POSTDOCTORAL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM (PDEP)

Proposal deadline:
January 12, 2027 (3:00 pm ET)

BURROUGHS WELLCOME FUND

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KEY DATES

Grant application portal available	October 2026
Application deadline	January 12, 2027 (3:00 pm ET)
Notice of award	By June 2027
Award start date	September 1, 2027
In-person Enrichment Workshop and New Awardee Meeting (required for Awardees and Mentors)	September 19-23, 2027
Award end date	August 30, 2030

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Burroughs Wellcome Fund is committed to fostering the development of the next generation of biomedical scientists. The career development of young scientists has been a major funding theme at BWF. The lack of equal access to advancement opportunities within certain groups, including some historically underrepresented groups, first-generation college students and those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, is a significant problem for the scientific community. Many students with strong SAT scores, impressive grades, and success in high school honors math and science courses leave the college science pipeline. Thus, factors other than school preparation, science aptitude, and interest must be responsible for the low achievement and low persistence of these subgroups of undergraduate and graduate Science & Engineering students.

For this reason, the Burroughs Wellcome Fund created the Postdoctoral Enrichment Program in 2012. BWF is committed to funding the next generation of scientists and researchers, thus we have an interest in advancing the careers of individuals who may have been denied equal access to important opportunities. The primary goal of the Postdoctoral Enrichment Program (PDEP) is to promote equal access efforts and to enhance the postdoctoral training and experience of junior scientists. Funds will be provided to support the following enrichment activities:

1. Activities for the postdoctoral fellow to enhance research productivity, e.g. workshops, courses, travel, collaborations, and training in new techniques
2. Activities for the postdoctoral mentor to increase the mentoring of PDEP fellows in university-based programs:
   - Career guidance of the postdoctoral fellow
   - Research guidance that increases the productivity of the PDEP fellow
   - Attendance at one annual meeting of mentors hosted and/or sponsored by the Burroughs Wellcome Fund (BWF)
3. Participation in a peer network system of postdoctoral scholars

POSTDOCTORAL ENRICHMENT AWARD

The Postdoctoral Enrichment Program (PDEP) provides a total of $60,000 over three years to support the career development activities for postdoctoral fellows at a degree-granting institution in the United States or Canada whose training and professional development are guided by mentors committed to helping them advance to stellar careers in biomedical or medical research. For this cycle, up to 30 awards will be granted for enrichment activities annually. This grant is meant to supplement the training of postdocs whose research activities are already supported. It is not a research grant.

Beginning with the 2023-2024 grant cycle, BWF and the Charles H. Revson Foundation announced a collaboration aimed at expanding equal opportunity efforts in the scientific research community. This partnership expands the advancement of scientists and enhances their contributions to various fields of research.

Through PDEP, the Charles H. Revson Foundation funds up to five additional fellowships to postdoctoral researchers at institutions located within the New York Metro area. PDEP award recipients being supported by the Charles H. Revson Foundation will be recognized as BWF PDEP/ Revson Scholars.

The program provides a total of $60,000 over three years as follows:

Year one: $20,000 will be granted to support enrichment activities of the postdoctoral fellow ($10,000 for research supplies or equipment uniquely required to enhance the postdoctoral fellow's research and $10,000 for education and training, including for mentors in the research lab where the postdoctoral fellow is assigned.) The PDEP award cannot be used to support salary expenses or indirect costs. (Refer to "Terms of Grant" for information on indirect costs and other requirements for use of funds.)

Year two: $20,000 (same allocation as year one)

Year three: $20,000 will be granted to help the postdoctoral fellow advance research efforts towards the professoriate. The funds must be used to develop independent, innovative areas of research.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants for the Postdoctoral Enrichment Award:

- must have no more than 48 months of postdoctoral research experience (in a research laboratory) at the time of application and not be more than 5 years from his/her Ph.D.
- must be based at public or private nonprofit organizations in the United States or Canada, including degree-granting academic institutions, research institutes, and teaching hospitals affiliated with academic degree-granting institutions. A US IRS letter of determination showing non-profit status is required for all applicants. Candidates should check with their institutional officials to confirm the institution's classification.
- must be nominated by a qualified mentor at the institution where the applicant will conduct the postdoctoral/fellowship training. Applications must be approved by an official responsible for sponsored programs (generally from the grants office, office of research, or office of sponsored programs) at the institution.
- must have secured a postdoctoral position with funding (including support by the mentor's existing research grants) at an institution in the United States or Canada and must begin the postdoctoral position on or by the designated award commencement date.
- must have demonstrated a commitment to promoting equal access and opportunity through their activities, background and life experiences, which may be informed by someone's membership in groups that have been historically underrepresented in the sciences.
- must be citizens of the United States or Canada (at the time of application).
- must devote at least 75% of time to research.

In addition to the PDEP awards funded by the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, up to five additional PDEP awards will be funded by the Charles H. Revson Foundation. These awards will be recognized as the BWF PDEP Revson Scholars. This designation is in recognition of postdoctoral researchers at institutions located within the New York Metro area receiving the BWF PDEP award. The PDEP award and programming as a Revson Scholar are largely consistent with BWF, along with some additional engagement in New York with the Charles H. Revson Foundation's biomedical program recipients.

The program seeks to support postdoctoral fellows with Ph.D.s in the biomedical or medical sciences. Applications should focus on foundational, curiosity-driven research in the biological/biomedical sciences. Applicants with M.D. degrees who have secured a postdoctoral research appointment beyond clinical fellowship will be considered for this program. DDS, DVM, and PharmD candidates may be eligible, but should contact BWF prior to applying. Proposals in health services research or involving large-scale clinical trials are ineligible.

IMPORTANT NOTES

A person with more than 48 months of postdoctoral experience (in a research laboratory) at the time of application or with more than five years from his/her Ph.D. is not eligible for this award.

The PDEP award can only be made to institutions in the U.S. or Canada. Institutional Internal Revenue Service determination letter of non-profit status is required as part of the application.

A qualified mentor is required for the PDEP award. It has been documented that individuals are less likely to enter and remain in science and engineering when they lack mentors and role models. Mentors are expected to provide a letter of nomination with the proposal and the mentor's commitment to the applicant's career is important. Mentors of funded PDEP awardees are strongly encouraged to attend a mentoring workshop during the Fall of the year that the award is made. The mentor must explicitly state how the postdoctoral fellow's stipend is being supported since the PDEP award cannot be used to support salary expenses. Please see the characteristics of a qualified mentor under "Selection Process" and expectations of mentors under "Terms of the Award."

SELECTION PROCESS

Selection of award recipients is made by a scientific advisory committee with final approval by the Burroughs Wellcome Fund Board of Directors. Generally, up to 25 Postdoctoral Enrichment Program (PDEP) awards will be made annually. The committee will use the following criteria to identify PDEP fellows who are innovative and committed to research. The award will provide funding to support and advance the PDEP fellow and support clear articulation of the vision and philosophy of advancing his/her career.

Qualifications of PDEP Applicant

- PDEP fellows with strong Ph.D. achievement and actively conducting research in the biomedical and medical areas.

Characteristics of Proposed Mentor

- Capacity, track record, and commitment to advancing the careers of young scientists.
- Willingness to participate in workshops to understand expectations of the award and a commitment to its goals (see Eligibility and Terms of the Award).
- Publications, training, and research background.

Characteristics of Proposed Research Laboratory

- Appropriateness of facilities including laboratory, classroom, and residential spaces where the PDEP fellow is assigned.
- Clear indication of adequate equipment and facilities for work being proposed for PDEP fellows. If additional equipment is being requested, an explanation of why the equipment is required.

Considerations for Sharing a Personal Statement

A competitive application also includes a strong personal statement. The PDEP program prioritizes applicants who have demonstrated a clear commitment to promoting equal access and opportunity through their activities, leadership, and contribution to science.

Key questions/points that an applicant should consider addressing in their Personal Statement:

1. What is your motivation for pursuing your scientific project? How has your life and professional experience led to your current research focus?
2. Using your own lived experience, please describe the skills you have developed to navigate through your career at your academic institutions and explain how you have addressed personal and professional challenges.
3. How has your lived experience altered or driven your view of a future career in science?
4. What is your experience using language and communication to expand access, knowledge, and opportunities for science in your community?
5. Describe your current professional network and how being selected as a BWF PDEP scholar will alter and improve your opportunities in science.
6. In what ways have you served as a leader in your local and scientific community?

TERMS OF THE GRANT/USE OF GRANT FUNDS

Indirect costs may not be charged against BWF grants.

Awards are made to institutions on behalf of the award recipients. The Postdoctoral Enrichment Program (PDEP) award provides a total of $60,000 over three years as outlined below to support the development of a PDEP fellow. Individual PDEP fellows conducting foundational, curiosity-driven research in the biological/biomedical sciences are eligible to apply. Award recipients must commit 75% of their time to research.

The institutions are responsible for disbursing the funds and for maintaining adequate supporting records and receipts of expenditures. Indirect costs may not be charged against the awards.

Award recipients must provide BWF with an annual progress report detailing their progress. Institutions must provide an annual financial report. Both reports must be submitted (on forms that will be provided) by November 1st of each award year. Continued funding will depend on both the timely submission of these reports and their favorable review by BWF and its program advisory committee.

Award recipients may obtain funds from other sources for research in the same or similar areas as that conducted under these grants, so long as there is no conflict with meeting the terms of BWF's award.

This award cannot be used to provide the postdoctoral fellow's salary or to purchase reagents or equipment commonly found in the mentor's laboratory. The award is under the control of the award recipient and may be used flexibly for career development activities as outlined below.

Year one: $20,000 will be granted to support enrichment activities of the postdoctoral fellow ($10,000 for research supplies or equipment uniquely required to enhance the postdoctoral fellow's research and $10,000 for education and training, including for mentors in the research lab where the postdoctoral fellow is assigned.)

Year two: $20,000 (same allocation as year one)

Year three: $20,000 will be granted to help the postdoctoral fellow advance research efforts towards the professoriate. The funds must be used to develop independent, innovative areas of research.

BWF acknowledges that postdoctoral fellows may move to new institutions. Award transfers to another postdoctoral position is considered by the Burroughs Wellcome Fund on a case-by-case basis. Award recipients who change institutions for another postdoctoral position may take with them any equipment or supplies purchased under the award.

Postdoctoral fellows securing a tenured tracked faculty position may be eligible for a transfer award, where remaining PDEP funds may be transferred to the new institution.

Scientific publications or presentations that result from these awards must acknowledge the awardee's receipt of a Burroughs Wellcome Fund Postdoctoral Enrichment Program Award. Copies of journal articles and other publications should be sent to BWF along with the annual progress report.

Awardees should follow their institutions' patent, copyright, and intellectual property policies regarding discoveries that result from research conducted under these awards. BWF expects the appropriate federal, state, and local guidelines with regard to scientific misconduct are in place and enforced at all institutions with which BWF awardees are affiliated.

Awardees should share scientific findings in a timely manner via the standard means of scientific communication, including publications and/or presentations in scientific forums. BWF will not retain any rights to published results or patents that result from the research.

Expectations for Mentors

A qualified mentor is required for the PDEP. It has been documented that many individuals are less likely to enter and remain in science and engineering when they lack mentors and role models. This program is designed to encourage innovative scientists with broad ranging backgrounds and experiences in the biomedical and medical sciences and with experiences in working with postdoctoral fellows to consider serving as mentors.

BWF has developed an enrichment workshop for PDEP awardees and their mentors. The workshop takes place annually in conjunction with BWF's New Awardee Meeting. Details of the workshops will be provided with ample notice and PDEP mentors will be strongly encouraged to participate in a minimum of one mentor workshop within the first two years of the active award period. Discussions and topics will include considerations of the cultural barriers that exist for certain postdoctoral fellows within the scientific community and the value effective mentoring can have on mentee career development and progression.

Questions?

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