



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
TRANSPLANTATION
RESEARCH NETWORK

AST Research Network Priority Focused Grants: 2024 Immunosuppression, Rejection, and Biomarkers

The application deadline is 11:59 pm Pacific Standard Time on December 1, 2023. To submit an application, visit www.myast.org/research-grants. If you have any questions, please email research@myAST.org.

The purpose of the AST Priority Focused Grants is to advance the field of transplantation by supporting specific priority areas in solid organ transplantation. This grant supports one of the priority areas: immunosuppression, rejection, and biomarkers.

A. General Information: Immunosuppression, Rejection, and Biomarkers

One grant will be awarded in the amount of \$75,000 per year for two years, for a total of \$150,000. The grant is intended to provide salary support for the researcher, salary of personnel directly working on the project, and other research costs. Institutional overhead is not permitted.

Research must commence on July 1, 2024 and cannot be deferred for any reason.

B. Research Focus

Applications are accepted in one of three categories: basic, clinical, or translational science. Only grants supporting research in solid organ transplantation will be considered.

We accept applications on *any* research topic related to immunosuppression, rejection, and biomarkers. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Novel immunosuppressive therapies/regimens
- Acute and chronic rejection, graft survival
- Molecular/genomic biomarkers and novel diagnostics
- Infectious complications of transplantation - prevention and therapy
- Clinical and translational studies in tolerance

C. Application and Review Process

1. Applications must be complete and submitted online through the AST Research Network submission website.
2. The Society remains committed to a diverse and inclusive culture. The membership is encouraged to apply with an emphasis on diversity in age, gender, ethnicity, race, and other underrepresented minorities as defined by the [AAMC](#).
3. All complete applications received by the submission deadline are reviewed and scored by an expert panel.
4. The review criteria include the quality of the applicant, scientific project, and environment. Review will assess novelty, research approach, feasibility of obtaining relevant data, prior work, and overall impact.
5. All applicants will receive comments on the strengths and weaknesses of their grant application.
6. All applicants will be notified of the status of their application in March 2024.

7. Those awarded a grant will be asked to accept or decline the grant via email. Upon acceptance, the recipient will be asked to complete and return an official letter of agreement signed by the applicant and the grants office.
8. Grant recipients will be recognized during the 2024 American Transplant Congress (ATC), June 1-5 in Philadelphia, PA. Recipients are expected to register for and attend ATC. Registration is not included as part of the AST grant.

D. Eligibility Criteria

1. Academic Appointment and Institutional Resources:
 - a. Investigators with an academic or clinical appointment and the resources to conduct independent research are invited to submit proposals.
2. AST Membership
 - a. The applicant must be an active member of the AST or have submitted a completed membership application by December 1, 2023.
 - b. If awarded a grant, the applicant's membership must be maintained throughout the term of the grant.
3. Other Funding
 - a. The applicant may currently hold other independent research awards. However, the project must be distinct from that of any concurrent award.
 - a. Faculty may only hold one new AST grant per year: as a PI of a concurrent AST research grant or as mentor/sponsor of a Fellowship Research Grant. If more than one grant from a given faculty member (as PI or mentor) is submitted and deemed competitive for funding, the AST will determine which grant to fund.
4. Employment
 - a. Employees of the grant cycle's sponsoring PII partner(s) are not eligible to apply for the grant unless the project is a multi-center collaboration where the partnering institution is one of the participating centers and it is not the lead center.
5. Miscellaneous
 - a. The proposed work is to be performed in a North American laboratory.
 - b. Education: The applicant must have completed post-graduate training at the time of application.
 - c. Citizenship: The applicant must be either a) a U.S., Canadian, or Mexican citizen; b) a lawfully admitted permanent resident foreign national of the U.S., Canada, or Mexico with a valid visa during the awarded period; or c) a foreign national admitted lawfully for residence in the U.S., Canada, or Mexico during the awarded period. J1 and H1B visa holders are eligible to apply.

E. Specific Application Requirements:

1. Title
2. Abstract of the proposed research plan: This document should concisely summarize the project in 400 words or less. The abstract should introduce the project and note its relevance to immunosuppression, rejection, and biomarkers. It should describe the long-term objectives and specific aims, research design, and methods for achieving these goals.
3. Applicant's NIH biosketch (5-page format) to include all usual and pertinent information, particularly describing other past and current research funding and prior published work.
4. The name, title, institution, and NIH biosketch of co-investigators and/or key co-collaborators (if applicable).
5. Complete proposed research plan: The document cannot exceed six (6) pages, not including references. The following sections must be included:
 - a. Aims: include the key questions posed or hypotheses to be tested

- b. Introduction: provide the rationale for the research
 - c. Preliminary Results (if any): show preliminary results supporting the research plan
 - d. Research Plan: explain how the questions or hypothesis will be studied, with emphasis on experimental design over the details of the specific methods to be used. Include a description of the statistical method. Anticipated results and potential pitfalls and alternative approaches should be briefly discussed. Specific research (and, if applicable, training) goals to be reached at the end of the grant should also be provided. Discussion of the impact of the anticipated work in contributing new insights to the question and the transplant field should be discussed in 2-4 sentences.
 - i. Research plan should include a description of relevant core facilities, equipment, and capabilities.
 - e. Outline of specific milestones / deliverables expected for the first year of the project.
 - f. If the applicant is currently receiving funding for a project similar to the topics described in this RFA, the applicant should explain how the funds of this grant would not overlap with the funds of the other research support.
6. Overall project budget
- a. The grant is intended to provide salary support for the researcher, salary of personnel directly working on the project, and other research costs. Institutional overhead is not permitted.

Overall, the applications should be written in a focused manner that addresses one or two questions. The work proposed should be feasible for the period of the grant award. In a similar vein, the budget requested should be appropriate to perform all of the work proposed.

DISCLAIMER: The AST will not assume responsibility for any clinical study funded by the AST. Such proposals must be IRB-approved prior to the release of funding. Any responsibility will be assumed by the PI and the funded institution.

F. Funding Guidelines & Terms of Agreement

Review these guidelines and terms prior to completing your application. If you are awarded a grant, you and your institution's grant office will sign a formal letter of agreement (LOA) agreeing to these funding guidelines and terms.

1. The grant provides salary support for the researcher, salary of personnel directly working on the project, and other research costs. Institutional overhead is not permitted.
2. Funding will not be released until IRB approval and visa status (if applicable) is confirmed.
3. Research must begin on July 1, 2024 and end by June 30, 2026; the research start date cannot be deferred.
4. The grant is paid in annual installments to the recipient's institution. Funding in the amount of \$75,000 will be provided for one year of research. A second year of funding in the same amount may be provided to the recipient if milestones in the first year are met. The second year of funding will be subject to approval by AST.
5. The recipient must continue to meet all above stated eligibility criteria and perform the research as outlined in the original application.
6. Pursuant to regulations of the federal Physician Payment Sunshine Act (included in the Affordable Care Act), NPI numbers will be collected from grant recipients (if applicable) and tax ID numbers collected from the recipients' institutions (if applicable). All payments will be reported to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Open Payments system, as payments from AST represent indirect transfers of value from the funding pharmaceutical company.

7. Grant funding is not transferable from one recipient to another. If the grantee relocates, the AST will determine if the grant can be transferred to the recipient's new location, or if the grant must be surrendered and any remaining funds returned (if the grant is surrendered, a final report will still be required).
8. The grant recipient must acknowledge the grant as a funding source in all manuscripts and presentations derived from the funded research using the following statement: "This work was supported by a grant from the American Society of Transplantation Research Network." Copies of such publications must be submitted to the AST National Office.
9. Reports are required at the following intervals, and continuation of funding is contingent upon completion of these reports:
 - a. Six-month progress report due December 31, 2024.
 - b. Twelve-month progress report due June 30, 2025.
 - c. Eighteen-month progress report due December 31, 2025.
 - d. Final report within 30 days of the conclusion of the grant term.
 - i. A final report is required even if the grant is surrendered for any reason prior to the conclusion of the grant term.

Offering and administering a research grant with PII partners does not represent an AST endorsement of the use of the partners' products.