

ORDE "KNOW YOUR AGENCY" SERIES: AMERICAN DIABETES ASSOCIATION

Agency Site: <https://professional.diabetes.org>

OVERVIEW

In 1945, 26 physicians joined together to form a new association to help them pool knowledge about a perplexing disease. Today, the American Diabetes Association (ADA), located in Arlington, VA, has three main roles: 1) supporting research, 2) advocating for additional resources, and 3) providing information and support for those living with diabetes or at-risk for developing diabetes and for health care professionals. (Source: ADA 2017 and Beyond, p. 2)

Specific Interests

ADA funds research on Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, pre-diabetes, obesity, gestational diabetes, and diabetic complications. (Source: We Are Research Leaders)

Approach

Organized as a voluntary health agency, ADA funds basic and clinical/translational research efforts – primarily supporting pilot project and early career investigator opportunities through their research program. The ultimate goal of this research program is to encourage new ideas and breakthroughs in diabetes research. ADA expects their investigators to then parlay their findings into larger funding, a strategy that has proven successful as more than 90% of their researchers have funding from other sources within 5 years (Source: Research 2017 Year in Review, p. 13). In addition to its grants program, ADA also publishes several leading peer-reviewed scholarly journals including *Diabetes*, *Diabetes Care*, and *Diabetes Spectrum*.

AGENCY ORGANIZATION

The ADA is led by a Chief Executive Officer and Leadership Team, and is governed by a Board of Directors. While ADA membership was originally limited to health care professionals, as the agency's roles increased, membership was opened to general members beginning in 1970 (Source: 75th Anniversary Timeline). Today, their membership consists of over 14,000 health care professionals, and 500,000 people with diabetes, their families and caregivers.

AGENCY GRANTS PROCESS

The agency's external research program, started in 1952, has provided funding for more than 4,700 research grants at \$807.4 million since its inception (Source: Research Programs Grant Portfolio web page). Today, ADA offers two major grant programs:

1) CORE RESEARCH PROGRAMS FOR FACULTY

This is the standard research grants program. Applications are due in April with awards starting in January of the following year. Preference is given to less established researchers. Competitions offered are:

- **Innovative Basic Science Research Awards** – \$115,000/year for up to 3 years
- **Innovative Clinical or Translational Science Research Awards** – \$200,000/year for up to 3 years
- **Junior Faculty Development Awards** – \$138,000/year for up to 4 years; *supports investigators up to Assistant Professor rank with less than 10 years of research experience beyond receipt of terminal degree*

2) PATHWAY TO STOP DIABETES® INITIATIVE

This nomination-based program is designed to bring in a new generation of diabetes researchers, and puts the focus on people instead of projects. Each award provides \$1.625 million in total funding. Institutions are limited to **one** nomination across three possible categories:

- **Initiator Award** – Provides transitional funding at the postdoctoral level through independent researcher status (7 years of funding)
- **Accelerator Award** – Targets early career investigators (5 years of funding)
- **Visionary Award** – Seeks established, productive investigators who wish to move into diabetes research (5 years of funding)

Awards:

In 2017, the Association invested more than \$37.4 million, supporting 371 research projects in their Core Program. Basic research accounted for 65% of this spending with the remainder allocated to clinical/ translational research efforts. (Source: Research 2017 Year in Review, p. 15)

From 2013 through 2018, the Pathway Program has funded 29 scientists, a \$47 million investment. (Source: 2017 Pathway Annual Summary Report, p. 8)

Additional Funding Mechanisms

ADA also offers Targeted Research opportunities through Requests for Applications, funding specific to community support, and a postdoctoral fellowship program.

Contact with ADA Program Staff:

Program staff members are available to answer limited investigator questions about funding programs. Their preferred method of contact is email – either grantquestions@diabetes.org for the Core Program or pathway@diabetes.org for the Pathway Program. ADA also maintains Frequently Asked Questions sites for both programs. Note that program staff cannot comment on proposed grant topics and/or agency relevance.

Typical ADA Proposal Process:

- 1) PI determines suitability of proposed project to ADA mission and specific topic area(s)
- 2) PI contacts program staff for assistance and questions about application
- 3) PI submits application via ADA Grant Management Site
- 4) The review process varies by award program: **CORE RESEARCH PROGRAM** – This program features a two-stage process in which three review panel members first evaluate and score applications; at this point, applications are either triaged or go through full panel review **PATHWAY PROGRAM** – Applications are reviewed by the ADA Mentor Advisory Group
- 5) Applications with highest scores are awarded based on availability of funds
- 6) Successful PI receives award notice

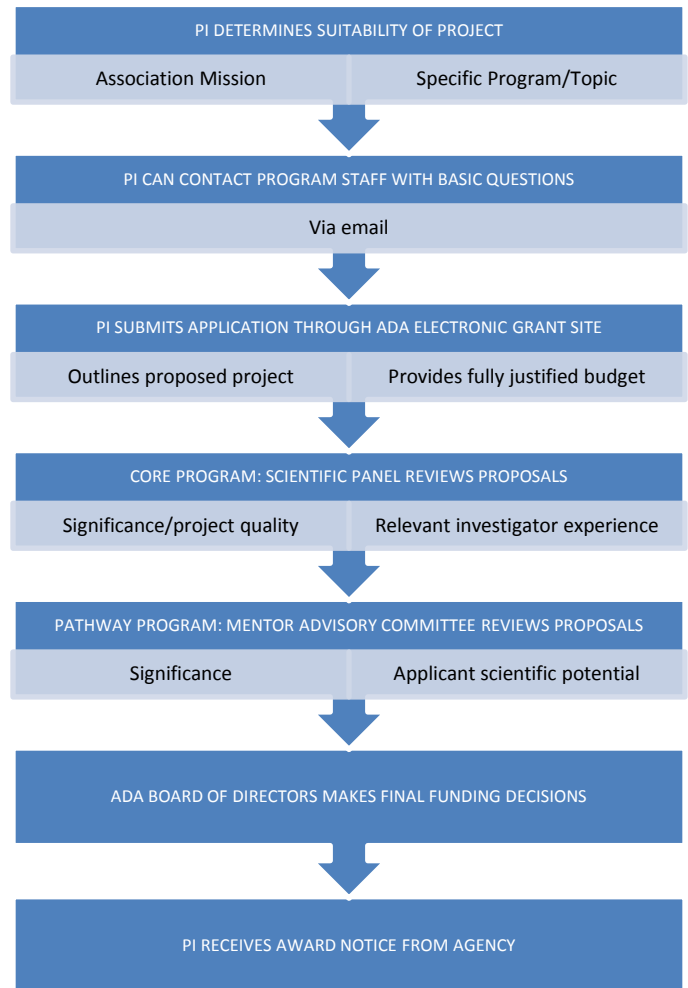
Proposal Review Process:

For the Core Program, review panel members are sent a list of all grants received from which they select proposals best fitting their areas of expertise. Grant proposals are then reviewed and scored by three panel members in the preliminary review round. Based on the score, proposals move on to the final round or are triaged. Those whose proposals are triaged receive notifications and reviewer comments about four months after the proposal deadline. Final proposal review is conducted at the panel level with highest scoring applications then selected for funding.

The selection committee for the Pathway Program is called the Mentor Advisory Group, made up of 35 well-established researchers in diabetes and other fields who also serve as mentors for awardees, providing both scientific and career advice.

Review criteria vary somewhat across the programs, but important factors are significance, project quality, impact/innovation, and relevant investigator experience. For the early career award, additional factors are scientific potential of applicant and institutional commitment.

**AMERICAN DIABETES ASSOCIATION
PROPOSAL & REVIEW PROCESS**



What Happens Next?

Successful principal investigators and their institutions receive award notifications from ADA. Awarded PIs are required to maintain active membership in the ADA Professional Section throughout the award period.

Applicants not selected for award may resubmit revised applications one time.