



HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE  
HUMAN BIOLOGY PROJECT

2024  
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

# Huntington's Disease Society of America's HD Human Biology Project

## **Dates and Deadlines**

Letter of Intent due:	Friday, May 3, 2024
Complete applications due:	Friday, July 5, 2024
Scientific Advisory Board review:	September 2024
Notification of award:	October 2024
Fellowship start date:	no later than December 1, 2024

## **Online application portal**

If you have previously used ProposalCentral, you may sign in [here](#) and search for an Open Opportunity by typing "Huntington's Disease Society of America" in the search box field and filtering opportunities by Grant Maker. This should take you to the Human Biology Project LOI. If you have not used ProposalCentral before, you can create an account using the same link.

To continue editing an existing application, login directly to [ProposalCentral](#) and click on either the "Home" tab or the "Proposals" tab to access your submission in progress.

## **Program Goal**

Support for investigator-initiated research directed towards better understanding the biology of Huntington's disease (HD) in humans. The research projects and observations resulting from them should have the potential to directly impact the lives of patients or help guide future drug development for HD.

## **Statement of Need**

The Huntington's Disease Society of America (HDSA) is interested in sponsoring innovative lines of inquiry into human HD patient data that will shed light on the most proximal biological events caused by the mutant huntingtin gene. All research proposals must incorporate a patient-centric focus to understanding HD. Some examples of the types of projects the HDSA Scientific Advisory Board would like to see addressed by the international research community are listed below. These examples are *not* intended to be an exhaustive listing.

1. Translation of HD animal model observations to patients or patient-derived cells/tissues (stem cells, postmortem tissue, blood/spinal fluid samples, etc).
2. Biomarker discovery/development
3. Clinical pilots, imaging studies, or development of clinical scales/assessments
4. Unbiased Systems Biology studies using data generated from human HD biological samples to uncover proximal biological pathways affected in human HD
5. Human-focused drug target identification and validation
6. Research using innovative technologies or interventions to improve care and quality of life for HD patients and caregivers

## **Background and Rationale**

Research into neurodegenerative diseases like HD has largely relied on rodent models of disease. However, since HD does not naturally occur in other species and the central nervous system is especially different between rodents and humans, there is a real need to ensure we understand HD in the context in which it occurs: hence the need to conduct clinical research studies in humans whenever possible to test working hypotheses about the disease. The generation of supporting (or refuting) data for these hypotheses will be crucial to ensuring the most promising therapeutic approaches advance to clinical trials as quickly as possible.

The research to be supported by HDSA must meet certain criteria.

- The proposals must involve the use of HD patients, patient data and samples or human HD model systems to maximize the impact on the execution of future clinical trials and/or drug discovery programs for HD. Examples of previously funded Human Biology Fellowships can be found at <http://hdsa.org/hd-research/hd-human-biology-project/>.
- The research proposals should **involve a collaboration** with investigators/clinicians at a reputable HD clinic anywhere around the world. Applicants may propose to work with any HD clinic they desire. We encourage applicants to consider the HDSA Centers of Excellence as a potential collaborator for their research. For a complete listing of the 57 HDSA Centers of Excellence and 11 Partner Sites, please go to: <http://hdsa.org/find-help/clinical-care-services/hdsa-centers-of-excellence/>

### **Eligibility**

**Fellows:** The HD Human Biology Project Fellowships are provided as “seed monies” (up to \$90,000 per year for up to two years) for new clinical or translational research projects that are directly related to understanding Huntington’s disease in the hope that the results can be used to attract funding from other sources. It is **NOT** required that applicants have an MD and/or a PhD degree from an accredited medical school, university or research institute at the time of application. Applications are welcomed and encouraged from individuals from other areas of research and health care (e.g., biostatisticians, physical therapists, biomedical engineers, etc....). Applications are welcome from all researchers regardless of their position/title. However, preference will be given to young investigators who are not yet independent investigators. Applications from U.S. and non-U.S. non-profit and for-profit institutions are also welcomed. These institutions include, but are not limited to, universities, hospitals, government and biotech/pharmaceutical companies. Projects submitted from a for-profit organization must be accompanied by a signed letter from an authorized representative stating that publication of the fellow’s work will not be delayed due to proprietary issues.

**Mentors:** If the applicant is a post-doctoral or clinical research fellow, a mentor must be identified before applying for the HD Human Biology Project. All mentors must have a PhD and/or MD/DO degree and be scientific investigators with primary appointments at academic, public or private research institutions. Collaborations between multiple HD clinics are strongly encouraged.

### **Awards**

The HDSA Grant provides funds up to \$90,000 a year for up to two years, subject to available organizational funds and demonstration of progress on the proposed research. Funding is primarily meant to support personnel (other than the mentor(s)) and supplies. Each award includes stipend up to 80% of the award (\$72,000) to cover salary and fringe benefits (up to 30% of salary) for the recipient, and an annual allowance (maximum \$30,000) to cover research costs, supplies and professional conference travel. Requested stipend must reflect percent effort devoted to the project (minimum 50% effort). Annual travel costs cannot exceed \$5,000, and are available to ensure the Fellow can attend the relevant HD conferences (i.e., HDSA Annual Convention, CHDI Therapeutics Conference, CAG Gordon Conference) that are important for their development. HDSA cannot cover the purchase of laboratory equipment or data storage devices. Budgetary items submitted with the proposal will be reviewed by HDSA, and **any exceptions must be justified and discussed prior to submission**. Consistent with HDSA policy, indirect costs, such as institutional overhead, are not allowed.

The number of fellowships HDSA will award will be determined by its available financial resources and the alignment of the proposed research within the HDSA portfolio. Fellows are permitted to obtain additional awards or grants to cover additional salary and research expenses as needed. However, it is required that the awardee dedicate at least 50% effort to the proposal.

### **Terms**

Proposals can be submitted as one or two-year projects. The funds cannot be used to purchase laboratory equipment or personal computers, nor does the award cover overhead costs. Awards are paid in installments, contingent upon approval of satisfactory progress as documented in progress and financial reports submitted to HDSA. To continue receiving financial support from HDSA in year two of a two-year research project, the awardee must demonstrate significant scientific progress towards the agreed upon milestones in the form of a detailed progress report (including all raw data). The first progress report will be due no later than 8 months after the start date of the award. Neither one- nor two-year awards are renewable. All publications resulting from research funded by HDSA must acknowledge the *Huntington's Disease Society of America*, and should be provided to HDSA when in press.

All IRB approved projects selected for funding that involve the recruitment of study participants must complete the HD Trialfinder Listing Request Form available on <https://hdsa.org/hd-research/hd-trialfinder/>. This information will be used to list the clinical study in HDSA's HD Trialfinder ([www.HDTrialfinder.org](http://www.HDTrialfinder.org)) that aims to match interested trial participants with HD research studies around North America.

**Sharing Research Results:** Twenty-four months after the award end date, HDSA may share the results (including raw data) of the funded research with third parties without restrictions. Before that time, HDSA can share the results (including raw data) of the funded research with third parties under a confidentiality agreement which will require such third parties to not publish any results they generate using the results of the funded research until twenty-four months after the award end date. Finally, by accepting funds from HDSA, awardees also agree to make (and agree HDSA may make) the raw data of the funded research **freely** available for inclusion in data repositories in a timely fashion.

**Institutional Approvals:** Human Participants and Vertebrate Animal Certifications must be documented with a copy of an official letter of approval (or equivalent for non-US applicants), which identifies the Principal Investigator, project title and date of approval, and is signed by the Review Committee Chair or equivalent responsible institutional/government official. Prior certification for another project cannot be substituted, but can be officially amended to include the proposed project (identified by project title). **IMPORTANT:** IRB, IACUC or equivalent ethical certification are NOT required to submit an application; however, such ethical certification must be submitted as soon as possible following official notification of an award. HDSA will not issue a grant payment until the appropriate certifications are received.

Projects using postmortem tissue must provide documentation that the necessary tissue is or will be available at the research site at the time of the award. Applications without proper documentation will be returned without review.

#### **Public Access/Dissemination**

Funded researchers are also required to submit or have submitted for them to the National Institutes of Health's PubMed Central database an electronic version of their final, peer-reviewed manuscripts upon acceptance for publication, to be made publicly available no later than 12 months after the official date of publication. This requirement applies to all grants awarded after January 1, 2013, whether HDSA funds the research in whole or in part.

HDSA reserves the right to make information about funded awards publicly available.

#### **Review, Notification, and Announcements**

Proposals will be reviewed by the HDSA Scientific Advisory Board. Proposals will be scored in a manner similar to the NIH scoring system. The scoring system utilizes a 9-point rating scale (1 = exceptional; 9 = poor). This scale will be used by all eligible (without conflict of interest) SAB members to provide an overall impact score that reflects upon the following criteria:

- **Impact:** Does the proposal help us better understand HD human biology or address a critical

issue within the HD research community? Or, does it have the potential to positively benefit the quality of life for HD patients and families?

- **Scientific approach:** Are the methods and technologies appropriate to address the question? Is the proposal human-centric?
- **Feasibility:** Can the project be completed within the timeline and with the available resources?
- **Strength of Candidate and Mentor lab:** Do the applicant and mentor have the relationship, skills, and resources to successfully carry out the project? Is it a supportive environment for working on HD?
- **Clinical collaboration:** Is there a strong relationship between the laboratory and clinic? Will recruitment/sample procurement be supported and feasible?

Applicants will be notified by e-mail after the funding decision process is complete. All fellowship awards shall be posted on the HDSA Research website. Upon completion of the fellowship, the outcomes of each project may be highlighted in various HDSA communication vehicles, such as newsletters, webinars, or the HDSA website. HDSA fellows may also be asked to present their findings in the form of a scientific presentation at the Annual HDSA Convention. If selected to present, HDSA will cover all costs for the research fellow to attend the HDSA Convention.

### **Payment of Awards**

The recipient of any fellowship from HDSA must use the awarded funds for the specific purpose they were originally intended. Any proposed changes to the budget must be discussed with HDSA. Any funds not used in the above specified manner must be returned to HDSA within 60 days of the receipt of the final scientific report by HDSA. Payment of the awards is contingent upon receiving any institutional approvals (IRB or IACUC) that are required for the proposed research.

Awards will be paid in four installments according to the following schedule:

- The first payment totaling 67% of the first-year budget will be made to the researcher's institution **upon acceptance** of the HDSA award terms and conditions, including receipt of all required certifications by a post-award official authorized to act for the institution receiving the award.
- The second payment equaling 33% of the first-year budget will be sent upon receipt and acceptance of a progress report detailing the progress through the first **8 months** of the project.
- The third payment totaling 67% of the second-year budget will be contingent upon HDSA receiving an annual research progress report and a financial report from the investigator **12 months** after the award begins.
- The fourth payment equaling 33% of the second-year budget will be sent upon receipt and acceptance of a progress report detailing the progress through the first eight months of the second year of funding (**20 months** from the start of the project).

A final scientific report and a financial reconciliation are due no more than 30 days after the grant end date. The fellow and mentor may request a one-time only, no-cost extension of up to six months if there is a hiatus in the training. Requests for no-cost extensions must be approved by HDSA prior to the extension period and require submission of a progress report and financial report.

A fellowship award cannot be transferred to another investigator, laboratory or sponsoring institution without prior written approval from HDSA.

HDSA reserves the right to request documentation of expenses. Records and receipts should be retained for three years following the grant period.

### **Letter of Intent and Application**

Letters of Intent (LOIs) and Applications must be submitted through HDSA's online application portal at ProposalCentral. See details above.

Completed LOIs must be received by HDSA no later than **Friday, May 3, 2024, at 5:00 pm (EDT)**. LOIs will be reviewed by the HDSA Scientific Advisory Board and those most closely aligning with the statement of need will be invited to submit a full proposal. The completed application and supporting documents must be received by **Friday, July 5, 2024 at 5:00pm (EDT)**.

Recipients will be selected in September 2024. Awards will be recommended by the HDSA Scientific Advisory Board prior to formal approval by the HDSA Board of Trustees. Awardees will be notified in October 2024 via email, with the anticipated start date to be between November 1, 2024 and December 1, 2024.

### **Supporting Documents**

Applications must be accompanied by a letter from the project supervisor/mentor of the department in which the work will be done, evaluating the significance of the research to be conducted and potential of the researcher. Proposals involving human research participants must indicate any potential risks (physical or psychological).

Copies of the certified consent form and approval from the sponsoring Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of research participants must accompany the application. If the proposals also include a portion of research involving use of animals, you must include a statement certifying compliance with all applicable federal, state and local laws, and conformity with and adherence to the Animal Welfare Act, the National Research Council Guide for the Care & Use of Laboratory Animals, and any appropriate US Department of Agriculture or National Institutes of Health (NIH) regulations and standards.

A completed full application will include the following:

- I. General Application
  - a. Administrative Information
  - b. Abstract and Lay Summary
  - c. Impact on HD Patients and Families
  - d. Budget with Justification
  - e. Biographical Sketches of applicant and mentor, including personal statement/career plan (NIH style acceptable)
  - f. Other Research Support
- II. Research and Training Plan
  - a. Summary of Specific Aims
  - b. Introduction/Background
  - c. Preliminary Studies with Figures (if applicable)
  - d. Experimental Plan (methods, statistical analysis, plan for data analysis, etc....)
  - e. Power Calculations (all studies involving human subjects MUST complete a power analysis to determine appropriate sample size)
  - f. 6-, 12-, 18- and 24-month milestones
  - g. HD Clinic Collaboration Details
  - h. Literature Cited
  - i. Letter(s) of Support
  - j. IRB Certifications and Laboratory Animal Welfare Approvals (if applicable)

**For further questions regarding the fellowship, contact:**

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