



2026 Researcher Connection Program Application

Application Deadline: Rolling until funds are exceeded

Contact Information: Uplifting Athletes, 8 Atkinson Drive, PO Box 574, Doylestown, PA 18901

For any questions or concerns, please contact rare@upliftingathletes.org.

Overview

The Researcher Connection Program is intended to assist with travel expenses for early-career researchers and doctoral students with an interest in the rare disease field. It is our hope that this program provides opportunities for these individuals to be able to connect in-person with the rare disease community, to foster collaboration, and communication.

Completed applications should be submitted to rare@upliftingathletes.org.

Who Qualifies For The Researcher Connection Program?

Applicants must reside in the United States or Canada and meet the following criteria in order to be considered for this program:

- Enrolled in a MD, DO, PhD, or equivalent degree and interested in rare disease researcher
- A clinical or basic researcher (MD, DO, PhD, or equivalent) working in the US or Canada, who is currently in postdoctoral training at an academic medical institution AND within 10 years of obtaining their doctoral degree at the time of grant submission.

Note: Please contact Uplifting Athletes at rare@upliftingathletes.org before applying if eligibility questions still remain after reviewing these guidelines.

What Is Covered By This Program?

This program provides reimbursement of funds for qualified applicants to attend patient advocacy organization sponsored events. For example, applicants may attend a family conference, scientific meeting, or symposium hosted by a patient advocacy organization. This program does not cover the cost for patients to visit with specialists or doctors appointments.

How Much And What Does Each Travel Reimbursement Cover?

Each travel reimbursement will cover **up to \$1,450** in travel expenses including, but not limited to, airfare, hotel stays, meals, and conference passes. To determine meal expenses covered by Uplifting Athletes, please reference the per diem rates for the city in which you are visiting to determine the breakfast, lunch, dinner, or daily total amount. Uplifting Athletes will cover up to the dollar amount given by GSA.gov for a single meal or daily total. Visit <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates> to learn more.

How Many Recipients Will Be Awarded?

Recipients are awarded based on the availability of funds and may vary grant cycle to grant cycle. Uplifting Athletes has a finite amount of funding for this program, and will accept qualifying applications until all funds have been allocated.

How Will Recipients Be Selected?

Applications are evaluated by a team at Uplifting Athletes on a rolling basis. Applicants will be notified via email if their application was accepted or rejected.

What Is Expected Of Me If I Secure This Grant?

It is expected that you will attend, in-person, a patient/family conference, scientific meeting, or symposium that is hosted by a rare disease-specific patient advocacy organization. Following the event, you will be asked to fill out a survey that describes the impact of the event and asked to send in any photos that you would like to share.

You will also be invited to join us at the Uplifting Athletes' Young Investigator Draft for the following year.

Are Non-Disease State Specific Conferences Eligible For This Travel Program?

Yes, conferences that are held by non-disease state specific organizations are still eligible. We ask that you specify on your application which patient advocacy organization or patient community you plan to meet with at this conference and why it is necessary to meet at this specific conference.

Am I Expected To Speak At The Patient Advocacy Event?

We strongly encourage applicants to reach out to the sponsoring patient advocacy organization to see if there is an opportunity to speak at the event. This could include an educational talk to the patient community or an update on your current research. Securing a speaking opportunity is not a requirement.

How Can I Apply?

Complete the attached application found on pages 3-4 and submit it electronically to: rare@upliftingathletes.org. We ask that applicants please submit requests for support at least 45 days in advance of planned travel, but no more than 120 days in advance of the planned travel.

What Happens If I Am Selected, But Can No Longer Attend due to illness or a family emergency?

In the case of illness or a family emergency, please email rare@upliftingathletes.org. Letting us know will help ensure that the funding can be redirected to another recipient.

Uplifting Athletes Commitment To Health Equity:

Uplifting Athletes is committed to providing equitable opportunities for underrepresented researchers. We will ensure that at least 20% of Researcher Connection Program recipients will be reserved for researchers from an underrepresented background. Uplifting Athletes uses the [NIH definition](#) to define who is considered an underrepresented researcher.

Researcher Connection Program Application

Please send completed application to rare@upliftingathletes.org

1. Application Date:

2. Name:

3. Email:

4. Phone number:

5. Institution:

6. Name of Event:

7. Event Host:

8. Location of Event:

9. Disease state:

10. Travel dates:

11. The National Institute of Health (NIH) recognizes that there are underrepresented groups in medicine and includes the following groups as underrepresented in biomedical research:

- ☐ Individuals from racial and ethnic groups such as Blacks or African Americans, Hispanics or Latinos, American Indians or Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders
- ☐ Individuals with disabilities
- ☐ Individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds (as defined in the [November 22, 2019 Guide notice](#))
- ☐ Women from the above backgrounds at the graduate level and beyond in scientific fields

Do you identify with one or more of these underrepresented groups as defined by the NIH?

☐ Yes

☐ No

12. How did you hear about the Researcher Connection Program?

13. How does attending this conference benefit your research or the rare disease community?

14. Have you been given the opportunity to speak at the event? If yes, what are you planning to speak about? Please check the box that best describes your opportunity to present.

- ☐ Not given a chance to present/speak
- ☐ Chance to speak to small group or individual attendees
- ☐ Poster presentation to small group
- ☐ Poster presentation to large group
- ☐ Given stage to speak on conference agenda to large audience
- ☐ Other: (Please describe below):

15. Why have you chosen this rare disease state or general research in the rare disease space?

16. If the conference you plan to attend is not for a disease-state specific organization, please tell us what patient advocacy organization or community you plan to meet with.

17. Description of request and Statement of financial need. Please include approximate expenses (amounts in dollars) in the table below

Category	Approximate Cost (USD)
Conference Registration	
Travel	
Transportation	
Hotel	
Meals	
Other:	

18. Will your institution be covering any of the cost?

19. Total Amount requested (Up to \$1,450): _____