



# Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Award 2011 Request for Applications

---

## I. Purpose

The mission of the Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation's (PMSF) Research Support Committee is to improve the quality of life for individuals and families affected by Phelan-McDermid Syndrome (PMS) by fostering sound genetic, biological and medical research related to the causes, effects, diagnosis and effective treatments of PMS. PMSF's grants and fellowships program is intended to encourage research projects that will advance the development of treatments and cures for PMS. Our vision for change is to fund projects that will yield publications, leverage federal funding for future PMS research, and accelerate the development of therapeutics.

PMSF invites applications from postdoctoral fellows interested in pursuing careers in Phelan-McDermid Syndrome research. The primary purpose of the PMSF Fellowship is to provide highly qualified candidates with exceptional research training opportunities related to the study of Phelan-McDermid Syndrome.

Applications must demonstrate direct relevance to at least one of these targeted research priorities:

- Identification of the *molecular pathophysiology of PMS that can inform translational research* for drug discovery
- Development and evaluation of *novel treatments* that can address the core symptoms and associated medical (including psychiatric) conditions of PMS throughout the lifespan
- Development of *evidence-based clinical care recommendations* for PMS

Applicants must propose at least one aim that reproduces an important finding in the field from another lab.

## II. Conditions & Critical Dates

Letter of Intent due: June 1, 2011, 11:59 p.m (U.S. Eastern Time)

Letter of Intent notifications: June 15, 2011

Application due: July 31, 2011, 11:59 p.m. (ET)

Peer review panels: August, 2011

Notification: September 1, 2011

Start date (earliest): September 5, 2011

### III. Award

The PMSF Fellowship will be granted to a qualified postdoctoral fellow. The fellowship is awarded for a period of one year and may be renewed for a second year, based on satisfactory progress. A progress report is required ten months after the start of the fellowship and at the end of the second year.

The award is for \$50,000 in year one, and \$50,000 in year two.

### IV. Eligibility and Roles

**Post-doctoral Fellows:** Applicants should have training and experience at least equal to the Ph.D. or M.D. level. The selected postdoctoral fellow must spend at least 90% of his/her professional time engaged exclusively in PMS research related activities for the duration of the award. The fellow may not simultaneously serve in an internship or residency, hold a tenure-track faculty appointment, or hold another named fellowship award during the support period. International applications are encouraged.

**Mentors:** Prior to application, applicants must have identified a mentor for their fellowship. Mentors must have a Ph.D. and/or an M.D. or equivalent degree, and be a scientific investigator with an academic or research institutional appointment (tenured, tenure-track, or equivalent position). The mentor must be affiliated with a nonprofit research institution with a research mission and administrative infrastructure. Tax-exempt status must be documented under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code, or similar classification outside the United States. The application must include a letter of recommendation from the mentor. Statements of Commitment from the mentor must be included with both the LOI and application. Confidential letters of recommendation from the mentor must be submitted (please see instructions below).

### V. Application Submission

Please note:

- Applications received after the deadline will not be accepted unless permission has been previously granted by the PMSF and then only due to rare and unavoidable circumstance. There are no exceptions to this rule. All decisions of PMSF in regard to late submissions will be final.
- Only PDF files will be accepted. Figures and legends must be included within the specified page limits. Documents should be 11 point Arial font with 1-inch margins all around. Applications exceeding the specified page limits will not be reviewed.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to contact their Office of Sponsored Projects (or the equivalent) to identify the Responsible Official (RO) for this application. The RO will review and submit the final portion of the application. Their submission is their approval of the application on behalf of the institution. LOI forms can be completed and submitted by the applicant. Full applications can only be submitted by the RO.

### VI. Preparing the Application

**Complete the LOI form.**

- 1) **Application title.**
- 2) **Statement of Relevance to PMS.** Not to exceed 1 page. Short summary of the research topic and an explicit statement of how the study contributes to finding causes of and treatments for PMS.

- 3) **Summary of the research plan.** Not to exceed 2 pages. Summary of the research plan should include background, preliminary results, and specific aims.
- 4) **Biographical sketches** of the fellow, mentor, and collaborators, not to exceed four pages per individual. Please use the NIH Biographical Sketch format.
- 5) **Mentor letter.** Letter from the mentor providing a statement of commitment to provide resources essential to achieve the specific aims and career goals of the fellow.
- 6) **Responsible Official contact information.** Name and contact information for the Responsible Official from the Fellow's institution.

The LOI page is to be submitted by the applicant. Institutional officials are not required for this submission. The applicant will receive an e-mail after PMSF reviews the LOI. Applicants with approved LOIs will be able to move to the full application. All LOI decisions are final and no comments will be available.

### Complete the application

- 1) **Proposal title.**
- 2) **Scientific Abstract.** 250 words maximum. Provide a summary of the project.
- 3) **Lay Abstract.** 250 words maximum. Provide a lay description of the project for non-experts. The lay abstract may be reprinted on the PMSF website and/or in other communication materials.
- 4) **Research Plan.** Not to exceed 4 pages. Project Narrative should include:
  - a) Specific aims, background and significance/relevance to PMS
  - b) Preliminary data, if applicable.
  - c) Experimental design, methodology, and timeline for achievement of specific aims.
- 5) **Figures.** Up to 3 relevant images or figures related to the Research Plan may be included.
- 6) **Bibliography** with complete literature citations including titles and all authors.
- 7) **Human Participants and/or Vertebrate Animals:** Applications that use human subjects or vertebrate animals must address issues of protections. *Note that ethical approvals from the applicant organization are required before an award will be made. These approvals do not serve in lieu of the information requested below.*
  - a) **HUMAN PARTICIPANTSS** (defined as living individuals)
    - i) Scientifically justify the involvement of human participants in the proposed research.
    - ii) Describe in detail the plan for the involvement of human participants in the proposed research
    - iii) Describe in details the potential risks to participants and measures to be taken to protect human participants from those research risks.
    - iv) For clinical trials, describe plans for data and safety monitoring, including the description of a data and safety monitoring board if necessary.
    - v) If the project proposes no involvement of human participants but uses existing human data or biological specimens, justify the claim of non-involvement of human participants.
  - b) **VERTEBRATE ANIMALS**
    - i) Describe in detail the proposed use of the animals, including species, strains, ages, sex and number to be used
    - ii) Justify the use of animals, choice of species and numbers to be used
    - iii) Provide information on the veterinary care of the animals
    - iv) Describe procedures for ensuring discomfort, distress, pain and injury is minimized. Please include the method of euthanasia and the reasons for its selection.
- 8) **Letters of Collaboration** (optional). Up to two one-page letters of collaboration may be submitted describing a collaborative arrangement.
- 9) **Current and Pending Support.** Indicate funding source, total award amount, award duration (inclusive dates), and project title, both for the applicant and the mentor. Clearly explain the extent to which currently funded research projects will overlap, complement and/or contribute to the proposed research.

- 10) **Biographical sketches** of the fellow, mentor, and collaborators, not to exceed four pages per individual. Please use the NIH Biographical Sketch format.
- 11) **Exhibits.** Supplemental exhibits that support the Research Plan, including publications, can be submitted. Multiple items should be combined into one file. Final Items uploaded in this section will be reviewed at the discretion of the reviewer.
- 12) **Mentor's Letter of Support & Commitment**, of 2 pages or less, must be e-mailed as a pdf file by the mentor to Geraldine Bliss at [gbliss@att.net](mailto:gbliss@att.net). The letter should have the name of the candidate at the top and the mentor's name, title and institution at the bottom. The mentor's letter should include:
  - a statement that in combination with resources that the mentor will make available, the PMSF fellowship award will provide sufficient resources to complete the proposed research project
  - a commitment to protect the required 90% of the candidate's time for research and training
  - a commitment to actively guide the candidate's work
  - a recommendation attesting to the candidate's qualifications, commitment to research, and quality of scientific work

When the application is complete, it is the responsibility of the applicant to contact their Responsible Official who must complete the submission. Applications must be submitted by the R.O. to Geraldine Bliss at [gbliss@att.net](mailto:gbliss@att.net). Applications that are late, incomplete, exceed the document limitations, or do not adhere to the required format will not be reviewed.

PMSF reserves the right to return without review any fellowship proposal that in its judgment is not in compliance with its rules and procedures for proposal preparation and submission, is not responsive to its research training goals, or exceeds its funding limits or available resources. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application is complete and conforms to the guidelines.

## **VII. Review Process and Evaluation Criteria.**

Applications will be reviewed by independent peer review panels that will include members of PMSF's Scientific Advisory Committee as well as active and experienced investigators recruited from the scientific community for their expertise in the research areas of the applications. Fellowship applications will be reviewed on the relevance of the proposed research to PMSF' research priorities, scientific merit, impact, and the strength of the candidate and mentors.

## **VIII. Notification and Announcements**

Applicants will be notified by e-mail after the funding decision process is complete. All grant awards shall be posted on the PMSF website. The outcomes of each award will be posted after completion of the training project.

## **IX. Payment of Awards**

The recipient of any grant from PMSF must use the awarded funds for the specific purpose for what they were originally intended. Any funds not used in the above specified manner must be returned to PMSF. Payment of the awards is contingent on receiving any institutional approvals (IRB or IACUC) that may be required for the research.

Awards will be paid annually and payment will be contingent upon authorization of a post-award official authorized to act for the institution receiving the award, and upon acceptance of the PMSF award terms

and conditions, including receipt of all required certifications. A fellowship award cannot be transferred to another investigator, laboratory or sponsoring institution without prior written approval from PMSF.

The second year payment will be contingent upon receipt and approval of interim progress and financial reports from the investigator 10 months after the award begins. Final reports are due no more than 60 days after the grant end date. The fellow and mentor may request a one-time only, no-cost extension of up to six months if there is a hiatus in the training. Requests for no-cost extensions must be approved by PMSF prior to the extension period and require submission of a progress report and financial report.

## **X. Miscellaneous**

**Human Subjects and Vertebrate Animal Certifications** must be documented with a copy of an official letter of approval (or equivalent for non-US applicants), which identifies the Principal Investigator, project title and date of approval, and is signed by the Review Committee Chair or equivalent responsible institutional/government official. Prior certification for another project cannot be substituted, but can be officially amended to include the proposed project (identified by project title). **IMPORTANT:** IRB, IACUC or equivalent ethical certification are NOT required to submit an application; however, such ethical certification must be submitted as soon as possible following official notification of an award. PMSF will NOT issue a grant contract or any form of funding until appropriate certifications are received.

Projects using postmortem tissue must provide documentation that the necessary tissue is or will be available at the research site at the time of the award. Proposals without proper documentation will be returned without review.

The first payment will be contingent upon receipt of the countersigned grant agreement letter and certification of ethics approval, if applicable. Subsequent payments will be paid annually and will be contingent upon receipt of interim progress and financial reports and achievement of the specific aims on the timeline. Interim reports are due 10 months after the start of the grant.

## **XI. Public Access/Dissemination**

Funded researchers are required to submit or have submitted for them to the National Institutes of Health's PubMed Central database an electronic version of their final, peer-reviewed manuscripts upon acceptance for publication, to be made publicly available no later than 12 months after the official date of publication.

Funded researchers must also submit to PMSF a lay summary of the manuscripts, which may be reprinted on the PMSF website and/or in other communication materials, and present a talk at the family conference, held in even-numbered years.

PMSF reserves the right to make information about funded grants publicly available. Funded research projects may be subject to data and resource sharing requirements.

PMSF should be acknowledged as "Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation" in any presentations or publications resulting from research performed during the PMSF Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Award cycle.

## **XII. Contacts**

Geraldine Bliss

Chair, Research Support Committee

Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation

Phone: 941-485-8000

Email: [gbliss@att.net](mailto:gbliss@att.net)

[www.pmsf.org](http://www.pmsf.org)