



AES/EPILEPSY WELLNESS ADVOCATES EARLY CAREER RESEARCH AWARD PROGRAM GUIDELINES

LAST UPDATED SEPTEMBER 15, 2025

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

[Epilepsy Wellness Advocates](#) (EWA) is sponsoring a one-year grant of up to \$70,000 for early career investigators to undertake a research project with a focus on integrative health and wellness approaches to manage epilepsy and improve patient quality of life. This research shall be non-invasive and non-pharmacological in nature (though alternative medicine is encouraged), may be preclinical or clinical, and can range from mechanistic to therapeutic studies. Research projects selected for funding must address topics that have not been the subject of significant prior study; proposals should either explore areas where no substantive research has been conducted, or build upon preliminary or pilot studies that demonstrate promising grounds for further investigation.

EWA's areas of interest include nutrition, cognition, behavior, emotion, activity, environmental, and integrative health innovation. Further details are listed below and can be found on the [AES website](#):

- Nutrition
 - Diet
 - Vitamins and supplements
 - Gut-brain axis
- Cognition, Behavior, and Emotion
 - Cognition and cognitive impairments
 - Behavior and behavioral therapies
 - Emotion, stress, and emotion regulation
- Activity
 - Exercise
 - Sleep
- Environmental
 - Weather
 - Seasonal

- Daylight
- Geolocation
- Changing time zones/travel
- Exposure to environmental toxins
- Innovation
 - Technological advances
 - Eastern medicine
 - Endogenous and exogenous influences
 - Other comorbidities

APPLICATION DEADLINES AND AWARD DATES

- September 2025: Application submission opens through ProposalCentral
- January 22, 2026: Full proposals due
- By May 31, 2026: Awardees notified
- July 1, 2026: Earliest award start date. May be delayed up to 3 months (October 1, 2026).

APPLICATION POLICIES

1. An individual may only serve as the primary mentor for one application submitted in a given year for a mentored award administered by the AES, including Predoctoral Research Fellowship, Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, Research & Training Fellowship for Clinicians, the ESC mini-grant, and the AES/EWA Early Career Research Award. Similarly, an individual may not apply for a Junior Investigator Research Award and also be listed as the primary mentor on a proposal for a mentored award.
2. More than one application may be submitted from a single institution, but final funding decisions will consider a preference to limit multiple awards to one institution.
3. Applicants may request a delay in the start date of up to 3 months.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Proposals from ineligible applicants will not be reviewed. If you have any questions regarding your eligibility, please contact AES Grants Staff at grants@aesnet.org before submitting a proposal.

Applicants must:

1. Hold an MD, DO, PhD, ScD, PharmD, or equivalent degree.
2. Be a clinical or research fellow, postdoctoral fellow, have an academic appointment at the level of Assistant Professor or equivalent at a university, medical school, research institution, or medical center, or be a newly appointed clinical faculty member within five years of first full-time appointment before the award start date.
 - Researchers with other early faculty appointments (such as Instructor, Adjunct Track, etc.) may apply but are strongly encouraged to provide a letter of support from their department chair.
3. Have a defined research plan that is relevant to integrative health and wellness approaches to manage epilepsy and improve patient quality of life, with access to institutional resources to conduct the proposed project.
4. Be able to devote at least 25% of their time to the project. If a reduced protected time is deemed necessary by an early career clinical faculty applicant, such requests will be considered on a case by case manner and on a competitive basis, provided that such requests do not compromise the training experience and research goals of the applicant's project.

In addition:

5. No mentor required, but strongly encouraged. Cannot be listed as the primary mentor on a proposal for a mentored research award by AES. If adding a mentor(s), the mentor should have expertise to supervise and provide guidance on epilepsy-related research.
6. Physician applicants whose research will involve patient care or direct involvement with patients must have completed all residency training and be licensed to practice medicine at their institution.
7. U.S. citizenship is not required. Preference will be given to applications for research to be conducted at U.S. institutions. Depending on available funds, applications may be considered for investigators outside the U.S. who otherwise meet the eligibility criteria.
8. Applicants from all backgrounds are encouraged to apply. Selections will be made without respect to race, gender, or any other protected characteristic or protected status.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Projects will be evaluated based on:

- The scientific merit of the research
- The clarity of the proposal
- The applicant's qualifications and potential to benefit from the award
- The feasibility of completing the research project with the proposed timeline and resources
- Optional: the availability and demonstrated commitment of a qualified mentor to advising on the proposed project

AWARD POLICIES

Epilepsy Wellness Advocates Support

This grant will be funded at up to \$70,000 by the American Epilepsy Society, who shall also administer said grant, made possible through a grant from Epilepsy Wellness Advocates. Quarterly payments are made to the institution, and the funds may only be used to support the direct costs of research. Support includes up to \$69,000 for direct research costs and \$1,000 for travel support plus complimentary registration to attend the Annual Meeting of the American Epilepsy Society. Awardees will also receive complimentary one-year AES membership. No indirect costs are provided. Submission of scientific and financial reports, no later than 90 days after completion of the project, is a requirement.

Awardees may not hold other overlapping grants/awards for the same research. Accordingly, full disclosure of all available and pending funds for research support must be made in the grant application. If funds from other sources become available during the review or tenure of the Epilepsy Wellness Advocates Grant, the applicant/recipient must inform AES in writing so that a decision can be made about continuation of the award.

Use of Human Subjects/Tissues in Research

When human subjects or tissues are to be used in a research project, it is the responsibility of the grantee to ensure that the project receives approval from his/her Institutional Review Board. A copy of that Board's current approval notice and a copy of the patient informed consent form should be submitted with the application if they are available. If not submitted with an application selected for an award, these documents must be submitted at least two weeks before the award start-date.

Use of Animals in Research

When animals and/or animal tissues will be used, it is the responsibility of the grantee to ensure that the project receives approval from the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. If available, a copy of these documents

should be submitted with the application. If not submitted with an application selected for an award, these documents must be submitted at least two weeks before the award start-date.

All entities that receive funding from the American Epilepsy Society must adhere to the following principles:

1. Animals shall be used in biomedical research only when no other means of obtaining scientifically sound, valid, and useful results are available.
2. The minimum number of appropriate animals required to obtain and validate results shall be used.
3. The acquisition, care, and use of animals must be in accordance with all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations.
4. Certifications must be received from research facilities prior to being approved for a research fellowship that the facility(ies), its researchers, and employees adhere to the Animal Welfare Act and the National Research Council *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*; and any appropriate U.S. Department of Agriculture or National Institutes of Health regulations and standards must be followed.
5. In cases requiring the death of an animal, only the most appropriate and humane form of euthanasia shall be used consistent with the purpose of the research.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Full proposals due by January 22, 2026, by 5:00 PM Eastern time

Proposals must be submitted through ProposalCentral (<https://ProposalCentral.altum.com/>).

- Applicants who do not yet have an account with ProposalCentral will need to register as a new user and provide the requested professional profile information before proceeding.
- Once logged in as a user, go to the *Grant Opportunities* tab, and filter the list to display American Epilepsy Society Awards.
- Locate the line for *EPILEPSY WELLNESS ADVOCATES EARLY CAREER RESEARCH AWARD* and click on *Apply Now* to begin an application.

Complete applications must be submitted through ProposalCentral.

No applications, nor any parts of or updates to the application, will be accepted if submitted after the deadline or if sent directly to AES offices by electronic or U.S. mail.

Required components of the application include the following sections to be completed as online forms or submitted as individual proposal attachments in PDF format. ***Please read these full instructions carefully and plan in advance to ensure all components will be completed before the application deadline.*** Additional instructions will be available on screen in ProposalCentral and within downloadable templates for proposal attachments.

1. Title Page:

- a. **Enter the title of your proposal** (max 75 characters)
- b. **Enter the start and end date requested for your project.** In general, the award term should be July 1, 2026-June 30, 2027. However, a delay of up to 3 months (beginning no later than October 1, 2026) in the start date is permitted, if necessary.
- c. **Research Type (basic, translational, or clinical).** Definitions for the categories are available at the end of these instructions. Multiple categories are often relevant to an individual project. Please select one category as the primary type of research that best fits your proposal and then indicate in the boxes below what percentage of your research falls within each category.

- d. **Type of epilepsy under investigation** While multiple categories may be relevant to an individual project, please select a maximum of two choices (one primary and one secondary) that best fit your proposal.
 - e. **Research classification.** Definitions for the research classifications are available at the end of these instructions. While multiple categories may be relevant to an individual project, please select up to two choices (one primary and one secondary) that best fit your proposal.
- 2. Download Templates and Instructions:** This guidelines document and all proposal attachment templates can be downloaded [here](#).
- 3. Enable Other Users to Access This Proposal:** This screen allows you to give other users access to your grant application, if necessary, such as your mentor or financial officers at your institution. Please inquire internally at your institution to understand who, if anyone, should be able to access your proposal.
- 4. Applicant/PI:** This information is pre-loaded 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.
 - a. ORCID ID (optional): Applicants are encouraged to connect your application to your ORCID ID (available through the Personal Data for Applications within your Professional Profile). The ORCID ID is a persistent digital identifier that distinguishes you from other researchers, helping to ensure that your professional activities over time are linked to your identity.
- 5. Institution and Contacts:**
 - a. Institution information is pre-loaded from the applicant's INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE. Double-check that the information is complete and correct. If it is not, click Edit Institutional Profile to update. The institution listed should be the institution where your project will be completed.
 - b. Enter the requested contacts in the table provided. Select the appropriate Signing Official and financial officer from the drop-down list or enter the email address of a new official and click on ADD. Complete the information form, and click on the SAVE or CLOSE WINDOW link, and the added official will be listed as the assigned signing official or financial/fiscal officer. Enter the correct contact and address to which award payments should be sent if this proposal is selected for funding.
 - i. Note: The name you enter as the Signing Official will be asked to provide the e-signature for your submission in Step 15 (see below).
- 6. Key Personnel:** Indicate key personnel other than the applicant/PI who will contribute significantly to the execution of the proposal, including your mentor and/or co-mentor. This may also include collaborators, consultants, postdocs, students, and others.
- 7. Abstracts and Keywords:**
 - a. Describe the proposed research project for both general (lay) and scientific audiences (1500 characters maximum for each abstract).
 - b. Please select keywords that describe the specific focus of your research. At least two keywords are required, and up to five are allowed. Please select keywords carefully, as they will aid in matching your application to appropriate reviewers.
 - c. Please select the Benchmarks for Epilepsy Research that best fits your proposed project. If your proposal is selected for funding, your award will be publicly shown in the iCARE database with such categorizations. You must select one, and can select up to two. More information on the Benchmarks is available [here](#).

- 8. Budget Period Detail:** Use this section to provide a detailed budget by listing costs under the headings provided. The total budget can be up to \$70,000, with up to \$69,000 for direct research costs and up to \$1,000 for travel to the AES Annual Meeting.
- 9. Budget Summary:** This page summarizes the information provided in the Budget Detail and requests a narrative justification for the costs provided in the budget detail.
- 10. Other Support:** Please provide all other past (last 3 years), current, and pending support for the applicant's research. Other Support includes: all financial resources available in direct support of an individual's research and/or research training, including but not limited to research grants, research training fellowship awards, cooperative agreements, contracts, and/or institutional awards. Recognition awards, prizes, or gifts do not need to be included.
- 11. Organization Assurances:** Use this section to indicate use of human subjects, human tissue, or vertebrate animals, and to confirm institutional assurances. All assurances should be provided at the time of the application if available, and documentation must be provided before funding can begin for awarded proposals. See Award Policies above for more information.
- 12. Proposal Attachments:** Attachments must be uploaded as PDFs. Where noted, templates will be available for download on ProposalCentral. Select the appropriate attachment type and upload as instructed onscreen.
- a. **Applicant and mentor biosketches:** Provide using NIH-style format appropriate to applicant career stage. If a co-mentor is proposed, provide a biosketch for the co-mentor.
 - b. **Research Plan:** Please use the template provided and include the following elements: specific aims, background and significance, previous work directly related to this research (if available), research plan and methods. Research must include a focus on integrative health and wellness approaches to manage epilepsy and seizures and improve patient quality of life. Use at least 11 pt font and at least ½ inch margins. (maximum 6 pages, not including references)
 - c. **Applicant Statement and Training Goals:** Please use the template provided and include the following elements. Use at least 11 pt font and at least ½ inch margins. (maximum 1 page)
 - i. Describe your long-term career goals and your reason for choosing epilepsy as an area of specialized clinical and/or research training.
 - ii. Describe the clinical and research training you will receive during the grant term and how this training will contribute to your career goals.
 - iii. In the table provided, indicate the percentage of time you will spend in the activities identified. The total should not exceed 100%. No specific percentage of time is required for this award.
 - d. **Facilities Available:** Provide a profile of the institutional environment and the facilities available. Use at least 11 pt font and at least ½ inch margins. (no page limit).
 - e. **Letter of support from the project mentor (optional):** The mentor letter should describe the research training and mentorship to be provided to the applicant, including the skills and techniques the applicant will learn as well as any classes, seminars, professional development activities, and opportunities to participate in conferences and other interactions with the research community. In addition, the letter should describe the applicant's qualifications for this mini-grant and how this support and the mentor's expertise and mentorship experience will contribute to his/her future success. If one or more co-mentors are proposed, the letter from the primary mentor should clearly describe their roles in the applicant's training.
 - f. **Other proposal attachments (optional):** Examples of additional optional attachments (if applicable) include letters of support from collaborators or consultants, or documentation related to approval

for the use of vertebrate animals or human subjects. (See Policies and Procedures; IRB/IACUC documentation will be required prior to funding if selected for an award).

- 13. Validate:** Click the VALIDATE button to check for any missing REQUIRED information or files. All missing required information will be listed on the screen. Please correct any missing information before submitting your application.
- 14. Signature Pages:** The Applicant/PI and the Signing Official must e-sign the application prior to submission in order for the application to pass validation. All signatories must log in to ProposalCentral to sign the application. Signatures needed are:
- a. Applicant/PI: Please type your full name and hit sign. This will trigger an email to your designated Signing Official asking them to log in and sign.
 - b. Signing Official: The Signing Official you listed in Section 5 (Institution and Contacts) will be listed here. After you complete your e-signature, the Signing Official will receive an email asking them to log in and complete their e-signature. They need a ProposalCentral account in order to complete their signature, and can access the application through the "Proposals" tab. The Signing Official's signature is required for you to submit your application.

If needed, you can go back to Section 5 and edit the signing official.

- 15. Submit:** You will be unable to submit if you have not provided all the required information. Any missing information will be listed on the screen. If your submission is successful, you will receive a confirmation message on the screen and a confirmation email will be sent to the applicant.

CATEGORY LISTS & DEFINITIONS, FOR FIELDS COMPLETED ON THE TITLE PAGE

Research Type	Definitions
Basic	Basic research is the systematic study of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and of observable facts without specific development of processes, products or clinical applications. Projects typically include studies of the mechanisms of normal or disease related processes at the molecular, cellular, systems or organ level.
Translational	Translational research is defined here as research to actively develop and/or refine specific processes, products, clinical applications, and implementation practices that can ultimately be used by patients or healthcare providers.
Clinical	Patient-oriented research, possibly with basic or translational goals, that is conducted with human subjects or on material of human origin (e.g. tissues, specimens and cognitive phenomena) for which an investigator directly interacts with human subjects. Excluded from this definition are in vitro studies that utilize human tissues but cannot be linked to a living individual. Patient-oriented research can encompass physical or behavioral aspects of epilepsy, therapeutic interventions, applications of new technologies, clinical trials, epidemiologic studies, outcomes research, public health, and health services research.

Epilepsy or Seizure Type. This listing has been revised from previous years in response to the [2025 Classification of Seizures Types](#) by ILAE and adjusted specifically for this mechanism.

- Epilepsy – Autosomal Dominant Epilepsy w Auditory Features (ADEAF)
- Epilepsy – Autosomal-Dominant Nocturnal Frontal Lobe Epilepsy (ADNFLE)
- Epilepsy – Childhood Absence Epilepsy (CAE)
- Epilepsy – Childhood Epilepsy with Centrottemporal Spikes (formerly BECTS)
- Epilepsy – Dravet Syndrome
- Epilepsy – Early Myoclonic Encephalopathy (EME)
- Epilepsy – Epileptic Encephalopathies
- Epilepsy – Genetic Epilepsy with Febrile Seizures plus (GEFS+)
- Epilepsy – Hemiconvulsion–Hemiplegia–Epilepsy
- Epilepsy – Infantile Spasms (IS)
- Epilepsy – Juvenile Absence Epilepsy (JAE)
- Epilepsy – Juvenile Myoclonic Epilepsy (JME)
- Epilepsy – KCNQ2 Encephalopathy
- Epilepsy – Landau-Kleffner syndrome (LKS)
- Epilepsy – Lennox-Gastaut Syndrome (LGS)
- Epilepsy – Ohtahara Syndrome
- Epilepsy – Polyhydramnios, Megalencephaly and Symptomatic Epilepsy Structural Syndrome (PMSE)
- Epilepsy – Progressive Myoclonus Epilepsies (PME)
- Epilepsy – Reflex Epilepsies
- Epilepsy – Self-limited neonatal seizures or familial neonatal epilepsy (formerly BFNE)
- Epilepsy – Temporal Lobe Epilepsy (TLE)
- Epilepsy – Unknown or other
- Epilepsy – West Syndrome
- Etiology – Post-traumatic epilepsy (PTE)

Research Classification	Definitions
Etiology	Research included in this category aims to identify the causes or origins of epilepsy and its co-occurring conditions- genetic, infectious, metabolic, environmental, or other factors, and the interactions between these factors
Mechanism of Disease	Research included in this category looks at the biology of how epilepsy/seizures starts and progresses as well as normal biology relevant to these processes. Research may also look at the biology of co-occurring conditions as they relate to epilepsy patients, such as depression, anxiety, autism, Alzheimer's, and traumatic brain injury.
Prevention	Research included in this category looks at identifying interventions which reduce the risk of developing epilepsy or its co-occurring conditions by reducing exposure to risk factors and/or increasing protective factors. Interventions may target lifestyle or behavioral changes and may involve drugs, devices, or vaccines.
Detection/Diagnosis/Prognosis	Research included in this category focuses on identifying and testing biomarkers, technology methods or predictive models that are helpful in detecting and/or diagnosing as well as predicting the outcome or chance of recurrence of seizures and/or co-occurring conditions
Treatment Development or Evaluation	Research included in this category focuses on developing and testing treatments, such as novel therapeutics, devices or other interventions to target seizures and co-occurring conditions.
Outcomes	Research included in this category includes a broad range of areas: surveillance and epidemiology; ethics, education and communication approaches for health care professionals, patients and families, and community members; patient care and health care services research; self-management interventions, effectiveness research and phase 4 trials
Model Systems	Research included in this category looks at the development of new animal models, cell cultures and computer simulations and their application to other studies across the spectrum of epilepsy research
New Technology and Methodology	Research included in this category is primarily focused on developing new technologies and methodologies for use in epilepsy research, clinical care, or self-management.