



CMT Research Foundation

Questions? Contact kate.andersh@cmtrf.org

Program Name:	2026-2027 George and Cleary Simpson Award For Emerging Researchers
Grant Opportunity:	GCSAFER — Focused Research Award
Website:	cmtrf.org/research/emerging-researcher-award
Funding Amount:	\$75,000 for a one (1) year project duration.
Who Should Apply?	Early-career independent researchers who completed their last doctoral degree (MD, PhD, etc.) no more than 10 years prior to the application deadline or current graduate trainees (including MD, PhD, or MS students). See Section V.

Brief Program Description

The CMT Research Foundation values bringing fresh talent and thinking into the CMT research arena. The George and Cleary Simpson Award for Emerging Researchers provides support for one early-career researcher per year to tackle high impact, innovative science aligned with CMTRF's research priorities.

Awards will be prioritized to applicants that propose research projects with strong scientific merit and high potential to result in further research related to CMT drug development. Within the year's defined focus area, applicants are strongly encouraged to bring bold, creative, and innovative approaches, narrowing the program to a specific priority is not meant to narrow ambition.

This cycle's Focus area, the specific challenge for applicants to address, is **transcriptional regulation of the peripheral nerve using omic-level analysis**.

Key Dates

Date	Milestone
October 15- November 12, 2026	OPTIONAL Letter of Intent (LOI) submissions period open*
December 7, 2026 – January 29, 2027	Application submissions period open
Spring 2027	Applications reviewed
June 1, 2027	Award notification issued
July 1, 2027	Earliest project start date

**Option for applicants to receive preliminary feedback from CMTRF advisors on proposed research ideas.*

Table of Contents

- I.** About Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease and the CMT Research Foundation
- II.** Program and Award Overview
- III.** Funding Amount and Duration
- IV.** Value Beyond the Grant Dollar
- V.** Eligibility
- VI.** Research Criteria and Focus Area
- VII.** Letter of Intent Submission Process — OPTIONAL
- VIII.** Application Submission Process
- IX.** Project Review Process and Criteria
- X.** Contract Execution
- XI.** Resources and Other Information
- XII.** CMTRF Contact Information

I. About Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease and the CMT Research Foundation (CMTRF)

Charcot-Marie-Tooth (CMT) is a group of inherited neuropathies caused by genetic mutations that result in damage to the peripheral nerves responsible for transmitting signals between the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) and all other parts of the body, including the arms, hands, legs and feet. People with CMT experience problems with balance, walking, fine motor skills, and more. Symptoms may begin as early as birth or later in adulthood and gradually worsen over time. There are multiple forms of the disease, with varying genetic prevalence and different biological mechanisms leading to disease. Collectively, CMT affects approximately 150,000 people in the U.S. and more than 3 million people around the world.

There is no effective treatment or cure for CMT.

The CMT Research Foundation (CMTRF) is a patient-led, non-profit organization focused on advancing the development of treatments and cures for CMT. CMTRF's focus is to support projects that can lead to new therapeutics for CMT or greatly advance the speed and volume of CMT drug development. CMTRF [grant opportunities](#) have funded 31 projects so far, supporting promising CMT research in academia, industry and other entities. To date, CMTRF has invested over \$8M in research, and contributed to the progress of 9 pipeline therapeutics for CMT.

II. Program and Award Overview

For the 2027 grant cycle, CMTRF continues the Emerging Researcher Award (ERA) program under its redesigned George and Cleary Simpson Award for Emerging Researchers Focused RFP model. Rather than an open call inviting applicants to propose their own research direction, each cycle centers on a single, specific research focus area. A defined challenge, topic, or priority will be selected annually aligned with CMTRF's scientific priorities. The focus area can shift from year to year, but the program's structure, one focused topic and one \$75,000 award, stays consistent. Within the year's focus area, innovative and creative approaches are highly encouraged. **This cycle's Focus Area is transcriptional regulation of the peripheral nerve using omic-level analysis.**

The core goals of the GCSAER Grant are to:

- Engage and recruit new talent and thinking to CMT research.
- Encourage the exploration of new or innovative ideas within the year's defined focus area.
- Generate meaningful preliminary data that can be used to launch larger CMT research projects.

III. Funding Amount and Duration

Under the redesigned model, CMTRF issues a single guaranteed award of \$75,000 per grant cycle.

- Salary support can only account for up to 50% of the total amount requested. The majority of funds requested must be used for research expenses.
- Applicants may request up to \$1,500 for travel during the award and are highly encouraged to use this to attend a future Global CMT Research Convention. For selected awardee, CMTRF will provide free registration for the upcoming Global CMT Research Conventions during the award period.
- Indirect costs must not exceed ten percent (10%) of the total budget and must be justified. Approval of indirect costs is at the discretion of CMTRF.
- The award is intended for a one-year duration.

IV. Value Beyond the Grant Dollar

Funding alone is not the program's only differentiator. CMTRF is considering the following additional benefits for awardee:

- Access to top experts through relevant CMTRF consortia and committees.
- A presentation slot at the annual Global CMT Research Convention.
- Mentorship and networking with established researchers in the CMT field.

V. Eligibility

- Applicants must have obtained a doctoral degree (MD, PhD, etc.) no more than 10 years before the date of the application deadline or current graduate trainees (including MD, PhD, or MS students).
- Postdoctoral and predoctoral applicants will require a letter of support from a PI sponsor/mentor. Early career investigator applicants must have the resources and ability to conduct independent research or have their own lab by the proposed start of the award.
- Proposed ideas must be independent of PI-led projects or concepts that have not been previously funded or explored and must address this cycle's defined Focus Area (see Section VI).
- Work may be conducted in academic, non-profit, or pharma/biotech institutions.
- For industry applicants, academic-industry collaborations are encouraged, but not mandatory.
- Applicants from all countries are eligible to apply.

VI. Research Criteria and Focus Area

For the George and Cleary Simpson Award for Emerging Researchers, research projects must include innovative approaches that address the challenge or gap defined within this cycle's Focus Area. Collaborative projects or efforts across research groups and institutions are highly encouraged. All projects must:

1. Address this cycle's defined Focus Area: **Transcriptional regulation of the peripheral nerve using omic-level analysis**
2. Include basic science, translational, or clinical research applicable to CMT drug development, specific to individual CMT subtypes or applicable across multiple CMT forms.

VII. Letter of Intent Submission Process- Optional

LOI submission period open: October 15, 2026 – November 15, 2026.

Prior to submitting a full application, applicants are highly encouraged to submit an OPTIONAL short 2–3 page Letter of Intent (LOI) describing their project idea ahead of the full proposal, so that CMTRF staff and the review committee can review the idea and provide initial feedback and suggestions to incorporate into the full application.

- LOIs can be submitted at any time during the LOI submission window.
- Feedback will be provided within 4 weeks (excludes holidays).

- Skipping the LOI stage will not negatively impact the review of the full application.

No registration is required for the LOI submission site.

The LOI asks for the following:

- Your information
- PI sponsor/mentor information (if applicable)
- Confirmation of alignment with this cycle's Focus Area
- Project title
- Expected proposed project budget
- A two-to-three-page project summary, including a one-paragraph summary; rationale; aims; preliminary results; research plan; timeframe; references.

VIII. Application Submission Process

Application submission period open: December 7, 2026– January 29, 2027 by 5:00 PM (Eastern).

A link to the online Submission Portal will be shared Fall 2026.

1. Submission Portal Registration and Use

On the Submission Portal:

- You will be asked to create a username and password.
- You will be asked to complete a profile.
- Once logged in, you will land on your personal applications dashboard, which describes what and how to prepare for your application.
- Items marked *** below can be prepared separately and then uploaded to the application as files. PDF is recommended; most other electronic formats are accepted (Word, Excel, PNG). Documents should be typed using Times New Roman 12 or Arial 11, with margins no less than a half inch on each side, and information presented clearly and concisely. Key figures and legends must be of sufficient quality and size to be evaluated by the reviewer.
- Once you start an application you can "save as draft," log out, and return later to complete it.

2. General Application Information

Complete sections as follows:

- **Application Type:** Check "Pilot Grant."
- **Applicant Information:** Complete your personal details as requested.
- **PI Sponsor/Mentor Information:** If you do not have an independent laboratory, provide the requested information for your mentor. If you already have an independent laboratory, a mentor is not required, but you may optionally identify a senior scientist who provides collaborative mentorship.
- **Title of Project.**
- **Lay Summary** (one paragraph): A brief overview of the project understandable by a non-scientist. Do not include confidential or proprietary information.
- **Scientific Summary** (one paragraph): A brief overview of the project in scientific language, used to inform the scientific community.

- **Focus Area Confirmation:** Confirm that the proposed project addresses this cycle's defined Focus Area.
- **Research Stage** (bench-to-bedside): check one — Basic, Translational, or Clinical.

3. Scientific Proposal: Limit 5 pages (excluding references)***

This must include:

- **Abstract** (1 page limit): Briefly describe the background, rationale, and proposed Specific Aims.
- **Background:** Critically evaluate existing knowledge and identify the gaps the project intends to fill. State the importance and rationale relating the specific aims to longer-term objectives and this cycle's Focus Area. Describe the relationship of the proposed work to your long-term career goals as they apply to CMT.
- **Preliminary Results:** If applicable, provide preliminary results supporting the project or rationale.
- **Experimental Design and Methods:** Provide experimental design and methods, describing protocols, expected data, analysis approach, and how results will impact the research plan. Discuss potential pitfalls, limitations, and alternative approaches.
- **Facilities and Equipment Available:** Describe resources for this project (laboratory, clinical, animal, computer, office, etc.) and any collaborative-site facilities to be used.
- **External Research Support:** If the project includes consultant arrangements or collaboration outside your group, describe the working relationships and provide letters of support.

4. Proposed Budget***

- **Total Amount:** Pilot Grant awardees receive \$75,000.
- **Currency:** Budget requests must be in US dollars (USD).
- **Detailed Budget***:** Use the CMTRF budget template (link posted on the website), fill it out, and create a PDF. Budget tables have pre-set formulae — enter data only where indicated in red.

Budget Table 1: Direct Costs — Personnel

For Pilot Grants, Personnel Costs cannot exceed 50% of the total budget.

- Enter name, role, base salary/year, % effort, and calendar months for each individual seeking salary support — totals auto-calculate. For hires yet to be made, enter "TBD" under name.
- Enter the distribution by Aim for each individual; totals in the orange subtotal boxes should match.

Budget Table 2: Direct Costs — Research

- Categories include animals, reagents/supplies, equipment, contractor and technical service fees, and travel.
- Applicants may request a \$1,500 stipend to support Convention travel.
- Enter category, description, and cost across applicable Aims; subtotals auto-calculate.

Budget Table 3: Overall Requested Budget

- Direct cost numbers auto-calculate.
- Indirect cost requests must be entered manually (max 10% of total budget) and are approved at CMTRF's discretion.

Applicant Attestation

Once the budget tables are complete, provide the attestation confirming the information is accurate and complete to the best of your knowledge.

Budget Justification* (2 pages maximum)**

Address all categories applicable to your budget. Prepare as a Word document or PDF and upload to the appropriate application section.

- **Personnel:** For each person, provide a paragraph (≤10 lines) on role, training, and justification for % effort/months. For "TBD" positions, describe the qualities sought and recruitment timeline. NIH Biosketches will be requested for all listed personnel.
- **Research costs:** Provide a breakdown of all research-related costs (animal studies, reagents/supplies, equipment, contracting/consulting, other).
- **Indirect Costs:** Must be justified and cannot exceed 10% of total direct costs.

Unallowable Costs

- General office technology, computers, software fees.
- Office supplies.
- Publication costs.
- Conference travel, with the exception of the approved CMTRF Convention travel stipend.
- Facility renovation or furniture.
- Entertainment or living expenses.
- Insurance, visas.
- Indirect cost requests in excess of 10% of the direct cost request.

CMTRF reserves the right to disapprove costs outside of this list.

5. Gantt Chart***

A clear visual timeline for your milestones and the conduct/completion of the proposed work. Use the CMTRF template (link posted on the website), complete it, create a PDF, and upload as indicated.

6. NIH Biosketches***

Required for the applicant, PI Sponsor/Mentor (if applicable), and any other key collaborators referenced in the application, including international applicants. Format must follow the [NIH Biosketch guidance](#).

7. Letter of Support

Applicants without their own lab or independent experimental capacity must provide a letter of support from a PI sponsor/mentor specifying availability of/access to sufficient resources. Applicants with an independent laboratory may optionally name a senior scientist providing collaborative mentorship; if named, a letter of support must be attached.

8. Institutional Review Board/IACUC Approvals***

Where applicable, CMTRF requires U.S.-based awardees to obtain IRB approvals in accordance with federal policies for human subjects research and animal research. Copies must be uploaded with the application; if pending, provide expected review/approval dates. CMTRF will not release payments until these documents are on file.

9. Other Support

Provide information on any other current and pending research funding (grants, stipends, scholarships), including source agency, grant type, amount, duration, grant number (if known), and abstract, to help

CMTRF identify and resolve potential sources of overlap. Commitment of an individual's effort greater than 100 percent is not permitted.

10. Application Submission

Before clicking "Submit," be sure the application is complete. You will receive an automated confirmation email, and your application status will display "Submitted" on your portal dashboard. Once submitted, an application cannot be edited. Questions or accidental incomplete submissions:

kate.andersh@cmtrf.org

IX. Project Review Process and Criteria

It is anticipated that review of applications will be completed within the review window noted in Section VII (Key Dates).

1. Applications will first be reviewed by CMTRF staff to ensure they are complete and meet the goals of the program. Those that do not may be triaged.
2. Applications will be evaluated by the review committee on the following criteria:
 - **Significance:** Does the project have the potential to advance scientific knowledge, address the year's Focus Area, and lead to meaningful outcomes for CMT research and treatment?
 - **Innovation:** Is the project idea, approach, or technology not currently being explored or addressed by others in the CMT field?
 - **Approach:** How scientifically sound and feasible is the project plan?
 - **Research Team and Environment:** Does the applicant have the expertise/resources to carry out the project, and interest in continuing it after the award?

Score	1	2	3	4	5
Significance	Groundbreaking potential; ability to fundamentally advance CMT research or treatment.	Clearly addresses significant challenges; outcomes promising and impactful.	Adequately addresses challenges; outcomes achievable but may lack transformative potential.	Marginally addresses challenges; outcomes unclear or speculative.	Fails to address critical challenges or lacks potential for meaningful outcomes.
Innovation	Highly innovative, introducing groundbreaking concepts that could reshape current understanding or methods.	Demonstrates clear innovation with new ideas, technologies, or approaches.	Moderately innovative; some novel aspects but not entirely unique.	Minor innovations; approach is only somewhat distinct.	Lacks originality or replicates existing efforts without added value.
Approach	Exemplary plan; rigorous, well-thought-out, and highly feasible.	Well-designed and feasible, with minor areas for refinement.	Scientifically sound with room for improvement in execution.	Some aspects feasible, but plan has major weaknesses.	Poorly designed, unrealistic, or lacks feasibility.
Research Team and Environment	Exceptional expertise/support and resources; ideal environment with clear commitment to long-term impact.	Strong expertise and supportive environment with minor limitations.	Adequate expertise/support and environment, with room for strengthening.	Limited expertise/support or resources; environment may hinder success.	Team lacks required expertise or resources; environment is unsupportive.

3. The single guaranteed award will go to the project nominated by the committee with the strongest overall score.

4. All awards are subject to compliance with applicable regulations and CMTRF policies and are contingent upon agreeable contract terms.

X. Contract Execution

If your application is approved for funding, you will receive a Letter of Award. Following this, CMTRF will negotiate an Award Contract with your institution. CMTRF forges partnerships with funded grantees that include a revenue share program, reinvested into translational research for treatments and cures for all types of CMT. Every contract includes a return on the Research Foundation's initial investment, which is reinvested in new projects. Once the contract is fully executed, award funding can be issued.

XI. Resources and Other Information

For the latest updates and news about this RFA, visit cmtrf.org/research/emerging-researcher-award

XII. CMTRF Contact Information

For technical support and grant information: Kate Andersh, PhD, Scientific Portfolio Manager, CMTRF — kate.andersh@cmtrf.org

For scientific and project applicability questions: Meghan Drummond, PhD, VP of Research and Drug Development, CMTRF — meghan.drummond@cmtrf.org