

AST Research Network: Directed Research Grants

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Overview

The AST Research Network seeks to increase the availability of funded research opportunities in transplantation and immunology research. In addition to pursuing funding to support our annual career development research grants and other investigator-initiated research, the AST Research Network is also interested in partnering with industry, academia, or nonprofit entities that wish to support research in a specific area. Through such arrangements, the AST Research Network can help its partners meet their scientific goals while increasing funding available for researchers. To guide these efforts, the AST Research Network has developed a set of procedures surrounding the initiation, promotion, review, and administration of directed research grants. These procedures are an origination point for discussion, and it should be noted that the AST Research Network has a degree of flexibility on many matters herein.

The AST Research Network carries out its mission through the following:

- 1) **Striving for Excellence** – We aim for the highest standards of performance, integrity, and service in all dimensions of our work.
- 2) **Investment in Leaders** – We support effective, visionary, and collaborative leaders who motivate others, inspire change, and produce results.
- 3) **Adoption of a Long-Term Perspective** – We take the long view, considering the implications of today’s decisions for future generations.
- 4) **Demonstrated Curiosity** – We actively solicit new perspectives to inform our work and are committed to collaboration and partnership.

I. Initiation

A grantor may approach the AST Research Network at any time with a proposal to seek applications for research funding in a specific area/set of areas. If the area of research fits with the AST's and its Research Network's mission and vision, the AST and the grantor will come to agreement on all aspects of the grant in alignment with AST policies and outlined in a letter of agreement prior to the grant announcement.

While the AST recognizes that the focus of a directed grant may be by definition narrow in scope, we recommend that the scope be sufficiently broad to allow for innovation and scientific creativity in the proposals, which could lead to novel applications of the product and/or reagent.

In addition to the research grant funds, an administrative fee will be paid to the AST for the work associated with the directed grant.

II. Research Grant Requirements

The AST Research Network will work with the grantor to develop the grant requirements including the grant term length, funding amount, career level target, eligibility, funding terms, and others, which will determine the Request for Application (RFA) and marketing plan. The AST Research Network and the grantor will develop a timeline for each grant that outlines the responsibilities of each party.

Items for Consideration during Development of the Research Grant

The grantor may change certain criteria to suit their needs, but some elements may not be changed.

A. Elements that are determined by the grantor

1. The grantor may decide what the grant funds can be used for and what expenses are prohibited: e.g. salary support, research team salary support, equipment, indirect expenses/institutional overhead, etc.
 - Grantors are strongly encouraged to permit an allowance of institutional overhead costs, as this widens the pool of potential applicants.
 - Grantors may allow indirect costs, but no more than 10% of the total grant funding.
2. The grantor determines the length of the funding period (e.g. one year, two years, etc.).
3. The grantor may decide if the grant should be limited to North American researchers/research settings only, or if international researchers/research settings may apply.
 - This is contingent upon whether the AST Research Network or the grantor will be administering the payments (see below), to be discussed during the development of the grant.

B. Elements that cannot be changed by the grantor

1. AST membership must be a requirement; if an applicant is not an AST member they may apply for membership as long as their application is received prior to the grant deadline.
2. The grantor may not request a timeline that is unrealistic for execution either for the AST Research Network or for the researcher.
3. Grant payment(s) must be made to the institution of the recipient and not the individual.
4. If the AST Research Network will administer the payments (see below), the grantor may only select an annual-payment schedule.

5. At a minimum, the grantee will be asked to provide a report annually for the term of the grant that summarizes progress and use of grant funds.
6. RFAs will include a disclaimer to indicate that partnership with AST is not an AST endorsement of the product/reagent on which the RFA is focused. Standard language: “Offering and administering a research grant with this partner does not represent an AST endorsement of the use of the partner's products.”
7. The research focus of the RFA will be worded in such a way that it is hypothesis-driven, objective, unbiased, and free of mention of anticipated results.

III. Review, Scoring, and Selection Process

The AST Research Network and the grantor will determine together the review criteria and rubric and the selection process. The AST Research Network will designate a reviewer panel of subject matter experts to score the applications and recommend recipients. The grantor gives the final approval of the grant recipients.

The AST Research Network will notify all applicants of their status (accept or reject) by email. The AST Research Network will prepare a plaque for the recipient and present at a designated AST meeting (Cutting Edge of Transplantation or the American Transplant Congress).

A. Elements that cannot be changed by the grantor

1. The AST Research Network will determine how the scores are submitted and tabulated using their expertise and experience to choose the best method considering factors like timeline, complexity, and budget.
2. The AST Research Network's reviewer conflict of interest policy must be in place to ensure no reviewers are in direct conflict with any submitted grants.
3. The AST Research Network's designated reviewer panel will independently review applications and make a final recommendation. Participation from the grantor's representatives is not allowable.

IV. Administration of the Grant

Grant payments must be made to the institution of the recipient and not to the individual.

There are two options for the administration of directed research grants.

Option 1: AST Research Network administers the grant

In this scenario, the letter of agreement will exist between the individual's institution and the AST Research Network. The AST Research Network will be responsible for administering all payments, collecting all reporting, and managing the grant until the term of the grant expires.

1. The grantor will provide the full amount of the grant to the AST Research Network according to the terms of the agreement, and funding will be paid out to the grantee by the AST Research Network.
2. The AST Research Network will provide to grantor copies of any and all reports from the grantee during the term of the grant.

Option 2: Grantor administers the grant

In this scenario, the grantor will contract directly with the researcher's institution and be responsible for administering all payments, collecting all reporting, and managing the grant until the term of the grant expires. The AST Research Network will be available for questions but will not maintain an active role in the administration of the grant.

1. Grantor will provide to the AST Research Network copies of any and all reports from the grantee during the term of the grant.