

Applying to the NIH HEAL Initiative PainCare Clinicians Training Program (PCTP) Mentored Career Development Awards (K08, K23) – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is the goal of the HEAL Career Development (K08/K23) Awards for Pain?

The purpose of the NIH Heal Initiative PainCare Clinician Training Program (PCTP) is to support the career development of individuals with clinical doctoral degrees (see below for more eligibility details) to create a group of new and well-trained independent investigators in the field of pain.

What research topics are allowed?

Applications may propose research within the clinical pain management area (encompassing chronic pain, acute pain, recurrent/episodic pain, the transition from acute to chronic pain, and/or a combination of these). Some examples of research areas include: health equity in pain management, biomarkers, chronic overlapping pain conditions (COPC), implementation science, non-opioid treatments for pain, pain across the lifespan, pain education, prevention of chronic pain, and placebo analgesia.

When should I consider applying to an NIH Institute and Center (IC) career development award vs a HEAL K23 or K08 career development award?

Many career development awards will continue to be funded by a specific Institute or Center (IC) at NIH when the aims of the career development award fall under an IC mission. Please first contact the IC(s) to see if your proposed aims would be considered appropriate for funding within their IC. If the IC(s) indicate that your career development awards do not fall within their mission, please reach out to the contacts for the HEAL K23 and K08s (contact information below). Please refer to the list of [Pain Consortium Members](#) for NIH IC points of contact and links to the IC's mission statements (<https://www.painconsortium.nih.gov/about/pain-consortium-members>).

The HEAL K23 and K08s may prioritize applications that propose: research on [cross-cutting topics](#) that include research areas across multiple NIH institutes and centers (ICs); research that may not fit into one specific IC's mission (e.g., a study examining outcomes for musculoskeletal pain and sleep); and/or research topics that are not commonly funded by an IC (e.g., studies examining provider decision-making or studies that do not include patient reported outcome measures).

What are the eligibility requirements for applying?

You are eligible to apply for the [K23](#) if you have a health professional doctorate degree (e.g., MD, DO, DDS, PharmD, nursing research) or a PhD/doctorate in clinical disciplines (such as clinical psychology or nursing), and if you have completed clinical training. Additionally, you must propose research that involves working with patients (clinically-based research).

You are eligible to apply for the [K08 awards](#) if you have a research or clinical doctoral degree (e.g., MD, DO, DDS, PharmD, nursing research) or a PhD/doctorate in clinical disciplines (such as clinical psychology or nursing). Individuals with PhDs in non-clinical disciplines that are certified to perform clinical duties should contact a Program Officer to discuss eligibility. Applicants may propose clinical or pre-clinical research (see below for more information on the K08 awards).

General requirements:

- Applicants must be licensed to practice clinically in the U.S.
- Applicants must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents by the time of award. Only domestic institutions are eligible to apply.
- Candidates must have full-time appointments at their academic institutions and must commit a minimum of 75% of full-time professional effort to the proposed research and career development activities.
- Candidates must identify a mentor to supervise the proposed career development research, and the mentor must be an active investigator in the proposed area of research (candidates are encouraged to identify more than one mentor). Ensure that mentors meet the mentorship competencies outlined in the NOFO.

When are applications due?

There are several receipt dates, shown in the table below:

Receipt Dates	Resubmission Dates
October 12, 2024	November 12, 2024
February 12, 2025	March 12, 2025
June 12, 2025	July 12, 2025
October 12, 2025	November 12, 2025
February 12, 2026	March 12, 2026
June 12, 2026	July 12, 2026
October 12, 2026	November 12, 2026
February 12, 2027	March 12, 2027
June 12, 2027	July 12, 2027

Are resubmissions allowed?

Yes, resubmissions are allowed.

The following are the resubmission dates based on receipt date:

Receipt Dates	Resubmission Dates
October 12, 2024	November 12, 2024
February 12, 2025	March 12, 2025
June 12, 2025	July 12, 2025

October 12, 2025	November 12, 2025
February 12, 2026	March 12, 2026
June 12, 2026	July 12, 2026
October 12, 2026	November 12, 2026
February 12, 2027	March 12, 2027
June 12, 2027	July 12, 2027

How do I know which K award I should apply to?

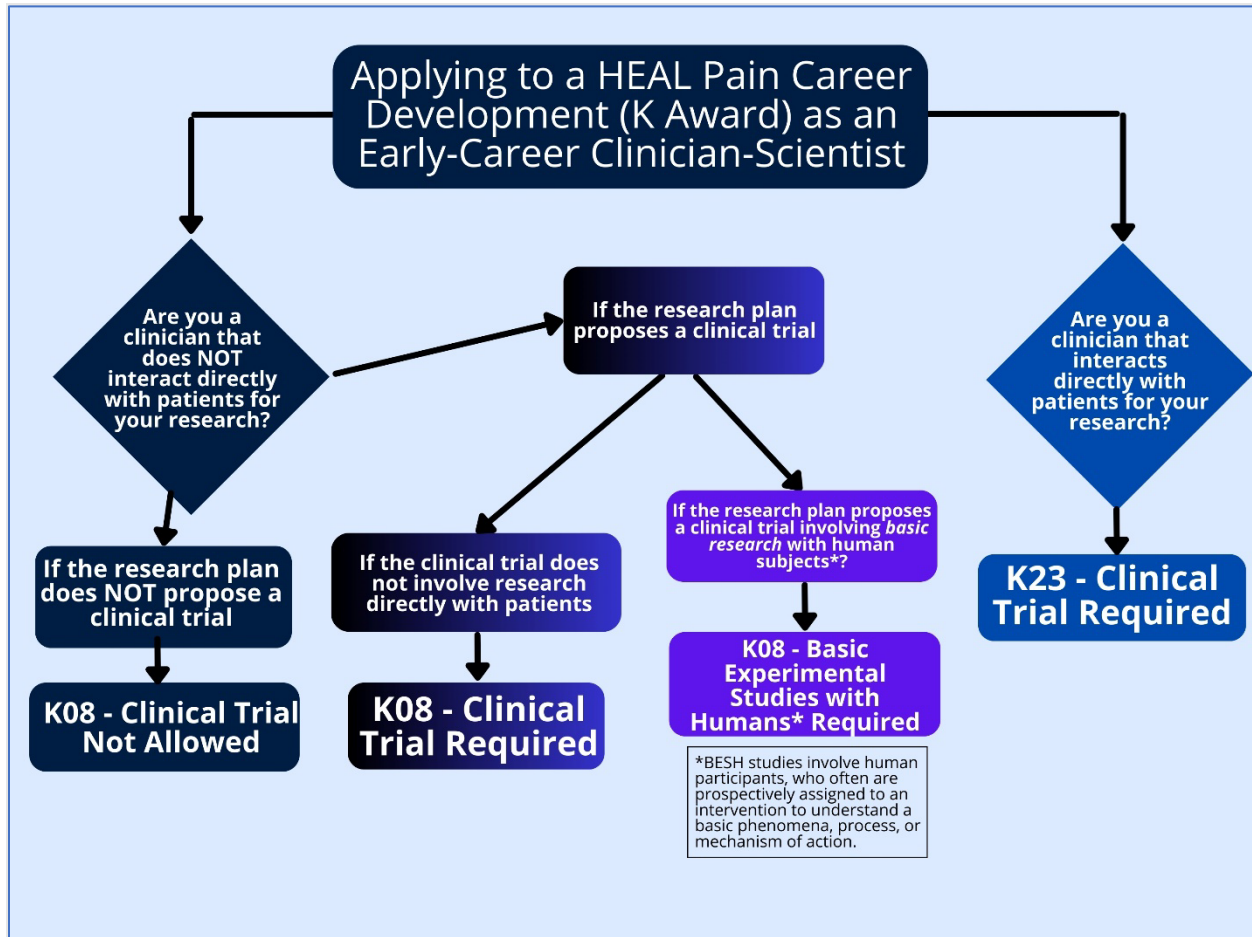
The mentored career development awards (K08, K23) are intended for early-career clinician-scientists who require additional mentored training, in addition to the development of an outstanding research project, in order to achieve research independence (e.g., to be competitive for an R01 or equivalent award). Applicants should apply to a mentored K award if they believe an additional 4-5 years of mentored training is required to achieve research independence.

Applicants should apply to the [K23 \(Clinical Trial Required\) NOFO](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-24-220.html) (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-24-220.html) if they are an early-career clinician-scientist that interacts directly with patients as part of their research. Applicants to this award are proposing to serve as the lead investigator of an independent [clinical trial](#), a clinical trial feasibility study, or a separate ancillary study to an existing trial, as part of their research and career development, and they have a mentor/mentoring team to support their research activities. For the K23, applicants must propose research that involves working with patients (clinically-based research).

Applicants should apply to the [K08 \(Clinical Trial Required\) NOFO](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-24-217.html) (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-24-217.html) if they are an early-career clinician-scientist doing basic research or clinical research. Applicants to this award are proposing to serve as the lead investigator of an independent [clinical trial](#), a clinical trial feasibility study, or a separate ancillary study to an existing trial, as part of their research and career development, and they have a mentor/mentoring team to support their research activities. Applicants may propose research involving patients (clinically-based) or they may propose basic research.

Applicants should apply to the [K08 Basic Experimental Studies with Humans \(BESH\) Required NOFO](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-24-218.html) (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-24-218.html) if they are an early-career clinician-scientist proposing basic science studies involving human participants. These studies fall within the [NIH definition of a clinical trial](#) and also meet the definition of basic research. Examples of studies that could be submitted for this type of award include studies that prospectively assign human participants to conditions (i.e. experimentally manipulate independent variables) and that assess biomedical or behavioral outcomes in humans for the purpose of understanding the fundamental aspects of phenomena without specific application towards processes or products in mind.

Applicants should apply to the [K08 \(Clinical Trials Not Allowed\) NOFO](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-24-219.html) (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-24-219.html) if they are proposing research that does not involve leading an independent clinical trial, a clinical trial feasibility study, or an ancillary clinical trial. For this award, applicants can propose a research experience in a clinical trial led by a mentor or co-mentor. Research types that could be eligible for K08 Clinical Trials Not Allowed included, but are not limited to, studies without a comparison group/treatments, secondary analyses studies, or epidemiological studies.



What is the difference between the K08 (Clinical Trials Required) and K23 (Clinical Trials Required) awards?

The purpose of the **K23** award is to provide individuals who have a clinical doctoral degree with an intensive, supervised, **patient-oriented research experience** by providing support and protected time to be able to transition to an independent clinical research career. The K23 Clinical Trials Required NOFO is meant for applicants proposing to serve as the lead investigator of an independent [clinical trial](#), a clinical trial feasibility study, or a separate ancillary study to an

existing trial, as part of their research and career development, where the **clinician interacts directly with patients as part of their research.**

Similar to the K23, the goal of the K08 award is to provide individuals with clinical doctoral degrees with intensive, supervised research career development experience by providing support and protected time to be able to transition to an independent clinical research career. The **K08 Clinical Trial Required NOFO** is meant for applicants proposing to serve as the lead investigator of an independent clinical trial where the proposed research involves **basic laboratory science**, as well as **research on human subjects that does not involve direct interaction with those subjects.** **Data-based studies** are also appropriate for this award.

For both the K23 and K08 awards, the eligibility for the Principal Investigator (PI) is the same:

- Must have an M.D. or comparable clinical doctoral degree
- Must have completed clinical training and be board-eligible by the time of award
- Must commit a minimum of 9 calendar months (75% of a full-time appointment) worth of effort to the K-award

If you want advice about which NOFO to apply to, speak to a Program Officer (contacts below). You can also visit [this website](#) for a list of case studies/examples to help you determine whether your study would be considered by NIH to be a clinical trial.

Where will these applications be reviewed?

All applications will be reviewed by the NINDS training review panel. The HEAL career development awards will be reviewed with other neuroscience career enhancement awards. The reviewers may not be pain experts.

What is the salary?

The career development awards will offer \$125,000 in salary per year to recipients.

What are the direct costs allowable with the award? What are the indirect costs?

NIH will pay direct costs for a career development award such as salary support, travel to conferences, reimbursement to participants, etc. The career development award also allows an awardee to request \$50,000 per year which can include items such as: training; salary; participant reimbursement; travel to research meetings and/or trainings; tuition support; fees and books related to career development; supplies; equipment; other research expenses; statistical services (including personnel and computer time).

Indirect costs (Facilities and Administrative Costs) are reimbursed at 8% of modified total direct costs.

Am I required to attend the PURPOSE Annual Meeting?

Yes, all awardees will be required to attend the annual PURPOSE Meeting. The [PURPOSE Annual Meeting](#), held by the [PURPOSE Network](#), facilitates the creation of a network of pain

research mentors and mentees; fosters communication between scientists and clinicians of different disciplines; and provides enhanced mentorship, leadership courses, and any additional trainings that might be helpful for early-career scientists. Recipients of the HEAL K08/K23 career development awards are required to attend - and may be asked to present at - the HEAL R24 Annual National Pain Scientist Career Development Meeting. It is therefore recommended that applicants build in travel costs (up to \$2,000) for the PURPOSE Annual Meeting as part of their proposed budget.

Should I join the PURPOSE Network?

Recipients will be required to join the PURPOSE Network in order to attend the PURPOSE Annual Meeting. It is also encouraged to join the PURPOSE Network to get access to a community of pain researchers and online webinars and trainings. You can join the network by visiting: <https://painresearchers.com/>

Am I required to attend the HEAL Annual PI Meeting?

Attendance at the [HEAL Annual Scientific Meeting](#) is encouraged. PIs may choose to use their travel funds to go to the meeting, but it is not a requirement. Additionally, if you are invited to speak at the meeting, your travel costs will be covered.

Who should I contact if I have additional questions?

Primary contacts for scientific/research questions:

Laura D. Wandner (NINDS) – laura.wandner@nih.gov

Elizabeth Sypek (NINDS) – Elizabeth.sypek@nih.gov

Secondary contacts for scientific/research questions:

Mark Egli (NIAAA) – megli@mail.nih.gov

NIA Training Office (NIA) – niatraining@mail.nih.gov

Helena H. Ahn (NICHD) – Helena.ahn@nih.gov

Lanay M. Mudd (NCCIH) – lanay.mudd@nih.gov

Rebecca N. Lenzi (NIAMS) – rebecca.lenzi@nih.gov

Nastaran Zahir (NCI) – nas.zahir@nih.gov

For financial/grants management questions: ChiefGrantsManagementOfficer@ninds.nih.gov

What other resources exist as I prepare my application?

[Suggestions for a Good Career Development Plan](#)

[NIH Definition of a Clinical Trial](#)

[NIH Loan Repayment Program](#)

[Institutional Support for Mentored K Awards](#)

[Information on Institutional Commitment for K08 Awards](#)

[Webinar: Understanding Career Development \(K\) Awards](#)

[NIH Pain Consortium: Grant Mechanism Webinar Series](#)

[Know Your NIH Institutes & Centers \(ICs\) - Webinar Series Hosted by the PURPOSE Network](#)
(must have an account with <https://painresearchers.com> to access this webinar series)