Fighting Blindness Career Development Award 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

A key priority for Fighting Blindness is to support the next generation of vision researchers. We recognise that training, networking and developing collaborations is key to the career development of early-stage career researchers and clinicians.

With this in mind, we are pleased to announce the 'Fighting Blindness Career Development Award'.

The purpose of the award is to provide funding for applicants to-

A. Attend an official training course (in-person or virtual), and/or
B. Attend training in another laboratory on a specific technique(s), and/or
C. Present research papers/posters at national/international conferences/workshops (in person or virtual), and/or
D. Facilitate national and/or international networking and collaboration meetings or events

All activities must be in the area of vision loss specifically in the areas of inherited retinal diseases (IRDs) and age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Applications in the area of diabetic retinopathy will also be considered.

1.2. Funding

The maximum total funding available for the award is €1,500. Eligible costs include registration, travel, accommodation, subsidence and activity costs.

The activity must take place between January 2025 and December 2025.

Applicants can apply for funding for more than one activity, but costs must be no more than €1,500 total. For example, an applicant can apply to attend a vision research-related training course and also to present at national/international conferences/workshops once the budget does not exceed €1,500 and it is clear how these activities will be of benefit to their career development.

1.3. Timelines

Application deadline	**5pm, 14th October 2024**
Review	October – November 2024

1.4. Host institution

The host institution is the organisation that receives and administers grant funding and is responsible for compliance with all general and specific terms and conditions of awards.

In order to be eligible to apply for funding, a proposed host institution must be a higher education institution on the island of Ireland.

Alternatively, in certain exempt situations the host institute may be a hospital on the island of Ireland. The hospital must have the capacity to receive and administer the grant funding. It will also be responsible for compliance with all general and specific terms and conditions of awards. A letter of support stating this will be required.

2. Eligibility Criteria

Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be assessed. Therefore, we strongly recommend you read the following to be made aware of requirements:

Activity:
The activity must be in the vision loss research specifically in the areas of inherited retinal diseases (IRDs) and age related macular degeneration (AMD). Applications in the area of diabetic retinopathy will also be considered.

  - In terms of training if the training is in a broader area, then the applicant must demonstrate how it is useful for their career in vision loss research.
  - Networking and collaboration events must be in the area of vision loss research.
- Clinical activities with no research aspect are not eligible.
- The funding is not meant to be used to supplement an existing networking and collaboration event. It should be a standalone activity.
- Training in another laboratory must be for a specific technique or techniques that will directly benefit your vision loss research. This training must not be available in your own lab.

Academic applicants must:

- Be a PhD student or an untenured postdoctoral scientist (not be tenured for a lectureship position at the time of applying for the Career Development Award).
- For postdoctoral scientists have between a maximum five years* research experience following their doctoral degree (time since date of thesis submission).
- Have a strong commitment to progressing their career in vision research.
- Have a studentship or contract in the host institute that covers the entire duration of

the award.

Clinical applicants must:

- Have a medical degree.
- Must not be at consultant level.
- Have previous experience undertaking research.
- Have a strong commitment to undertaking vision research.
- Have a contract in the host institute that covers the entire duration of the award.

Previous Career Development Award recipients will not be eligible for a further Career Development Award within 3 years of a successful application.

*Extended leave- Fighting Blindness recognises that applicants may have had to take a period of extended leave from their careers for a number of reasons including carers, maternity, paternity, adoptive, parental and medical leave. To ensure equity for those who have had to take extended leave in the past, where relevant, there will be an opportunity for applicants to extend their period of eligibility for this award or justify reasonable shortcomings in their application portfolio commensurate with these circumstances to the external reviewers. Please contact research@fightingblindness.ie for more information. Extended leave will also be taken into consideration during the assessment of applicants.

3. Application procedure

Applications should be made by completing the Career Development Award Application Form.

Outlined below are the sections in the application form.

Applicant details

- Applicant CV (using Fighting Blindness Applicant CV template)

Institutional Declaration of Support

- Declaration of Support from host institute indicating that they are aware of and support the application (using Fighting Blindness Declaration of Support template).
- Please note for applications for training in another laboratory, a letter of support will be required from the Principal Investigator of the host laboratory that you intend to undertake the training in.

Activity Details

Lay Summary (350 words max)

Please give a summary of the activity(s) that is detailed in the application using non-scientific language.

Please complete section A, B, C and/or D

A. Training Event

- Name of event
    - If there is no official name, please put in a short description of the event.
- Nature of the event and event description
    - Brief description of the overall event
- Location
    - City/Town, Country or
    - Virtual
- Duration Dates
    - First day of event until last day
- Website of event
    - If the event does not have a dedicated website, please enter the details of any website where information on the event is available.
- Dates that you plan to attend the event
    - Do you plan to attend the whole event or only specific days?
- Have you applied for funding from any other organisation to attend this event(s)?
    - If yes, please give details of what organisation(s) you have applied for funding to and when you will be notified of the outcome.

B. Training (specific technique(s) in another laboratory)

- Name of the principal investigator of the laboratory you will undertake training in
- Research Institute that the laboratory is based in
- Description of the training
    - Detail the technique(s) that you will be trained in. Include details on who will provide the training and why you chose this specific laboratory.
- Duration Dates
    - First day of training until last day
- Have you applied for funding from any other organisation for this training?
    - If yes, please give details of what organisation(s) you have applied for funding to and when you will be notified of the outcome.

C. Conference

- Name of event
    - If there is no official name, please put in a short description of the event.

- Nature of the event and event description
    - Brief description of the overall event
- Location
    - City/Town, Country or
    - Virtual
- Duration Dates
    - First day of conference until last day of conference
- Website of event
    - If the event does not have a dedicated website, please enter the details of any website where information on the event is available.
- Dates that you plan to attend the event
    - Do you plan to attend the whole event or only specific days?
- Have you applied for funding from any other organisation to attend this event(s)?
    - If yes, please give details of what organisation(s) you have applied for funding to and when you will be notified of the outcome.
- Summary of the work that you will be presenting at the event.
    - If not confirmed yet please give information on what work you hope to present.

D. Collaboration

Building networks and establishing collaborations is key to the career development of researchers and clinicians. The Career Development Award offers funding activities that have the sole aim of developing networks and collaborations in the area of vision loss research.

Please detail the plan for the networking and collaboration activity (500 words max).

Include information on-

- The aim of the activity
- Who will attend
- The format of the activity
- The outputs of the activity

Career development (400 words max)

Using non-scientific language, please detail how the activity detailed in this application is of benefit to your career development in the area of vision loss research.

Benefit to people affected by vision loss (200 words max)

Using non-scientific language, please detail how the research that you undertake in your career and that will be enhanced by this award will benefit those affected by vision loss.

Budget

Please detail the budget under the following categories. Leave any sections blank that are not relevant. A breakdown under each category is required as is a justification of the cost.

Please see the 'Fighting Blindness Use of Funds Guidelines' before completing the budget section. A breakdown of all costs incurred on the award will be required to be provided by the Host Institute.

The following costs will be covered for the awardee:

- Registration/ course fees
- Travel
- Accommodation
- Subsistence
- Activity costs
    - Examples include- Room rental, tea and coffee etc. Travel for participants not included.
    - Consumable costs associated with training in specific techniques.

4. Submission of Application

Completed application forms should be sent to research@fightingblindness.ie in Word Format by **5pm 14th October 2024**.

Checklist for submission-

- Application form
- Applicant CV (using Fighting Blindness applicant CV template)
- Host Institute Declaration of Support (using Fighting Blindness Declaration of Support template)
- Host PI Letter of Support (only needed for applications for training on specific techniques in a laboratory)

5. Reporting

Successful applicants will be required to submit a short report to Fighting Blindness after the activity has taken place. The report will outline the activity and contain an overview of the costs incurred.