



The Arthritis Foundation Clinical Rheumatology Fellowship Request for Proposals (RFP)

Cultivating A New Generation of Rheumatologists

The Arthritis Foundation is pleased to announce our 2026 RFP for Clinical Rheumatology Fellowships.

Award durations and amounts are:

- Adult fellowship: 2 years of funding. Total Award amount: \$150,000.
- Pediatric fellowship: 3 years of funding. Total Award amount: \$225,000.
- Med-Peds fellowship: 4 years of funding. Total Award amount: \$300,000.

I. The Arthritis Foundation Clinical Fellowship Program Summary

The Arthritis Foundation is seeking applications from institutions with training programs in clinical rheumatology to meet the challenges of the rheumatology workforce shortage. This RFP targets US post-residency rheumatology clinical fellowship training programs in:

- Adult
- Pediatric
- Med-Peds

II. Key Application and Notification Dates

- Institutions may apply for a fellowship with a start date of **2027 or 2028**. (*Start date may be modified during contracting.*)
- **LOI Due Date: Tuesday, October 27, 2026, 2:00 PM Eastern.**
- LOI submissions will be reviewed as received and within approximately one week of submitting LOI, eligible applicants will be notified. Early submission is encouraged to allow for earlier access to full proposal material.
- **Full Proposal Submission Due Date: Tuesday, December 1, 2026, 2:00 PM Eastern.**
- Date of final status notification: **Wednesday, March 31, 2027, 2:00 PM Eastern.**
- **Award agreements must be signed within 60 days of notification of intent to fund.**

III. Fellowship Goals

The goals of the Arthritis Foundation Rheumatology Clinical Fellowship Program were determined based on feedback received from stakeholder groups, including patients and health care providers. This rheumatology workforce expansion initiative seeks to:

1. Reduce workforce barriers to care that threaten critical access to state-of-the-art rheumatology care for all children and adults with arthritis.
2. Support early-in-career physicians who are committed to improving the lives of people with arthritis outside of the clinic, by engagement with the arthritis community, particularly where those communities have limited access to rheumatological care.

The initiative's goals can be accomplished through the following activities:

- Support programs that provide: innovative educational and/or training support for early-in-career physicians who wish to enhance their competency to care for communities with limited access to rheumatological care, particularly those with barriers to care that result from geographic separation of the patient community and care providers; training in rheumatology physician-extender methods, such as telemedicine, allied health professional collaboration and/or other means; or education in associated health care system and legal issues related to these services.
- Assure that curricula for adult rheumatologists-in-training provide appropriate exposure to unique medical care needs of young adults who are transitioning from pediatric to adult rheumatology. Such training should be oriented to the unique needs of this special population. The institution is encouraged to engage with the Arthritis Foundation if access to this patient population is not readily achievable. If an institution has no pediatric rheumatology program, then collaborations with other pediatric programs confirmed by a letter of support are encouraged.
- Recruit fellows who are committed to meeting the rheumatology needs of areas and communities with limited access to care and/or who come from disadvantaged backgrounds or groups currently underrepresented in health care and health sciences.
- Expand scope of the training experience to incorporate engagement with people who have arthritis outside of the clinical environment through Arthritis Foundation research, events, advocacy, and other engagement opportunities.

- Include training in:
 - Use of shared decision-making between doctor and patient.
 - Research emphasizing clinical and translational research.
 - How to best address the mental and emotional health needs of patients.

IV. Institutional Eligibility

- The training program must be accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). For Med-Peds both the Adult and the Pediatric Programs need to be ACGME accredited.
- The application should originate from the Fellowship Director. For Med-Peds, the application can originate from the Director of either the Adult or the Pediatric Program.
- For **Adult Programs**, the program is eligible if:
 - It is creating a new ACGME-approved slot (prepared to participate in the NRMP match for the first year of funding)
 - This is a new ACGME-accredited Adult program (prepared to participate in the NRMP match for the first year of funding)
 - It is creating an expansion slot that is in progress towards institutional GME and ACGME approvals (or will be applied for, pending receiving this award) and will have obtained institutional GME and ACGME approvals prior to award start date.
- For **Pediatric Programs/Med-Peds Fellowships**, the program is eligible if:
 - The program has not received this award since 2018 and is filling an existing ACGME-approved slot that was unfilled during the most recent match cycle because of funding constraints.
 - It is creating a new ACGME-approved slot (prepared to participate in the NRMP match for the first year of funding)

- This is a new ACGME-accredited Pediatric program (prepared to participate in the NRMP match for the first year of funding)
- It is creating an expansion slot that is in progress towards institutional GME and ACGME approvals (or will be applied for, pending receiving this award) and will have obtained institutional GME and ACGME approvals prior to award start date.
- Institutions may hold awards for multiple programs concurrently.
- Multiple applications from a single institution will not be permitted unless they are for separate training programs (e.g., Adult, Pediatric and Med-Peds)
- There are no citizenship restrictions for supported fellows.

RENEWAL REQUESTS

- Current awardees may apply for a renewal in the last year of the award (applying in the fall before the award ends the following summer). An award is only eligible to be renewed once.
- In the Sustainability section, be sure to demonstrate diligence in raising funds/raising endowment, contributions from institution and/or donor. Provide your plan for finding permanent sources of funding and indicate how an additional award will allow you to get there.
- Since the goal of the program is to provide seed support, the review committee may view renewal application as a lower priority, please keep this in mind when making your case.

V. Institutional Responsibility

Required

- Pursue development of an innovative post-residency rheumatology clinical fellowship position that is guided by the ACGME Program Requirements for Graduate Medical Education in Rheumatology, as appropriate.
- Cover any remaining balance for costs of the fellowship training program.

- Annually, designate one fellow, who will provide a short bio, headshot, CV or Biosketch and demographics. The same fellow can be designated for the duration of the award and/or multiple years, or a different fellow can be chosen each year.
- Have a strategy to recruit fellows who have a professional commitment to meeting the needs of areas and communities with limited access to rheumatological care.
- Submit an annual report on the fellow's training progress and work, and the progress of the program towards meeting its goals.
- Abide by the terms and conditions of this fellowship grant.

Recommended

- Provide funding and time at least once during the fellowship period for fellow's travel to, and attendance at an Arthritis Foundation event, such as the Arthritis Foundation Pathways Conference, the Juvenile Arthritis Conference, or various Science Symposia.
- Provide funding and time at least once during the fellowship period for the fellow's attendance at a high-profile meeting on rheumatology research (e.g., ACR Convergence, CARRA Annual Meeting, or another research and educational scientific conference).
- Offer implicit bias training to all members of the Fellowship Program (staff and fellows).

VI. Fellow's Responsibility

Once identified by the awarded Institution, the Arthritis Foundation funded fellow must:

- Commit to accept their role in allowing the institution to meet its responsibilities under the terms and conditions of awards.
- Submit a short bio, headshot, CV or Biosketch and demographics (with the option to decline demographic data).
- The fellow is encouraged to attend a major Arthritis Foundation conference or event at least once during the fellowship period and attend a professional scientific/educational meeting at least once during the fellowship period.

- Commit to meaningful engagement with Arthritis Foundation local communities and national office. This may include activities such as attending the Fellows Reception during ACR Convergence, speaking at Arthritis Foundation events, advocacy, referring patients to the Arthritis Foundation's Connect Groups (support groups), participation in walks, galas and/or juvenile arthritis camps.
- Upon finishing the fellowship program, the Arthritis Foundation looks forward to continued engagement with each fellow. Areas of potential future interaction include, but are not limited to:
 1. Referring Patients to Arthritis Foundation for Education and/or Support
 2. Joining Local Leadership Board, Committee or Task Team
 3. Participating in Fellows Reception during ACR Convergence
 4. Being an Advocate
 5. Being a Peer Reviewer
 6. Being a Subject Matter Expert for Webinars, Events, and Presentations
 7. For Juvenile Arthritis Opportunities: JA Family Summit (formerly known as the JA Conference), JA Family Day, JA Camp, JA Connect/Support Groups
 8. Community events (such as Walk to Cure Arthritis, Jingle Bell Run, Cycling Experience, Galas, Golf, Pickleball Tournaments)

VII. Full Proposal Review Criteria/Selection Process

- Applications will be scored by a peer-review panel, in consultation with patient advocates and Arthritis Foundation staff.
- Institutional grantees will be selected based on strength of alignment to the goals of the program, and eligibility parameters, as described in Sections III and IV above.

- Reviewers are instructed to focus on the following review criteria:
 1. Innovativeness and quality of the academic and clinical components of the training program
 2. History of productivity of the program
 3. Sustainability of the training program
 4. Commitment to areas and communities with limited access to rheumatological care
 5. Approach to achieving the goals of the Arthritis Foundation's Rheumatology Clinical Fellowship Program
 6. Commitment to engagement with the Arthritis Foundation

VIII. Fellowship Budget and Duration

- The Foundation will provide \$75,000/year for the duration of the award. The institution is expected to cover the remaining costs of their training program.
- Award durations:
 - Adult, 2 years
 - Pediatric, 3 years
 - Med-Peds, 4 years
- Institution must certify funds will be applied toward direct costs of supporting the fellowship program. Flexibility is granted to the Institution with respect to how funds are applied. Some institutions may, for instance, prefer to support a different fellow each year of the award, while other institutions may wish to apply the support to the training of a single individual for the duration of the award. While the budget may be considered generally unrestricted, **indirect costs related to institutional overhead are not permitted.**
- Annual funding is contingent on demonstration of ACGME accreditation, recruitment and placement of an appropriate fellow in the requested slot, and satisfactory execution of the program, as evidenced by annual progress reports.

IX. Application Instructions

Letter of Intent

After reviewing the criteria, those who intend to apply must first complete the LOI stage. No uploads are required for the LOI stage. The following information is required:

- Project Title
- Applicant/PI (Fellowship Director) and Institution Information
- Program type (Adult, Pediatric or Med-Peds)
- Program eligibility for this award
- Total Budget amount (see section VIII. Fellowship Budget and Duration)
- Only the Applicant/PI (Fellowship Director) needs to electronically sign the LOI. (Electronic signature from the institution's signing official is **NOT** required for the LOI.)

LOI approval will be sent to the applicant within 1 week of LOI submission.

Full Proposal

Full Proposals are by invitation only. Full Proposals must be entered into the current **required Arthritis Foundation template** (which can be found within the application on ProposalCentral).

Program Proposal (Limit 7 pages, limit does not include references or table of contents)

For simplicity for both applicants and reviewers, the requested program information mirrors the application format of the Rheumatology Research Foundation fellowship programs. Applicants are, however, reminded to ensure that their application specifically addresses the goals of the Arthritis Foundation funding mechanism.

1. Proposal Summary

One paragraph emphasizing key attributes of the proposed program. Please use non-technical language for this section.

2. Program Description

Describe the proposed training program, including:

- **Population served**

Provide a description of the communities served by the clinical program, and any details that would define this population as having limited access to rheumatological care. This may include proximity to other training programs, average distances travelled by the patients, specific demographic features, etc. A specific program for training this population should be described in the program description.

- **Goals of the training program and progress in meeting these goals**

- **Description of program**

- Please use this space to describe the program and its ability to meet the Institution Responsibilities described in the RFP.
- The description should clearly describe which aspects of the proposed program currently exist or a planned for the future.
- As part of this section, list any participating institutions, general curriculum, and any areas of particular strength.
- Given the focus of this program on meeting the needs of populations with limited access to rheumatological care, the description should pay careful attention to describing how fellows will be trained to specifically serve these populations.
- Please also specifically address the institution's commitment to developing innovative models of training and care for populations with limited access to rheumatological care.

- **ACGME slot details**

- Provide the number of current and proposed ACGME-approved training slots and fill rates for existing slots over the past 5 years.
- Note the accreditation status of the proposed slot.
- Describe strategy to recruit fellows who have professional interests aligned with the goals of the RFP.

- **Sustainability**

Indicate the program's plans for sustaining the funded slot at the end of the Arthritis Foundation's funding period. The application should clearly indicate the specific funding mechanisms being considered (e.g., endowments, full-time funded positions, and others), and declare whether the support is guaranteed, or subject to further review. Any statement of financial need should be declared here. Since the goal of the program is to provide seed support, a strong sustainability plan for permanent support is critical.

- **Foundation Involvement**

Describe how the program's planned engagement with Arthritis Foundation local communities and/or National Office will support the fellow's training. Include a statement of current or past involvement.

Required Documents

- **Publications Table**

- List publications authored by prior rheumatology fellows within the last 5 years, based on work performed during the fellowship. Note the supported fellow with bold face type and indicate if the fellow was supported by Arthritis Foundation funding.
- Papers and abstracts should be listed separately and should note the status of any related peer reviewed manuscripts (e.g., in prep, submitted, published, none planned).
- Tables completed for application to other funding programs are permissible, if minimally edited to note items suggested in the prior bullet point.

- **Faculty Information Table**

- List each faculty member who is involved with the training program, including their names, credentials, title/role as it relates to the program, and a brief description of their involvement.
- Tables completed for application to other funding programs are permissible.

- **Graduated Fellows Table**

- List all Fellows graduated in last five years. Include full name and credentials, which years in training program, Rheumatology ABIM/ABP status, whether boards were passed on first try, and the present career choice and location of the Fellow.
- Tables completed for application to other funding programs are permissible.

- **Fellowship Positions Questionnaire**

- Please fill out the Fellowship Positions Questionnaire with indicated information.
- Tables completed for application to other funding programs are permissible.

- **Arthritis Foundation Award History**

- Please provide a history of Arthritis Foundation support, if any, to your program.
- Include names of fellows, and which years they trained under the Arthritis Foundation award.

- **Letter(s) of Institutional Support**

- **For Adult* and Pediatric Fellowships:**

A letter from the Division Chief or Department Chair confirming the organizational commitment to the training program and stating that the Institution will commit to covering the balance of training costs not covered by this grant. **(Only 1 letter will be accepted and may not exceed 1 page in length.)**

**Optional additional Letter of Support from collaborating pediatric programs could be included to demonstrate commitment to fellow training in pediatric to adult transitions.*

- **For Med-Peds Fellowships:**

1. A letter from the Division Chief or Department Chair (**Pediatric Program/Dept of Pediatrics**) confirming the organizational commitment to the training program and stating that the Institution will commit to covering the balance of training costs not covered by this grant **(1-page limit)**
2. A letter from the Division Chief or Department Chair (**Adult Program/Dept of Medicine**) confirming the organizational commitment to the training program and stating that the Institution will commit to covering the balance of training costs not covered by this grant **(1-page limit)**

- **Response to past reviews (for resubmissions only) (limit 1 page)**

If you previously applied for the same program, but did not receive funding, your application is considered a resubmission. If this application is a resubmission, a response to past reviews is required, to include:

- o Summary of any substantial changes to the application.
- o Response to criticism or concerns of prior reviewers.

X. Submission

- All LOIs and full applications, for this program ("Rheumatology Fellowship Training"), must be submitted using ProposalCentral, the Arthritis Foundation's online grants management portal, available by logging into your ProposalCentral account at <https://proposalcentral.com/> and clicking the Grant Opportunities tab, and searching for Arthritis Foundation. If you do not have an account, please set up a FREE account by clicking "Need an account?" under the LOGIN button. **Required Arthritis Foundation template** can be found within the application on ProposalCentral.
- The Signing Official must be someone who has the power to legally bind your organization in grant matters. This will be someone other than the applicant/PI except in very rare circumstances. If you wish to have the PI serve as the Signing Official, please contact the Arthritis Foundation at AFscience@arthritis.org, prior to submitting your application, to request an exemption.
- All applications must be submitted by 2:00 PM Eastern time on the deadline date.
- Any application submitted after deadline, incomplete, or failing to otherwise adhere to instructions will be administratively declined.

XI. Full Proposal Formatting

- Please use the **required Arthritis Foundation template** provided within the ProposalCentral application.
- Margins should be greater than or equal to 1/2" on all sides.
- Font size should be no less than 11 points. Font must be Arial.

- Applications must be written in English and formatted such that, if printed, would print to 8.5"x11" paper.
- Please be mindful of the page limits for each section.
- PDF file formats are preferred. In order to allow for administrative notes to be added, editing permissions **must not** be restricted and files **must not** be password protected.

XI. Questions and Additional Information

We encourage inquiries concerning this funding opportunity and welcome the opportunity to answer questions from potential applicants. For all inquiries including general grants information and questions regarding application instructions, application, and processes, please email: AFscience@arthritis.org

For technical assistance with ProposalCentral, please call 1.800.875.2562 (toll-free U.S. and Canada) or 703.964.5840 (Direct Dial International) or email: pcsupport@altum.com. Customer service is open Monday-Friday, 8:30am-5:00pm Eastern.