



## THE WHAM EDGE AWARDS 2025

*An Initiative of The WHAM Investigator's Fund*

WHAM ([Women's Health Access Matters](#)) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing awareness of and accelerating funding for women's health research and investment to transform women's lives. WHAM builds the business case for investing in women's health, funds cutting-edge research that focuses on sex-based differences, and fosters collaboration across the entire healthcare ecosystem.

In today's increasingly constrained funding environment, private investment is no longer optional—it's essential. The WHAM Investigator's Fund was created to fill a critical gap: supporting early-stage projects through private donations to explore how sex-based differences affect health outcomes. These awards, launched in 2022, provide urgently needed resources to advance innovative research that might otherwise never be pursued.

Obtaining sufficient funding is a long and difficult journey—especially for early-stage projects. Grants often require preliminary data that researchers haven't yet had the opportunity to collect. As a result, promising ideas are left unexplored, and progress is delayed or lost.

WHAM recognizes the high bar early-stage projects must meet to access sources of funding. We aim to remove these barriers and empower the next generation of science to pursue bold ideas that have the potential to drive breakthrough insights and transform the future of healthcare.

The WHAM Scientific Advisory Board helps identify high-potential opportunities, establish metrics for impact, and select projects for funding across four key areas that disproportionately or differently impact women:

- Autoimmune Disease
- Brain Health
- Cancer
- Heart Health

In 2025, WHAM also welcomes proposals addressing:

- Healthspan
- Bone and muscle health
- Novel approaches to women's health conditions (e.g., endometriosis, menopause, PCOS)
- Innovative methodologies, including AI and secondary data analysis

WHAM is focused on funding pre-clinical, clinical, and translational research that focuses on women and investigates how sex-based differences influence biology and health outcomes. The health of traditionally under-represented ethnic and racial groups is also an area of interest.

### **About the WHAM Edge Awards:**

WHAM's goal is to inspire and elevate the next generation of leaders in women's health research. To that end, WHAM Edge Awards of \$25,000 each will be created in 2025 as part of The WHAM Investigator's Fund.

Each of WHAM's partner organizations and collaborative members will have the opportunity to nominate several early-stage investigators for consideration. Institutions are encouraged to support nominated researchers through co-funding, lab space, or other institutional resources.

Final projects will be selected by WHAM's Scientific Advisory Board. The recipients will be chosen on October 22, 2025, and announced at The WHAM Fall Forum on October 29, 2025. The \$25,000 in funding must be used within one year of the award date.

### **Application Requirements:**

WHAM has intentionally designed a streamlined, accessible application process. All publications that included research funded wholly or partially by WHAM must acknowledge WHAM.

1. **Eligibility:** Applicants should be early in their research careers—graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and newly appointed assistant professors comprise the ideal cohort of applicants.
2. **Focus Areas:** Proposals must address at least one of the four areas that are of interest to WHAM mentioned above.
3. **Proposal Length:** Applications should not exceed 2500 words or 5 pages.
4. **Proposal Content:** Applications must include a clear explanation of the following:
  - a. The problem or challenge you are addressing.
  - b. Why it is important and to whom (stakeholders)?
  - c. How are you planning to study/solve the problem?
  - d. How might this work benefit health of women?
  - e. How might your work be translated into a useful intervention or contribute in other ways?
  - f. For context, the proposal should include a description of the current landscape in the relevant field, and how the proposed work might advance the field.
  - g. Include a budget outlining the major categories of direct costs required to complete the project (e.g., salary, equipment, data analysis tools) along with a brief justification for each category. The justification should explain how each cost supports the project's goals and feasibility within the one-year timeframe. Allowable costs include direct research expenses such as personnel, equipment, supplies, and data analysis. Non-allowable costs include indirect costs such as institutional overhead, administrative support, and general utilities. Travel and publication costs are allowable if directly related to the proposed project.
  - h. The proposal should be completed within one year of the receipt of funding. An interim progress report within six months of the start of funding and a final report after one year must be submitted to WHAM.
5. **Bio-sketch:** A current Bio-sketch should be included.
6. **Conflicts of Interest:** Any potential conflicts of interest in the two preceding calendar years should be disclosed.
7. **Letters of Support:** Up to 2 letters of recommendation (1 - 2 pages max) is required from the academic institution with which the applicant is affiliated from the person nominating the application and/or a mentor. The letter should state the rationale for nominating a particular researcher, and address both the person's capabilities, and the potential contribution of the research to advancing women's health.

### **Review and Evaluation:**

The proposals will be reviewed by WHAM's Scientific Advisory Board and presented to the WHAM Board prior to a final decision. Members of The WHAM Research Collaborative and external experts will be consulted where appropriate.

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. **Value to Stakeholders** – *how translatable or useful*: What hurdles do you anticipate in translating this approach to the clinic? Are there any risks that concern you?
2. **Feasibility** – Can the research be performed within this budget and in the allocated time frame?
3. **Significance** – *how important/critical*: Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field? Is there a strong scientific premise for the project? If the aims of the project are achieved, what are the potential benefits and to whom?
4. **Approach** – *how well-reasoned and appropriate*: Does the investigator place adequate emphasis on sex and gender as biological variables? Are the overall strategies, methodologies, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project?
5. **Innovation** – *how novel*: Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms? Will this research lead to a new way of addressing existing challenges? Is there an AI application that would accelerate this project?
6. **Investigator Qualification** – Is the researcher's experience and knowledge well suited to the project? If there are gaps, do they have access to senior investigators who might function as resources and provide advice?
7. **The State of The Field** – *how good are the tools/resources*: Does the investigator have access to the institutional support for equipment, labs space, and other resources necessary to successfully carry out the proposed research?
8. **Publishability** – If the proposal is successfully completed will the finding merit publication?

**Submission Information:** Applications should be submitted via email to [marianne@whamnow.org](mailto:marianne@whamnow.org) no later than September 15, 2025.