

NEXT GEN PREGNANCY INITIATIVE

Application deadline:

December 5, 2023
(3:00 pm EST)

BURROUGHS
WELLCOME
FUND 

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KEY DATES

Application deadline	December 5, 2023, 3:00 pm (EST)
Finalist interviews	April 9-10, 2024
Notice of award	May 31, 2024
Award start date	June 1, 2024
Initial installment	July 15, 2024
Award end date	March 31, 2028

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Building upon the original goals of the BWF Preterm Birth Initiative, a recently convened Pregnancy Think Tank has helped shape the next iteration of this award mechanism. Growing evidence suggests the interrelatedness of the duration of pregnancy, fetal growth, and adverse pregnancy outcomes such as preterm birth, preeclampsia, intrauterine growth restriction, stillbirth, and maternal medical complications including maternal mortality. Other areas of interest are climate change and environmental impact on pregnancy, complications associated with ART, and epigenome-wide association studies. We have expanded the scope of this award mechanism to capture these and other pregnancy outcomes as we believe they will be mutually informative and accelerate discovery. Each award will continue to provide up to \$500,000 over a four-year period (\$125,000 per year).

The initiative is designed to stimulate both creative individual scientists and multi-investigator teams to approach healthy and adverse pregnancy outcomes using creative basic and translational scientific research methods. The formation of new connections between reproductive scientists and investigators who are involved in other areas is particularly encouraged. Postdoctoral fellows nearing their transition to independent investigator status through senior established investigators are encouraged to apply.

Molecular and computational approaches such as genetics/genomics, immunology, microbiology, evolutionary biology, mathematics, engineering, and other basic sciences hold enormous potential for new insights independently or in conjunction with more traditional areas of parturition research such as maternal-fetal medicine, obstetrics, and pediatrics. We encourage applications seeking actionable therapeutic interventions, novel diagnostics, and device development for real time data capture, and particularly those investigating mechanisms of racial disparities in pregnancy outcomes.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Public or private non-profit organizations in the United States and Canada, including degree-granting academic institutions, research institutes and teaching hospitals, are eligible to receive Burroughs Wellcome Fund support.
- Postdoctoral fellows nearing their transition to independent investigator status through senior established investigators are eligible to apply.
- Proposals should address the biomedical causes and molecular mechanisms underlying adverse pregnancies and their outcomes including but not limited to peri-implantational events, placentation, fetal determinants, fetal-maternal immune responses, biological basis for racial-ethnic disparities, mechanisms relating preterm birth to other adverse pregnancy outcomes, biology of normal labor, genomics, evolutionary influences, maternal complications and other approaches. Proposals seeking to identify biomarkers predicting preterm birth are welcome.
- Citizens and non-citizen permanent and temporary residents of the U.S. and Canada who are legally qualified to work in the U.S. or Canada are eligible.
- Candidates who are temporary U.S. residents must hold a valid U.S. visa (J-1, H1B, F-1 or O-1 visas).
- Temporary Canadian residents must hold a valid Canadian visa (Study Permit, C-43, C-44, C-10, or C-20 work permits/visas).
- If you are a postdoctoral candidate, your visa status must allow you to remain in the U.S. or Canada during the project period of the grant. If a grant is awarded and your visa does not allow for such a stay, BWF may terminate the grant. BWF will not intercede on behalf of non-citizens whose stay in the U.S. or Canada falls out of visa compliance.
- Proposals can be submitted by individual investigators or research teams designating a contact principal investigator. At least one member of the team must have training and expertise outside the traditional areas of reproductive science.
- BWF is also interested in Preterm Birth Risk Stratification using artificial intelligence and machine learning.
- Proposals that cross institutional boundaries (partnerships between multiple universities or collaborations within larger universities) are welcomed.
- Current or active BWF preterm birth grant or next generation pregnancy award recipients are not eligible to reapply.
- Former BWF preterm birth or next generation pregnancy award recipients whose grant has been completed may reapply for another award provided the proposal submitted is a substantially different proposal (must not be a continuation or slight modification of previous work). The principal investigator must demonstrate successful outcomes and highlight significant achievements from the earlier award.

Note: Postdoctoral fellows nearing transition to independent investigator status are **welcome** to contact program staff directly at ngp@bwfund.org about their planned proposal, competitiveness for the award, transferring to a new institution, and other questions that may arise.

For additional information regarding permitted use of funds, see Terms of Grant.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- BWF strongly encourages applications from persons who have been historically underrepresented in the research enterprise, including but not limited to: women of any ethnic or racial group; any person identifying as Black or African American, Latino/a or Hispanic American, Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, indigenous to the Pacific Islands, indigenous Canadian; persons with disabilities; persons from disadvantaged backgrounds (see <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-20-031.html> for examples). BWF also strongly encourages individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+ to apply.
- An Internal Revenue Service determination letter of the institution's non-profit status will be requested by BWF staff if said letter is not on file in our database.
- Candidates who currently hold a Burroughs Wellcome Fund award must contact BWF staff (ngp@bwfund.org) prior to beginning an application.

SELECTION PROCESS

BWF utilizes an interdisciplinary [Advisory Committee](#) to review applications, interview finalists, and make recommendations for approval by the Fund's [Board of Directors](#).

Selection will be based on the creativity, novelty, and innovation of the proposal as well as the likelihood of a significant impact in the area of adverse pregnancy outcomes.

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

TERMS OF GRANT/ USE OF FUNDS

Indirect costs may not be charged against the awards. Institutional overhead may not be charged against BWF grants.

Awards will be made to public or private non-profit organizations in the United States and Canada, including degree-granting academic institutions, research institutes and teaching hospitals on behalf of the principal investigator. The principal investigator's institution is responsible for disbursing the funds and for maintaining adequate supporting records and receipts of expenditures.

Scientific publications or presentations that result from these awards must acknowledge the principal investigator's receipt of a Burroughs Wellcome Fund Next Gen Pregnancy Initiative award. Copies of journal articles and other publications should be sent to BWF along with the annual progress report.

The principal investigator should follow their institutions' patent, copyright, and intellectual property policies regarding discoveries that result from research conducted under these awards. The principal investigator must adhere to all federal, state, and local regulations regarding the participation of human subjects, and the use of animals, radioactive or hazardous materials, and recombinant DNA in their research projects. 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 grant recipients are affiliated.

The principal investigator 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.

The principal investigator must provide BWF with an annual progress report detailing scientific progress. Institutions must provide an annual financial report. Both reports must

be submitted (on forms that will be provided) by June 1 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.

The support allocated for research is under the control of the principal investigator and may be used flexibly for items such as equipment, consumable supplies, travel to scientific meetings, and laboratory personnel working with the principal investigator. Prior approval by BWF is required when, within an award year, purchases of equipment exceed \$20,000 or travel costs exceed \$8,000.

During the award period, unused research funds may be carried over to the succeeding year. The principal investigator may receive a no-cost extension; requests explaining why an extension is needed must be submitted in writing at least two months prior to the end of the award. At the termination of the grant period, grant balances of \$500 or less may be retained by the institution.

BWF allows for an institutional allowance of up to 10% of the total Grant to support the cost of fringe benefits, such as health insurance premiums, vacation, or retirement for the Named Investigator. When the cost of fringe benefits exceeds the institutional allowance, the Institution is expected to cover these costs as an indication of support for the Named Investigator. Any portion of the institutional allowance which is not used to support the Named Investigator's benefits will be added to the Named Investigator's research allowance.

Award recipients may not hold concurrent BWF awards.

Up to seven (7) research grants will be awarded. Research grants will provide \$500,000 over a four-year period (\$125,000 per year) and are expected to begin June 1, 2024.

APPLICATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

Full proposals:

Interested candidates who meet the grant criteria will need to submit one online proposal through BWF's Grant Application System. A completed full proposal consists of data entry fields submitted through the online Grant System plus required PDF attachments. Application Deadline: **December 5, 2023 by 3:00 pm (Eastern).**

Proposal Elements:

- **Primary Applicant Information**
 - Basic Information of Principal Investigator
 - Education and Training
 - Demographic Information
 - Biographical Sketch of Principal Investigator
- **Collaborator Information (9 Maximum)**
 - Collaborator Details
 - Collaborator Biographical Sketch
 - Collaborator Letter of Support
- **Applicant Institution Information**
 - Institutional Details
 - Institutional Certification Form (template provided)
 - IRS Determination Letter
- **Proposal Information**
 - Lay Abstract
 - Scientific Abstract
 - Research Plan (12-page limit)
 - Bibliography
- **Project Budget (Budgets MUST total \$500,000 or less)**
- **Certification**
 - IRB Certification
 - Animal Care Certification
- **Reprints/Publications (10 Maximum)**

All communications, including the invitation to interview and declinations, will be made through email.

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

[Download Forms and Templates](#)

Key Application Components:

Be prepared in advance to populate the application with the following data components and required documents in addition to the Principal Investigator (Primary Applicant) information.

A. Collaborator Contact Information

Enter the contact information of all investigators involved in the proposed project that will be assisting the principal investigator (maximum of 9). At least one member of the team must have training and expertise outside the traditional areas of reproductive science.

B. Lay Abstract (one page)

Describe a brief summary of your research project to explain the significance, innovation, impact, and relevance of the proposed research to people who do not have prior knowledge about the subject.

C. Scientific Abstract (one page)

Describe the proposed work, including specific aims that is understandable to a multidisciplinary group of scientific reviewers. Use 11 or 12 point font for the text.

D. Research Plan (12-page limit)

For the research plan, the specific aims should be limited to the first page of the proposal, and the remaining 11 pages dedicated to the research plan. Your plan should describe the interdisciplinary nature of the proposal, the research plan, and the impact of the work on adverse pregnancy outcomes. It should be a complete, cohesive, and coherent scientific document that tells a story. Use a standard 11-point font for the text, and no smaller than a 9-point font for figures or tables. Text must be single-spaces, with one-inch or larger margins on all sides. Number the pages of the research plan.

A bibliography or reference list is optional and **NOT** considered part of the 12-page limit. The list of literature references should be directly related to the research plan. Published papers may be cited.

E. Biographical Sketches

Provide the standard NIH biographical sketch of the Principal Investigator and at least one scientist working outside the area of reproductive science, and all other collaborators/partners. Each biosketch should not exceed five pages. Do not exceed 10 biosketches (including PI). A five-page CV may be substituted for applicants at Canadian degree-granting institutions.

F. Letters of Support from all Collaborators or Partners

Provide letters of support from all collaborators or partners discussing their expertise and role(s) in this research project and include at least one letter from one scientist working outside the area of reproductive science. Maximum of nine letters.

G. Budget

Complete the budget and justification that explains how this research grant will be spent over four years. The proposed budget may be used for consumable supplies, equipment, travel expenses, administrative personnel, student stipends, salaries and benefits, and other appropriate expenses relative to the research.

The principal investigator is allowed up to \$20,000 per year to be used for salary support, including fringe benefits. BWF allows for an institutional allowance of up to 10% of the total Grant to support the cost of fringe benefits, such as health insurance premiums, vacation, or retirement for the Named Investigator. See Terms of Grant. There is **NO** limit for salary support including fringe benefits for collaborators, other laboratory or clinical personnel working with the award recipient. Equipment purchases should not exceed \$20,000 per year and travel costs should not exceed \$8,000 per year without written authorization. **No indirect costs or institutional overhead can be charged to this grant.**

H. IRB Certification

Certification from all collaborating institutions' IRB if human subjects are to be used – one page approval sheet only. Note: IRB certification must be obtained by the start date of the award (June 1, 2024).

I. Animal Care Certification

Certification from all collaborating institutions Animal Care and Use Committee if animal models

are to be used – one page approval sheet only. Note: Animal care certification must be obtained by the start date of the award (June 1, 2024).

J. Reprints/Publications

Include relevant publications or manuscripts submitted for publications that demonstrate your capabilities and research accomplishments. Maximum of 10.

K. Institutional Certification Form

Using the template provided, complete the form including signature of an authorized signing official (grants/contracts office, sponsored programs) of the principal investigator's institution.

L. IRS Determination Letter

Upload a copy of the institution's most recent IRS determination letter that indicates the institution is recognized as a 501(c)(3) organization.

Note to Applicants:

Proposals will not be accepted after **3:00 pm** Eastern Time on **December 5, 2023**. The online application system shuts down automatically at the deadline and the SUBMIT button will no longer be available.

- Plan to submit your application well in advance of the grant deadline to allow adequate time to troubleshoot any issues.
- Out of fairness to all applicants, late submissions will not be accepted. No exceptions or extensions will be granted.
- After the deadline, applicants with incomplete proposals and those not adhering to instructions will be disqualified without prior notice.
- Only proposals submitted through BWF online application website will be accepted.

Questions?

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

Next Generation Pregnancy Program Email Address:
ngp@bwfund.org