



New Jersey Autism Center for Excellence (NJACE) Seed Grant Request for Applications (RFA) 2025

Important dates:

March 21st, 2025	Letter of Intent Due (Required)
May 16th, 2025	Application Due
August 1st, 2025	Notice of Award

Program overview (NJACE)

The NJACE grant was awarded to Children's Specialized Hospital (PI: Wayne Fisher) in July 2023, with a subcontract to Rutgers University. In addition, Autism New Jersey is a collaborating institution. The goals of the NJACE are to improve health outcomes of New Jersey residents at all life stages with a focus on community-oriented research tailored to the autism community and their needs. This includes both basic research focused on understanding biological or environmental variables that may improve ASD outcomes in the future and clinical research focused on improving outcomes for ASD individuals.

One of the specific aims of the NJACE is to create a seed grant program that will promote interdisciplinary research and training that complements the existing grant program provided by the Council. We will address this specific aim (i.e., develop enduring basic, applied, and science-to-practice research on autism) by developing a seed grant program to facilitate the development of competitive research grant applications focused on interdisciplinary research, such as an Autism Center of Excellence (P50) grant application. Second, we will create another seed grant program to address our second specific aim (i.e., develop enduring autism training programs) that will facilitate the development of competitive ongoing training grants (e.g., NIH T32 grants) focused on interdisciplinary basic, translation, clinical, or dissemination research.

Successful applications for these research and training seed grants are expected to describe how the proposed work will make impactful and innovative contributions to understanding ASD and ultimately lead to improved outcomes for individuals with ASD and their families/caregivers, even if improved outcomes are not an immediate product of the project. For example, if an application for a research seed grant is proposing basic research with the short-term goal of better understanding the neurobiology of repetitive behavior, the application also should articulate how achieving that short term goal could also further the long-term goal of improving outcome for individuals with ASD and their families/caregivers.

Grant Information

Developing a robust and experimentally sound research or training grant application can require many hours of work and the collaboration of many parties. However, successful funded grants have produced meaningful research projects, scientific advancements, fruitful training programs, and supported making medically necessary services more accessible to vulnerable populations. The NJACE seed grants are aimed at aiding faculty in developing robust and impactful research projects or training programs in pursuit of ongoing funding. Specifically, the NJACE is interested in providing seed grants to faculty in pursuit of research or training grants that will address the any of the following critical areas of need areas:

- (a) transition to adulthood, including health care, educational pursuits, and employment;
- (b) developmental support services (e.g., early identification, co-occurring ID);
- (c) use of data to drive measurable health improvements;
- (d) identifying and targeting vulnerable populations for interventions to address health disparities; and

(e) promotion of collaboration across sectors to develop health policies and achieve health equity.

Eligibility

Full-time Faculty or Qualified Research Institutions in New Jersey: Only those employed by entities credentialed as a qualified research institution in the State of New Jersey may apply for a seed grant. The research-credentialed entity must have established procedures to receive and administer Federal and State grants and adhere to procedures for the protection of human subjects as regulated by NIH. The research-credentialed entity must also have an Institutional Review Board (IRB) that will approve the proposed research activities.

Number of grants available

For this funding period, two seed grants (1 research and 1 training) will be awarded. The research seed grant will support up to \$125,000 per year for two years (\$250,000 total, including direct and indirect costs). The training seed grant will support up to \$112,500 per year for two years (\$225,000 total, including direct and indirect costs).

Letter of Intent

A letter of intent (LOI) is required prior to submission of the application. The letter of intent will be a short document, not to exceed one single-spaced page, describing the project and PI using the LOI template provided in Appendix A.

Application

The requirements for the full application are provided in Appendix B.

Budget preparation

Budgets must include fringe rate calculations and personnel costs/justifications for full-time and part-time employees/consultants where applicable. Direct and indirect costs for the duration of the grant must be detailed. Maximum indirect cost is 10% (e.g., \$25,000 of the available \$250,000). The fringe benefits are restricted at 15% for all personnel with no exceptions whatsoever.

Review process

All applications will be reviewed in accordance with the process described below. The determination of awards will be made through a two-step process:

1. Administrative review:

Upon receipt, all grant applications will be reviewed by the NJACE administrative team for compliance with the outlined regulations in this RFA, and to ensure completeness and accuracy. If the grant application needs correction due to a budgetary issue, the applicant will be contacted

to provide a revised budget. If the NJACE administrative team determines that the application does not meet the administrative requirements, the application will be denied and will not be forwarded to the next phase, independent scientific review.

2. Independent scientific review:

The NJACE will identify a committee of reviewers based on the number of grant applications and the content of those applications. The review committees will be tasked with determining the relevance of all applications to the priorities of the NJACE, before evaluating the applications on the significance of the application to critical areas of need and feasibility. Based on these reviews, the committee will make funding recommendations to the NJACE administrative team.

The NJACE administrative team will receive the applications triaged by the review committees along with their recommendations. The NJACE will make the final funding decisions, considering the mission, priorities, and critical areas of need.

Research seed grant applications will be reviewed according to the following criteria:

1. Significance of the proposed research and hypothesis.
2. Innovation.
3. Scientific evidence supporting the hypothesis to be tested.
4. Feasibility and adequacy of the procedures to be used in the research.
5. Evidence of research experience of the PI and staff in the proposed research area.
6. Reasonableness of the budget in relation to the objectives, methods, approach, procedures, and data analysis proposed.
7. Likelihood that the project will lead to future outside funding.

Training seed grant applications will be reviewed according to the following criteria:

1. Significance of the proposed training program and goals.
2. Innovation.
3. Feasibility and adequacy of the procedures to be used in developing the training program.
4. Evidence of experience of the PI and staff in the proposed training area.
5. Reasonableness of the budget in relation to the objectives, methods, approach, and training procedures proposed.
6. Likelihood that the project will lead to future outside funding.

Post-award reporting

At the conclusion of the review process, all applicants will be formally notified of the outcome of their application as soon as possible but no later than August 1st, 2025 via a letter of intent to fund or a letter of denial.

Questions

For any questions, reach out to the NJACE at NJACE@childrens-specialized.org.

Appendix A: Letter of Intent Form

New Jersey Autism Center for Excellence (NJACE)

Seed Grant Letter of Intent for 2025

Funding Opportunity: Research Seed Grant Training Seed Grant
 Plus-1 Seed Grant Postdoctoral Fellowship Grant

Principal Investigator (PI): Fill Here

PI Address: Fill Here

PI Email: Fill Here

PI Telephone: Fill Here

Project Collaborators (if applicable): Fill Here

Fellowship Mentor(s)/Supervisor(s): Fill Here

Participating Institutions and Organizations (including FEIN#): Fill Here

Project Overview

Descriptive Title of the Project Proposed: Fill Here

Specific IACC Question Addressed in Proposed Project (selected from Appendix 1): Fill Here

Significance: Fill Here

Specific Aims: Fill Here

Approach: Fill Here

Appendix B: Application Instructions

- Font: Arial 11 point. (A smaller type size may be used for figures and graphs but must be legible.)
- Margins: Use at least one-half inch margins (top, bottom, left and right) for all pages.
- Proposal must be submitted to NJACE@childrens-specialized.org as a single PDF file and titled: LastName_FirstName_SeedGrant_NJACE2025.pdf
- Format and order of documents must be strictly adhered to. Submissions that do not meet the following guidelines, will be returned without review.
- Submissions must include
 - **NIH Biosketch for PI and key personnel**
 - Use format currently required by NIH.
 - Include Other Support
 - List all external and internal research support regardless of relevance to this application, including pending applications. Give grant number, title, duration, amount for current year, total value of award, and source of support.
 - **Scientific Abstract**
 - Limited to 250 words
 - **Lay Abstract**
 - Limit to 250 words using simple, everyday words and sentences.
 - **Specific Aims**
 - Limited to one page
 - **Proposed Funding Source (e.g., NIH, PCORI)**
 - **Research (or Training) Strategy**
 - Limited to 6 pages (not including references, budget, and budget justification)
 - Sections include (See for detailed suggestions)
 - Significance
 - Innovation
 - Approach (include expected outcomes & measurement)
 - **Literature Cited**
 - **Protection of Human Subjects**
 - **Budget**

- Funds cannot be used for memberships, food, drink, lodging, the purchase of books or subscriptions, or travel to meetings of professional societies (unless the investigator is presenting research supported by the grant).
- **Budget Justification**
 - As per NIH guidelines for a detailed budget

Additional Information for Training Seed Grants

Training seed grants are meant to assist in pursuing ongoing training grants (e.g., T32 NIH training grants). The NJACE would like to see: (a) creative and effective methods of fostering communication across disciplines; (b) opportunities for junior researchers to partner with and be mentored by more senior researchers; (c) methods to disseminate up-to-date information on the latest research on best practices in autism; (d) raise awareness on the critical areas of need as identified by stakeholders in the autism community; (e) encourage and foster the development of innovative research into the causes, diagnosis, early detection, prevention, and management of autism; and (f) organize a multidisciplinary team with plans to continue to facilitate feedback and input from other interest groups and stakeholders (e.g., autism self-advocates). Funding from the seed grants and funds obtained from other sources for future training grants can be used by awardees in many ways, including but not limited to stipends, training funds, tuitions, trainee travel costs, or training related expenses. Applications should include (a) identification of a future funding source that best fits the goals of the training program; (b) a set of clear and compelling goals and objectives for the program and how each concept aligns with those of the funding source and the proposed NJACE; and (c) a comprehensive and practical plan for evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the training program over time, with plans set in place for continued improvement. Additionally, applications should describe some of the following aspects in their proposal: (a) creative and flexible learning opportunities for trainees (e.g., simulation-based training), (b) on-the-job training, (c) programs that prioritize the development of meaningful research, and (d) programs that target vulnerable communities to close the gap in access to services.

Additional Information for Research Seed Grants

Research seed grants are meant to assist in pursuing ongoing research grants (e.g., P50 NIH grants). The NJACE would like to see research proposals that support the critical areas of need outlined above. Applications should describe: (a) how the proposed research project will improve the literature base on the causes, diagnosis, early detection, prevention, and management of autism; (b) a future funding source that best fits the research project; (c) a clear and achievable research protocol; (d) the literature base supporting the procedures and the need for the proposed research study; and (d) a comprehensive and practical plan for pursuing future federal funding.