

Molecular Pathogenesis and New Interventions in Scleroderma: Request for Applications (RFA)

Schedule for 2025 Grants

Submission Guidelines

- New Grants: Received by February 17, 2025

Review of Applications

- Review on a rolling basis through Fall 2025
- Funding Available: between June – November 2025

Required Submission Materials

- Completed, signed application
- Relevant supplemental material appended to the application
- Research proposal
- Three (3) letters of recommendation

Goals of the RFA

The Scleroderma Research Foundation also seeks to advance research by promoting collaboration and cross-institutional cooperation among scientists in a variety of disciplines, attracting promising new scientists to scleroderma research, and bringing new technology and thinking to the field of scleroderma research.

Eligibility Requirements

Applications may be submitted by researchers at non-profit domestic or foreign organizations, public or private, such as universities, colleges, hospitals, laboratories, units of state governments, and eligible agencies of the Federal government. Interested researchers at for-profit organizations should direct inquiries concerning eligibility to the SRF. Racial/ethnic minority individuals, women, and persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply as principal investigators.

We welcome applications from researchers with substantial ongoing scleroderma-focused research as well as scientists who have not previously worked on scleroderma.

Mechanisms of Support

The mechanisms of support will include the Investigator-Initiated Research Grant (SRF01), the Exploratory/Developmental Research Grant (SRF02) and the New Faculty Grant (SRF03):

- The Investigator-Initiated Research Grant (SRF01) provides support for a larger-scale project in scleroderma research to be performed by the named investigator(s) in an area representing his/her specific interest and

proven technologies from other disciplines to advance our understanding of the pathogenesis of scleroderma. Investigators may also conduct small-scale clinical projects, including observational or retrospective studies. They may gather pre-clinical data from new therapies or obtain preliminary data on toxicity and efficacy in a limited number of patients.

- Exploratory/Developmental Research Grants are not intended to support large-scale undertakings or supplement ongoing research; instead, investigators are encouraged to use these grants to explore the feasibility of innovative research that would not qualify for an Investigator–Initiated Research Grant. Researchers can also use the Exploratory/Developmental Research Grant to develop a research basis for a subsequent Investigator-Initiated Research Grant or other funding. The specific aims of the Exploratory/Developmental Research Grant project may be incorporated into the application for the Investigator-Initiated Research Grant prior to the termination of the Exploratory/Developmental Research Grant.
- The New Faculty Grant (SRF03) will enable the investigator to establish an independent program in scleroderma research while the candidate is beginning a tenure-track appointment at a public or private nonprofit institution in the United States or abroad. To be eligible for the SRF03, the candidate must be in a tenure-track position. The candidate should be within seven years of receipt of her/his research or health professional doctoral degree as of the date of application.

Investigators proposing to conduct small, pilot/toxicity clinical trials are advised to review the NIAMS guidelines for preparation of clinical trial applications and the NIAMS guidelines for Data and Safety Monitoring Boards.

Investigator-initiated research grants (SRF01) may not exceed \$200,000 per year in total costs and grants spanning up to three years will be considered.

Exploratory/Developmental grants (SRF02) may not exceed \$75,000 per year in total costs. The total project period for a SRF02 application submitted in response to this RFA may not exceed two (2) years. These grants are non-renewable and continuation of projects developed under the SRF02 program will be through the SRF01 grant program.

New Faculty Grants (SRF03) may not exceed \$75,000 per year in total costs, and grants for up to two years will be considered.

Research Objectives

The pathogenesis of scleroderma is complex and not well understood. Immune activation, vascular abnormalities and dysregulation of extracellular matrix components contributed to end-stage obliterative vasculopathy and fibrosis. Host and environmental factors may contribute to disease predisposition and onset. Although these disease components have been known for some time, their roles in disease initiation and progression are poorly understood.

The purpose of this RFA is to encourage Investigator-initiated (SRF01; SRF03) and Exploratory/Developmental (SRF02) research to discover and explore new approaches and hypotheses for the pathogenesis of scleroderma. In addition, the RFA also seeks to promote the development and pilot testing of new therapeutic approaches. Potential areas of research include, but are not limited to:

and vasculopathy in scleroderma as well as identification of potential therapeutic interventions.

- Genomic studies aimed at identifying factors affecting incidence, age of disease onset, rate of progression, and disease severity.
- Studies on biomarkers and new diagnostic methodologies to monitor progression of scleroderma or predict disease course or response to therapy.
- Translational studies based on new therapeutic or mechanistic hypotheses aimed at treating scleroderma or its complications with currently available drugs.
- Identification of clinical subgroups of scleroderma and of scleroderma complications, including gastrointestinal disease, interstitial lung disease, pulmonary arterial hypertension, and other end-organ complications and characterization of their clinical characteristics and course.
- New cell-based or animal models to elucidate scleroderma pathogenesis or end-organ complications and to test new therapies.

Internet links (URLS) in SRF Grant Applications

All applications and proposals for SRF funding must be self-contained within specified page limitations. Internet addresses (URL's) should not be used to provide information necessary to the review because reviewers are under no obligation to view the internet sites.

Duplicated and Resubmitted Grant Applications

select one source; SRF will not fund substantially the same grant. An investigator may submit an application with substantial revisions of applications already reviewed and rejected, but such applications must include an introduction addressing the previous review.

Accountability

Applicants who accept an award from the SRF will be asked to account for how they have spent their grants. **Grant recipients will be required to attend the annual SRF Workshop to present their research, which is typically held in April or May each year.**

Scientific Contact and IRB Approval

The Scleroderma Research Foundation does not assume responsibility for the conduct of the investigation or the acts of the investigator because the investigator's conduct and actions are under the direction and control of the grantee institution and subject to the institution's medical and scientific policies. Grantee institutions must safeguard the rights and welfare of individuals who participate as subjects in research activities by reviewing proposed activities through an Institutional Review Board (IRB) as specified by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office for Human Research Protections, DHHS (OHRP). Furthermore, grantee institutions must adhere to current US Department of Health and Human Services guidelines regarding financial conflict of interest, recombinant DNA, research misconduct, and vertebrate animals. The Awardee's institution must ensure appropriate governance of animal studies as well as human studies.

Application Submission Procedures

4. Print and sign the completed application.
5. Ship* 2 (two) hardcopies of the signed completed application, research proposal, relevant appendix material, and three letters of recommendation to:

Grant Applications
Scleroderma Research Foundation
220 Montgomery Street, Suite 484
San Francisco, CA 94104

*Use a trackable carrier service to ensure receipt by the SRF office.

For questions, contact grants@srfcure.org

Submission Deadlines

New grants: February 17, 2025.

Review Considerations

Applications that are complete and responsive to the RFA will be evaluated for scientific and technical merit by the Scientific Advisory Board of the Scleroderma Research Foundation. Considerations will include the significance and potential impact of the experimental hypotheses, experimental approach, qualifications of the investigator, the investigator's scientific environment, and reasonableness of the budget and project duration.

Grant Criteria



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