

Stepping Strong Innovator Award FAQ

What is the Stepping Strong Innovator Award?

The **Stepping Strong Innovator Award** is an endowed program that 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. The Stepping Strong Center grants up to three (3) awards in the amount of \$100,000 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.

To date, the Stepping Strong Center has provided **\$4.2 million** to **42** multidisciplinary, multi-institutional Innovator Award research teams. Since 2014, researchers have leveraged their Stepping Strong Innovator Awards to secure more than **\$29 million** in additional funding from external sources including private philanthropy, corporations, and federal agencies.

To learn more about other programs that the Stepping Strong Center supports, please [visit our website](#).

What topics is the Stepping Strong Center interested in funding for the 2025 Innovator Awards?

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 of rehabilitation innovation and research that would be supported 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 to learn more about the center’s mission, leadership team, and accomplishments since its inception in 2014.

What is the deadline for applying for a Stepping Strong Innovator Award?

Letters of Intent are due on **January 9, 2025 at 11 pm EST**. Based on letters of intent, select applicants will be invited to submit full proposals for review. Full applications are due on **April 3, 2025 at 11 pm EST**.

Application Questions

Who is eligible to apply for the Innovator Award?

The Stepping Strong Innovator Awards are open to all applicants with a proposal related to the prevention, treatment, or recovery of traumatic injury. Each proposal must include at least one collaborator with a primary affiliation at a Mass General Brigham hospital as part of the team but can also include team members from external organizations. Applications can be submitted by clinicians, academic researchers, nurses, allied health professionals, post-doctoral fellows, public health professionals, community partners, engineers or leadership at startups.

Is this grant competition open to only Brigham researchers, or anyone at a Mass General Brigham hospital or research center?

Each proposal must have at least one collaborator with a primary affiliation at a Mass General Brigham hospital or research institution, and no more than 25% of the award funding can be allocated to institutions external to Mass General Brigham.

I am not affiliated with Mass General Brigham but conduct research in one of the areas that the Stepping Strong Center funds? Can I apply for the Innovator Awards?

Yes, the center will accept applications from other institutions if there is at least one collaborator on the team with a primary affiliation at a Mass General Brigham hospital or research institution, and no more than 25% of the award funding can be allocated to institutions external to Mass General Brigham.

Am I required to have research collaborators for my application?

The Stepping Strong Center gives preference to proposals that include a multidisciplinary team, such as researchers, clinicians, engineers, community partners, and subject matter experts.

Do I have to be a U.S. citizen to apply?

No, U.S. and non-U.S. citizens are welcome to apply.

Can individuals who do not have a Harvard Medical School academic affiliation or appointment apply for an Innovator Award?

Yes, the center accepts applications from anyone seeking to improve the prevention, treatment, and recovery of traumatic injury. They do not need an academic affiliation or appointment at Harvard Medical School, however, at least one member of the team must be an employee of a Mass General Brigham hospital or research center.

My research collaborators are based at private research labs. Can they be part of our application team?

Yes, the center accepts applications that include private-sector researchers if the team includes one collaborator with a primary affiliation at a Mass General Brigham hospital or research institute and no more than 25% of the award funding is allocated to institutions external to Mass General Brigham.

Proposal Questions

How much grant funding is provided by a Stepping Strong Innovator Award?

The Innovator Award is a one-time \$100,000 grant to the Primary Investigator.

What can the grant funding from a Stepping Strong Innovator Award be used for?

The applicant should include a budget for \$100,000 (inclusive of 20% indirect costs) that identifies where the funds will be spent. Applicants should use the standard NIH detailed budget template and include a corresponding budget justification. The applicant should identify the research costs associated with their proposal, including personnel, equipment, travel, indirect costs, and other expenses.

Is there an indirect cost associated with the Stepping Strong Innovator Award?

Yes, Mass General Brigham will take 20% indirect costs on the direct cost budget. This should be factored into the applicant's total budget of \$100,000.

Who is on the judging committee for the Innovator Awards?

The review committee will consist of Stepping Strong Center leadership, the center's Medical Executive Committee and Advisory Board, Harvard Medical School faculty (both clinicians and researchers), faculty at other institutions, donors, venture capitalists, representatives of the biopharma/device industry, and other partners of the Stepping Strong Center.

Can you explain the selection process for Stepping Strong Innovator Award applicants?

- **Stage 1:** After letters of intent are received on **January 9, 2025**, they will be shared with a review committee consisting of Stepping Strong Center Leadership and Medical Executive Committee members. On **February 27, 2025**, invitations to submit full proposals will be sent to applicants.
- **Stage 2:** After full applications are received on **April 3, 2025**, proposals will undergo a review based on the applicant's connection to the [mission of Stepping Strong Center](#) and criteria outlined in the RFA, including scientific and programmatic feasibility, the significance of the clinical problem the proposal seeks to solve, and the strength of the research team applying. Selected finalists will be notified by **May 2, 2025**.
- **Stage 3:** Finalist applications will be reviewed by the center's Leadership, Medical Executive Committee, faculty at other institutions, donors, venture capitalists, representatives of the

biopharma/device industry, and partners of the Stepping Strong Center. This group will provide insights from organizational, commercialization, and clinical perspectives.

- **Stage 4:** Finalists will present to the Review Committee on either **May 12 or May 23, 2025**. Based on the feedback from the Review Committee following the presentations, the Stepping Strong Center Leadership will select the 2025 Stepping Strong Innovator Award recipients.

When do I find out if I have won a Stepping Strong Innovator Award?

Award recipients will be notified **June 2, 2025** with the funding period starting **July 1, 2025** at the earliest.

General Questions

What is The Gillian Reny Stepping Strong Center for Trauma Innovation?

The Gillian Reny Stepping Strong Center for Trauma Innovation is multi-institutional research hub based at Brigham and Women's Hospital with medical co-directors at the Brigham and Massachusetts General Hospital. The mission of the Stepping Strong Center is 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.

The Stepping Strong Center was established in 2014 by the Reny and Epstein families following the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing tragedy. Several members of the family were injured, but none more than Gillian Reny, a high school student who suffered life-threatening injuries. With gratitude for their lifesaving care at the Brigham, the Reny's and Epstein's founded the Stepping Strong Center to advance trauma research and care for patients in Boston and beyond.

What medical challenge does the Stepping Strong Center address?

The Stepping Strong Center aims to advance the field of trauma research—a severely underfunded, under-represented medical discipline and one of the most demanding global medical challenges in our nation. In the U.S. alone, traumatic injuries are the leading cause of death for people up to 45 years of age. For those serving in the military, 82 percent of personnel return from battle with at least one wounded limb. Yet, despite these dire statistics, trauma care research receives less than two percent of funding from the National Institutes of Health. Trauma research is critical for identifying novel prevention measures and medical advancements to reduce the burden of trauma. The Stepping Strong Center intends to close this gap by funding cutting-edge research, through programs such as the Stepping Strong Innovator Awards.

How does the Stepping Strong Center achieve its goals?

Through generous support from donors, expert guidance from multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional medical leaders, and diverse educational initiatives, the Stepping Strong Center catalyzes innovation across the entire continuum of trauma care by,

- Educating the public on evidence-based interventions to prevent injuries from ever occurring;
- Fueling research, through programs such as the Stepping Strong Innovator Awards, that will revolutionize trauma care; and
- Advancing patient recovery to improve quality of life and long-term outcomes.

To learn more:

1. Email steppingstrong@bwh.harvard.edu
2. Visit the [Stepping Strong Innovator Awards web page](#)