



Applications for the 2026 Rita Allen Foundation Scholars Award in Pain are OPEN through **December 10, 2025**.

Application: <https://event.fourwaves.com/2026rafawardinpain/pages>

Since 2009, the Rita Allen Foundation has provided a special award for early-career leaders in basic pain research whose work holds high potential for uncovering new pathways to improve the treatment of chronic pain.

The Foundation has awarded annually two grants or more in the amount of \$150,000 over three years to early-career investigators pursuing innovative research that focuses on basic science mechanisms of pain.

Eligible candidates will have completed their training and provided persuasive evidence of distinguished achievement or extraordinary promise in basic research in pain. Candidates should be in the early stages of their career with an appointment at the faculty level.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the Rita Allen Foundation Scholars Award in Pain, the applicant must:

1. Have received committed start-up funds and independent laboratory space from their institution. (This information must be clearly indicated in the Department Chair/Division Chief's letter of support for the candidate.)
2. Be within three years of the start date of a tenure-track position or equivalent (senior postdocs and associate professors are not eligible)*.
3. Conduct their research and be appointed at an institution in the United States or Canada.
4. Demonstrate a commitment to the field of pain research.

Research Topics

Proposed research projects should be directed toward investigating the molecular biology of pain and/or basic science topics related to developing new analgesics for managing pain. The entire award is made available to projects specifically chosen by the recipient; university overhead is not supported.

Key Dates and Deadlines

- Applications will be open from October 15 - December 10, 2025.
- Completed applications must be submitted by 11:59 PM EASTERN TIME on December 10, 2025.
- The remaining 2 letters of support that are not included in your application must be submitted by Monday December 15, 2025, to the USASP Office (a representative will reach out to these individuals directly for their letter).

Grant awards will be announced in the summer of 2026. Subsequently, funds will be awarded for the initial twelve-month grant period upon satisfactory execution of a grant agreement.

Application Requirements

The application requires the following documents written in English:

1. A signature page that must be signed by the Applicant/PI and the Institutional Official responsible for submitting applications for extramural support.
2. An abstract (no more than 3,000 characters/300 words).
3. Leadership Statement (no more than 3,000 characters/300 words) summarizing the candidate's contributions as a leader in the field of pain research and their vision for their career.
4. NIH Biosketch (no more than 5 pages; see template).
5. Research proposal narrative that is 6 pages or less, with 11-point Arial font, and 0.5- inch margins. A 7th page will also be included for references.
6. Three letters of support:
 - a. One letter from the candidate's Department Chair or Division Chief that demonstrates strong support for the candidate's proposed research and career development (start-up funds, lab space, and a tenure-track position).
 - i. This letter of support will be appended to your attached application.
 - b. Two additional letters of support should come from the candidate's post-doctoral advisor, influential advisor, or mentor who has impacted the candidate's research.
 - i. Note: When completing the application, candidates must provide the email contact information for the individuals who will submit letters of support. It is highly recommended that applicants notify these individuals in advance to ensure their letters are ready to send once the USASP office reaches out following the submission. A USASP representative will directly contact these two individuals to request that their letters be submitted by December 15, 2025.
7. List of current and pending research support from all sources, as well as clarification as to whether there is any overlap between projects funded/submitted elsewhere and the current proposal (overlap should be avoided).

Review Criteria

Reviewers will assess the candidate's past contributions and their future potential as a leader in the field of pain research, based on the research proposal, biosketch, letters of support, and impact statement.

Other

Applications are reviewed by a Selection Committee that includes past Scholars Award in Pain recipients and other leading pain researchers. At this time, the Selection Committee is, unfortunately, unable to provide feedback on unsuccessful applications.

For information about additional programs for early-career researchers from the Rita Allen Foundation, please see the [Scholars page](#) of the Rita Allen Foundation's website. For questions about eligibility or other program-related information, please get in touch with the Rita Allen Foundation at ritaallenscholars@ritaallen.org.

USASP Detailed Application Process

Applicant/PI Profile Information

Please note that items marked with a red asterisk are required fields.

Application Submission Details

Please name your application using the following format "John Doe - RAF 2026". Next, you will be prompted to write down the title of your intended research project. Finally, you will be asked to answer questions regarding your eligibility for the Rita Allen Foundation Scholars Award in Pain. Please note that items marked with a red asterisk are required fields.

Lead Institution

The applicant should complete the requested information regarding their primary/lead institution. These details will involve the lead institution's name, address, phone number, and fax number. Please note that items marked with a red asterisk are required fields.

Organization Assurances

The applicant should complete the requested information regarding their proposed research project. These details will involve the type of research your project involves and/or approval status. Please note that items marked with a red asterisk are required fields.

Letters of Support

Completed applications will require three letters of support. These must include one letter from the candidate's Department Chair/Division Chief that demonstrates strong support for the candidate's proposed research and career development. The other two letters should come from the candidate's Ph.D./fellowship advisor, influential advisor, or mentor who has impacted the candidate's research. In this section, the applicant will provide contact information pertaining to each of the letter providers. Upon submission, these two individuals listed to provide letters of support will be contacted directly by a representative of USASP requesting that their letters be sent by December 15, 2025.

Attachments

The Applicant will upload all required documents as a single PDF in the following order:

1. Signed Signature pages,
2. Abstract,
3. Leadership/vision statement,
4. NIH Biosketch,
5. Research proposal narrative,
6. Letter of support from the Department Chair/Division Chief,
7. Summary of Current and Pending Funding

Signed Signature Pages

All applications must be signed by the Applicant/PI and the Institutional Official responsible for submitting applications for extramural support. The [signature page](#) may either be printed out, signed and scanned, or electronic signatures may be used on the PDF.

Abstract

The abstract should be limited to 300 words or up to 3,000 characters. Applicants are advised to check spelling, word, and character count before pasting their abstract within this section.

Leadership in Pain Research

The applicant will provide a personal statement detailing his/her vision for a career in pain research and provide information and/or examples of leadership in pain-related activities. The statement should be limited to 300 words or up to 3,000 characters.

NIH Biosketch

The applicant will provide an NIH Biosketch that should be no more than 5 pages long ([see template and examples here](#))

Research Proposal Narrative

The applicant will append a research proposal narrative that is limited to six pages in 11-point Arial font and 0.5-inch margins. A 7th page may be included for references.

Letter of Support from a Department Chair/Division Chief

Completed applications will require one letter from the candidate's Department Chair/Division Chief demonstrating strong support for the candidate's proposed research and career development.

Research Support

The applicant will provide information about all current and pending research support. The research plan should include something other than a project already funded or for consideration for funding elsewhere. If the applicant has received or has pending research support, the applicant should explain how the Rita Allen Foundation Scholars Award in Pain will enhance the applicant's pain research and how the project submitted for the Rita Allen Foundation Scholars Award in Pain differs from other funded or pending projects.

Summary

It is necessary for applicants to review their completed application in this section. The summary function is a way to ensure that all of the required application fields are completed and accurate. Please review all questions and inputs before submitting.

Submit

The Applicant/PI can submit their completed application in this section.

Applications with missing sections, that do not meet eligibility requirements, or do not adhere to the application instructions, including required formats (font size and page lengths) and use of signature pages, are considered ineligible.

Assistance with Applications

For technical support (including questions about trouble logging in and technical issues in completing an application) or questions regarding eligibility, please contact admin@usasp.org (the office is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m. ET to 5:00 p.m. ET).

Emails received after hours and on weekends will be responded to on the next business day.

For questions about other program-related questions: Please contact the Rita Allen Foundation at ritaallenscholars@ritaallen.org