

PREPARING A BWF CAREER AWARD AT THE SCIENTIFIC INTERFACE LETTER OF INTENT

The Burroughs Wellcome Fund Career Award at the Scientific Interface (CASI) is intended to foster the early career development of researchers who are dedicated to pursuing a career in academic research. The specific target group are researchers who have transitioned from graduate work in the physical/mathematical/ computational sciences or engineering into postdoctoral work in the biological sciences. The CASI grant provides \$560,000 over five years to bridge advanced postdoctoral training and the first three years of faculty. Review the [CASI Request for Proposals](#) for additional details on the grant program, the eligibility requirements, and the terms of the award. The following instructions will provide additional guidance on the requirements for the BWF CASI letter of intent and how to submit the proposal through ProposalCentral.

Application Process

Applying for this CASI award is a two-stage process:

- 1. Letter of Intent (LOI).** Interested candidates who meet the eligibility criteria will need to submit one online Letter of Intent (LOI) through ProposalCentral by **September 1, 2023, 3:00 pm EDT**. The grant application portal will be available by July 5, 2023. In brief, the LOI includes applicant information (to be completed within the grant portal) and an essay, as well as a confidential primary postdoctoral mentor letter of recommendation.
- 2. Full proposals.** Submission of full proposals will be *by invitation only* after review of the LOIs. By November 20, 2023, a selected group of applicants will be invited to submit a full application. Instructions on how to prepare a full research proposal will be provided. Full proposals will be due **January 8, 2024 by 3:00 pm EST**.

All communications, including the invitation to submit a full proposal and declinations, will be made through the ProposalCentral system and/or email.

BWF does not provide critiques or written comments of unfunded proposals.

How to Submit an Online Letter of Intent (LOI)

To begin a Letter of Intent (LOI) submission applicants should use ProposalCentral. LOIs must be submitted by September 1, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. (EDT). ProposalCentral is an application and grants management system utilized by multiple funders. Applicants may already have an account on the site. To access ProposalCentral use the link below:

<https://proposalcentral.com/>

Registering on ProposalCentral

If the applicant/candidate does not have an account, the candidate must register on ProposalCentral by clicking the “Need an account?” button and creating a professional profile, including an unique user ID and password. Remember the login and password to access the application at a later time. Applications do not need to be completed in one setting.

If a professional profile has already been created, the candidate must verify the information for accuracy before submitting a completed application. Demographic data in the professional profile is for statistical use only.

When creating the professional profile, candidates will be asked to add a primary institution. This is the institution where the applicant currently holds a position. It is likely that the institution already has a profile on the system. To search for the institution:

- Input the institution name (partial) and click display results
- Information from the institutional profile will automatically populate, including the institutional officer

If your institution is not listed on ProposalCentral, please reach out to the ProposalCentral technical support staff to help with this process.

Candidates have the option of linking their ORCID to their ProposalCentral account. ORCID is a persistent digital identifier that is unique to individual researchers, where they can keep their CV information current and share with other systems. BWF does not require the use of ORCID at this time, but it is highly suggested. Visit orcid.org for additional details. To start a LOI from the professional profile, locate the red “Create New Proposal” button.

Creating a New Proposal

After creating the professional profile and linking it to the appropriate institution, the next step is to begin the LOI using the following steps:

- Locate the Home tab within ProposalCentral and click the red “Create New Proposal button”
- Use the “Filter by Grantmaker” button to select the Burroughs Wellcome Fund
- Locate Career Awards at the Scientific Interface and click the “Apply Now” button
- Verify that an application is being created for the Program: Career Awards at the Scientific Interface, enter the project title and hit “Save.”
- Complete the LOI now or save and revisit later.

Completing the LOI

All proposals must be submitted through the ProposalCentral site including a confidential recommendation letter to be uploaded by candidate’s primary postdoctoral mentor.

Note that it is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that the confidential letter is submitted by the deadline due date. Each element of the proposal must be completed before the application can be submitted, and an application will not be considered complete without this confidential recommendation letter.

The applicant will be required to provide information on the following:

- Applicant/PI information (postdoc is the PI)
- Institutional Information (degree-granting only)
- List of Five Publications
- Mentor Information
- Essay (4,000 character maximum)
- Additional Proposal Information

The following pages and proposal elements must be completed prior to submission (all fields with a red asterisk are required):

Title Page

Enter the project title to begin the application (limited to 150 characters). Click save to be able to return to the proposal at a later time. Answer additional questions on the page, including providing a publication list.

For the publication list, provide up to five of the candidate’s top publications. The candidate should be a first author on at least one publication in a peer reviewed journal, including papers on which “first authorship” is shared. Other publications in the list may include manuscripts that have been submitted or published in pre-print journals, such as biorxiv or arXiv. However, preprints will not count towards the one first author peer-reviewed publication rule.

Download Instructions

Here candidates can download the CASI RFP and other instructions for completing the application.

Enable Other Users to Access the Proposal

This section allows applicants to grant access to others that would like to have access to the proposal. A candidate may grant three levels of access: View only, Edit (cannot submit), and Administrator (edit and submit). Only registered ProposalCentral users can be given access to the system.

Candidate Profile/Professional Profile

In this section, information is pre-populated with information from your professional profile. The following information must be completed in the professional profile (and it will populate in the Applicant/PI section):

- Institution: This is the institution where the candidate currently holds a position. It is likely that the institution already has a profile on the system. If the institution does not have a profile, contact ProposalCentral technical support for assistance.
- Contact Information: Position Title, Academic Rank, Primary Job Function, Department, Address, City, State, Zip, Country, Work, Mobile
- Degree Information: Highest Degree, Baccalaureate Degree, and Post Baccalaureate Degree
- Demographic Data (for statistical use only)

Candidates are not required to have an ORCID to submit a CASI LOI. However, it is recommended that you create an ORCID account and link it to your ProposalCentral account. ORCID is a persistent digital identifier that is unique to individual researchers, where they can keep their CV information current and share with other systems. Visit orcid.org for additional details.

Institution

Candidates MUST apply from an accredited degree-granting institutions in the U.S. or Canada. An institution includes its medical school, graduate schools, and all affiliated hospitals or research institutes. The mentor must hold an appointment at the degree granting institution. If the candidate is selected to submit a full proposal, the institutional official will need to sign off on the proposal.

Be certain the Lead Institution is the institution where the primary postdoc mentor has an appointment. If you need to change the institution, please click “Change Institution” and search for the appropriate organization. If this institution does not have a profile in ProposalCentral, contact ProposalCentral for technical assistance.

Candidates that are postdocs at independent research institutes may be eligible if the research institute is a non-profit institution [501(c)(3) or equivalent] in the U.S. or Canada and the primary postdoctoral mentor holds an appointment at an accredited, degree-granting institution in the U.S. or Canada. If both criteria are met, the candidate is eligible to apply but must apply through the degree-granting institution. With the exception of eligible postdoctoral fellows at the National Institutes of Health, LOIs will not be accepted from federal facilities. These policies are non-negotiable.

Essay

An essay of no more than 4,000 characters should be provided. The essay should be addressed to a group of well-educated scientists, who are not necessarily experts in the field: State the larger objective of the proposal and provide specific aims that will achieve this; Provide a brief description of your ability to carry out the project, including available resources; Address interdisciplinary and innovation aspects; State how this project will transition to the postdoc’s independent career period; Place your project in a larger context regarding its impact on other areas, emphasizing its significance.

Additional Information

Complete additional fields as requested on the form. Select up to two areas of biology that best describe your work.

Mentor and Key Personnel

Contact information and additional details on the following individuals should be provided:

- Postdoc Mentor (will need to provide a letter of recommendation)
- Secondary Postdoc Mentor (optional)
- Graduate Advisor (required)

To add key personnel, enter the email address of the individual and click the “Add Contact” button. Select the appropriate role from the drop-down menu. Complete the requested fields, including the institution of the key personnel. If the institution is not available in the search institution list, please add in the “Manual Institution Name” field. Click “Save” when done.

Letter from Mentor and Mentor Certification

The primary postdoc mentor is required to complete the following information for the LOI through the ProposalCentral system:

- Confidential Letter of Recommendation
- Certification of the postdoc’s eligibility

The recommendation letter is REQUIRED to submit the application. No late applications will be accepted due to letters not being uploaded by the mentor. It is recommended that the letters be uploaded and the certification complete by August 25th to allow ample time for the letter completion. Only one letter is allowed per LOI. Secondary postdoc mentors do not need to submit a letter of recommendation.

In the letter, the primary postdoctoral mentor should describe the candidate’s qualifications and potential for contributing to biomedical science, highlighting specific skills or expertise in a scientific discipline other than biology. The letter should also describe the research environment in which the candidate will work, the mentoring plan for the candidate, the number of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the lab, and the supporting services to be provided by the institution. The letter should be on letterhead, include a signature block, and be uploaded as a PDF.

It is recommended that candidates contact their mentor prior to requesting the recommendation letter through the system.

Candidate instructions to obtain confidential postdoc mentor letter:

From within the online LOI application, access the Mentor Letter and Certification Section to send an email to the postdoc mentor requesting a letter. Enter the email address of the mentor, confirm the email, and click the “+” button. A pop-up screen will appear. Verify the information and click the “Send Email” button. The mentor will be sent instructions on how to upload the letter and complete the certification form. Once the letter has been uploaded, it should be listed in the Attached Documents section as an attachment.

The email to the mentor will contain a link that the mentor must use to upload the letter to the LOI, as well as complete the certification questionnaire. Letters are confidential and cannot be viewed by the candidate.

Once the letter has been uploaded by the recommender, the letter will be listed in the Attached Documents section in the list of uploaded documents.

Note: Recommendation letters sent separately or after the application due date will not be accepted.

Attached Documents

Here the Blind Letter of Recommendation will be listed in the list of uploaded attachments, once the mentor has uploaded the letter. No additional documents need to be uploaded for the LOI.

Submission Process

Once the application is complete, do the following:

- Click the “Validate” on the sidebar to see if any errors are identified. All information must be provided **prior to application submission**.
- Click “Sign and Print” on the sidebar. The candidate should type the name in the box provided and click “Sign.” Candidates may download a copy of the proposal for their files.
- **SUBMIT** your application. On the right side bar, there will be a link to submit the application. Click the blue “Submit” button. Your application is **not submitted** until you complete this step.

You should receive a confirmation email once your application is submitted. If you do not receive this email, please reach out to BWF.

Note:

LOIs will not be accepted after 3:00 pm EDT on September 1, 2023. The online application system shuts down automatically at the deadline. Plan to submit the application well in advance of the grant deadline to allow adequate time to troubleshoot any issues. **NO EXCEPTIONS OR EXTENSIONS WILL BE GRANTED.**

After the deadline, candidates with incomplete LOIs and those not adhering to instructions will be disqualified without prior notice. Do not include a cover letter or supplemental materials. If extra materials are included, the LOI will be rejected out of fairness to all candidates.

Only LOIs submitted through ProposalCentral will be accepted.

It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that the confidential recommendation letter has been uploaded to their application and submitted by the deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Other Information

Accessing a save application:

To access a saved proposal, login to the ProposalCentral system. Click the proposals tab to see a list of in progress or submitted proposals, along with the status.

Questions?

The following are available on the BWF website:

- [Career Award at the Scientific Interface Requests for Proposals \(including eligibility requirements and terms of the award\)](#)
- [FAQs](#)

Eligibility inquiries should be directed in advance to BWF program staff by contacting:

Melanie Scott, Senior Program Associate
mscott@bwfund.org, 919-991-5107

Tammy Collins, PhD, Program Officer
tcollins@bwfund.org, 919-991-5120

Technical questions regarding use of the ProposalCentral system should be directed to:

ProposalCentral Support
1-800-875-2562 (8:30am to 5:00 pm ET M-F, except holidays)
pcsupport@altum.com