

# FAQs

## Please Read Our Eligibility Requirements Carefully

You must meet ALL of the following requirements to apply for an LSRF award:

- 1) U.S. citizens are eligible to work in any geographic location. Non-U.S. citizens must carry out their proposed postdoctoral research in a U.S. laboratory.
- 2) Applicants must apply within 5 years of receiving their PhD (or MD/DVM whichever was awarded later) as of October 1, 2023. If you received your PhD (or MD/DVM) before October 1, 2018, you are not eligible to apply. You may apply before defending your thesis, but must have your PhD (or MD/DVM) degree by the time the award is activated on August 1, 2024.
- 3) You must have begun (or will begin) working in your proposed postdoc lab between August 1, 2022 and July 31, 2024.
- 4) The application requires a letter of acceptance from your proposed postdoctoral supervisor (the Principal Investigator of the lab where you will conduct your postdoctoral training).
- 5) You must complete your postdoctoral training in a lab different from that of your graduate (thesis) lab. Applicants planning to remain in their thesis labs for the duration of their postdoctoral training period are NOT eligible. Remaining in your thesis lab for a few weeks or months after receiving your degree, before moving to your postdoc lab, is acceptable. This period is not your "first postdoc." It is simply a period of time between the receipt of your degree and the start of your postdoc training in a new lab and new research project.

Those pursuing a second postdoc in another new lab with another new project may apply if they meet the above criteria. You must apply within 5 years of PhD receipt AND have begun work in your new proposed postdoc lab between August 1, 2022 and July 31, 2024.

## Four Most Common Questions

Eligibility:

Q: I received my PhD in XXXX and have been working in my postdoc lab for X year(s). Am I eligible to apply for this award?

A: You must meet **ALL** the above listed eligibility requirements to apply.

Application:

Q: Do you have any samples of successfully funded applications? If I am not selected as a finalist, will I receive a review of my proposal?

A: LSRF will not provide a sample proposal, nor will you receive a critique of your submission. There is no standard template for a successfully funded proposal. A creative and innovative research project and well-written proposal are important components. Your best source of feedback is your mentor, lab colleagues or colleagues from other labs. Even with outside input, it's possible to submit an amazing proposal and not be selected as a finalist. It is less a reflection of how good your proposal is and more a reflection of the overall quality of applications in a given year.

Research Area:

Q: What type of research is acceptable for an LSRF proposal?

A: The LSRF accepts proposals from those conducting basic biological research in all areas of life science. The broad categories covering life sciences include: Biochemistry, Cancer Biology, Cell Biology, Computational Biology, Developmental Biology, Immunology, Microbiology, Molecular Biology, Neurobiology, Organismal Population & Evolutionary Biology, Physiology, Plant Biology, Structural Biology, and Virology. We do not have a focus beyond these broad categories.

Deadline:

Q: What is the procedure for requesting an extension to the submission deadline?

A: There is no procedure. No submission deadline extensions will be made. We encourage all applicants to submit well before the deadline, to allow for unexpected delays. A complete application means that an applicant has completed and finalized their submission before 8:00 p.m. EST on October 1, 2023 AND that the required three (3) reference letters and one (1) supervisor letter were received before 8:00 p.m. EST on November 1, 2023.

## ELIGIBILITY FAQs

Q: I completed a DVM degree 8 years ago but completed a PhD this year and began working in my postdoc lab in 2022. Is the fellowship available based on the most recent terminal degree? Am I eligible?

A: Yes, you are eligible to apply. The 5-year rule applies from the date of the last completed degree.

Q: My PhD certificate is dated 1 September 2018 and I would like to apply for the LSRF award in 2023. I recently began a second postdoc in a new lab. Am I right in thinking that I will be eligible to apply in 2023?

A: No, you are not eligible to apply. You must meet **all** eligibility criteria to apply. You meet the requirement of beginning work in your new, second postdoc lab between August 1, 2022 and July 31, 2024 but you received your PhD before October 1, 2018.

Q: I am working as a postdoc. I got my PhD in August 2019. I continued work in my PhD lab for a few months to complete an ongoing project and manuscript; then took a break from lab research for several months. I joined my postdoc lab in September 2022. Am I eligible to apply for the award in 2023?

A: Yes, you are eligible to apply. You received your PhD on or after October 1, 2018 AND began working in your postdoc lab between August 1, 2022 and July 31, 2024.

Q: I got my PhD in the fall of 2019 and I'm just starting my 4th year as a postdoc. I have been in my current lab since January 2020. Am I eligible to apply for the award in 2023?

A: No, you are not eligible to apply. You must meet **all** eligibility requirements to apply. You received your degree after October 1, 2018 but did not begin work in your postdoc lab between August 1, 2022 and July 31, 2024.

Q: I'm a PhD student at the University of New South Wales. I have completed one year and have 2.5 years remaining. Am I eligible to apply for LSRF for my PhD lab project?

A: No, you are not eligible to apply. The LSRF award is for postdoctoral research. Additionally, U.S. citizens are eligible to work in any geographic location. Non-U.S. citizens must work in a U.S. laboratory to be eligible for an award.

Q: If I receive an LSRF award may I transfer it to a different lab and institution if my research project changes?

A: Yes, LSRF does allow award transfers during the award period. Information about this may be found on our Award Details page.

Q: I am a non-U.S. citizen working in a U.S. laboratory and plan to apply for the LSRF award. I may move back to my home country in the next year or two. If I receive an LSRF award and begin it in the U.S. may I take the award with me to a postdoc position in my home country?

A: No, you may not. U.S. citizens are eligible to work in any geographic location while holding an LSRF award. Non-U.S. citizens must work in a U.S. laboratory to be eligible for an LSRF award. If you return to your home country before the three-year award period ends, you will forfeit the remainder of the award.

Q: I just received my PhD and have been offered a semi-independent, non-tenured place at a non-profit university. I will attend the lab meetings of a PI with similar research interests and this PI will provide me with career advice and mentorship. However, I am not officially a member of this PI's lab. Am I eligible to apply for the LSRF award?

A: No, you are not eligible. The award is open only to those in a mentored postdoctoral position within a PI laboratory.

Q: I plan to defend my thesis after the application deadline of October 1. I do not know where I will go for my postdoc yet. May I apply for the award this year?

A: No, you are not eligible to apply. A requirement for the application is that your proposed PhD supervisor submit a letter confirming your acceptance into the lab and guaranteeing that the host institution will adhere to the LSRF award guidelines.

Q: I plan to defend my thesis after the application deadline of October 1. I have been accepted into a postdoc lab beginning in the spring or summer of next year. May I apply for the award this year?

A: Yes, you are eligible to apply. You may remain in graduate student status even after the October 1 application date. The requirement is that you have your PhD by the time the award is activated on August 1, 2024 (assuming finalist and awardee status) and that you will begin working in the lab between August 1, 2022 and July 31, 2024. The application requires your proposed PhD supervisor to submit a letter confirming your acceptance into the lab and guaranteeing that the host institution will adhere to the LSRF award guidelines.

Q: I received my PhD last year and stayed in my thesis lab for several months completing a couple manuscripts and because my proposed supervisor did not have room in the lab until this year. I will move to my postdoc lab in a few weeks. Am I eligible to apply?

A: You are eligible to apply as long as you begin working in the lab between August 1, 2022 and July 31, 2024.

Q: I defended my thesis recently and believe my project still has many avenues to explore. Additionally, my thesis advisor is a great mentor, we work well together, and my family is settled in this area. My partner is a postdoc in another lab so staying put has many advantages on both a personal and professional level. Would you make an exception to the rule and allow an application from a person in this type of situation?

A: No, we will not make an exception. Individuals intending to remain in their thesis labs to complete their proposed LSRF postdoctoral research project are not eligible for an LSRF award. You must complete your LSRF research project in a different lab. Working as a postdoc in your thesis lab for a brief period before moving to your postdoc lab is acceptable.

Q: I applied previously and was not selected as a finalist. May I apply again?

A: Yes, you may apply again this year as long as you still meet the eligibility criteria. LSRF does not track applicants from one year to the next and your application will be reviewed again exactly as any other received this year.

Q: The LSRF is a 3-year award. However, there is a law in my country that limits the length of an external post-doctoral study to 5 years on a J1 visa. After that, I must return home and apply for another type of visa. I started as postdoc in the US in January 2018 and I can stay until January 2023. This means that I can only have an award for 1.5 years. Are there shorter award periods?

A: No, we do not have shorter award periods. Our awards are for three years. This does not mean that every awardee completes the full three years. Some terminate their award early for a variety of reasons, accepting a faculty position and establishing their own lab is one.

Q: The LSRF is a 3-year award. I applied for a different 1-year postdoctoral funding award that begins at the same time as the LSRF award. May I defer the LSRF award for a year if I am selected as a finalist? Are there shorter award periods available from LSRF?

A: No, you may not defer the LSRF award for any length of time. You may not hold another postdoctoral funding award at the same time as the LSRF award. No, we do not have shorter award periods. Our awards are for three years. You will need to decide between the LSRF and other funding if selected as a finalist.

Q: Is an applicant allowed to have any other funding while applying for or holding this award?

A: An applicant may hold outside funding during the application process; but is not allowed to hold another postdoctoral award concurrent with the LSRF award. LSRF must be the main source of funding for the awardee. Supplemental funding in the form of a travel award or similar instances is allowed.

# GENERAL APPLICATION FAQs

Q: What is the difference between the proposal summary/abstract and the proposal relevance statement?

A: The Abstract is a brief and accurate description of the proposed research, limited to 250 words. It will include the project's broad, long-term objectives and specific aims, and a description of the research design and methods. The Relevance Statement communicates the public health relevance of the project to the public in plain language and is no more than two or three sentences.

Q: Do I need to provide IACUC or IRB certification for my project if it involves vertebrate animal research or the use of human tissue?

A: No, LSRF does not require certification documents as part of the application. We expect that you will follow host-institution policy in this matter and must have all applicable certifications in place before accepting an award.

Q: May I submit application updates, such as newly published manuscripts or new and crucial research data to you after October 1?

A: No, it is not necessary, nor do we accept updates after October 1.

Q: I plan to submit similar proposals to other postdoctoral funding organizations. May I still apply to LSRF?

A: Yes, you may apply. We ask that you notify us if you accept another fellowship at any time during the application and review process (October 1 through July 31). An email to [apply@lsrf.org](mailto:apply@lsrf.org) will suffice.

Q: Is preliminary data required or expected?

A: Applications in each of the categories are reviewed by two experts in that broad field. Preliminary data is not necessary. We may solicit ad-hoc reviewers if a pair of reviewers does not feel they have the expertise required to adequately evaluate an application.

Q: Which part of the application is most important?

A: The review committee considers the whole application – CV, publications, proposal, and support letters. Individual sections are not scored independently or tallied for a final result. We seek to support creative, early-career postdocs with innovative research approaches.

Q: My proposal will not upload; the web browser freezes/crashes/quits unexpectedly.

A: Try switching the web browser you are using. The application system is designed to work with most browsers. We do not recommend the use of Internet Explorer.

Q: My proposal will not upload; the web browser freezes/crashes/quits unexpectedly.

A: It may be that your file is too large. Reducing the size of your proposal PDF file. There is no need for a proposal file larger than 5MB. Most complete application files we receive are between 1MB and 3MB.

Q: I am a US citizen considering applying for a postdoctoral position in Europe. Will proposing to work outside of the US impact my chances of getting funded?

A: We hope not. It is clear to all our current and potential sponsors that LSRF is, for them, a free high-quality peer-review system and that all LSRF finalists are worth funding.

Organizations who

choose to fund through LSRF are allowed to select the finalist(s) they wish to sponsor. We have no way of knowing whether a sponsor prefers to fund within the US or not, nor would we ask.

## SPONSORED PROGRAMS / FINANCE FAQs

Q: Do I need to have my grants office sign or submit my proposal?

A: No, LSRF does not require signatures at the time of application. The applicant submits their proposal using our Online application system. The application requires you to submit the name and email address of the person in your grants or sponsored programs office who will be contacted if an award is made. We recommend that you provide a copy of your completed application to your sponsored programs office, so they are aware of your application. If awarded, your sponsored programs office will be required to sign an Institutional Agreement with LSRF. You may refer your sponsored programs office to our Award Details page for more information about the award requirements.

Q: My sponsored programs office is asking for a budget before I submit my application. What do I tell them?

A: LSRF does not require a budget. The award amount of \$77,000/year is split as follows: \$66,000/year for salary and \$11,000/year for the research allowance. This is a 0% IDC award. The host institution is expected to pay the institution's share of an awardee's healthcare / benefit costs.

Q: Our finance office tells me that our institution/department/lab does not have funds to support a 0% IDC award. Can we use the research allowance for the institution's costs?

A: No, never. We realize that funding is extremely tight everywhere. We suggest that all institutions/departments/labs reach out to their development or fund-raising offices to see if suitable funds already exist and to discuss raising funds specifically for awards with limited or no IDC costs allowed. There may be donors or alumni who could be targeted with this type of funding request.

Q: Is an applicant allowed to have any other funding while applying for or holding this award?

A: An applicant may hold outside funding during the application process but is not allowed to hold another postdoctoral award concurrent with the LSRF award. LSRF must be the main source of funding for the awardee. Supplemental funding in the form of a travel award or similar instances is allowed.

Q: My research uses a technology that requires very expensive reagents. The company that provides this technology has an award program providing a limited amount of these reagents to qualified applicants. May I apply for this type of award while holding the LSRF award at the same time?

A: Supplemental funding in the form of a travel award or specific research application is allowed. For instance, many meetings provide travel awards and some companies occasionally make awards of their products or a cash equivalent. These types of small supplemental funding awards are acceptable.

Q: My host institution's postdoc salary scale is higher than what the LSRF award provides. Can I receive additional funding to supplement my salary?

A: Yes, your mentor/supervisor or host institution may supplement your salary to bring it up to existing salary levels at your institution.

Q: My host institution's postdoc salary scale is lower than what the LSRF award provides. Can I be paid at our lower institution level and use the remaining salary amount for more research allowance or let my institution apply these toward the F&A costs related to my award?

A: No, you must be paid at or above the LSRF salary level. No portion of the salary or research allowance may be used for the institutional F&A or indirect costs.

Q: My institution requires postdocs to be classified as employees (not contractors). This means FICA, social security and taxes will be withheld from the salary part of the award. Is this acceptable?

A: Yes, this is acceptable and preferred. LSRF has no restriction on or say in how an awardee is classified by the host institution.

## VISA FAQs

Q: What type of visa is allowed for an applicant?

A: Any visa that allows you to work as a postdoctoral researcher in a laboratory at a non-profit university or research institution. These are typically the TN, J-1 and H1B visas. All visa processes and issues are handled by the host institution where you plan to carry out your postdoc research. LSRF does not require any proof of visa in order to apply. If your proposal is selected for funding, you must have a work visa in place by the time the award is activated on August 1, 2024. You must maintain legal working status for the duration of the award period.

Q: I'll not be holding a valid visa at the moment of the application. However, I'll have it before the award start (if I am one of the finalists). Am I eligible to apply?

A: Yes, you are eligible to apply. LSRF does not require any proof of visa in order to apply. All visa processes and issues are handled by the host institution where you plan to carry out your postdoc research. You must have a valid work visa before the award activation date.

Q: I am a scientist, teacher, writer from outside the U.S. I am currently looking for a possible sponsor for an O1 visa prospect. Will the LSRF sponsor my visa?

A: We do not sponsor any type of visa.

# MENTOR / PROPOSED SUPERVISOR FAQs

Q: I have two mentors. One of them currently has an LSRF awardee in their lab. Am I eligible to apply and receive funding? I meet all of the other eligibility requirements.

A: In the case of co-mentors, if there is a current LSRF awardee in either lab, you will not be eligible to receive funding UNLESS the current awardee's funding were to end before your award begins (assuming finalist status and receipt of funding). This could happen if the current awardee is in their final award year or has indicated that they will end their award early.

Q: My proposed supervisor is also a co-mentor for an applicant in another lab. Is it OK for both of us to apply in the same year?

A: Yes, multiple applicants may apply in the same year from different labs and share a mentor. However, a laboratory may have only one LSRF awardee at a time. Should applicants from different laboratories who share a mentor be selected as finalists only one applicant will be awarded. If an applicant has listed two (or more) proposed supervisors (mentors), we consider that applicant to be a member of both labs.

Q: Can more than one lab member apply for the award in the same year?

A: Yes, multiple applicants may apply in the same year from the same laboratory. However, a laboratory may have only one LSRF awardee at a time. Should multiple applicants from the same laboratory be selected as finalists only one applicant will be awarded.

Q: Another member of my lab (or proposed co-mentor's lab) is a current recipient of this award as of two years ago. Can I still apply to the LSRF this year?

A: Yes, you may apply. In this case if you are awarded your fellowship would begin next year when the current recipient's award ends and there is no overlap. Note that the mentor/co-mentor restriction listed directly before this question is applicable to your question. If your mentor is a co-mentor on another current LSRF awardee's proposal, you would not be eligible to apply unless that awardee will cycle off their award before August 1, 2024.

## LETTERS FAQs

Q: I would like to include support letters from collaborators. How can these be included?

A: We do not accept separate letters from collaborators. Your supervisor(s) may address any collaborations in the supervisor letter of support if they wish to do so.

Q: My acceptance into my proposed laboratory is contingent upon me receiving a funding award. The instructions say that my proposed supervisor must acknowledge my acceptance to their laboratory and the willingness of the Institution to administer the award. Can I still apply?

A: We expect an applicant's proposed supervisor to provide a letter stating acceptance into the lab without any conditions or qualifiers written in the letter. That said, if you and your proposed supervisor have an understanding that no funding = no joining their lab and the supervisor will provide a support letter for your LSRF application without stating this, you are welcome to apply.



# RESEARCH AREA FAQs

Q: What types of research projects receive funding?

A: We do not track this type of data. The LSRF purpose is to secure funding for basic biological research in all areas of life science. We do not have a list of specific research topics that may be funded. Once a subset of finalists is chosen by our review committee, those proposals are presented to current and potential sponsors. *It is the sponsor who selects the finalist(s) they wish to fund.* The number of finalists funded varies from one year to the next and is unpredictable. Being selected as a finalist does not guarantee funding. We do not have an endowment or existing pool of funds so finalists not selected by a sponsor will not be awarded funding. You can see the range of projects currently funded on the "Current Fellows" page of our website, [lsrf.org](http://lsrf.org).

Q: Do you have data on which types of research your sponsors are most likely to fund?

A: No, we do not have this data nor can we predict what projects a potential or existing sponsor may wish to fund. Repeat sponsors can surprise us from one year to the next in terms of the general category of proposal they choose to support.

Q: I wanted to inquire if my area of research fits within the aims of the organization. My research in the fields of astrobiology and extremophile microbiology.

A: The LSRF purpose is to fund basic biological research in all areas of life science. If your project is in a field of basic life science research, you are welcome to apply.