



Solve M.E.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Supporting new and early-career investigators to advance ME/CFS discovery and build the foundation for future breakthroughs.



RAMSAY
RESEARCH
GRANT PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

The Solve M.E. Ramsay Research Grant Program is designed to grow and strengthen the scientific workforce studying ME/CFS, Long COVID, and related infection-associated chronic conditions and illnesses (IACCI). The program provides targeted funding for innovative, early-stage studies that advance biological understanding, with a primary focus on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) and Long COVID.



The Ramsay Scholars Grant Program honors ME/CFS pioneer Dr. A. Melvin Ramsay, whose careful clinical descriptions helped establish ME/CFS as a serious medical condition. His determination to understand the disease continues to inspire Solve M.E.'s work today. (Photo: ME-pedia)

Since its inception, Ramsay has supported high-impact pilot research that generates critical preliminary data, attracts new investigators to the field, and lays the groundwork for larger studies and downstream funding. Ramsay prioritizes innovative, mechanistically driven studies with the potential to open new lines of inquiry or accelerate progress in the field. Projects may leverage emerging technologies, existing datasets, biospecimen repositories, or cross-disciplinary approaches, particularly where these resources can help researchers enter the field efficiently and generate actionable preliminary findings.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Ramsay Scholars Grant Program aims to:

- **Expand the ME/CFS and IACCI research workforce** by attracting new investigators and supporting sustained engagement in the field
- **Generate rigorous preliminary data** that can enable larger studies and external funding
- **Advance biological understanding** of ME/CFS and Long COVID through innovative, hypothesis-driven research
- **Strengthen the research pipeline** by connecting investigators with relevant expertise, resources, patient-informed priorities, and the broader research community

AWARD INFORMATION

Solve ME is currently soliciting proposals for:

- **Ph.D. Student Award:** \$50,000 for one year
- **Postdoctoral / New Faculty / Returning Faculty Awards:** up to \$100,000 over two years
 - *This includes investigators re-entering the field after career interruptions (e.g., medical leave, family leave, or military service)*
- **Collaborative Research Award:** up to \$150,000 over two years
 - *This award prioritizes collaborations between at least two researchers. Ideally, at least one of these researchers is new to ME/CFS, Long COVID, or infection-associated chronic condition research. Multi-site projects are acceptable, but the award budget limit applies per project, not per institution.*

ENCOURAGED RESEARCH AREAS

The Ramsay Scholars Grant Program welcomes rigorous pilot studies that advance biological understanding of ME/CFS and Long Covid. Areas of particular interest include, but are not limited to:

- **Mechanistic, systems biology, and multi-omic research:** studies identifying disease pathways, patient subgroups, biomarkers, or therapeutic targets through approaches such as genomics, proteomics, metabolomics, immunologic profiling, neuroimmune biology, cellular metabolism, vascular biology, microbiome studies, or integrated multi-system analyses.
- **Comparative and cross-disease research:** studies comparing ME/CFS with Long COVID or other chronic, post-infectious, infection-associated, or overlapping conditions to clarify shared and distinct mechanisms.
- **Biobank-enabled research and existing data resources:** studies using biospecimens, pre-pandemic ME/CFS cohorts, public datasets, registry data, or other high-quality resources to accelerate discovery, replication, or validation.
 - *Pre-pandemic ME/CFS cohorts are of particular interest because they can help distinguish ME/CFS biology from SARS-CoV-2-related effects and clarify overlap with Long COVID.*

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants may include:

- Graduate students enrolled in a PhD program, pre- or post- qualifying exam
- Postdoctoral fellows
- New faculty:
 - Early-stage Investigators (within the first 5 years of leading an independent research program)
 - Established investigators who are new to ME/CFS, Long COVID, or IACCI research
- Faculty re-entering academic research after career interruptions
- Collaborative research teams involving two or more institutions or research groups.
 - Collaborative awards are intended to bring new expertise into the field. Applications may include an established ME/CFS investigator, provided the collaboration meaningfully engages at least one investigator or research group new to ME/CFS, Long COVID, or infection-associated chronic condition research.

ALLOWABLE COSTS

Funds may be used for research personnel, supplies, core services, biospecimen processing, data analysis, participant compensation, and other direct research costs necessary to complete the proposed work.

Equipment, travel, publication costs, subcontracting, and indirect costs (up to 10%) must be justified and are subject to Solve M.E. approval.

NON-RESPONSIVE TOPICS

Applications will generally be considered non-responsive if they:

- Do not focus on ME/CFS, Long COVID, or infection-associated chronic conditions
- Lack a clear research question, hypothesis, or measurable scientific outcome
- Are primarily educational, advocacy-based, or programmatic rather than research-focused
- Focus on general wellness or symptom management without a rigorous research design
- Do not align with the goals or scientific priorities of the Ramsay Research Grant Program

Clinical, behavioral, rehabilitation, or care-delivery studies may be considered responsive if they include a rigorous research design and a clear rationale for advancing clinical translation, trial readiness, patient-centered outcomes, or future research.

SUBMISSION AND REVIEW PROCESS

The Ramsay Scholars Grant Program uses a **two-step application and review process**. The Step 1 Research Plan is intended to provide a concise overview of the project concept and fit with the Ramsay program. The Step 2 full proposal should provide the methodological, analytical, and feasibility detail necessary for reviewers to evaluate scientific rigor and likelihood of success.

Step 1: Initial Research Plan

All applicants must first submit a concise, high-level **Research Plan** and a current CV or biosketch through the application portal.

Initial application deadline: November 13, 2026

The initial Research Plan should not exceed ~800 words total (not including references, budget, supplement, or CV) and should include:

- Specific Aims
- Background and Significance
- Preliminary Data, if applicable, or scientific rationale
- Research Design and Methods
- Proposed use of biobanks, existing datasets, and/or pre-pandemic cohorts, if applicable
- Expected Outcomes and Future Directions
- Potential Problems and Alternative Strategies
- References
- High-Level Project Budget
- Supplemental Materials, if applicable
 - This includes preliminary figures, tables, or graphs, uploaded in Word or PDF format.
- Current CV or Biosketch

Initial applications will be reviewed for scientific merit, alignment with Ramsay program priorities, feasibility, and potential to advance ME/CFS, Long COVID, and related IACCI research.

Step 2: Full Proposal and Blinded Peer Review

A subset of applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal for **double-blind peer review**.

Invitation to submit full proposal: December 4, 2026

Full proposal deadline: January 8, 2027

Full Proposal Components

Applicants invited to Step 2 will receive detailed submission instructions and templates. The full proposal should build substantially on the initial Research Plan and provide sufficient detail for rigorous, blinded scientific peer review.

The full application will include:

- Cover Pages and Applicant Information
- General Audience Summary
 - A concise, nontechnical description of the project, its significance, and potential impact for the ME/CFS, Long COVID, and broader IACCI communities.
- Technical Abstract
 - A scientific summary of the central hypothesis, aims, approach, and expected outcomes.
- Full Research Plan, including:
 - Specific Aims and Central Hypothesis
 - Background and Significance
 - Clear description of the knowledge gap being addressed and why the proposed work is important to the field.
 - Innovation
 - What is novel about the question, approach, technology, dataset, model, or application.
 - Preliminary Data and/or Scientific Rationale
 - Relevant prior findings supporting feasibility and the proposed hypothesis.
 - Detailed Research Design and Methods
 - Study design, cohorts or models, inclusion/exclusion criteria where applicable, experimental procedures, assays, technologies, and analytic approach.
 - Statistical Analysis and Power Considerations
 - Sample size justification, statistical methods, primary outcomes, and plans for handling missing data or multiple comparisons, where applicable.
 - Use of Existing Resources
 - Planned use of biobanks, existing datasets, pre-pandemic cohorts, shared infrastructure, or other established resources, where relevant.
 - Rigor, Reproducibility, and Data Quality
 - Key controls, validation strategies, batch-effect mitigation, replication, and other measures to ensure robust findings.

- Potential Problems and Alternative Strategies
- Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 - Specific deliverables and benchmarks for determining project progress and success.
- Future Directions and Path to Follow-on Funding
 - How the findings will position the work for larger studies, external funding, collaborations, or translational development.
- Project Timeline and Milestones
- Full Budget and Budget Justification
- Facilities and Resources
- Full NIH-style Biosketches
- Letters of Collaboration or Support, as applicable
- Human Subjects / IRB or Vertebrate Animal Information, if applicable
- Data and Resource Sharing Plan, if applicable
- Supporting Documentation, as requested

Finalists will submit the completed application through the designated submission process provided with the invitation.

Evaluation of Final Proposals

Finalist applications will be evaluated based on:

- Scientific rigor and feasibility
- Innovation and mechanistic insight
- Alignment with program priorities
- Potential to generate meaningful preliminary data and support future external funding
- Appropriate and strategic use of existing resources, including biobanks, datasets, and pre-pandemic cohorts where relevant
- Expected impact on the field and potential to advance the research pipeline

Blinding Requirements for Final Proposals

- To support the double-blind peer review process, finalists must not include identifying information in blinded sections of the full application.
- Do not include names of investigators, collaborators, institutions, universities, hospitals, laboratories, or core facilities. Applicants should instead use generic terms such as “Principal Investigator,” “Co-Investigator,” “Institution,” “Clinical Site,” or “Core Facility.”
- In the references section, applicants should not highlight themselves or co-applicants as authors.
- **Failure to follow blinding instructions may result in administrative rejection or a request to revise and resubmit.**
- Supporting documentation that necessarily contains identifying information, such as letters of collaboration, consortium agreements, subcontract documentation, CVs/biosketches, or institutional materials, should be submitted separately from blinded application sections as instructed.

TIMELINE

- **Initial Research Plan Deadline:** November 13, 2026
- **Invitation to Submit Full Proposal:** December 4, 2026
- **Full Proposal Deadline:** January 8, 2027
- **Final Award Decisions:** February 8, 2027

A Ramsay Award notice will include the recommended funding level, applicable award conditions, program policies, and project reporting requirements. Applicants whose proposals are not selected will be notified as promptly as possible.

AWARDEE EXPECTATIONS

Awardees will be expected to:

- Participate in the Ramsay Scholar Network, including quarterly mentorship meetings and engagement in Solve M.E. research programming
- Contribute to the Ramsay Scholar Hub through research summaries, publications, progress updates, webinars, or short-format content
- Acknowledge Solve in relevant study publications and conference presentations
- Partake in community-facing scientific and development communications such as webinars, research summaries, quotes, or presentations when appropriate.
- Present findings through Solve M.E. events and/or partner conferences, when appropriate

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions regarding this RFA, please contact the Solve ME Research Team at grants@solvecfs.org

FAQ

Can I submit a project focused on another infection-associated chronic condition or illness (IACCI) that is not ME/CFS or Long Covid?

Projects focused on other IACCIs may be considered, but they should include a clear connection to ME/CFS and/or Long COVID, such as a comparative cohort, shared biological mechanism, or directly relevant translational question.

You list specific areas of interest. Will my project be deprioritized if it falls outside those areas?

No. The listed areas are intended to highlight topics of particular interest, not to limit the scope of eligible research. We welcome innovative, well-justified projects that advance the field, even if they do not fall within a listed priority area.

For the collaborative research proposal, does one investigator need to be new to the ME/CFS field?

Because a central goal of the Ramsay program is to expand the research workforce, collaborative research

proposals that meaningfully bring new investigators or expertise into ME/CFS, Long COVID, or related IACCI research will be prioritized.

When will I know whether I have been invited to submit a full proposal?

Applicants selected to advance to Step 2 will be contacted by email by **December 4, 2026** with instructions for submitting a full proposal.

Will there be an opportunity to ask questions about the RFA?

Yes. Solve plans to host a one-hour Ramsay Office Hours session on **October 22 at 11:00 AM ET**. Registration details will be shared separately. Applicants are encouraged to attend if they have questions about program fit, eligibility, or the application process.

What are the reporting and engagement requirements for awardees?

Awardees will be expected to submit an annual progress report of approximately 1–2 pages summarizing progress to date, key findings, and relevant data or milestones. Awardees will also be expected to acknowledge Solve M.E. support, engage with the Solve M.E. research network, and participate, when appropriate, in scientific and community-facing communications such as webinars, research summaries, presentations, quotes, or development materials.

Who should I contact with questions about the RFA?

For questions regarding the Ramsay Research Grant Program or this RFA, please contact the Solve M.E. Research Team at grants@solvecfs.org.