

2026 CARRA-Arthritis Foundation Mentored Career Development Award (MCDA)

Grant Project Period Length: 3 years

Total Grant Funding Amount per award: \$366,000

Grant Availability: Up to 3 awards (at least 1 focusing on JIA; open to all disease areas)

LOI Deadline: January 20, 2026

Data and Sample Share Request Deadline: January 20, 2026

Application Deadline: March 2, 2026

Project Period Start: July, August or September 1, 2026

CARRA's culture of collaboration focuses on facilitating, accelerating, funding, and performing research driven by academicians, clinicians, patients, and families to fulfill its mission: to conduct collaborative research to prevent, treat, and cure pediatric rheumatic diseases. CARRA's peer-reviewed grant program offers various funding opportunities to support investigators at all career levels and advance research that furthers our mission.

Program Description

This mentored career development award is intended to support an early career investigator (fellow, assistant professor) who demonstrates a clear track record and commitment to developing an independent research career in pediatric rheumatology.

All applications must focus on areas identified in the [2023-2025 CARRA-Arthritis Foundation Inflammatory Arthritis Research Agenda](#).

Special consideration will be given to applications addressing the specific topics listed below, which were considered among patients, caregivers, and providers to be of critical importance:

- Precision Medicine
 - Biomarker identification; diagnostic and prognostic
 - Starting/stopping medication
 - Safety and the impact of use of specific medications (e.g., TNF-I in non-systemic JIA)
- Patient Outcomes and Outcome Measures
 - PROs, impact on health-related quality of life, health disparities, and other related issues
 - Long-term outcomes; impact on childbearing, occupation, college, marriage, delays vs. peers, growth, and reproductive health
 - Transition
 - Health-related quality of life (HRQOL)
 - Environmental factors
 - Patient-reported outcomes (PROs)
 - Tools/outcome measure development, implementation, and ongoing validation
- Epidemiology
 - Use of the CARRA Registry (artificial intelligence and data science)
- Representativeness

- Social determinants of health
- Equitable participant representation in the CARRA Registry
- Treatment Development
 - Working with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on acceptable trial designs in pediatric patients
 - Evidence development (use of CARRA Registry and community data)
- Comparative Effectiveness Research
 - Consensus Treatment Plan (CTP) Program (development, revision, and implementation)

All applications must focus on areas identified in the CARRA 2023-2025 [Strategic Plan](#) and 2023–2025 CARRA-Arthritis Foundation Inflammatory Arthritis [Research Agenda](#). The Arthritis Foundation directly supports this award, and priority will be given to proposals with a focus on juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA).

Eligibility

- The project principal investigator (PI) must be a CARRA member in good standing (up to date on membership dues and member profile is current and accurate).
- Applicants must hold an MD and must be at the instructor or assistant professor or equivalent level. Third-year fellows with offers of faculty positions are also eligible.
- The following current CARRA members are eligible to serve as PIs on this award:
 - Pediatric rheumatologists
- Current or past MCDA grant awardees are not eligible to apply.
- Previous and current CARRA awardees who wish to submit new grant applications must be up to date on all award deliverables.

Data and Sample Collection

Grant applicants who intend to utilize the CARRA Registry or CARRA-related data and/or samples must receive approval from the CARRA Data, Sample, and Publications Committee (DSPC) via a data and sample request before submitting their grant applications. Applicants will be required to provide documentation of DSPC approval.

The request must match the intended use outlined in the grant proposal. Failure to receive approval of the data and/or sample request before submission of the grant application will result in the administrative decline of the application.

Data and sample requests take approximately 4–6 weeks for review and approval. If you would like to know more about who can access CARRA data and biosamples, conditions of use, and the review process, please review the Data and Sample Share Policy on the [CARRA website](#).

For more information on requesting CARRA data and/or samples and to access the request form, please visit the Data and Sample Request page on the [CARRA Research Portal](#).

Materials For Submission

Step 1: Letter of Intent

Letters of Intent (LOIs) are due January 20, 2026 in Proposal Central and must include the following information:

- PI Name
- Institution and Contacts
- Key Personnel
- Application Keywords
- Biosketches

LOIs are non-binding and will be used to guide reviewer selection.

Step 2: Full Application

All application text should be Arial 11pt OR Times New Roman 12pt font. Margins should not be less than 0.5 inches on standard letter paper (8.5 x 11 inches).

Applicant/PI

Institution & Contacts

The institution's information will be automatically populated by Proposal Central. Please ensure that the institution's information is correct.

Enter the email address for institutional contacts:

- Signing official
- Financial officer
- Technology transfer officer

Other Key Personnel

Add emails for key personnel participating in the project.

Abstract

- Lay Summary: Please provide a general audience summary. Text only. No special characters or formatting (up to 300 words).
- Project Summary: Please provide a summary for a technical audience. Text only. No special characters or formatting (up to 600 words).

Patient Impact

- Describe how your CARRA-funded award will ultimately directly or indirectly impact patients (up to 350 words).

Project Aims

- Identify two to five aims that outline the project's central objectives within the full funding period. Each aim should also be referenced and fully described within the main Research Proposal document. When inputting the short description of the aim in section 8, please start with the aim number (e.g., "Aim 1: Description of aim"). Enter a short description of your Specific Aim and Associated Milestone. Explain how this aim relates to CARRA's mission and

vision.

Milestones and Deliverables

- Provide a brief description of at least one milestone (timepoint that delineates a key phase in a project schedule) and at least one deliverable (final outputs) per aim. Deliverables may include, but are not limited to, the development of new models, knowledge generation, publications and other knowledge mobilization activities, technical advancements, provisional patents filed, etc.
- Input a brief description (one or two sentences) for each milestone/deliverable. Click the + icon to add rows for each additional milestone/deliverable.

Budget Period Detail

The budget must indicate how funds will be allocated during the project period.

- All PIs are required to dedicate effort to their projects, which must be noted on the budget table. A letter of support from the applicant's division chief must be submitted, documenting that the percentage of effort is available and confirming the investigator's salary. If the PI is the division chief, a letter from the department chairperson is required.
- The funding limit for this award is \$366,000.
- Salary support will be limited to a base salary cap of \$200,000 but can include payment of local fringe rates (in addition to the salary cap).
- Total salary support for the PI(s) must not exceed 60% of total project costs.
- Reasonable poster printing, publication, and travel expenses are permitted.
- Other expenses should be discussed with CARRA staff before application submission.
- CARRA will allow up to 10% Facilities & Administration (indirect) costs, which must be incorporated into the project budget. If indirect costs are requested, total costs for this project must not exceed the amount awarded per year by the grant.

Budget Summary & Justification

- Present items in the same order as they appear in the budget. Explain how the cost of items was arithmetically determined. Provide all consultants' names and organizational affiliations, the services they will perform, the expected compensation rate, travel, per diem, and other related costs. Provide the purpose and destination of each trip and the amount of time spent traveling. List all individuals/organizations with whom consortium or contractual arrangements have been made. List all consortium personnel, the percentage of effort, and the roles in the project.

Organizational Assurances

- Applicants are expected to provide an IRB approval letter, a copy of the IRB application, or an exemption letter.

Proposal Attachments

Applicant's Statement

- Describe how the current project is expected to advance the applicants' goals of pursuing a career in research.
- Description of applicant's current and future research interests and commitment to a career in research.
- Describe any further research training the applicant plans concurrent with the proposed project's completion.
- Provide a timeline which includes a research project and anticipated training benchmarks.
- The page limit is 3 pages, single-spaced. Margins should be 0.5 inches on all sides.

Mentor's Statement/Mentor's Letter of Recommendation

- Include a mentor personal statement and letter of recommendation detailing this person's role in the project and career development plan.
- A letter of support from the division chief of the applicant must be submitted guaranteeing 75% dedicated research effort, with at least 50% dedicated to this project, and confirming investigator salary. If the PI is the division chief, a letter from the department chair is required.
- There is no page limit.
- Statements must address all the bulleted points below:
 - What will the specific role of the applicant in this project be? Be specific and, as much as possible, describe what the daily activities of the applicant will be as they relate to this project.
 - What specific skills are the applicant expected to acquire with this experience? How will acquisition of these skills advance the applicant's proposed research career? How will you determine if the applicant has acquired these skills?
 - Describe the research environment that this project will take place in and the resources available to the applicant.
 - Describe any adjustments that will be made to the applicant's other commitments (clinics, hospital coverage, teaching, etc.) if this grant is awarded.
 - Describe your experience serving as a mentor.
 - Describe your mentoring plan (weekly meetings, etc.) to ensure successful completion of this project.

NIH Biosketch

- In this section, the applicant can upload documents for the application. NIH-formatted Biosketches for all PI(s), co-PI(s), and all co-I(s). Please limit 5 pages per Biosketch and combine all Biosketches into one PDF with the PI(s) Biosketch listed first.
- Applicants should highlight any past CARRA Registry publications in their Biosketch (if applicable).

Research Plan

Formatting guidelines

Use Arial 11pt OR Times New Roman 12pt font. The page limit is 6 pages, single-spaced. Margins should be 0.5 inches on all sides. Organize the Research Plan in the specified order using the instructions provided below. Start each section with the appropriate heading.

Background

Describe/include the following:

- Establish the current status of the field/significance of the problem.
- Reference and discuss the work of experts in the field.
- Indicate how the project will advance knowledge in the field.
- Discuss your team's prior work, if applicable.

Impact and Significance

Describe/include the impact and wider implications of the project, specifically:

- How does this project leverage the CARRA network?
- How does this project positively impact the pediatric rheumatology scientific community?
- How will this project advance CARRA's Research Agenda?

Methods/Activities

Describe/include the following:

- Study question
- Study population
- Study design
- Sample size
- Study sites
- Study schedule
- Primary and secondary outcomes
- Thoroughly describe the project activities and feasibility
- Methods for solving the problem and possible pitfalls
- Timeline for the project activities

Analysis and Statistical Plan

Describe/include the following:

- Qualitative and quantitative analysis plan for the project
- Provide justification for sample size

Environment

Describe/include the following:

- Scientific environment
- Institutional support
- Physical and other resources available to complete the project

Dissemination & Data Sharing:

- Present a plan for sharing the results of the project through a variety of mediums

Sustainability Plan

- If applicable, present a plan for continuing the project beyond the award period and future funding plans. Describe in detail how this project will be used to apply for future funding opportunities.

Specific Aims

- Limit to one page.

Timeline

- List of Project Activities and/or Deliverables

Letters of Support

- Letters of support are required for budgets that include investigator salary/effort. A letter of support from the division chief of the applicant must be submitted, documenting that the percentage of effort is available and confirming the investigator's salary. If the PI is the division chief, a letter from the department chairperson is required.
- Up to 2 letters of support from collaborators, mentors, and institutions are highly recommended. They must reflect the PI's ability to lead this effort and complete the study.

Grant Policies

- Funds will be provided to the awardee's institution and used by the PI according to the project budget. For projects requesting budget support to cover CARRA Registry and Biorepository costs, CARRA will hold the requested funds and pay them to the appropriate vendor.
- If the PI cannot complete the project, any unexpended balance must be returned to CARRA.
- Awardees are expected to submit an abstract after the 1st year of the award and attend the CARRA annual meeting(s) until the project is complete/results have been presented.
- Awardees must submit a final progress report no later than 90 days after the project period end date.
 - Late submission may impact an applicant's eligibility for future CARRA grants and data/sample requests.
- All awardees of funding received through CARRA's Intramural Research Program must abide by the procedures outlined in the current [CARRA Authorship, Publication, and Presentation Guidelines](#) when presenting/publishing findings from their projects.
 - This includes submitting all abstracts, posters, and manuscripts to the CARRA Data Sample and Publications Committee (DSPC) [here](#) for approval prior to submission and acknowledging the support of CARRA and the Arthritis Foundation by including the following language: "The authors wish to acknowledge CARRA and the ongoing Arthritis Foundation financial support of CARRA."
- All requests to distribute research surveys through CARRA's network must be submitted online using the [Survey Request Form](#). As of January 1, 2025, CARRA will not provide staff support to program and distribute surveys. However, CARRA members can request access to CARRA email lists to distribute their surveys. Investigators will be responsible for programming and distributing their research surveys upon request approval and contingent upon receiving required documentation (including IRB approval/waiver).

PI Private & Demographic Info

- The applicant should provide basic demographic information in this section:
 - Gender
 - Race
 - Primary Race

- Ethnicity
- Citizenship

Required Signature Page

The applicant and institutional official must sign the application before it can be submitted.

Online Submission through Proposal Central

CARRA uses an electronic grant submission process. All applicants must submit their full application packages through Proposal Central's online grants management system. Paper applications will not be accepted.

- All applicants must register as users on Proposal Central [here](#).
- Click [here](#) for Proposal Central's guide on how to set up an account.
- Click [here](#) for Proposal Central's frequently asked questions (FAQs).
- Still need help with Proposal Central? Reach out to [Proposal Central's Support Desk](#).

Evaluation of Proposals

CARRA has procedures for assessing the technical and scientific merit of applications to provide for an objective review and to assist you in understanding the standards against which your application will be reviewed. CARRA has indicators for each review criterion to assist you in presenting pertinent information related to that. Generally, at least two scientific reviewers and one caregiver reviewer will assess every application that passes the initial administrative review. Below are the criteria that reviewers use to assess applications.

Scientific Review Committee Grant Scoring Sheet

Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses
1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses

Contact Information:

Program or Administrative Questions:

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Technical Questions:

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