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## 2025 Stepping Strong Innovator Awards: Request for Applications

The Gillian Reny Stepping Strong Center for Trauma Innovation (the Stepping Strong Center) is pleased to invite proposals for the **2025 Stepping Strong Innovator Awards**. The Innovator Award program supports research and innovation across the continuum of trauma care to prevent traumatic injury before it occurs, to improve the treatment and care of traumatic injury when it does occur, and to ensure its associated recovery. Up to three (3) awards in the amount of \$100,000 each will be granted for a one-year period, inclusive of up to 20% indirect costs. Applications that focus on accelerating the translation of an innovative idea into a clinical or community setting through a **multidisciplinary, collaborative** approach will be given top consideration.

### Areas of Focus

Proposals will fall into one of the following three focus areas of the continuum of trauma care:

#### 1) Injury Prevention

- Proposals that highlight the design, evaluation, and implementation of community- and hospital-based interventions with a focus on reducing or avoiding injuries
- Considerable preference will be given to the following areas:
  - Actionable and scalable primary prevention interventions
  - Interventions with a proven pathway toward implementation in real-world settings (pilot projects and preliminary data collection will still be considered)
  - Projects that align with the Centers for Disease Control's [research priority topics](#)

#### 2) Treatment: Prehospital/Triage, Emergency Department, and Inpatient Acute Care

- Basic science, translational, and clinical research and innovation projects that may improve and optimize the following:
  - Survival at the point of injury
  - In-hospital efforts to minimize morbidity and mortality and preserve function
  - Inpatient and outpatient interventions to facilitate healing and wellness in the acute period
  - New strategies for enhanced therapeutic outcomes
- Examples include:
  - Hemorrhage control interventions, tissue/organ preservation techniques, triage strategies
  - ICU protocols, emergency department interventions, operation stabilization techniques, infection and wound management, secondary reconstructive techniques
  - Development of new therapeutics, strategies for targeted and enhanced drug bioavailability

#### 3) Recovery: Rehabilitation, Reentry, and Long-Term Survivorship

- Basic science, translational, and clinical research and innovation proposals that maximize long-term functional, clinical, and psychological status
- Examples include:
  - Studies that evaluate interventions to address trauma-induced long-term physical and psychological outcomes
  - Innovations for upper- and lower-limb amputees; the development of prostheses
  - Physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) strategies

## Additional Considerations

For all areas of focus, projects should align with research priorities identified by the [National Trauma Research Action Plan](#) (NTRAP).

Applicants are encouraged to visit the Stepping Strong Center website at [BWHsteppingstrong.org](http://BWHsteppingstrong.org) to learn more about the center's mission, leadership team, and accomplishments since its inception in 2014.

## Timeline

Initial Selection Process	Dates
RFA Announcement	November 14, 2024
Letters of intent due	January 9, 2025 at 11:00pm EDT
Invitations to submit full proposal sent to applicants	February 27, 2025
Full applications due	April 3, 2025 at 11:00pm EDT
Finalists notified	May 2, 2025
Finalist presentations to review committee (finalists attend <b>one</b> session)	May 12 and 23, 2025
Award recipients notified	June 2, 2025
Earliest funding start date	July 1, 2025

## Eligibility

- Healthcare professionals, including clinicians, academic researchers, nurses, allied health professionals, and post-doctoral fellows, along with private-sector researchers and inventors, are invited to apply. Research can be conducted jointly between the public and private sectors.
- At least one collaborator must have their primary affiliation at a Mass General Brigham institution and no more than 25% of the award funding can be allocated to institutions external to Mass General Brigham.
- Previous applicants of the Stepping Strong Innovator awards are eligible to re-apply. Previous Innovator Award recipients may re-apply two years after receiving their initial award and are encouraged to mentor research trainees and early career faculty applying for Stepping Strong research funds.
- Applicants may serve as the Principal Investigator (PI) on only one proposal but may serve as co-I on multiple proposals.
- U.S. and non-U.S. citizens are welcome to apply.
- If an application advances to a finalist presentation, at least one team member must be available to participate in the presentation session to which the application is assigned (sessions are scheduled for May 12 from 3-5pm and May 23 from 10am-12pm).

## Application Process

Letter of intent - due **January 9, 2025 at 11:00 pm EDT**:

1. Cover Sheet including project title, principal investigator's name, employing institution, department, academic/professional title, email address, and telephone number
2. 1-page letter of intent outlining:
  - a. Objective(s) of your study
  - b. How the proposed research aligns with the mission of the Stepping Strong Center
  - c. How the proposed work fits in the continuum of trauma care and cite the [NTRAP priority area\(s\)](#) of which the project aligns
  - d. The future direction of the research, and specifically, how your work will advance trauma care

The Letter of Intent must be in Arial, 11-point font. Single spacing is allowed, with margins of at least 0.5 inches. **Please compile the two documents, in the above order, into a single PDF and email to [steppingstrong@bwh.harvard.edu](mailto:steppingstrong@bwh.harvard.edu) no later than 11:00 pm EDT on January 9, 2025.**

Letters of Intent will be reviewed by Stepping Strong Leadership and as required, additional established researchers with content expertise. **Based on Letters of Intent, select applicants will be invited to submit full proposals for review.** Decisions will be communicated by February 27, 2025 and will be final. No written feedback will be provided.

Full application - **due April 3, 2025 at 11:00 pm EDT:**

1. Cover Sheet (see “Letter of Intent” above)
2. A lay clinical impact summary (300-word limit)
3. A scientific abstract (300-word limit)
4. Research Statement (five-page limit, excluding references):
  - a. Introduction/background, including the problem or challenge you will address. This section should include a description of the project’s alignment with the Stepping Strong mission and [NTRAP priorities](#) (cite specific NTRAP consensus document and research topic(s)).
  - b. Specific aims, significance (including potential clinical significance, societal and/or patient impact, the potential for commercialization and market size and, if applicable, the extent to which your research will improve upon any current gold standard), and preliminary data (if available)
  - c. Approach (include methods, approximate one-year timeline, and contributions of each team member)
  - d. Future strategies for raising funding beyond the Stepping Strong Innovator Award
5. Biosketch of principal investigator, co-investigators, and significant key personnel using NIH format
6. A one-year, detailed budget for up to \$100,000 The total amount should be inclusive of up to 20% indirect costs and submitted using the detailed Mass General Brigham budget template.
7. A budget justification
8. Copy of current human or animal use protocol approval letter (if applicable)

The text of the Research Statement must be in Arial, 11-point font. Single spacing is allowed, with margins of at least 0.5 inches. **All items must be compiled, in the above order, into a single PDF and emailed to [steppingstrong@bwh.harvard.edu](mailto:steppingstrong@bwh.harvard.edu) no later than 11:00 pm EDT on April 3, 2025.** Applications that are incomplete, do not meet formatting guidelines, and/or are submitted late will not be considered.

## Review Process and Criteria

Proposals will undergo an initial review by the center's leadership team to confirm alignment with the center's mission to catalyze trauma innovation for injured civilians and military heroes, through multidisciplinary investigative collaborations across the continuum of trauma care, from prevention to treatment and recovery. Proposals that fulfill these criteria will advance to a rigorous scientific review by an expert panel, which will include the center's faculty leadership and members of the Stepping Strong Medical Executive Committee. Additional expert reviewers, including from outside Brigham and Women's Hospital, may be engaged as needed. Applications will be scored and ranked according to NIH criteria for prioritization to advance to the finalist presentation session, where applicants will have the opportunity to present additional information about their projects to the review panel. **If an application advances to the finalist presentation session, at least one team member must be available to participate in the presentation session to which the application is assigned. Finalist presentation sessions are scheduled for both May 12 from 3-5pm and May 23 from 10am-12pm** and finalists will be notified with their assignment by May 2. The final selection will be made by the Stepping Strong Center leadership team based on review committee scores and finalist presentations.

## Program Terms

- Recipients will submit a six-month progress report and a final project report during the one-year funding period.
- Recipient (or collaborator in the case of an external recipient) must remain employed by Mass General Brigham for the duration of the funding period; award may otherwise be forfeited.
- Recipients will inform the Stepping Strong Center as well as the Brigham's Office of Strategic Communication of any media appearances or coverage of their work.
- Recipients must cite the funding source as The Gillian Reny Stepping Strong Center for Trauma Innovation in media appearances, publications, posters, other grants, and other professional recognition related to this project.
- Recipients will participate in Stepping Strong Center events and meetings, where they will present their work to internal or external audiences, as needed and appropriate.
- If you found a startup from this project, you will be expected to donate to the Stepping Strong Center 1% of the founders' equity per \$100,000 of grants awarded, up to a maximum of three times the total amount of grant funding awarded. This amount is in addition to any equity or royalties paid to Mass General Brigham.
- For at least three years post-award, recipients will report publications, additional funding, inventions (whether patentable or not), and other award outcomes to the Stepping Strong Center within 60 days.

*By applying for the Stepping Strong Innovator Award you agree to release and hold harmless Brigham and Women's Hospital, The Gillian Reny Stepping Strong Center for Trauma Innovation and its subsidiaries, affiliates, societies, advertising and promotion agencies, partners, representatives, agents, successors, assigns, employees, officers and directors from any liability, illness, injury, death, loss, litigation, claim or damage that may occur, directly or indirectly, whether caused by negligence or not, from (i) such Applicant's participation in the Stepping Strong Innovator application process and/or his/her acceptance, possession, use, or misuse of any award or any portion thereof, (ii) technical failures of any kind, including but not limited to the malfunctioning of any computer, cable, network, hardware or software; (iii) the unavailability or inaccessibility of any transmissions or telephone or Internet service; (iv) unauthorized human intervention in any part of the entry process or the promotion; (v) electronic or human error which may occur in the administration of the promotion or the processing of entries. Your application also means that you agree to the program terms governing the Stepping Strong Innovator Awards.*

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**  
Cheryl Lang, MPH, Senior Program Manager | 857.307.5414  
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