

Catalyst Grants 101

A QuickStart Guide to the Catalyst Grant Program at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab

January 2024



What is a Catalyst Grant?

The Catalyst Grant Program is the largest internal opportunity for participating in funded research and innovative thinking at SRALab, and these grants are available to all employees. If you have an idea that could help patient outcomes or improve an organizational process, you should apply! All applications must include a researcher and a non-research employee. Consequently, you do not have to have research experience to participate and, if needed, the Catalyst Grant staff can help partner you with an appropriate researcher.

There are five types of Catalyst Grants, each with a specific purpose. Please see below for a brief overview of each and information to guide you in the application process.

Visit <https://www.sralab.org/catalystgrant2024> for additional information and application forms. Contact Melissa Briody, Senior Project Manager, Research (mbriody@sralab.org) with questions.

Catalyst Grant Categories

Project

These grants are for low-cost projects (\$1,000-10,000) that are easy to implement and will have an immediate impact on our patients or organization. This is a great place to start if you've never done research before. If you have an idea of how to improve something, you can partner with a researcher to design a solution. Some previous examples are building a device to prevent a tracheostomy tube from disconnecting, creating a menu with pictures our patients can use to order meals, and analyzing patient data to determine predictors for successful ventilator weaning.

Quality

Quality Grants specifically focus on quality improvement projects that lead to a positive change in process or patient outcome. The funding amount for this category is \$10,000-\$25,000. Quality improvement projects are not traditional research projects. Submissions in this category must utilize a quality improvement framework such as the four-stage Plan, Do, Study, Act Model.

Mentorship

Mentorship Grants are a great starting place for people with limited research experience who would like to become more competent in translational research and have a potential project that will impact patient care (\$10,000-\$25,000). For example, a therapist may propose a project that addresses a clinical problem they see with their patients or develop/evaluate a new tool they would like to use in the clinic. The work will be mentored by an experienced researcher and the mentee will be expected to identify specific, measurable mentorship goals and provide evidence of achievement at the end of the grant.

Translational

Translational Grants fund a scientist and clinician collaborative project of \$10,000- \$25,000 that impacts patient care and/or outcomes. The goal of this grant is to perform high quality translational research that warrants dissemination to the rehabilitation community at the national/international level. However, unlike a Foundational Grant data leading to additional research and external funding is not an expectation of a Translational Grant.

Foundational

The Foundational Grant is intended to fund a scientist and clinician collaborative project that will potentially impact patient care and/or outcomes and lead to external funding and additional research. In addition to serving as the foundation for future work, these grants are intended specifically to create the pilot data necessary to apply for a substantial external grant (e.g., NIH, VA, DOD).

How Much Money Should I Ask For?

You'll need to make it clear exactly how you will use the funding and why you need it. Below are some typical budget items included in Catalyst Grant applications. Be sure to use the budget template provided in the application form. It will make this process much easier!

DIRECT COSTS

Labor Expenses

A big part of your budget will likely be used to pay your team members. You will need to determine what type of experts you need to make your project successful and how much time they will need to complete their role. For example, if you think a new device may be useful during therapy, you will want to make sure an engineer is on board to help you develop the device and fix it if it stops working. Team members should enter their salary information in the budget. If you plan to hire a new employee, you can contact Azra Ehrenreich, Manager, Grant Administration (aehrenreich@sralab.org) to request an estimated hourly rate.

A final thing to remember is that labor expenses also include covering benefits like health insurance. These “fringe” costs are around 30% of an employee’s salary and they are automatically added to your budget.

Equipment and Supplies

You may have equipment costs of less than \$5,000 included in your budget or materials and supplies such as medical tape, adhesive electrodes, syringes, etc.

Participant Reimbursement

The amount of money budgeted for research participants depends on what they will be doing (*i.e.*, completing surveys, performing a six-minute walk test, or taking a device home to use). Your research partner will help you determine the appropriate stipend amount for your study. The key factor is that the amount must not be so high that it coerces people to be involved in a study that they might not otherwise take part in.

INDIRECT COSTS

Research budgets also include indirect costs, which cover expenses like rent, power, internet, human resource management, insurance, etc. that are required to make research at our organization possible. For the Catalyst Grant program, these indirect costs are 10% of your budget. Again, be sure to use the budget template located in the Catalyst Grant application form. It automatically calculates this amount and makes your life much easier!

How do I show I’m qualified to do the work?

A biosketch, resume, or CV for each team member shows their qualifications to do the work in the proposed project and demonstrates their commitment to the project. A biosketch template is available at the [NIH Grants webpage](#).

Who gets the money?

All Catalyst Grant proposals are carefully evaluated through an internal review committee that includes representatives from research and clinical departments. After carefully reading each proposal, the reviewers rate the proposals and then meet to discuss them and make funding recommendations. At this point, a project manager may reach out to you to request some minor modifications to the proposal, such as reducing your budget, or verifying a few things, such as a quote for equipment. After all this information is gathered, Dr. Lieber, Dr. Sliwa and the executive leadership team make final funding decisions.

I got the award! What’s next?

All applicants will receive an email notifying them of their award decision. If your project was selected for funding, a project manager will provide information about next steps.

I thought my proposal was pretty good, but I didn’t get it. Why not?

Researchers often need to submit proposals several times before they are funded. Don’t get discouraged! Unfortunately, even strong proposals are not always funded because there is a limited amount of money to go around. However, it is important to keep in mind there are a couple of deal-breakers; if you do not follow instructions or your application is incomplete, it probably won’t be reviewed. If your project was not chosen for funding, you will receive feedback and suggestions to further develop your idea. You are welcome to contact the project manager and discuss your proposal individually to determine how to improve your proposal for the next application round.

Who Can I Talk to About All This Cool Research Stuff?

Talk to research leaders either during Third Thursday Office Hours or by reaching them via the contact information below.

Levi Hargrove, PhD
Scientific Chair, Center for Bionic Medicine
lhargrove@sralab.org

José Pons, PhD
Scientific Chair, Legs + Walking Lab
jpons@sralab.org

Leora Cherney, PhD, CCC-SLP, BC-ANCD
Scientific Chair, Think + Speak Lab
lcherney@sralab.org

Allen Heinemann, PhD
Director, Center for Rehabilitation
Outcomes Research
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Monica Perez, PT, PhD
Scientific Chair, Arms + Hands Lab
mperez04@sralab.org

Rick Lieber, PhD
Chief Scientific Officer
rlieber@sralab.org

Katherine Earnest,
RN, MSN, CRRN, CNML
Director, Nursing Research
kearnest@sralab.org

NEED HELP WITH A LITERATURE SEARCH?

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab's medical librarian is a great resource if you need advice on your search strategy or require assistance to obtain full text resources.

Andrew Wahl, MSLS
Medical Librarian
awahl@sralab.org

WANT MORE INFORMATION ON THE RESEARCH ACCELERATOR PROGRAM?

We have an employee at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab to help answer all your questions or get you involved!

Melissa Briody, MOT, OTR/L, MS, HSM
Senior Project Manager, Research
mbriody@sralab.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Visit <https://www.sralab.org/catalystgrant2024> for application forms and additional information.

To learn about additional research activities and opportunities at SRAlab, please reference [Research 101](#) available on SRAlab Connect.