Catalyst to Independence Award

Supporting the next generation of scientists to revolutionize a field

Letter of Intent deadline:
March 17, 2022

Invited full proposal deadline:
May 27, 2022
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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Additional Ventures Catalyst to Independence Award (AVCIA) is a research award that supports exceptional early career scientists during the final years of a mentored postdoctoral research position (Level I), through the transition to an independent faculty position (Level II). The AVCIA is primarily for investigators pursuing research relevant to single ventricle heart disease, including genetics, basic cardiovascular development, tissue engineering, computational modeling, and other relevant areas.

In addition to providing generous research support, this program utilizes a multi-pronged approach to equip investigators with the skills and tools they need to thrive as leaders of outstanding independent research programs, such as lab management and grant-writing training. This program is structured to put the investigator first, providing unique layers of financial and mentoring support that bolster the personal and professional success of awardees.

KEY DATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application Portal Opens</td>
<td>February 2, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Intent Due</td>
<td>March 17, 2022, 5 pm PT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full Proposal Due</td>
<td>May 27, 2022, 5 pm PT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>July 25-August 5, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notification of Award</td>
<td>September 1, 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding Begins</td>
<td>November 1, 2022</td>
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Deadlines are subject to change at the discretion of Additional Ventures in response to nationally or globally relevant events, including the COVID-19 pandemic.
PROGRAM STRUCTURE
AVCIA provides generous monetary and programmatic support for the scientific and professional development of awardees. The program provides up to six (6) years of support in two phases across the transition from advanced postdoctoral fellow to independent faculty.

In the first phase, AVCIA provides up to three (3) years of support for awardees in mentored, research-focused roles (Level I). The second phase provides up to three (3) years of support for fellows who have achieved independence and are appointed to tenure-track faculty roles (Level II).

The two phases of the program are intended to be contiguous, and support for Level II is contingent on satisfactory progress during Level I (see Transition to Independence). The transition between Level I and Level II will be strongly dependent on achieving key milestones proposed in Level I, as well as acceptance to tenure-track. For the 2022 cycle, we anticipate awarding up to eight (8) new investigators.

Scientific Focus Area
Additional Ventures is on a mission to solve single ventricle heart disease, guided by our Research Roadmap to address the critical knowledge gaps within this field and beyond. This award provides support for outstanding investigators pursuing topics relevant to single ventricle heart disease and aligned with the specific focus areas in the Roadmap:

I. Lay the Foundation: Develop a Community Resource
   I. Large-scale sequencing
   II. Longitudinal clinical and imaging data
   III. Comprehensive biobank
   IV. Harmonized data and analytics platform
II. Understand the Origins of Single Ventricle Disease
   I. Deep phenotype-genotype
   II. Model organisms
   III. Non-genetic and modifiable risk factors
   IV. Normal cardiac development
III. Define Biological Mechanisms of Outcomes
   I. Outcome origins
   II. Substrate-outcome relationship
   III. Predictive models
   IV. Early detection
IV. Effectively Predict, Prevent, and Address Clinical Sequelae
   I. End-Organ trajectory, mapping, and biomarkers
   II. Personalized medicine approaches
   III. Alternative interventions
   IV. Learning networks
V. Focus on Functional Cures, Not Palliative Approaches
   I. Enabling technologies
   II. Standardization and scale
   III. Cross-disciplinary teams
   IV. Bionic, regenerative, and transplant approaches
While this award supports science that will advance the understanding and treatment of single ventricle heart disease, we welcome new and creative approaches to the above thematic areas, including those involving method development or novel approaches at the outset of the applicant’s proposed work.

*Note: This award exclusively supports projects focused in basic and translational science. Registry builds will not be considered.*

**Program Funds**

Awardees can receive up to $1.2M (USD) over the course of the award period. Funds include stipend, annual research expenses, salary support for support staff, and a supplement that can be used for health or family care, as shown below. Due to differences in length of time supported and geographic location, the total award amount will vary amongst awardees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Funds</th>
<th>Level I</th>
<th>Level II</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stipend*</td>
<td>Starts at <strong>GS-11</strong></td>
<td>Starts at <strong>GS-12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. annual research expenses</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. annual support staff compensation</td>
<td>Up to $50,000 starting in year 2</td>
<td>Up to $50,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual supplemental health/family care**</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
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*Annual stipend levels are determined using the [US General Schedule](https://www.usastaffing.gov/), which standardizes compensation based on locality, experience, and position.

**Health- and family-care funds are intended to supplement university-provided health care.

**Supplemental Health and Family Care**

AVCIA recognizes that the high costs of health and family care impact the ability of early career investigators to fully participate in the extramural workforce. To ensure that this opportunity is welcoming to and supportive of fellows from diverse backgrounds and life-stages, all awardees are eligible to receive a $5,000 supplemental award per annual budget period to offset family- and/or health-related expenses.

The award may be used at the discretion of the fellow in addition to institution-provided health and family-related benefits. **Supplemental funding is not subtractive from research funds.**

**Professional Development Programming**

**Funding outstanding research begins with a focus on people and projects.** In addition to monetary support for fellows and their research, AVCIA provides additive programming dedicated to skill building, peer support, lab and people management, mentorship, networking, and career growth. These include but are not limited to:

- Sponsored attendance at our [Single Ventricle Investigator Meeting](https://www.singleventricle.org), held every eighteen (18) months in the United States
- Individual career coaching during each Level of the award and participation in regular training workshops
- Participation in [Additional Ventures Speaker Series](https://www.additionventures.org) - a virtual seminar series that tackles diverse topics within and adjacent to the SV field
- Round table and networking programming for AVCIA awardees
Each of the above provides an opportunity for awardees to meet others within the field, share their work, and learn new skills that are critical for the success of their careers.

**Mentorship**

Applicants must identify a primary mentor who will provide supervision and support for the proposed research plan and commit to the applicant’s career development. Applicants are strongly encouraged to work with their mentor in preparation of the application, and are welcome to recruit the support and expertise of additional mentors where appropriate. Mentors may transition in and out of the primary role as needed through the course of the award period.

During Level I, the primary mentor will ideally be the principal investigator of the laboratory in which the fellow resides; however, we recognize this is not always possible. In this case, the mentor should be an active investigator in the proposed or adjacent research area and be able to attest to the facilities and resources available for high-quality research. The mentor must certify that they are committed to providing the resources, expertise, and time necessary to ensure the success of the applicant.

*Mentors can be changed at any time with written approval, including the transition to independence.*

**Transition to Independence**

AVCIA was designed to assist in the successful advancement to a faculty position. This award provides funding support to qualifying awardees for up to three (3) years as a newly appointed tenure-track faculty member (Level II) at a qualifying academic institution. To apply for transition to independence, Level I awardees must provide a letter of institutional commitment and faculty appointment along with a satisfactory progress report, abbreviated research plan, and categorical budget for the independent years of the award.

Transition to Level II can be requested at any time during the three (3)-year mentored period after a tenure-track faculty appointment has been obtained. No cost extensions be discussed on a case-by-case basis if a fellow does not transition within the three (3)-year Level I award term.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

*Eligible applicants must meet each of the General Eligibility Requirements listed below:*

- Applicants must have earned a PhD, MD, or doctoral equivalent **more than 3 years** prior to the application due date and must have held their current role for at least 2 years.

- Applicants must have current postdoc or instructor status (or equivalent) and be in non-independent, mentored positions.

- Applicants cannot concurrently hold a transition award from another organization and must commit to a minimum 9 calendar months (75% of the year) dedicated effort to the proposed work.

- All applicants must be affiliated with a domestic nonprofit academic or research institution, including public/private academic universities or institutions of higher learning (including colleges, universities, medical schools, and other related academic research institutions); certain qualified governmental agencies with active biomedical research programs may also meet eligibility criteria.
Applicants must be citizens, non-citizen permanent residents, or temporary residents of the U.S. who are legally qualified to work in the U.S. Immigration-related matters and visa applications are the responsibility of the fellow and sponsoring institution.

Potential candidates are encouraged to discuss their individual situation with Additional Ventures program staff. Please contact us at grants@additionalventures.org. Applicants from historically excluded and underrepresented groups are strongly encouraged to apply.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Please visit our application portal for the most up-to-date information and log in to start your application.

Login to ProposalCentral by visiting www.proposalcentral.com and select the Catalyst to Independence Award in the Grant Opportunities tab, or access the portal via this direct link.

Applications are a multi-step process that includes rigorous evaluation at each stage:

- Letter of Intent
- Invited proposal
- Interview
- Mentored Award (Level I)
- Independent Award (Level II)

**Pre-submission Consultation**

Additional Ventures is committed to facilitating the application process that both increases the impact and success of funded studies. Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with Additional Ventures program staff prior to submitting a letter of intent. Contact us at grants@additionalventures.org for guidance on program scope or to seek feedback on proposal fit.

**Letter of Intent Submission Elements:**

Interested candidates who meet the eligibility criteria above are invited to submit an online pre-proposal through Additional Ventures’ online grant portal by March 17, 2022, 5 pm PT. All application materials should be completed within the portal or prepared from provided templates. The letter of intent includes the following elements:

- Title Page
- Eligibility criteria certification
- About the Applicant
  - Including applicant’s name, institution, degree(s), academic rank, and contact information
  - Applicant biosketch (template provided within the portal)
- Mentor information
  - Including name, position, and contact information
  - Mentor biosketch (template provided within the portal)
  - Primary Mentor letter of commitment (two (2) pages, PDF upload)
    - a. Confirming the availability of facilities to conduct the research project
b. Listing all other sources of grant support (current and pending), including title, annual and total amount of grant, and funding period.

c. Confirming availability for supervision, guidance, and counseling.

- Institution information
- Project Summary
  - Lay summary (written for the general public) describing the project’s aims and goals, including how the completion of the study will impact single ventricle research and/or care (up to 2100 characters).
  - Key words (up to 6)
  - Selection of Research Roadmap category reflective of the project’s primary scientific focus area
- Career Statements
  - Scientific Career Statement (up to 7000 characters)
    - Applicants should outline their scientific passions, interests, and career goals, including a brief discussion of the applicant’s future independent research program.
    - Areas for consideration include research commitment to the field, funding strategy, mentoring style, approach to collaborations, and development of teaching, lab management, and/or leadership skills.
    - Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss how future programs will contribute to our understanding or treatment of single ventricle congenital heart defects.
  - Career Impact statement (up to 3500 characters)
    - A statement outlining how the award will impact the applicant’s research and career trajectory.
    - Areas for consideration include discussion of new opportunities or area of discovery, impact of programmatic elements, personal and/or professional hurdles overcome.
- Applicant demographic information (optional)
  - Additional Ventures strives to support a scientific community that is diverse, collaborative, and forward thinking. A response is not required, and data will not be shared with reviewers.

**Full Proposal Submission Guidelines:**
Select applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal; decisions will be communicated by April 4, 2022, 5 pm PT. Full proposals are due **May 27, 2022, 5 pm PT**. Complete full proposals include the following elements:

- Technical abstract (2100 characters)
- Scientific Significance (2100 characters)
Select the primary Research Roadmap category addressed by this proposal and explain how your research is critical to advancing the field of single ventricle. Additional context for how the proposed research is relevant to science and society should be provided.

The statement should address the purpose of the proposed studies, potential key findings and why they matter, and possible future directions.

- **Uploaded documents:**
  - Specific Aims (One (1) page, PDF upload)
    - A brief, technical summary of the project’s scientific goals and expected outcomes, including the impact that the research results will have on the single ventricle and adjacent fields.
    - Include specific objectives of the research proposed.
  - Research Plan (Five (5) pages, PDF upload)
    - Outline of research methodology to be used in pursuit of the project, including background and relevant preliminary results, research methods and study design, discussion of expected results, statistical analysis of data (where appropriate), and possible alternative approaches. Figures are permitted and are included in the page count.
  - References Cited (PDF upload, no strict page limit)
    - Categorical Budget (fillable form)
  - A categorical budget in USD covering the first three (3) years of the award, including research-related and indirect costs. No budget submission is required to qualify for supplemental health and family care support.
  - Categories include:
    - Stipend: Applicants should request a specific GS-level stipend that is dependent on number of months in their current role and geographic location. For example, using the General Schedule website calculator, an individual who has been in their current postdoctoral/instructor/or equivalent role for 3 - 4 years would select GS 11 and step 4. A postdoc in their current role for 4 years and 3 months would choose step 5. **Stipend supplementation is allowed but must be provided by the host institution and cannot be subtracted from research expenses. Additionally, the host institution is responsible for fringe benefits.**
    - Research Expenses: equipment, consumables, project-related or conference travel, publication costs, etc.
    - Indirect Costs: Up to 10% of the research budget amount (see here for our institutional policy)
    - Support Staff Compensation: Up to $50,000 starting in year 2 can be requested to fund a research technician or other support staff role.
    - Facilities & Resources (one (1) page, PDF upload)
Describe the organizational resources available to perform the specific work proposed in the research plan. Include facilities, major equipment, and other resources (such as institutional services).

- **Data Sharing Plan and Philosophy (one (1) page, PDF upload)**
  - Specifies the applicant’s and the applicant organization’s commitment to sharing project results, data, and/or resources with other institutions and researchers for non-commercial use to advance the understanding and treatment of single ventricle heart defects. This may include how data will be deposited, how resources will be shared, or the use of preprint servers to communicate findings.

- **Institutional letter of commitment (one (1) page, PDF upload)**
  - This letter of commitment should state that applicant organization will be able to support the research led by the fellow and confirming the current status of the applicant as a postdoc, instructor, or equivalent.

**Interview Process**
Selected applicants will be invited to participate in a one-hour virtual interview, to be scheduled between July 25 – August 5th, 2022. At least one week prior to the interview, applicants will receive full proposal feedback from external reviewers. The interview will be conducted in two parts:

- **Part 1 (15 minutes; applicant and mentor)**
  - Both applicant and their mentor are invited to the first part of the interview. This 15-minute section will consist of introductions of the attendees and a mentor statement. The mentor is asked to make a brief statement in support of the applicant and to discuss their role in current and future mentorship, with 5 minutes for questions.

- **Part 2 (45 minutes; applicant only)**
  - In the second part of the interview, applicants are asked to present their projects in a pitch-style format, no more than 10 minutes. Following the pitch, Additional Ventures staff and selected external advisors will engage applicants in a series of questions. This is meant to be conversational (and fun!) and a time for Additional Ventures to get to know applicants better. **This is your opportunity to communicate your passion and excitement for what you do and what you would like to do in the future.**

Additional details on the interview process will be provided at the time of invitation.

**REVIEW AND SELECTION**
As with all our competitive grant programs, Additional Ventures utilizes a multi-step internal and external review process to invite applicants and select finalists for funding.

**Letter of Intent Review and Selection**
In consultation with career coaching and faculty development experts, Additional Ventures will utilize an internal review process to assess letters of intent and invite select applicants to submit full proposals. Review criteria include eligibility, commitment to field, perceived impact, and significance of research question. A subset of applicants will be invited to submit full proposals.
**Full Proposal Review and Selection**

Upon receipt of full proposals, internal and external panels of reviewers, including subject matter experts and AVCIA advisory board members, will evaluate application materials and make recommendations for selection of finalists. Finalist selection will be based on:

- Importance of scientific questions identified in the proposal to the strategic investment areas of the [Research Roadmap](#).
  - Candidates should present clear evidence that proposed studies will have an impact on one or more of the identified focus areas.

- Scientific merit
  - Candidates should demonstrate clear, hypothesis-driven science that is both sound and feasible.

- Impact of award on applicant.
  - Candidates must clearly state how this award would help them achieve their research and career goals.

- Potential of candidate to transition to a successful independent career.
  - Candidates should demonstrate that their proposed Research Plan is unique and innovative, building on previous experience and creating new pathways in the field.

- All eligibility requirements have been met.

In addition to above, final decisions will take into consideration applicant’s responsiveness to feedback and fit with the goals of the program.

Additional Ventures will provide feedback to all applicants not selected for funding. Receipt of feedback is an important part of the scientific process, and it is our intention to provide succinct summaries of written critiques and comments for all applicants.

**Additional Selection Criteria**

- Additional Ventures strives to support a scientific community that is diverse, collaborative, and forward thinking. We all benefit when each of us is given a voice and space to innovate. As such, Additional Ventures recognizes the deep inequalities inherent in academia and strives to support those who have been historically excluded and underrepresented. We highly encourage applications from women, minorities, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with disadvantaged backgrounds.

- Diversity extends beyond visible differences and represents a sense of belonging to a community, each with a fresh perspective. Thus, we also encourage applicants from diverse geographic communities that are often underrepresented in higher education – this includes rural communities and fellows who represent those regions.

**ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES**

Grantees funded by this effort will be expected to engage in the activities and provide deliverables described below:
▪ Progress reporting, including conversation via teleconference, virtual meetings, and/or written reports, that include the following:
  o Semi-annual, virtual research progress presentation with program representatives
  o Semi-annual, written summary of progress and pitfalls
  o A report of annual participation in Additional Ventures- and partner-led professional development programming

▪ Attendance and presentation at the Additional Ventures Single Ventricle Investigator Meeting
▪ Active participation in AVClA-sponsored professional development programming and activities
▪ Active participation in Additional Ventures-led round-table discussions and/or workshops that bring together grantees to discuss progress and results.
▪ Active participation in Additional Ventures Annual Speaker Series.
▪ Response to reporting inquiries requested by Additional Ventures, relating & not limited to: publications and presentations, patents, collaborations, external award of additional funding.

TERMS OF AWARD/USE OF FUNDS
Each funded organization will be required to sign and agree to Additional Ventures’ grant terms within thirty (30) days from receipt of notice of the award and prior to the funds being released. The grant terms will be available upon submission of a full proposal.

Responding to this RFP, submitting a letter of intent and/or a full proposal does not entitle any individual or institution to receive funding from Additional Ventures. Funding, if any, is provided at Additional Ventures’ sole discretion pursuant to the terms of a written grant agreement executed by Additional Ventures and the selected grantee organization, the terms of which Additional Ventures may require to be acknowledged by the PI.

COVID-19 POLICY AND SUPPORT
As a foundation, Additional Ventures is deeply committed to supporting our scientific communities. We are sensitive to how COVID-19 is affecting the wellbeing of our grantees, and are dedicated to supporting scientists, clinicians, and academics through these unprecedented times.

We anticipate that COVID-19 will cause delays and changes to planned research activities, through the introduction of both professional and personal difficulties. The Additional Ventures team is cognizant that no standard plan will work for all grantees or apply to all situations; as such, we are willing to work with our grantees on a personal basis to discuss options and find appropriate solutions. These may include, and are not limited to: budgeting revisions, revisions to timelines and due dates of deliverables, personnel changes, shifts to remote work (e.g. computational approaches), allowances for child/dependent care or transportation, and mental health support. Please contact our team to discuss how we can help; we know that allowing flexibility means a greater chance of success.

QUESTIONS?
For all inquiries, please contact: grants@additionalventures.org
ABOUT ADDITIONAL VENTURES
Additional Ventures is a nonprofit foundation that aims to accelerate research progress and improve clinical care for children born with complex congenital heart defects so that they have a normal duration and quality of life. Although one in one hundred children are born with a congenital heart defect, there are limited options for those with the most complex forms, including single ventricle (SV) heart defects. For these children, there is no cure. With rapid advances in areas like genomics, single-cell technologies, and tissue engineering, now is the time to coordinate concerted efforts to understand how to overcome this devastating, complex disease.