



## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

### ***CURE EPILEPSY* AWARD**

CURE Epilepsy’s investigator-initiated grant programs seek to push the envelope and accelerate promising research leading to disease-modifying breakthroughs for people living with epilepsy. We prioritize highly innovative, risky, paradigm-shifting projects that address our mission to cure epilepsy, affirming our core belief that the only acceptable final goal is “no seizures, no side effects.”

**CURE Epilepsy: Our mission is to cure epilepsy, by promoting and funding patient-focused research.**

We identify and fund cutting-edge research, challenging scientists worldwide to collaborate and innovate in pursuit of this goal.

Our commitment is unrelenting.

CURE Epilepsy strongly encourages multidisciplinary, collaborative projects, especially those that include investigators and expertise from fields outside of epilepsy. Requests may be made for up to \$250,000 for two years.

CURE Epilepsy encourages applications from groups underrepresented in the biomedical, clinical, behavioral, and social sciences. These groups include individuals with disabilities, veterans, persons from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups and gender diverse groups, women in biomedical-related disciplines, or any legally protected characteristic.

U.S. citizenship is not required. Researchers outside the U.S. are also encouraged to apply.

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### PRIORITY AREAS

The following priority areas reflect CURE Epilepsy's focus on advances that have the potential to truly transform and save lives. Prevention, disease modification, and elimination are critical goals and consistent with our mission.

- Transformative research to enhance our understanding of the cellular, molecular, genetic, and systems-level mechanisms that lead to any of the epilepsies, facilitating the continued investigation of disease-modifying or preventative strategies.
- Innovative approaches that can prevent, modify and/or arrest the development of acquired epilepsy. Examples include epilepsy that develops after stroke, tumor, traumatic brain injury or infection, including febrile infection-related epilepsy syndrome (FIREs) as well as new-onset refractory status-epilepticus (NORSE).
- Research that will inform the development of novel therapies to prevent onset or halt the progression of the severe pediatric epilepsies.
- Research focused on new, effective treatments for the >thirty percent of the epilepsy population who are pharmacoresistant.
- Novel research that furthers our understanding of the causes and ultimate elimination of SUDEP.
- Translational, clinical, and clinically informed basic research that will facilitate understanding of the cellular-, molecular-, and systems-level mechanisms that underlie the relationships between sleep and epilepsy.
- Based on CURE Epilepsy's current research objectives, lower priority will be given for research in the following areas:
  - Research that focuses solely on a comorbid condition without also seeking to address/understand the accompanying epilepsy.
  - Research that focuses solely on improving localization of the epileptic seizure focus.

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

This award is available to both established and early-career investigators. Generally, early career investigators are university faculty at the assistant professor level (or hold an equivalent position in a non-university research organization). Early-career investigators must submit a letter of support from the department head or chair confirming their appointment and institutional support for their position in terms of salary, laboratory space, and available infrastructure to carry out the work if funded. Established investigators are university faculty at the associate professor level or above. Investigators in non-university positions or those in non-tenure track positions must demonstrate

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seniority through evidence of independent grant funding, publications, including at least one senior author publication, and service on review committees, advisory boards, professional societies, etc. Researchers who serve on CURE Epilepsy’s Scientific Advisory Council are ineligible to apply for or sponsor a grant for the duration of their term. International applicants are welcome. Post-doctoral fellows may not apply for this award. All materials must be submitted in English.

## FUNDING CYCLE DETAILS

Activity	Key Dates
Request for Proposals	Monday, November 27, 2023
Letter of Intent Deadline	Tuesday, January 9, 2024 – 9pm ET
Full Application Invitations	Tuesday, February 20, 2024
Full Application Deadline	Tuesday, March 26, 2024 – 9pm ET
Anticipated Award Announcement	July 2024
Anticipated Project Start Date	September 2024

## BUDGET

Requests may be made for up to a total of \$250,000 paid over two years. Funding requests may include salary support for the Principal Investigator (PI), co-PIs, technical staff, supplies, animal costs, publication fees and travel to an epilepsy-related conference if the PI is presenting his/her CURE Epilepsy-funded research. Limited equipment purchases that are required to complete goals will be considered. **Indirect costs are not supported.** Funds cannot be used to cover institutional expenses such as network charges, computer maintenance and services, insurance dues or other miscellaneous expenses not directly related to performing the project.

## LETTER OF INTENT INSTRUCTIONS

All applicants must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI). The LOI should clearly and succinctly outline the hypothesis to be tested, the specific aims, and provide a brief description of the research plan according to the guidelines in this announcement.

### Letter of Intent Instructions:

Below are instructions for the required **scientific summary** and **future directions** sections, which together can be no longer than two pages in length. LOIs exceeding two pages of text will not be reviewed.

1) **Scientific Summary:** Clearly and succinctly outline the hypothesis and specific aims and provide a brief

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description of how the proposed research plan aligns with CURE Epilepsy’s mission and with CURE Epilepsy’s desire to push epilepsy research forward by leaps rather than by incremental steps (one and one-half page maximum).

- 2) **Future Directions:** Describe what next steps will be taken once the goals of your proposed project have been achieved (one-half page maximum, including spaces).

A few points to note:

- It is important to keep in mind that a key factor that reviewers consider when assessing applications is feasibility. Lower scores will be given to proposals that are not realistically achievable within a two-year timeframe. The “Future Directions” section enables you to explain how your research will progress once the goals of your proposed project have been achieved.
- Graphs and charts do not count towards the two-page text description of your project.
- References are not required at the LOI phase. However, if you decide to include references, they do not count towards the page limitation.

## FORMATTING GUIDELINES

- Type font: 12-point.
- Type density: No more than 15 characters per inch (including spaces). For proportional spacing, the average for any representative section of text should not exceed either 15 characters per inch or 114 characters per line.
- Spacing: Single-spaced between lines of text, no more than five lines of type within a vertical inch.
- Margins: Minimum of 0.5-inch top, bottom, right, and 1-inch left.

## LETTER OF INTENT PROPOSAL CENTRAL INSTRUCTIONS

LOIs must be submitted through proposalCENTRAL (<https://proposalcentral.altum.com>). To begin an application, applicants will need to create a professional profile, if one does not already exist.

### Instructions for each section of the application in proposalCENTRAL:

- 1) *Title Page:* Enter proposal title (maximum 150 characters, including spaces).
- 2) *Download Templates and Instructions:* Download LOI guidelines and other available instructions (if provided) as needed.
- 3) *Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal:* Use this optional section to grant access to a collaborator or co-investigator.
- 4) *Applicant/PI:* This section should auto-populate from the applicant’s professional profile. Double-check that the information is complete and correct. If it is not, click “Edit Professional Profile” to update the information. Indicate whether you are an early career or established investigator.

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- 5) *Institution and Contacts*: Information should auto-populate from applicant's profile.
- 6) *Co-Principal Investigator/Collaborators*: Please enter information for any co-investigators or collaborators, if applicable.
- 7) *Keywords*: Select at least three keywords from the list that best describe the specific focus of your research proposal.
- 8) *Current and Pending Support*: List all current and pending support for you and any co-investigators. Pending support includes any grant applications that you have submitted, but for which decisions have not yet been communicated. Current and pending support is required for the PI and co-PI but is not required for collaborators.
- 9) *Attach LOI (if applicable), and Biosketch*: Once the LOI is finalized, attach it by uploading the PDF into this section of proposalCENTRAL.  
Early-career investigators must submit a letter of support from the department head or chair confirming their appointment and institutional support for their position in terms of salary, laboratory space, and available infrastructure to carry out the work if funded.  
**Biosketch for PI**: You may use NIH biosketch format if preferred over template provided.  
Optional
  - Applicants are encouraged to provide statements regarding their commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in their research environment (one hundred words or less).
  - Applicants may include within their biosketch a one-half page section describing any life events or circumstances that contributed to delays or gaps in their career trajectory. This may include information that may not otherwise be apparent to reviewers and can help provide context as they evaluate your professional trajectory and achievements. Examples include but are not limited to; being a member of a community underrepresented in biomedical research, having experienced a life event that impacted career trajectory (such as parenthood, family, or medical leave), COVID-19 pandemic-related effects, having a learning or other disability, coming from a low-income family, and being the first in your family to go to college.
- 10) *Validate*: The system will check for required components that have not been completed. Applicants will not be able to submit until all required components are completed.
- 11) *Submit*: Click "Submit" after your application has been successfully validated.

## FULL PROPOSAL NARRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS (10-PAGE LIMIT\*)

Following review of LOIs, select applicants will be invited to submit full proposals and will be asked for the following:

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- **Hypothesis and Specific Aims:** Clearly state the hypothesis to be addressed by the proposed research and the specific aim(s) of the project.
- **Background:** Describe the project background.
- **Preliminary Data:** Provide preliminary data available at the time of submission.
- **Research Plan:** Detail the experiments that will be done to address each specific aim, details of research design and methods, the expected outcomes, potential pitfalls, and how results will be interpreted. If this is a collaborative proposal, briefly describe how the collaboration adds value to the application.
- **Statement of Relevance to CURE Epilepsy's mission:** Include one paragraph detailing how the proposed research addresses CURE Epilepsy's goal of transforming epilepsy research and ultimately transforming patient care, and specifically how the proposed research will lead to a better understanding of the underlying mechanism(s) of epilepsy and could potentially lead to a cure.
- **References:** Please list all literature cited within the proposal. References do not count toward the page limit.

Applications are evaluated for innovation, feasibility, scientific merit, relevance to grant mechanism, relevance to CURE Epilepsy's mission, and potential to be transformative.

\*The ten-page limit of the Proposal Narrative is inclusive of any figures, tables, graphs, photographs, diagrams, chemical structures, pictures, pictorials, cartoons, and other relevant information needed to judge the proposal.

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- Type density: No more than 15 characters per inch (including spaces). For proportional spacing, the average for any representative section of text should not exceed either 15 characters per inch or 114 characters per line.
- Spacing: Single-spaced between lines of text, no more than five lines of type within a vertical inch.
- Margins: Minimum of 0.5-inch top, bottom, right, and 1-inch left.

## FULL PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROPOSAL CENTRAL

Full proposals must be submitted through proposalCENTRAL (<https://proposalcentral.altum.com>).

To access your application, log in to proposalCENTRAL and go to the Manage Proposals tab. If you click on "Edit" next to your approved LOI, you will be taken into the full proposal application. Below are instructions for each section on the online application:

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- 1) *Title Page*: Enter proposal title (maximum 150 characters, including spaces).
- 2) *Download Templates and Instructions*: Access a copy of these guidelines and download a biosketch template if you do not already have one completed.
- 3) *Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal*: Use this optional section to grant access to co-investigators or collaborators so they may review or enter information into the application.
- 4) *Applicant/PI*: This section should auto-populate from the professional profile. Double-check that the information is complete and correct. If it is not, click “Edit Professional Profile” to update the information. Indicate whether you are an early career or established investigator. CURE Epilepsy now requires an ORCID ID with all full proposal submissions. If your ORCID ID is not already provided on this page, enter an ORCID identifier in your Professional Profile by clicking “Edit Professional Profile.” Detailed instructions may be accessed in Section 2 of the online application – Download Templates and Instructions.
- 5) *Institution and Contacts*: Information should auto-populate from your profile.
- 6) *Co-investigators/Collaborators*: Enter contact information for co-PIs and/or collaborators. Typically, co-investigators are co-funded by the grant, collaborators are not.
- 7) *Letters of Recommendation*: Submit up to three letters of recommendation from mentors, department heads, or collaborators. **Letters of recommendation are only required for early career investigators.** Early-career investigators must submit a letter of support from the department head or chair confirming their appointment and institutional support for their position in terms of salary, laboratory space, and available infrastructure to carry out the work if funded. Letters from collaborators can be requested here or uploaded in the attachments section.
- 8) *Abstract*: Answer the questions in each box according to the instructions below:
  - a. *Lay Summary*: The lay summary will be reviewed by CURE Epilepsy’s Lay Review Council. Please take special care to describe the proposed work and its potential impact on the field of epilepsy in language appropriate for a nonscientific audience. Include the following:
    - i. *Project Goals*: Bulleted list of the goal(s) of the project.
    - ii. *Aims*: Bulleted list of how those goals will be tested.
    - iii. *Deliverables*: Bulleted list of tangible deliverables to result from this work if successful.
    - iv. *Impact*: Briefly explain how the project, if successful, will contribute to improved treatment, prevention, and cures. In this section, you may also explain the next steps in your research plan once the goals of your proposed project have been achieved.
  - b. *Scientific Summary*: Please provide a scientific abstract for your project.

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- 9) *Budget Period Detail:* Provide a detailed budget. The maximum budget for this program is \$250,000 USD over two years. Include an itemized list of how funds will be used, e.g., materials, animals, salary, fringe benefits, disposables, maintenance, publication fees, travel\*. While stipend support can be provided for graduate students, tuition is not an allowable expense. **Please note that indirect costs and institutional overhead are not provided.** Funds cannot be used to cover institutional expenses such as network charges, computer maintenance and services, insurance dues or other miscellaneous expenses not directly related to performing the project. All expenses must be converted to U.S. dollars (USD).
- \*Note that there is a travel cap of \$1,500 USD for international applicants and \$1,000 USD for U.S. applicants per year, which can be budgeted for a maximum of two investigators (the PI and Co-PI). If awarded funds, CURE Epilepsy encourages all grantees to attend the annual American Epilepsy Society meeting. Additional funds outside of the award will not be given to attend this event.
- 10) *Budget Summary and Justification:* Review the summarized budget to make sure that details have been entered correctly. Provide budget justification statement. The budget justification should clearly detail how and where the funds will be used and why these expenditures are critical to the success of the proposed research.
- 11) *Current and Pending Support:* Enter current and pending support for all PIs on the proposal. Please indicate if there is any overlap with the proposed work.
- 12) *Organization Assurances:* Answer the questions regarding use of human subjects, animals, recombinant DNA, and the possession of a Schedule 1 license, if appropriate for the proposal.
- 13) *Proposal Narrative and Other Attachments:* Upload the following documents:
- Proposal Narrative.
  - Description of facilities available at the PI's institution. Facilities/Institutional Assurances (do not exceed one-half page): If an institution does not have an official assurance document, please provide, in writing, assurances from the department chairperson or practice colleagues confirming the applicant's time, facilities, and future position if research is funded. Include a description of the facilities available. Please submit facilities/institutional assurances for each PI.
  - Biosketch for PI. You may use NIH biosketch format if preferred over template provided.
- Optional
- Applicants are encouraged to provide statements regarding their commitment to

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fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in their research environment (one hundred words or less).

- Applicants may include within their biosketch a one-half page section describing any life events or circumstances that contributed to delays or gaps in their career trajectory. This may include information that may not otherwise be apparent to reviewers and can help provide context as they evaluate your professional trajectory and achievements. Examples include but are not limited to; being a member of a community underrepresented in biomedical research, having experienced a life event that impacted career trajectory (such as parenthood, family, or medical leave), COVID-19 pandemic-related effects, having a learning or other disability, coming from a low-income family, and being the first in your family to go to college.

- d. Co-Investigator Biosketch: Upload biosketch for each co-investigator, if applicable.
- e. Collaborator Letters of Support: Upload letters from collaborators indicating their support of the proposed work, if applicable.
- f. Signed signature pages: Upload signed signature pages which are generated in Section 15 of the application.

14) *Validate*: The system will check for required components that have not been completed. You will not be able to submit until all required components are completed.

15) *Signature Pages*: Click “Print Signature Page” to obtain a PDF of the document that needs to be signed by you (the submitting PI) and an institutional representative. After signatures have been collected, scan and upload to Section 13.

16) *Submit*: Please **make sure to click “Submit”** once your application has been validated by the system.

**NOTE: CURE Epilepsy may occasionally share your full proposal with prospective donors or other advocacy groups who may be interested in co-funding the award. A non-disclosure agreement will be signed by each person who is given access to the full proposal.**

**Inquiries:** Questions regarding these guidelines are welcome and should be directed to the Research Team at [Research@CUREepilepsy.org](mailto:Research@CUREepilepsy.org) or 312-255-1801, Extension 3.

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## APPLICANT FAQs

Answers to a series of frequently asked questions may be found below. If after reviewing additional clarification is needed, please reach out to the Research Team at [Research@CUREepilepsy.org](mailto:Research@CUREepilepsy.org).

**Q Are international applicants eligible to apply?**

**A** Yes, international applicants are eligible to apply for CURE Epilepsy grants. All application materials must be submitted in English and should be written with a clear hypothesis and specific aims as is consistent with the U.S. grant-making system.

**Q Are multiple researchers from the same institution allowed to apply for the same grant?**

**A** Yes. There is no limit to the number of researchers from the same institution who can apply for the same grant.

**Q I'm interested in submitting a LOI for an open CURE Epilepsy award with a scientist who is currently funded by CURE Epilepsy. Is this allowed?**

**A** Yes, you can apply for an open award if your co-PI would not be receiving salary from the current award by the start date of the new award for which you are applying. Grantees cannot receive funding on two different awards at the same time.

**Q I was invited to submit a full application last year but was not awarded funding. I have addressed the concerns voiced in the reviews of my original application and would like to reapply. Can I reapply, and if so, what is the process?**

**A** Yes, we encourage you to reapply. However, you must go through CURE Epilepsy's standard application process. The first step is to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI).

**Q I received a CURE Epilepsy grant in the past. Can I apply again?**

**A** Yes. You are welcome to apply for a grant as a current/former CURE Epilepsy grantee. It should be noted, however, that a current grantee cannot receive funding on two different awards at the same time. So, you can apply for a new award if the funding for the new award would begin after your current award has ended.

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- Q** Can I apply for an award if I am an active reviewer for CURE Epilepsy?
- A** Yes. If you are an active reviewer, you can still apply for an award. We will ensure that you are not assigned to applications in the award category for which you applied.
- Q** Can I submit more than one application in the same cycle or to different award mechanisms, if running concurrently?
- A** Yes, if the two applications have completely different hypotheses and specific aims.
- Q** Does CURE Epilepsy only fund academic laboratories?
- A** CURE Epilepsy funds research from academic and non-academic laboratories. We fund researchers working at universities, small companies, and non-profit research institutions.
- Q** If I am submitting with another researcher, do we both need to apply?
- A** CURE Epilepsy welcomes collaborative proposals with more than one principal investigator. However, one application must be submitted on behalf of the collaboration, under one PI's account in proposalCENTRAL.
- Q** Can multidisciplinary funding be split between two institutions?
- A** Yes, funding can be split among multiple institutions. However, CURE Epilepsy will only contract with the primary institution, which will be responsible for negotiating subcontracts with the institutions of any co-PIs/collaborators involved with the project. CURE Epilepsy requires detailed budgets outlining the allocation of funds to each institution.
- Q** Who can receive a salary from the grant?
- A** Grant funds can be allocated to cover the salaries of investigators, postdocs, and graduate students in relation to the percentage of effort spent on the project, as well as research supplies and some travel expenses (see below). **Indirect costs are not covered.**

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**Q** Can grant funds be used for travel expenses?

**A** Yes. There is a travel cap of \$1,500 USD for international applicants and \$1,000 USD for U.S. and Canadian applicants per year which can be budgeted for a maximum of two investigators (the PI and Co-PI). If awarded funds, CURE Epilepsy encourages all grantees to attend the annual American Epilepsy Society meeting in December. Additional funds outside of the award will not be given to attend this event.

**Q** If I can't submit by the deadline, can I request an extension?

**A** No, CURE Epilepsy does not provide deadline extensions.