



**POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM IN NATIONAL GLAUCOMA RESEARCH**

**A PROGRAM OF BRIGHTFOCUS FOUNDATION  
AWARD APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS  
Due by 5:00 PM EST (Washington, D.C.)**

**Award Overview**

This fellowship program is intended to support postdoctoral researchers during their final stages of mentored training. The specific research proposed in the application should be focused on some aspect of research that will have an impact on understanding or treating glaucoma and should also serve as the basis for the applicant's own independent research career.

Award Amount: \$75,000 per year (total value \$150,000)

Duration: 2 years

**All applications must be submitted online through the application portal.**

**Please note that all deadlines are 05:00 PM East Coast Time (Washington, DC) on the day of the deadline.**

**Deadlines are posted at <http://www.brightfocus.org/grants/deadlines-guidelines>**

If you have any questions regarding the program, please contact the BrightFocus scientific affairs department at [researchgrants@brightfocus.org](mailto:researchgrants@brightfocus.org). If you have any difficulties with the application portal, please contact proposalCENTRAL at [pcsupport@altum.com](mailto:pcsupport@altum.com) or during normal business hour (8:30am - 5:00pm Eastern Time, Monday through Friday) by phone (toll-free): 800 875 2562 (Toll-free U.S. and Canada) or +1 703 964 5840 (Direct Dial International).

The BrightFocus Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization that seeks to save mind and sight by funding innovative research worldwide and by promoting better health through education.

## **GUIDELINES IN BRIEF**

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

This fellowship is available to researchers within four years of degree conferral or end of residency or fellowship. Exceptions to the above four-year eligibility period will be considered under unusual circumstances. Candidates must submit a written exception request to BrightFocus and obtain approval before applying. The application for this fellowship must be written by the intended fellow in conjunction with the mentor/laboratory head where the fellowship will be conducted. The application should be submitted through the business office of the institution where the fellowship will take place. Should the fellowship support be funded, the award is for support of the fellow and not for the mentor directing the research.

This award is intended to support the fellow's salary, health insurance and travel to attend a scientific meeting each year to present BrightFocus-funded research.

The application must be accompanied by a letter from the head of the laboratory where the fellow will train, stating that laboratory space and research funds are available to support the project if the award is funded by BrightFocus.

### **NOTES ON ELIGIBILITY**

#### **Specific eligibility criteria include:**

- Candidates must hold an MD, PhD, DVM, DO, OD or equivalent degree
- Applicant may apply for this fellowship before completing their terminal degree, if they have a firm commitment from the laboratory head in which training will take place, and the applicant is the main author of the application
- Fellowship may be performed in a non-profit, governmental, academic research institution, or at a for-profit including start-up and biotech institution
- Previous recipients of this award are not eligible

### **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

For detailed information about the Terms and Conditions and Patent and Intellectual Property Policy and Contract that will apply if an application is successful, visit the BrightFocus website (<http://www.brightfocus.org/grants/terms-conditions-grant-awards> for the Terms and Conditions, and <http://www.brightfocus.org/grants/terms-conditions/patent-intellectual-property-policy> for the Patent and Intellectual Property Policy. A copy of our Patent and Intellectual Property Contract is made available through the online application portal. We encourage each of our applicants to share this contract as early as possible in the application process with the technology transfer office of the applicant's university or research institute.

### **REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS**

BrightFocus uses a peer-review system to evaluate all applications. Submissions are evaluated and given a priority score by a Scientific Review Committee comprised of established scientists in fields related to the proposed

research. The recommendations of the Scientific Review Committee are subject to final approval by the Board of Directors of BrightFocus. To ensure that BrightFocus is funding meritorious research proposals that have a high potential for success, the Board of Directors bases its funding decisions on the results of a formal, rigorous peer-review process.

Prior committee members are published on the BrightFocus website at: [View a list of experts who have served on the committee.](#)

The final status of proposals will be communicated to applicants by mid-April. Declinations are made by email. BrightFocus staff are not authorized to provide information on priority scores, ranking, or likelihood of funding of applications prior to official notification of applicants.

### **HUMAN/ANIMAL RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

BrightFocus requires that the Principal Investigator, Collaborators, Consultants, Mentors, Consortium partners, or Sub-Contractors abide by the BrightFocus policy regarding human subject and vertebrate animal research.

Research projects involving human subjects and/or vertebrate animals must meet or exceed standards required for United States of America federal government funding including all rules and regulations developed by the National Institutes of Health. If the proposed research will involve the use of human or vertebrate animal subjects, a signed release from the appropriate committee of the Grantee Institution must be provided to BrightFocus, to demonstrate approval of the proposed research protocol(s) before Grant Award funds are released. For research conducted in the U.S., this release is satisfied by IACUC or IRB approvals.

If the project is to be funded through an award to a foreign institution or through an individual fellowship award that will support activities at a foreign institution, BrightFocus requires a statement of compliance from the Grantee Institution that the activities will be conducted in accordance with all applicable local laws and regulations in the foreign country. Such foreign protocols must meet or exceed standards required for United States of America federal government funding for research projects.

### **PUBLIC EDUCATION**

BrightFocus is a publicly-supported charitable organization funded by donor contributions and has an active public education program that informs donors and other interested individuals about the research we sponsor. Information provided to the public by BrightFocus may include the technical and non-technical titles of the project, the name and institutional affiliation of the Principal Investigator and Mentor(s), the amount of the award, and the non-technical project descriptions provided by the applicant. **This information is also included in BrightFocus' required reporting to the Internal Revenue Service on our Form 990, which will be made available to the public.** Therefore, **any section of the application designated by BrightFocus as non-confidential should not be used to communicate confidential information.** The submission of the application shall be deemed consent of the applicant and affiliated Grantee Institution to the publication of this information, should a grant be awarded. Declined proposals will remain confidential in their entirety.

## **NOTES ON CERTAIN REAGENTS AND TECHNIQUES**

### **PRIMARY CULTURES OF HUMAN TRABECULAR MESHWORK CELLS:**

Primary cultures of human trabecular meshwork cells are now available commercially. Unfortunately, commercial sources do not follow standards already established in the glaucoma field for characterizing their cells. Thus, if a NGR applicant proposes to use commercially purchased trabecular meshwork cells in their proposed experiments, the applicant must provide data in their application demonstrating proper TM cell morphology (phase-contrast micrograph of confluent cells) and dexamethasone (100 nM for 5 days) induction of myocilin protein (by western blot analysis plus immunofluorescent microscopy, to determine magnitude and proportion of cells with myocilin induction, respectively).

For more information on the need to phenotype commercially purchased TM cells, please refer to the following paper: Stamer WD, Clark AF. (2016) *Exp. Eye Res.* “The many faces of the trabecular meshwork cell.” (PMID: [27443500](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27443500/)).

In addition, applicants may visit the following web page (<http://iclac.org/databases/cross-contaminations>) maintained by the International Cell Line Authentication Committee, formed in 2012. They provide a database list of cell lines that are currently known to be cross-contaminated or misidentified.

### **RETINAL GANGLION CELLS (RGC5):**

The RGC-5 cell line was originally reported as derived from postnatal day 1 rat retina cells, expressed markers specific to retinal cells, and was sensitive to trophic factor withdrawal and glutamate toxicity following treatment with differentiation factors [Krishnamoorthy et al. (2001) *Brain Res Mol Brain Res.*; 86(1-2):1-12]. Several research groups report that even cells obtained from the originating laboratories are not of rat origin and do not express genes and proteins specific to retinal ganglion cells, but instead have been identified as a transformed mouse photoreceptor line (661W) [Van Bergen et al. (2009) *IOVS*; 50:4267-4272, Krishnamoorthy et al. (2013) *Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci.*; 54:5712-5719]. Thus, NGR applications proposing to use this cell line to model RGCs will likely not receive a score from the NGR SRC in the fundable range. Furthermore, if applicants have used RGC5 cells to generate preliminary data, they should not ascribe any finding to RGC specific biology.

### **HYDROSTATIC PRESSURE:**

Responses of optic nerve head cells (e.g.: retinal ganglion cells, astrocytes, lamina cribrosa cells) to mechanical stress is important in glaucoma. Many studies have reported the biological effects of hydrostatic pressure on ONH cells cultured on a rigid substrate. This does not replicate the situation in vivo, where pressure acts to deform the connective tissues that ONH cells interact with. It appears that reported effects in many previous hydrostatic cell culture studies were a consequence of changes in oxygen tension rather than pressure itself [*Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci.* 2011 Aug 11;52(9):6329-39]. Thus, unless extraordinary steps are taken to control for secondary effects of pressurization (e.g. oxygen and transport limitations), applications proposing to use the hydrostatic pressure model on rigid substrates will likely not receive a score from the NGR SRC in the fundable range.

### **EPISCLERAL VEIN CAUTERY RAT MODEL:**

This method of producing elevated eye pressure relies on either cautery or ligation of episcleral veins. The only way that this successfully produces elevated pressure is if vortex veins, located beneath rectus muscles, rather than true episcleral veins, are cauterized or ligated, as this impedes venous outflow from the retina and entire uveal tract of the globe. This results in an immediate elevation in pressure (due to arterial filling of these intraocular tissues) that is now generally recognized to result from congestion of the eye. As this pressure elevation is fundamentally different from

that produced by aqueous outflow obstruction, the episcleral vein cauterization model is best used for proposals that study glaucoma resulting from ocular congestion, such as elevated episcleral venous pressure.

**MOUSE MODELS OF OCULAR HYPERTENSION (OHT):**

Due to their similarities in anatomy, physiology, and pharmacology to humans, mice are a valuable model system to study the generation and mechanisms modulating conventional outflow resistance and thus intraocular pressure. In addition, mouse models are critical for understanding the complex nature of conventional outflow homeostasis and dysfunction that results in ocular hypertension. Recent consensus recommendation [Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci. 2022 Feb 1;63(2):12; PMID: [35129590](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35129590/)] describes a set of minimum acceptable standards for developing, characterizing, and utilizing mouse models of open-angle ocular hypertension. Thus, an applicant to the NGR program proposing to use mouse models of OHT is expected to adhere to the set of standard practices for OHT or outflow facility phenotypes listed in the above recommendation for increased scientific rigor and better enabling researchers to replicate and build upon previous findings.

**VIEW SLIDESHARE VIDEOS FROM BRIGHTFOCUS GLAUCOMA FAST TRACKS:**

Since 2017 BrightFocus has organized and sponsored three BrightFocus Glaucoma Fast Track workshops, an immersive learning opportunity specifically created for scientists starting or contemplating a career in glaucoma research. Please visit our website for the program and links to view recordings of the presentations, which include insights into the current state of glaucoma research, specifically in reference to animal models and techniques <https://science.brightfocus.org/event/glaucoma-fast-track-2022>.

## BRIGHTFOCUS FOUNDATION

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF THE APPLICATION TEMPLATE AND ONLINE SUBMISSION

All applications must be completed through our online portal. To access the application portal, click the blue-encircled Apply Online/arrow on the BrightFocus website at: <http://brightfocus.org/research/apply/main.html>, where you will be taken to a registration and login page.

#### General Submission Guidelines

- Submit your application using the instructions provided in the application portal
- Use font at a size no less than 11 points
- Use margins no less than 3/4" on all sides
- The color of the narrative text should be black
- Applications must be legible and written in English
- Do not use jargons or unusual abbreviations
- Maximum character and/or word/page counts for individual sections will be enforced
- Text in the descriptive legends or captions of figures, tables, or photographs must be included within maximum limit

**You MUST complete ALL of the sections in your application.** Applications that are incomplete or fail to adhere to formatting instructions **will be DECLINED without review.**

#### Section 1

##### TITLE PAGE

##### Project Title

This section of the application asks for Project Title (maximum 150 characters)

##### Non-technical Title

Please provide a non-technical title for your project (maximum 75 characters)

##### Keywords

Please indicate 6-10 comma separated keywords or phrases related to your proposal.

##### Project Budget

Enter the total costs for the entire project period. Payments will be released on a quarterly basis, evenly distributed throughout the award duration. If you request funds for one year, you may only request a maximum of half of the award value.

##### Project Period

Enter the start and end dates for the entire proposed project period. **All awards should be listed to begin on July 1 of the year following the application deadline.**

## **Response to Prior Critiques/Changes from Prior Submission**

### **Changes from Prior Submission** (maximum 750 characters)

If you have submitted a proposal to BrightFocus in the past 5 years, please explain how this proposal is different from prior submissions.

### **Response to Prior Critiques**

If you have received a detailed critique on prior submission, please upload a one-page detailed resubmission response to critique under Research plan and supporting Attachments.

## **Section 2**

### **DOWNLOAD TEMPLATES AND INSTRUCTIONS**

This section contains Research Plan Document, Career Development Plan document, and Biographical Sketch that are required to complete, or which might be necessary for the full submission of your application. You **MUST** use the “Research Plan” format provided in this section for submission.

## **Section 3**

### **ENABLE OTHER USERS TO ACCESS THIS PROPOSAL**

This section is used specifically for providing access rights to other people whom you may wish to have access to your application. You may choose their access as “View” or “Edit.” If you give someone “Edit” ability they can upload documents or add attachments in your absence.

If you mark an individual as “Auto Notify” this means each time an email is sent to you through proposalCENTRAL, that person will automatically receive a copy of the email.

## **Section 4**

### **APPLICANT/PI**

This section of the application asks for the Principal Investigator’s information. All fields that are marked with asterisk (\*) are required fields. If you already have a professional profile within proposalCENTRAL, these fields will be automatically populated and filled in. Please review them carefully to confirm the information is correct.

## **Section 5**

### **INSTITUTION AND CONTACTS**

This section contains the information of the “Lead Institution.” This page defaults to the institution of the Principal Investigator. If the institution is incorrect, you may click on the “Change Institution” button and search for the correct institution.

### **Institutional/ Signing Official**

Select from the list of officials supplied with the institution’s profile and click the “Add” button. If the contact is not in the list, enter the contact’s email address and click the “Add” button. The selected individual is authorized to act for the applicant organization and to assume the obligations imposed by the conditions for this award. The signature of this person will be required.

### **Financial Official**

Select from the list of officials supplied with the institution's profile and click the "Add" button. If the contact is not in the list, enter the contact's email address and click the "Add" button. The selected person will be to whom correspondence related to the financial matters will be addressed. Please note that international organizations will receive payments by wire transfer, while U.S. domestic payments are made via electronic Automated Clearinghouse (ACH) payments. BrightFocus cannot wire transfer payments domestically.

### **Mentor/Sponsor**

Enter the contact's email address and click the "Add" button of the person supervising the training of the Principal Investigator of the proposal.

### **Section 6**

#### **KEY PERSONNEL**

ALL personnel working, collaborating, over-seeing or coordinating on the project MUST be listed in this section. This section should also include all collaborators and consultants. You will need to insert their email address in the space provided and click "Add." Complete all required fields and click "Save" when completed. This person will now appear in the "Key Personnel" window.

**IMPORTANT:** Each Collaborator or Consultant identified should provide a signed Letter of Support summarizing their role in the proposed research and their compliance with all appropriate animal welfare and human subject requirements. This letter should certify that they have agreed to their role as proposed in the version of the application received by BrightFocus.

### **Section 7**

#### **SPONSOR/MENTOR LETTER**

A letter of support from the Sponsor/Mentor in whose lab the fellowship will be conducted is required in each application. Once you have input the email address of the Sponsor/Mentor, an email is generated from proposalCENTRAL to the Sponsor/Mentor with specific instructions on how to provide this letter of support. These are blind letters and not sent to the applicant for uploading. It is up to the applicant to make sure the letters are uploaded by the Sponsor/Mentor prior to the Validation stage. The letter from the Sponsor/Mentor must include the items below and should be no longer than two pages in length. The Sponsor/Mentor letter must be signed and submitted through proposalCENTRAL to be included as a part of the application.

#### **A. Research Support Available**

In a table, the Sponsor/Mentor should list all current and pending research and training support specifically available in the laboratory during the period of the proposed postdoctoral training. Include funding source, title of the research or training program, and name of the principal investigator, dates and total direct costs of the award. If the mentor's research support will end prior to the end of the proposed training period, the mentor should provide evidence that sufficient funds will be available to support the applicant's research. The role of the mentor in the integrated research and development plans



should be described. Also, a statement as to how often the Sponsor/Mentor will be available for discussions with the applicant if a fellowship award is forthcoming.

**B. Applicant’s Qualifications and Potential for an Independent Research Career**

Describe how the applicant is suited for this research training opportunity based on his/her academic record and research experience, including how the individual research training plan and your own expertise as the mentor will help this researcher establish an independent research career. Also indicate the names, current positions, and locations of trainees that the Sponsor/Mentor has trained as post-doctoral fellows in the past.

**C. Other Educational Opportunities available in the Sponsor/Mentor’s Department/Institution that will enrich the applicant’s post-doctoral experience.**

Describe the availability of other collegial activities in the department/institution that will be available for the applicant to participate in should this fellowship be awarded. Provide details of additional seminar programs, and didactic instruction programs that are available for the applicant in the department/institution where the research will be conducted.

**Section 8**

**ABSTRACTS AND NON-TECHNICAL INFORMATION**

**Non-technical Summary**

Please provide a general audience summary below. Please limit your response to 400 characters including spaces. Text only. No special characters or formatting.

**NOTE:** BrightFocus is a publicly-supported charitable organization funded by donor contributions and has an active public education program that informs donors and other interested individuals about the research we sponsor. This Non-technical Summary is considered **NON-CONFIDENTIAL** and will be used for public educational purposes if your proposal is selected for funding.

**Technical Abstract**

State the objectives, hypotheses, and specific aims of the proposed research, along with a summary of the proposed research methods. This abstract is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed research when separated from the proposal. Please limit your response to 2400 characters including spaces. Text only. No special characters or formatting.

**REMINDER: This abstract is considered CONFIDENTIAL and will only be released for purposes of administration and peer-review.**

**Specific Aims and Benchmark Accomplishments**

State the objectives and the hypotheses to be tested and describe concisely and realistically what the specific research described in this application is intended to accomplish. Please include the milestone or benchmark accomplishments that you will use to assess progress on this project. Limit your response to 4200 characters including spaces. Text only. No special characters or formatting. Specific Aims do not need to be reiterated in the research plan document.

**NOTE:** You may attach a schematic of Specific Aims and Benchmark Accomplishments in Section 14 (Research plan and supporting Attachments).

### **Relevance of Proposed Research to Glaucoma**

State briefly and concisely how the proposed research is relevant to determining the causes of or possible treatment or cure for Glaucoma. Limit your response to 1200 characters including spaces. Text only. No special characters or formatting.

### **Research Category**

Please select the Research Category appropriate to the proposed project. BrightFocus does not weight its funding preferentially towards or against any of the listed categories. Your choices will not influence the likelihood of funding. Responses to the fields are used to aid in the selection of appropriate reviewers for the proposal.

### **Rigor and Reproducibility**

BrightFocus has partnered with the Alzheimer's Disease Preclinical Efficacy Database ([AlzPED](#)), in their mission to promote efficient, transparent, reproducible and accurate research aimed at preclinical therapy development for Alzheimer's Disease. We are implementing the same standard across all our disease programs. Use the drop down menu to indicate the elements of rigor and reproducibility that are addressed in your proposal. While some of these elements may not pertain to more basic research studies, they help provide a framework for how to approach comprehensive preclinical and clinical research design.

## **Section 9**

### **FACILITIES AND ENVIRONMENT**

Briefly document the suitability of the available research facilities and academic environment for the execution of the proposed research. Do not list facilities that are irrelevant to the proposed research. Exceptional resources should be noted, but more common resources should be omitted or summarized generically. Limit your response to 5000 characters including spaces.

## **Section 10**

### **BUDGET PERIOD DETAILS**

Prepare separate budgets for each year for which funding is requested. The total funds in the budget must not exceed the amount requested. **The budget may not contain administrative overhead or indirect costs (or other prohibited items)** and should be prepared in U.S. dollars. BrightFocus budgets are divided into the following categories:

#### **Personnel Costs**

The Principal Investigator, key investigators, and any support personnel (usually Technicians or Research Assistants) actively involved in research may request salary and benefits. Such requests should be justified and include indications of the percentage of time the personnel will devote to the proposed project (percent effort). If your salary is already paid for by the grantee institution, then do not request any dollar amount in the salary portion of the budget. You must, however, list percent effort that you will devote to the proposed project.

#### **Non-Personnel Costs**

**Supplies:** The amount of money requested for supplies should be divided into major research supply categories (e.g., cell biology reagents, test fees, etc.). If animals are to be involved, the justification should state how many are to be used, their unit purchase price, and their unit care cost.

**Equipment:** Any major item of equipment valued over US\$1,000 should be specifically named in the budget. BrightFocus will not fund the purchase of large capital equipment. Requested equipment must be directly related to, and enabling of, the proposed research.

**Contractual Services:** The Budget should specify any major support services required under the proposed research, such as preparation or laboratory testing of biological materials. The justification should indicate the period of contractual service.

**Travel:** Travel must be relevant to the accomplishment of the project or dissemination of results of the supported research. The purpose of the travel and destination should be clearly indicated, justified, and may not include premium ticketing packages (i.e., first class or other luxury travel).

**Other:** Itemize any other expenses by category. This category is often used by investigators seeking funding to defray costs of publication or registration at conferences where the results of the proposed research are to be presented. Please note that tuition reimbursement for undergraduate and graduate students is an allowable budget item, but tuition remission is not an allowable budget item.

**Note Regarding Budget Cuts:** When awards are offered, most budgets are approved as requested. However, in some cases BrightFocus may elect to make awards for only a portion of the requested budget. These decisions are made on the recommendations of peer reviewers and may manifest as an elimination of specific budget items, proposal aims, or percentage cuts off of the total award value.

**Note Regarding Open Access Publications:** BrightFocus does not require publication in specific journals or attendance at specific conferences. However, as a publicly-supported charity, BrightFocus recognizes the contribution of open-access model journals to the scientific community. BrightFocus grant applicants may request reasonable funds to allow publication in such journals.

## Section 11

### **BUDGET SUMMARY AND JUSTIFICATION**

#### **Budget Summary**

The Budget Summary summarizes the budget details entered for each budget period in the Budget Period Detail section. Budget period dates, budget amounts and budget justification information should be provided in the Budget Period Detail section.

#### **Budget Justification**

Provide justification for all salary requests, equipment purchases over \$1,000, animals, and supply categories. Provide a brief explanation of how the budget adequately supports the project described. Limit your response to 5000 characters including spaces.

**IMPORTANT** Please provide details on how resources and salary for the fellowship will be shared with the mentor's funding. Limit your response to 1000 characters

## **Section 12**

### **OTHER SUPPORT/ CERTIFICATION OF FUNDING OVERLAP**

BrightFocus defines funding overlap as a circumstance under which the proposed budget or scientific aims of a proposal is duplicative of the budget or scientific aims of a project funded by another source and led by the individuals responsible for the BrightFocus proposal. This overlap may be scientific, in which the duplication occurs in the specific aims of the research project, or financial, in which another funding source commits money for items documented in the BrightFocus proposed budget.

For the Principal Investigator add all the currently active support, all applications and proposals pending review or funding, and applications and proposals planned or being prepared for submission. Include all federal, non-federal, and institutional research, training, and other grant, contract, or fellowship support at the applicant organization and elsewhere. If part of a larger project, identify the Principal Investigator/Program Director and provide data for both the parent project and subproject. For each support, give the source of the support, title, project status, award number, dates of entire project period, annual direct costs, a brief description of the major goals of the project. Using the dropdown explicitly identify any grants that might scientifically or financially overlap with the BrightFocus proposal. If the requested support overlaps, describe and justify the nature and extent of any scientific and/or budgetary overlaps. Further describe any modifications that will be made should the present application be funded. Please save that data in order to complete the support entry for submission. .

To add your entries, please click the "+" link and add all entries previously saved in your Professional Profile will show. Please select the applicable support and save. All Mentor(s) and Collaborators should supply currently active and pending support only if that support might be considered to be overlapping the research being proposed to BrightFocus and if they have granted you at least View access to their profile, you can select Other Support from their profile as well.

To add new Other Support entries, click the "Create New Other Support" button. By default, this entry will be added to your profile, unless the option "Add to Profile" is not selected. If you have Edit or Admin access to your Key Personnel's profile, you can add new Other Support entries on their behalf to this application and update their profile as well.

## **Section 13**

### **ORGANIZATION ASSURANCES**

Please indicate if the proposed research will involve the use of human or vertebrate animal subjects. A signed release from the appropriate committee of the Grantee Institution must be provided to BrightFocus, to demonstrate approval of the proposed research protocol(s) before Grant Award funds are released.

#### **Human Subjects**

If activities involving human subjects are not planned at any time during the proposed project period, select "No" and select "Not Applicable" for status of approval.

If activities involving human subjects, whether or not exempt from Public Health Service (PHS) regulations, are planned at any time during the proposed project period, check the box beside "Yes." Indicate the status of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, insert the date of approval by the IRB of the proposed involvement of human subjects. If IRB review is delayed beyond the submission of the application, enter "pending." If the planned activities involving human subjects are exempt, insert the exemption number(s) corresponding to one or more of the eight exemption categories recognized by the PHS. The Assurance of Compliance number will appear as entered in the institution profile (for the institution you selected in the institution section of the proposal). Should the application be approved for funding, verification of the exemption or IRB approval will be required before funding begins.

All supported research, including that of collaborators, must comply with U.S. Federal, and any applicable local, regulations regarding the use of human subjects in research.

### **Vertebrate Animals**

If activities involving vertebrate animals are not planned at any time during the proposed project period, check the box beside "No" and select "Not Applicable" for status of approval.

If activities involving vertebrate animals are planned at any time during the proposed project period, check the box beside "Yes." In the space indicated, insert the date of approval by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) of the proposed use of vertebrate animals and the Animal Welfare Assurance Number. If IACUC review is delayed beyond the submission of the application, enter "pending." Should the application be approved for funding, verification of IACUC approval will be required before funding begins.

All supported research, including that of collaborators, must comply with U.S. Federal, and any applicable local, regulations regarding the use of vertebrate animals in research.

## **Section 14**

### **RESEARCH PLAN AND SUPPORTING ATTACHMENTS**

**Research Plan (required):** Limit (A-C) (6 pages)

**A. Background and Significance.** Briefly summarize the background to the present proposal, critically evaluate existing knowledge, and specifically identify the gaps that the project is intended to fill. Concisely describe the importance of the proposed research by relating the specific aims to the objectives.

**B. Preliminary Studies.** Use this section to provide an account of the principal investigator's preliminary studies pertinent to the application and/or any other information that will help to establish the experience and competence of the investigator to pursue the proposed project.

**C. Experimental Design and Methods.** Outline the experimental design and the procedures that will be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include the means by which the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted, power calculations, and account for gender-based differences in the disease, if applicable. Describe any new methodology and its advantage over existing methodologies. Discuss the potential difficulties and limitations of the proposed procedures and alternative approaches to achieve the aims. Provide a tentative sequence or timetable for the investigation and detail the duties of each collaborator. Point out any

procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to personnel and precautions to be exercised. Additionally, please visit the “Notes On Certain Reagents And Techniques” section of this proposal instruction document before finalizing your research plan.

**IMPORTANT** After completing please convert your Research Plan to a text-accessible pdf file format, save it as “lastname\_NGR\_Fellowship\_FY24.pdf” where ‘lastname’ is the surname of the Principal Investigator, and upload onto the online portal. **Text in the descriptive legends or captions of figures, tables, or photographs must be included within limit. Be sure to remove the cover page so you do not exceed the page count limit of 6 pages.**

### **Literature Cited (required)**

**Please list all the literature cited in the proposal and upload it as a single pdf document separate from the Research Plan.** Each literature citation must include the names of all significant authors, the name of the book or journal, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. Article titles should be provided. The use of "et al." in place of listing all authors of a publication is acceptable. If a publication is public, please include its [NIH PubMed Central](#) identification number (PMID) in the text.

### **Career Development Plan (required)**

To accomplish a successful postdoctoral fellowship, the mentor and fellow should develop a formal training plan to relate the proposed research towards the applicant's career. The training plan should be tailored to match the applicant's experience level and facilitate the applicant's transition to the next stage of their career. This plan is key to the evaluation criteria of the reviewers when the application is reviewed. Please carefully consider and succinctly complete this section. In a single page, describe:

- A. Past research experiences that have been impactful and why.
- B. Training potential of this fellowship. Include items such as classes, seminars, opportunities for interaction with your mentor, other groups and scientists, and any professional skills development opportunities. Also, include any planned publications and presentations.
- C. Career goals in glaucoma research and how the proposed training and research plans align with these goals.

### **Letters of Support (required)**

#### **Sponsor/Mentor Letter(s)**

**A signed Letter of Support from each faculty Mentor(s) is required.** These letters are blind letters and not sent to you for uploading. It is up to the applicant to make sure the letters are uploaded prior to the Validation stage. **The Sponsor/Mentor letter must be signed and accompany the application in order to be considered for this program.**

#### **Letters of Collaboration/Consultant (required)**

Each Collaborator or Consultant should provide a signed, single page Letter of Support summarizing their role in the proposed research. This letter should certify that they have agreed to their role, as proposed in the version of the application received by BrightFocus. These letters should also certify their compliance with any appropriate animal welfare or human subject regulations. **All of the Letters should be submitted as a single pdf document separate from the Research Plan.**

### **Biographical Sketches (required)**

Prepare a National Institutes of Health (NIH) Biographical Sketch on the Principal Investigator, Mentor(s), Collaborators, Consultants, and the other key research staff/personnel involved in the study. List relevant training, professional experience, and publications. You may replace this section with a NIH Biosketch already in your possession. Please limit individual biosketches to 5 pages. **All of the biosketches should be submitted as a single pdf document separate from the Research Plan.**

### **Resubmission Response to Critique (one-page limit):**

If you have received a detailed critique in the prior submission, you can upload a one-page response. Please use the naming convention (LASTNAME\_NGR\_Fellowship\_FY24\_response\_to\_critique.PDF) for the file, where “LASTNAME” is replaced with the surname of the PI on the proposal.

### **Appendix**

The Appendix file should be separate from the main proposal file and should be submitted as a SINGLE PDF file containing each of the included publications or manuscripts. Please use the naming convention (LASTNAME\_NGR\_Fellowship\_FY24\_appendix.PDF) for your appendix file, where “LASTNAME” is replaced with the surname of the PI on the proposal.

Up to five relevant papers or manuscripts *published or accepted for publication* in refereed journals may be included, if necessary. The papers or manuscripts should be the PI’s own work or that of a Mentor or Collaborator named on this proposal. Although up to 5 reprints are allowable, these should all be contained in a single PDF file for submission.

Reviewers are not required to consider appendix information. If the information that you wish to submit is essential to an evaluation of the application, incorporate it within the Research Proposal. **The Appendix is *not* to be used for circumventing the page limitations in the Research Proposal.**

### **Multimedia Files**

Unpublished video or sound files representing data that can’t be presented in static images and that is pertinent to the proposal may be submitted as a separate Multimedia file.

### **Section 15**

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST SELF-REPORT**

Depending on the breadth of expertise required to review the applications received in the present review cycle, a subset of the listed researchers may serve on the review committee that evaluates your proposal. For the present review cycle, please note that additional reviewers may be brought onto the review committee if additional expertise is required. Referring to the list provided, please select any individuals with whom the PI or the mentor(s) of this proposal has any conflict (co-published within preceding 3 years, co-employed or a recent trainee).

If you declared conflicts on the preceding page, list each reviewer by last name and indicate the type of conflict (co-published within preceding 3 years, co-employed or a recent trainee).

### **Section 16**

## **PI DATA SHEET**

The information in this section is not mandatory and is only for the use of BrightFocus Foundation for applicant statistics. This information will not be used as part of the review process.

### **Section 17**

#### **SIGNATURES AND PRINT**

After you complete all the proposal sections, click one of the Print buttons to open and print the cover/signature pages and application files. Before printing, please use the 'Validate' section (in the navigation menu to the left) to verify that you have entered all the required information. You are required to sign the application electronically in the fields provided. Principal Investigator, Institutional Signing Official and Sponsor/Mentor must be logged in using their own credentials to have access to the signature field.

#### **Principal Investigator Signature**

With this signature, the Principal Investigator agrees to accept the responsibility for the scientific conduct of the project and to provide the required scientific and financial progress reports if a grant is awarded as a result of this application.

#### **Institutional Official Signature**

With this signature, the institutional official accepts on behalf of the institution the obligations incurred by acceptance of a grant if one is awarded as a result of this application.

#### **Sponsor/Mentor Signature**

The person supervising the training of the Principal Investigator of the proposal should sign here.

### **Section 18**

#### **VALIDATE**

AFTER you have validated the document, you MUST click “SUBMIT” for the application to be submitted. Validating the document DOES NOT submit the application to BrightFocus Foundation. Proceed to Section 18 for Submitting the application.



## **INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS: REVIEW POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

BrightFocus awards grants for research on the causes of, and preventions or treatments for the diseases specified by each of its disease programs (i.e., Alzheimer's disease, glaucoma, and macular degeneration). The Foundation is interested in supporting high risk studies that illuminate areas for which there currently is little understanding, helping to bring to light crucial knowledge about these three devastating diseases.

Grants are awarded on the basis of the scientific merit of the proposed research and the relevance of the research to improving our understanding of these diseases.

To ensure that BrightFocus is funding meritorious research proposals that have high potentials for success, the Board of Directors bases its final funding decisions on the results of a formal, rigorous, scientific peer-review process, taking program goals and the availability of funds into consideration.

A full description of the review process and outcomes is available at <http://www.brightfocus.org/grants/frequently-asked-questions#arp>

### **GENERAL BRIGHTFOCUS REVIEW COMMITTEE PROCEDURES**

BrightFocus recruits and maintains a Scientific Review Committee (SRC) for each of the three research programs. These committees are comprised of established investigators with the appropriate expertise to provide constructive and equitable evaluations of grant applications. These individuals serve as volunteers, but are provided with a small honorarium for the time and effort they put into the review process. Almost all serve on NIH study sections or review committees for other foundations. A roster of individuals having served on each committee in the preceding five years is available at the website noted above.

The BrightFocus Scientific Affairs Department, in consultation with the Chair/Co-Chair(s) of the Scientific Review Committee, assigns each full-length proposal to at least a primary and secondary reviewer based on the expertise of the reviewers and the research area(s) of the proposal, and a tertiary reader is also assigned for the proposals. All proposals are checked against the pool of available reviewers for real or potential conflicts of interest prior to assignment of the proposal to individual reviewers.

Reviewers are required to decline assigned applications for which they do not have the appropriate expertise and must decline to review applications in which they have a real or potential conflict of interest. These applications are reassigned to other reviewers. Please note that we provide fields in the application portal for applicants to declare conflict of interest of the PI and Co-PI(s) with the list of current and/or past-serving SRC members.

Reviewers may not participate on a committee in any review cycle in which they themselves have submitted a proposal for consideration.

Reviewers are required to keep the information presented in grant applications and the deliberations of the Scientific Review Committee strictly confidential. It is the responsibility of the BrightFocus Scientific Affairs Department to communicate with applicants regarding the results of the review process and to serve as the intermediary between the Reviewers and the applicant.

## **REVIEW CRITERIA AND PRIORITY SCORE RANKING**

The BrightFocus Scientific Review Committee (SRC) uses the National Institutes of Health (NIH)'s 9-point scale to assess the overall impact score of each grant application, and to provide a priority score ranking recommending applications for funding to the BrightFocus Board of Directors. Ratings are in whole numbers only (no decimal ratings), where 5 is considered an average score.

<b><u>Overall ImpactScore</u></b>	<b><u>Descriptor</u></b>	<b><u>Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses</u></b>	
High	1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
	2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
	3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
Medium	4	Very Good	Strong, but with numerous minor weaknesses
	5	Good	Strong, but with at least one moderate weakness
	6	Satisfactory	Some strengths, but also some moderate weaknesses
Low	7	Fair	Some strengths, but with at least one major weakness
	8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
	9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses

Reviewers are instructed to take the following criteria into consideration when reviewing grants:

### **1. Significance/Relevance to Glaucoma disease**

Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress, and contribute significantly to current knowledge regarding the etiology, diagnosis, or treatment of Glaucoma? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved? How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?

### **2. Investigator(s) and Sponsor/Mentor(s)**

Are the PI, mentors, collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project? Are the Sponsor(s)' research qualifications (including recent publications) and track record of mentoring individuals at a similar stage appropriate for the needs of the candidate? If a team of sponsors is proposed, is the team structure well justified for the mentored training plan, and are the roles of the individual members appropriate and clearly defined? Are the qualifications of any collaborators(s) and/or consultant(s), including their complementary expertise and previous experience in fostering the training of fellows, appropriate for the proposed project? Does the Sponsors' research and training record, as well as mentoring statement, indicated that the candidate will receive outstanding training in the proposed research area and have the opportunity to publish high-quality papers and present research data at scientific meetings as the project progresses?

### **3. Innovation**

Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by using novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions? Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel to one field of research or novel in a broad sense? Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed?

### **4. Approach**

Does the investigator have a clear hypothesis and specific aims? Are the methods clearly explained and appropriate? Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility and will particularly risky aspects be managed? If the project involves clinical research, are the plans for 1) protection of human subjects from research risks, and 2) inclusion of minorities and members of both sexes/genders, as well as the inclusion of children, justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed? Has the investigator satisfactorily addressed issues or concerns regarding appropriate care and treatment of laboratory animals? Can the research proposed be accomplished in the time period of the grant.

### **5. Facilities and Environment**

Will the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Are the institutional support, equipment and other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the project proposed? Will the project benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, subject populations, or collaborative arrangements?

### **6. Budget and Period of Support**

Are the budget and the requested period of support fully justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed research?

### **7. Fellowship Training Potential**

Are the proposed research project and training plan outlined in the sponsor/mentor letter and the applicant's career development plan likely to provide the candidate with the requisite individualized and mentored experiences in order to obtain appropriate skills for a research career? Does the training plan take advantage of the candidate's strengths and address gaps in needed skills? Does the training plan provide adequate opportunities to present and publish research findings and meet with scientists in the community at scientific meetings as the work progresses? Does the proposed training have the potential to serve as a sound foundation that will clearly enhance the candidate's ability to develop into a productive researcher?

## **REVIEW RESULTS**

Applicants will be notified of the Board of Director's decision concerning their application by mid-April. BrightFocus staff are not authorized to provide information on priority scores, ranking, or likelihood of funding of applications prior to written notification of applicants. Please do not write or telephone BrightFocus to request such information.

## **REGARDING APPEALS**

If an applicant has evidence that a reviewer has materially misunderstood an otherwise properly and logically presented proposal, that applicant may submit a one page appeal to BrightFocus by email. Appeals of peer evaluations must be delivered to the BrightFocus Vice President of Scientific Affairs ([dbovenkamp@brightfocus.org](mailto:dbovenkamp@brightfocus.org)) within two weeks of receiving reviewer critiques. Additional information may be requested by BrightFocus on a case by case basis.

BrightFocus National Glaucoma Research  
Postdoctoral Fellowship Program Application Instructions

The appeals process is designed to address only extraordinary situations in which the review process is believed to have been compromised in such a way as to prevent unbiased or competent review of a proposal. This process IS NOT intended for routine rebuttal of specific reviewer critiques or opinions, or to overcome the consequences of poor writing or “grantsmanship.” Routine rebuttal of reviewer critiques may be submitted as a revised proposal in a later review cycle.

If the appeal is found to merit further investigation, the Vice President of Scientific Affairs, in consultation with the chairs of the Board Scientific Affairs Committee and appropriate Scientific Review Committee, shall determine an appropriate action on a case by case basis. Such actions may include re-evaluation of the proposal by the original reviewers for clarification of opinions, or evaluation by new reviewers who have not previously seen or discussed the proposal.