Whole-Genome Analysis for Autism Risk Variants RFA
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The frequently asked questions (FAQs) aim to cover topics related to the Simons Foundation Autism Research Initiative (SFARI) Whole-Genome Analysis for Autism Risk Variants RFA full proposal processes, Simons Foundation policies and online submission on proposalCENTRAL.

If you have a question regarding the RFA guidelines or policies not answered below, do not hesitate to contact the Simons Foundation at grants@simonsfoundation.org or call 646-654-0066.

1. Where do I submit my application proposal?
Applications are online and must be submitted online through proposalCENTRAL. New users first need to create a user account on proposalCENTRAL (https://proposalcentral.altum.com/). For instructions on how to create a user account, please see question number 2 below. For all users, log in and select “Create New Proposal” or click on the “Grant Opportunities” tab. Filter the Grant Maker by “Simons Foundation” and click on “Apply Now” next to the “Whole-Genome Analysis for Autism Risk Variants Request for Applications” program. Once all sections are complete and the attachments are uploaded, the “Submit” button will be activated.

2. How do I create a proposalCENTRAL user account?
Go to https://proposalcentral.altum.com/ and click “Create One Now” under “First Time Users.” Fill in the required fields, check the boxes to agree to proposalCENTRAL’s “Terms of Service and Acceptable Use Policy” and then click “Save.”

3. Is the Notice of Intent required to submit a full application? Is it the same as a Letter of Intent (LOI)?
No, the Notice of Intent is not required for application submission but we request that investigators who intend to submit a proposal send an email by 28 July 2015 with the intended investigators’ names and affiliations and their intended proposal’s title to grants@simonsfoundation.org with the subject line: SFARI WGA RFA Notice of Intent.

The Notice of Intent is not the same as a formal Letter of Intent (LOI). Approval is not required for application submission.

4. Can someone else (assistant, staff member, etc.) submit my application for me?
Yes, you can add users with administrator access to the proposalCENTRAL application so that someone other than the Principal Investigator (PI) can edit and submit the application. To add another user, go to section 3, “Enable Other Users to Access This Proposal,” and complete the required fields.

5. Can postdoctoral associates apply as Principal Investigators?
No, postdoctoral associates may not apply as PIs. All applicants and key collaborators must hold a Ph.D., M.D. or equivalent degree and have a faculty position or the equivalent at a college, university, medical school or other research facility.
6. Can multiple Principal Investigators apply for a grant?
Yes, if the proposal includes multiple PIs at more than one site, all investigators should have demonstrated prior success in similar collaborations.

For projects that have multiple PIs at different institutions, applications must be submitted by the PI designated as the contact PI and his/her institution. All applicants and key collaborators must hold a Ph.D., M.D. or equivalent degree and have a faculty position or the equivalent at a college, university, medical school or other research facility, and must submit a biosketch and a list of current and pending support.

Applications with multiple PIs from different institutions who will be paid directly by the contact PI’s institution are considered subcontracts.

7. Does the Simons Foundation require letters of support or collaboration?
We do not require letters of support or letters of collaboration for Co-investigators. If a letter is prepared, it can be uploaded as “Appendix: In-press papers on related topics.”

8. Is there a minimum percent effort for Principal Investigators or Co-investigators?
There is no minimum percent effort required for any personnel, but we expect personnel, in particular PIs and Co-investigators, to have efforts that reflect their roles in the project.

9. What is required for a subcontract? Where do I add the subcontract budget and upload subcontract budget details?*
Applications with subcontracts must submit a subcontract budget for each subcontract awardee and grant year. The applicant PI must include the direct cost budget totals for all subcontracts in the “Consortium & Contractual Direct” section and indirect costs for all subcontracts in the “Subcontract Indirect Cost” section. The subcontract budget can be downloaded and uploaded in the “Proposal Attachments” section of the full application on proposalCENTRAL.

10. What is the funding period? When will funding begin?
The initial funding period is for eighteen months and up to $250,000, including 20 percent of the modified total direct costs (see SFARI policies), beginning 1 November 2015.

11. Can foreign institutions apply for a grant?
Yes. Please upload, if available, a copy of your U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) 501(c)(3) determination or equivalency letter as part of the application. The Simons Foundation requires a determination letter from the IRS stating exemption under 501(c)(3) and furthermore, either a 509(a)(1), (2) or (3) classification. If an international institution is selected for funding and does not have the aforementioned documentation, the Simons Foundation will require the institution to complete an equivalency determination with NGOsoucre (see SFARI policies).

12. Can for-profit companies apply for a grant?
Applications may be submitted by for-profit companies, in which case the funds provided for the grant are to be used only for charitable purposes toward research related to autism spectrum disorders.

13. Are references, figures and figure legends included in the narrative six-page limit? How should they be included?
References, figures and figure legends are not included in the page limit for the full proposal. Please attach them at the end of the six-page narrative in the same PDF file. The Simons Foundation’s preference is for figures to follow the narrative rather than be embedded in the text.
14. What can I include as an appendix?

‘In-press’ papers can be included as appendices, as well as any papers that you consider essential for the work of the review committee (not more than three). Any other material should be included, if possible, in the narrative.

If you have video attachments for your proposal, please upload as an appendix (all file types are accepted). All appendices should be uploaded in the “Proposal Attachments” section of the application.

15. What are the font, font size and margin requirements?

11-point, legible font and .5 inch margins.

16. How can I find out more about available biospecimens and other data available from the Simons Simplex Collection (SSC)?

You can access and request information about the SSC biospecimens and data on SFARI Base. Please see our resources website for more information (http://sfari.org/resources/sfari-base/request-data-and-biospecimens). If you do not have a SFARI ID, you must create one. If you have problems with the log-in or have questions regarding the collections, please email collections@sfari.org.

17. Do the annual budget limits include the cost of purchasing SSC biospecimens?

No, SSC biospecimen estimated costs are not included in the budget limit. Prices for SSC biospecimens can be found in the price list on our website.

18. How were the 500 families from the SSC chosen to be sequenced out of a possible ~2,600?

All families with likely pathogenic mutations in probands and siblings, as identified by previous CNV and exome analyses, were excluded. The selection of the final 500 families from the remaining list was randomized. The list of the IDs of selected samples (together with summary information) is available here. Detailed phenotypic information for all individuals is available via SFARI Base (http://sfari.org/resources/sfari-base).

19. Can manuscripts focusing on a small number of genes be submitted for publication during the embargo period, which prevents submission of whole-genome analyses for publication until all data are deposited and QC is complete?

SFARI will consider these on a case-by-case basis, but yes, it is likely that researchers will have permission to submit these types of manuscripts for publication.

20. Do researchers need to send a copy of manuscripts to SFARI in parallel to submitting to a journal?

Yes, researchers must send a copy of manuscripts to SFARI in parallel to submitting to journals.

21. Does the PI need to sign the signature page?

No, only the signing official is required to sign the signature page.

22. How are applicants selected?

Applicants will be selected based on qualifications and experience with the topic(s) relevant to the program. Competitive applications will receive external peer review. Notification of application status is expected by 15 October 2015.
23. Is validating my proposal the same as submitting it?
   No. “Validating” the proposal checks for errors and omissions and will alert you to missing requirements of your Letter of Intent or application. If the application is complete, you must then click “Submit.” You will receive an email within ten minutes, and should contact pcsupport@altum.com if you do not receive confirmation and do not see your application in the “Submitted” tab or with the status changed to “Submitted.”

24. I get an error message citing a missing section when I try to submit.
   The "Validate" button reviews your application for missing sections. The submission instructions list the required sections and attachments. You must complete the missing sections listed. If you are still receiving error messages after completing and saving the indicated sections, please contact pcsupport@altum.com.

25. Where is the “Submit” button?
   The “Submit” button is located in the last section of the application. You will be unable to submit if you have not provided all the required information. If the problem persists, please contact pcsupport@altum.com.

26. Can I make changes to the application once it has been submitted?
   You must contact Simons Foundation to un-submit your full application before you can edit attachments or HTML sections. Please email grants@simonsfoundation.org or call 646-654-0066 if you would like to un-submit your application prior to the 14 August 2015 deadline.

27. Is there a confirmation email when I submit?
   A confirmation email is sent upon submission of the application. Please contact pcsupport@altum.com if you submitted your application and have not received a confirmation email within ten minutes. Make sure that spam filters allow emails from pcsupport@altum.com.
SFARI Glossary

Personnel definitions

Principal Investigator
The individual(s) judged by the applicant organization to have the appropriate level of authority and responsibility to direct the project or program supported by the grant. All Principal Investigators (PIs) must hold a Ph.D., M.D. or equivalent degree and have a faculty position or equivalent at a college, university, medical school or other research facility. He or she is responsible and accountable to the applicant organization and SFARI for the proper conduct of the project or activity, including the submission of all required reports. He or she will act as the main point of contact for the foundation. There is no minimum percent effort required for a PI, but it is expected that the PI will join the collaborative community of SFARI Investigators and that he or she will partake in some conferences, workshops and symposia that the foundation organizes.

The applicant organization may designate multiple individuals as PIs who share the authority and responsibility for leading and directing the project, intellectually and logistically. Each PI is responsible and accountable to the applicant organization or, as appropriate, to a collaborating organization for the proper conduct of the project or program, including the submission of all required reports. The presence of more than one identified PI on an application or award diminishes neither the responsibility nor the accountability of any individual PI.

The PI under whose name the application is submitted will serve as the contact PI for administrative purposes. The contact PI must be affiliated with the institution submitting the application. The contact PI will be responsible for communication between SFARI and the rest of the leadership team.

The role type ‘Co-PI’ will not be used by SFARI.

Co-investigator
An individual involved with the PI in the scientific development or execution of a project. The Co-investigator must hold a Ph.D., M.D. or equivalent and be employed by, or be affiliated with, the applicant/grantee organization or another organization participating in the project under a consortium agreement. A Co-investigator is considered Key Personnel, but the Simons Foundation does not require a minimum effort from the Co-investigator. The designation of a Co-investigator, if applicable, does not affect the PI’s roles and responsibilities, nor is it a role implying multiple PIs.

Consultant
An individual providing professional advice or services on the basis of a written agreement. These individuals are not normally employees of the organization receiving the services. Consultants also include firms providing professional advice or services.

Postdoctoral Research Associate or equivalent employee position
An individual who has received a doctoral degree (or its equivalent) and is engaged in a temporary and defined period of mentored advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research independence needed to pursue his or her chosen career path. The Postdoctoral Research Associate performs specific services in exchange for compensation, and he or she is treated as an employee of the grantee institution, with benefits.

SFARI funds may only be used for personnel who are employees of the grantee institution and who are eligible for benefits. Funds may not be used for stipend supplementation unless specifically authorized under the terms of the program from which funds are derived.