residency within 5 years of application submission.

Other trainees including undergraduate, graduate, or postdoctoral students who do not meet the above criteria may be supported as key personnel but cannot be designated Principal Investigator.

INSTITUTION

Public, private, and government-held research laboratories, medical centers, and universities are eligible to apply.

The Lipedema Foundation will not accept applications from any Institution that is delinquent in reporting on any prior award.

CITIZENSHIP AND HOST COUNTRY

This request has a global scope. There are no citizenship requirements.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Proposals must not duplicate or overlap existing funding of the Lipedema Foundation or other funding sources.

GO TO SUBMISSION PORTAL ([HTTPS://WEBPORTALAPP.COM/SP/LIPEDEMA_FOUNDATION](https://webportalapp.com/sp/lipedema_foundation))

Applicants who wish to submit multiple Letters of Intent in the same cycle must get prior approval from the Lipedema Foundation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Applicants new to the Lipedema field may wish to review the Lipedema Foundation website for [archives of publications](https://www.lipedema.org/books-and-papers) (<https://www.lipedema.org/books-and-papers>) and [other resources](https://www.lipedema.org/resources) (<https://www.lipedema.org/resources>), including the Lipedema Research Roadmap ([/roadmap](#)) and the LF Registry First Look Report (<https://lipedema.org/lfr-report>).

Applicants may also wish to review the Lipedema Foundation's [Applicant FAQ](https://lipedema.org/applicant-faq) (<https://lipedema.org/applicant-faq>).

Please find a copy of this request for proposals in PDF form [here](#) ([/s/LF_Request-for-Proposals_2021.pdf](#)).

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