

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**,¹ 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.

Read guidelines carefully

Institutional Commitment

If the guidelines require a letter confirming the department's commitment of space, time, resources, finances, career development, etc.

- Talk with your mentor and research leadership to discuss your career path, future research projects, and the extent of the institutional resources (promises) that may be available. (See page 2 for details.)

Research Independence

Some funding opportunities are only available to independent researchers. Read the guidelines carefully to determine what is meant by "independence."

- In general, evidence of independence includes pursuing your own research ideas; obtaining your own funding; and running your own laboratory.
- At Harvard Medical School, the rank of Instructor in Ophthalmology is considered a *pathway to independence*, and not evidence of independence.

Examples of Funding Agencies, Opportunities,² 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

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.