Policy for requesting letters of support for award/grant applications

Overview

Award and grant applications often require letters of support that fall under two main categories:

- **Letter of Recommendation**: Endorses you and your research
- **Letter of Institutional/Organizational Commitment**: Confirms that you have been given space, resources, and/or finances to develop your career

**Read the award/grant guidelines to determine who should be writing the letter.**

**Chair of the Department**
- Chair of Harvard Ophthalmology: **Joan W. Miller**

**Division/Department Chief**
- Chief of Ophthalmology, Joslin Diabetes Center/Beetham Eye Institute: **Lloyd Paul Aiello**
- Director of Research, Schepens Eye Research Institute: **Patricia D’Amore**
- Ophthalmologist-in-Chief, Boston Children’s Hospital: **David Hunter**
- Chief of Ophthalmology, Mass. Eye and Ear: **Joan W. Miller**

To request a letter from Joan W. Miller or Pat D’Amore, follow the process on page 2. For all other requests, contact individuals directly or follow their preferred guidelines.
Requesting Letters: Step-by-step

If you need a letter from:

- Chair of Harvard Ophthalmology: Joan W. Miller
- Director of Research, Schepens Eye Research Institute: Patricia D'Amore
- Chief of Ophthalmology, Mass. Eye and Ear: Joan W. Miller

Follow these steps:

**Six (6) weeks before you intend to submit your application**

**STEP 1.** Talk with your mentor(s)

**STEP 2.** Talk with your clinical service director (as appropriate)

**STEP 3.** Reach out to research leadership:

**Pat D'Amore, Basic Science Research**
Vice Chair for Basic and Translational Research, Harvard Ophthalmology; Associate Chief of Basic and Translational Research, Mass. Eye and Ear; Director of Research, Schepens Eye Research Institute of Mass. Eye and Ear

-or-

**Janey Wiggs, Clinical Research**
Vice Chair for Clinical Research, Harvard Ophthalmology; Associate Chief of Clinical Research, Mass. Eye and Ear

**STEP 4.** Inform your Integrated Grants Administrator (MEE/SERI) or Assistant (if you have one) about your intentions.

**NOTE**

If you are a Senior Investigator: Research leadership confirms your eligibility and ensures that this is a good time for you to submit

If you are an Early-stage Investigator: Research leadership confirms your eligibility; and discusses your career path, funding opportunities, future research projects, and the extent of the institutional resources (promises) that may be available. See page 3 for list of related funding opportunities.

**Four (4) weeks before you intend to submit your application**

**STEP 5.** Send the following materials to suzanne_ward@meei.harvard.edu, christine_carroll@meei.harvard.edu, your Integrated Grants Administrator (MEE/SERI, if applicable), and the appropriate person in Research Leadership (D’Amore or Wiggs):

- CV
- Research summary
- Letter requirements
- Summary of institutional commitment (if applicable)
- Due date

**Three (3) weeks before you intend to submit your application**

- Joan and Research Leadership review letters

You and/or your IGA will receive the signed letter as Dr. Miller’s schedule allows, before the deadline.
I’m a postdoctoral research fellow or an early-stage investigator. What funding opportunities are available, and which ones require a letter from the Chair or Chief?

**Key Terms**

The term, *early-stage investigator*, refers to Harvard Ophthalmology faculty members (Instructor, Assistant Professor) who conduct research and are in the early phase of their career (i.e. young investigators; junior investigators).

Early-stage investigators interested in pursuing funding opportunities should consult the current guidelines. Eligibility can vary among funding agencies, and from year to year.

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**Examples of Funding Agencies, Opportunities, and Letter Guidelines**

**Department of Defense**
Various grants/awards
- *Chair Letter*: introduces & endorses applicant

**Foundation Fighting Blindness**
Various awards
- *Chair Letter*: introduces & endorses applicant

**Harvard Medical School**
- Eleanor and Miles Shore 50th Anniversary Fellowship (Adler, every year for SERI, Mass. Eye and Ear, Ophthalmology on odd years)
- Leadership Development Course for Physicians and Scientists
  - *Chair Letter*: endorses applicant

**Knights Templar Pediatric Ophthalmology**
- Career-starter Research Grant
  - *Chair/Chief Letter*: confirms institutional commitment

**MGH Center for Diversity and Inclusion**
- Clinician-Teacher Development Award
  - *Chair Letter*: confirms institutional commitment
- Physician-Scientist Development Award
  - *Chair Letter*: confirms institutional commitment

**National Institutes of Health**
- K-awards (K08, K12, K23, K99)
  - *Chair Letter*: confirms institutional commitment
- R01/U01
  - *Chair Letter*: introduces & endorses applicant

**Research to Prevent Blindness**
- Career Development Award
- Special Scholars Award
  - *Chair Letter*: confirms institutional commitment

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1 Early-stage investigators are also known as “junior” or “young” investigators. As these descriptors conflate age with experience, Harvard Ophthalmology prefers the terms, “early-stage” or “early-career,” to more accurately describe an individual’s level of experience without reference to age.

2 Partial listing. Additional opportunities will be added as they become known.