NIDA International Program Drug Abuse Research Fellowships

Application Instructions

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) International Program offers the following postdoctoral fellowship opportunities.

- The INVEST Drug Abuse Research Fellowship (INVEST)
- The INVEST/CTN Drug Abuse Research Fellowship (INVEST/CTN)
- The United States (U.S.)–Mexico Drug Abuse Prevention Research Fellowship (U.S.–Mexico Prevention)

A fourth postdoctoral opportunity, the NIDA–Inserm Postdoctoral Drug Abuse Research Fellowship, provides a unique opportunity for U.S. and French scientists to obtain postdoctoral training with French and U.S. mentors, respectively. Application instructions for the NIDA–Inserm fellowship are provided in a separate packet.

The INVEST, INVEST/CTN, and U.S.–Mexico Prevention postdoctoral fellowships provide a unique opportunity for a non-United States (U.S.) researcher to obtain postdoctoral training with a U.S. NIDA-funded researcher. The fellowship may be renewable once (after evaluation of the first fellowship period).

**INVEST Fellowship**

Applicants and the U.S. NIDA-funded researcher may propose to conduct their research in any aspect of the biomedical, social, or behavioral components of drug abuse and addiction.

Previous fellows and their mentors have conducted research in all aspects of NIDA research, including basic science, epidemiology, prevention, treatment, and preclinical and clinical sciences.

**INVEST/CTN Fellowship**

Applicants and the U.S. NIDA-funded researcher may propose to conduct their research in any aspect of the Clinical Trials Network (CTN) research agenda on drug abuse and addiction, such as intervention research, clinical trials methodology, or drug abuse treatment as HIV/AIDS prevention.

The U.S. NIDA-funded researcher must be affiliated with one of the existing CTN Regional Research and Training Centers.

Fellowship offered by NIDA’s International Program and the Center for Clinical Trials Network.

**U.S.–Mexico Prevention Fellowship**

Applicants, who must be a Mexican researcher, and the U.S. NIDA-funded researcher may propose to conduct their research in any area of drug abuse prevention research, such as prevention intervention research, prevention services research, prevention methodology, or drug abuse prevention as HIV/AIDS prevention.

Fellowship offered as part of the ongoing collaboration of NIDA and the National Institute of Psychiatry Ramón de la Fuente Muñiz (NIP), with the participation of the National Commission Against Addictions (CONADIC) and the Society for Prevention Research (SPR).
About the Fellowship

NIDA encourages outstanding early-career scientists to apply for these competitive postdoctoral fellowships. The INVEST, INVEST/CTN, and U.S.–Mexico Prevention postdoctoral fellowships are awarded for 1 year.

During the fellowship, the fellow receives training in drug abuse research methods, develops and conducts a research project with the NIDA-funded mentor, and participates in professional development activities. Fellows also learn about the National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant application process from their U.S. mentor who has successfully sought NIDA support.

Each fellow receives a stipend of $47,484US to cover living expenses and a $7,750US allowance to cover the cost of health insurance and professional development activities. The fellowship also provides air travel, for the fellow only, to travel to the U.S. to begin the fellowship and back to his or her home country upon completion of the fellowship.

Fellows and their U.S. mentors join a network of international scientists who exchange information and collaborate on drug abuse research nationally, regionally, and globally.

Applicant Eligibility

Requirements for applicants include:

- An earned doctoral degree in medicine, public health, or biomedical, behavioral, or social science
- A minimum of 2 years of postdoctoral research experience including a demonstrated ability to engage in independent research
- Written assurance\(^1\) from an institution in the home country that there is a position to which the applicant can return after completing the fellowship

\(^1\)U.S.–Mexico Prevention applicant’s institution’s assurance must state that prevention research will be part of his or her future duties.

- Proficiency in written and spoken English
- Citizenship or permanent residency of a country\(^2\) other than the U.S.

\(^2\)U.S.–Mexico Prevention applicants must be a citizen or permanent resident of Mexico.

- Living and working outside the U.S. at the time the application is submitted
- Eligible for a J-1 visa to enter the U.S.

Mentor Eligibility

Requirements for mentors include:

- Must be a NIDA-funded researcher whose grant will be active throughout the proposed fellowship period.
- Mentor’s institution must be a sponsor for the U.S. Department of State “J” Exchange Visitor Program, and the mentor’s institution must be eligible to prepare and issue the requisite Form DS-2019 for the applicant and his/her dependents.
- For the INVEST/CTN fellowship, the NIDA-funded researcher must be affiliated with one of the CTN Regional Research and Training Centers as identified at https://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/organization/cctn/ctn.
Finding a Potential Mentor

First, write a brief summary of your goals for the fellowship. Outline your proposed research question, the scientific methods you will use to answer that question, and the data needed to complete your investigation. List the skills, techniques, or methods you wish to learn or improve during your fellowship.

This exercise will help you identify the search terms you will use to identify potential mentors. Search the RePORTER database of research projects supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) at https://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter.cfm, review peer-reviewed publications indexed by PubMed at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/, and consult the listing of previous postdoctoral fellows and mentors at https://www.drugabuse.gov/international/fellowships-postdoctoral-training#postdoc_fellow_mentor. For the INVEST/CTN Fellowship, contact one of the existing CTN Regional Research and Training Centers as identified at https://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/organization/cctn/ctn.

Before contacting a potential mentor, you should:

- Update your resume or curriculum vitae (CV) to ensure your information is current.
- Confirm your eligibility for the fellowship by emailing the NIDA International Program at ip@nida.nih.gov.
- Learn more about the potential mentor you’ve identified, including scientific discipline and specific research interests, by reviewing the potential mentor’s publications, research background, and professional website.

When emailing a potential mentor:

- Discuss how your proposed research project is compatible with the mentor’s research.
- Provide information about your eligibility, educational and professional background (include your CV and list of publications), and the goals of your fellowship and research project.
- Do not contact more than two or three potential mentors at the same time.

For additional assistance, please email the NIDA International Program at ip@nih.nida.gov. In your message, please indicate the fellowship opportunity for which you are interested.

Preparing the Application

The application is now submitted through the online application system. A complete application requires contributions from the applicant, the applicant’s current employer, the applicant’s references, the mentor, and the mentor’s institution. The applicant and selected mentor should review the following information:

1. Incomplete applications will NOT be reviewed.
2. Applications must be written in English only.
3. The sample application form, available on the NIDA International Program’s website, shows the type of information needed to complete the online application.
4. When starting the online application, the applicant must complete the online application. The applicant can select only one type of application (INVEST, INVEST/CTN, or U.S.–Mexico Prevention) for which to be considered.
5. The applicant should become familiar with the U.S. federal regulations on the conduct of research supported by NIH.

b. Any research conducted as a result of a NIDA International Program Drug Abuse Research Fellowship award must comply with all NIH policies on:

- Human Subjects
- Research Using Human Embryonic Stem Cells
- Research on Transplantation of Human Fetal Tissue
- Women and Minority Inclusion Policy
- Inclusion of Children Policy
- Vertebrate Animals
- Debarment and Suspension
- Drug-Free Workplace
- Lobbying
- Nondelinquency on Federal Debt
- Research Misconduct
- Civil Rights (Form HHS 690)
- Handicapped Individuals (Form HHS 690)
- Sex Discrimination (Form HHS 690)
- Age Discrimination (Form HHS 690)
- Recombinant DNA and Human Gene Transfer Research
- Financial Conflict of Interest

6. The applicant will be required to upload a full research plan developed in cooperation with and approved by the selected mentor.

   a. The U.S.–Mexico Prevention Fellowship research plan is to focus on drug abuse prevention research.

   b. The INVEST/CTN Fellowship research plan is to focus on any aspect of the CTN research agenda on drug abuse and addiction.

7. The mentor must complete the mentor online application.

8. When completing the online application, the mentor will be required to upload his or her Mentor Statement.

9. The “Certification and Acceptance” section of the Applicant’s and the Mentor’s application must be completed before the online application can be successfully submitted.

Mentor Institution as a Sponsor for the U.S. State Department “J” Exchange Visitor Program

The mentor will obtain, from his or her institution, a letter confirming the institution as a sponsor for the U.S. State Department “J” Exchange Visitor Program (J-visa). The letter should also confirm the institution’s eligibility to prepare and issue the requisite Form DS-2019 for the applicant and his/her accompanying dependents, if a fellowship is awarded to the applicant. The mentor institution J-visa letter must be emailed directly to the NIDA International Program by the application deadline.

The Applicant’s Professional References

Using the Reference Report Form downloaded from the website, the applicant should complete Part I of the form. The applicant should provide a copy of the Reference Report form to his or her two professional references (preferably one from the home country supervisor and one from a research colleague).
Each reference will complete Part II of the Reference Report including the rating scale. Each reference must also attach a letter of reference, on institution/organization letterhead, explaining his or her association with the applicant. The letter should also comment on the applicant’s training and experience, including other areas as appropriate. Identify strengths and weaknesses that should be considered in evaluating the applicant’s potential for a research career.

Each reference must email the completed Reference Report and letter of reference directly to the NIDA International Program by the application deadline.

**Submitting the Application and Supporting Documentation**

**Application Deadline:** April 1

**Notification of Award:** June 1

Each applicant and mentor will need to complete all sections of the electronic application form and upload the required documentation (e.g., fellowship research plan, mentor statement) by 11:59 p.m. **Eastern Time on April 1**.

The two professional references with letters of recommendation and the mentor institution J-visa letter must be submitted directly to the NIDA International Program via email at ip@nida.nih.gov. The supporting documentation must be submitted by April 1.

**For More Information**

- Website: [https://www.drugabuse.gov/international/fellowships-postdoctoral-training](https://www.drugabuse.gov/international/fellowships-postdoctoral-training)
- Email: ip@nida.nih.gov
Preparing Your NIDA International Program Drug Abuse Research Fellowship Research Plan

The Research Plan is the most important part of the application. This plan should be well formulated and presented in sufficient detail so that reviewers can evaluate its scientific merit. The applicant should actively seek the advice and cooperation of the selected U.S. mentor while preparing the Research Plan. The U.S. mentor’s collaboration is important, but the applicant must write the Research Plan. Be specific and informative, and avoid redundancy. Brevity and clarity in the description of the Research Plan are considered indicative of an applicant’s approach to the research objective and ability to conduct a superior project.

The Research Plan should not exceed three pages not including literature citations. The applicant should use the following format:

1. **Specific Aims.** State the specific purposes of the research and the hypotheses to be tested.
2. **Background and Significance.** Briefly describe the background of the Research Plan. This is an important consideration in the initial review of your application. Concisely state the importance of the Research Plan by relating specific aims to broad, long-term objectives.
3. **Research Design and Methods.** Discuss in detail the following:
   - The research design and procedures to be used to accomplish the specific aims
   - Sampling design, if conducting primary data collection
   - The analytic plan detailing the statistical approach to addressing the hypotheses
   - Any precautions necessary for procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to personnel
   - Potential limitations of the proposed project
   - The timeline for completion of the proposed investigation
   - The contributions that this project will make to the field of drug abuse research.
4. **NIH Regulations on the Conduct of Research.** Research conducted as part of a fellowship is subject to the same U.S. federal regulations, policies, guidelines, and review considerations as are all NIH research project grant applications. Within the Research Plan, applicants must demonstrate that they understand and have planned to comply with those rules, particularly if the research involves human subjects or vertebrate animals (see Preparing the Application, item 6).
5. **Literature Citations.** Provide literature citations at the end of the Research Plan. Each citation must include the authors’ names, book or journal titles, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication.
Review Criteria

Applications are peer-reviewed through a competitive process and assessed according to scientific merit, the proposal’s relevance to drug abuse and NIDA’s research mission, adequacy of the applicant’s education and experience to conduct the proposed research, likelihood that the proposed research can be completed within 1 year, and compatibility of the applicant’s and mentor’s objectives. Several factors may enhance the rating of an application, even though all of these items are not necessarily required.

Applicant

- Previous experience and education are commensurate with the proposed study.
- Although not yet considered a senior scientist, the applicant has demonstrated sufficient research experience to successfully complete the proposed study.
- The letters of reference support the applicant’s scientific record.
- The applicant has authored a peer-reviewed scientific article in the area of the proposed research.

Research Plan

- Describes how the proposed study is unique, how it will expand or advance the field of drug abuse research, and how it is consistent with the applicant’s career goals.
- Clearly and concisely states proposed aims, goals, and objectives appropriate to the stated hypotheses, conveying scientific sophistication and strong analytical skills.
- Thoroughly reviews the relevant literature.
- Acknowledges any potential regulatory issues or methodological limitations.
- Clearly states the applicant’s role in the proposed research and the collaborative plan between the applicant and the mentor.
- Describes what skills and experiences will be gained in the process of working with the mentor, why that proposed training would not otherwise be available to the applicant, and how those skills will be utilized when the applicant returns home.
- Includes a realistic timeline for completing the proposed study within the 1-year fellowship.

Research Resources and Environment

- Mentor has significant expertise in the research area.
- Mentor has a NIDA grant that will remain active throughout the fellowship period.
- Mentor has experience training fellows or other graduate-level students.
- Mentor’s institution is able to provide the resources necessary for the successful completion of the fellowship.
- Mentor’s research complements the applicant’s proposed study.
- Mentor demonstrates how he/she will ensure that the applicant is knowledgeable about and able to comply with NIH regulations regarding the conduct of research.