

PSYCHOSOCIAL RESEARCH

2027 APPLICATION GUIDE



This guide is intended to help you through the Psychosocial Research (PSR) grant application process. The Principal Investigator (PI)/Fellow/Applicant should carefully review *the current* guidelines, as they are updated annually.

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES	
March 5, 2026 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)	Letter of Intent (LOI) Due via ProposalCentral
May 2026	Notification of LOI Results
July 10, 2026 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)	Full Grant Application (FGA) Due via ProposalCentral
December 2026	Notification of FGA Results
April 2027	Awarded Grants to be Funded

This guide is intended for the following grant categories:

PSR Postdoctoral Fellowships

Investigational Grants

Interventional Testing

Our staff invite questions relating to submission of either a LOI or FGA. Contact the Program Officer via email at constanza@chnfoundation.org or refer to [Part 3](#) below for additional contact details.

To learn more about previously funded PSR grants, use the *Search Funded Grants* link at the bottom of the [Neilsen Foundation homepage](#) (www.chnfoundation.org), and enter “PSR” in the search bar. To combine two related searches, use “AND” (e.g., PSR AND resilience).

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PART 1: PSR Portfolio

A. Overview and Objectives

The PSR portfolio supports the study of people's psychological and social wellbeing and research to develop and test interventions that improve an individual's mental, behavioral, and social welfare following spinal cord injury (SCI). The goal is to build and disseminate solutions that individuals, caregivers, clinicians, and communities can incorporate to address emotional wellbeing and barriers to social engagement.

PSR funds studies across a range of disciplines that address emotional and behavioral challenges as well as barriers to participation in desired activities after SCI; however, it is strongly encouraged that relevant psychosocial and SCI research expertise be represented on the study team. The portfolio also seeks to advance the meaningful participation of people with lived experience at all stages of research design and execution to facilitate development of solutions that foster healthy behavior, satisfaction, and fulfillment.

Applications may focus on issues that reflect the diversity of people with SCI across their lifespan, including targeted SCI subgroups or specific aspects of psychological, environmental, and/or social support factors that impact health, functioning, and quality of life. The rationale for proposed research must be based on a full and current review of the existing literature to demonstrate need and significance to the field. Relevant research areas include, but are not limited to, health behaviors and fitness, independent living and lifestyle, caregiving, peer mentoring, employment and work, self-management and self-care, and accessible resources. Studies may involve qualitative and/or quantitative methodologies with a focus on psychosocial questions, including approaches that are patient-centered (e.g., interactions between clinical practitioners and individuals with SCI) and/or consumer-centered (i.e., non-medical interventions for people living with SCI at any stage).

PSR grants complement but are distinct from other [Neilsen Foundation portfolios](#). For example, programmatic requests to provide adaptive technology or to enhance services for rehabilitative or transitional programs for people with SCI would fall under the CO&I portfolio. Studies to explore interventions to improve neurologic function are more appropriate for the SCIRTS portfolio.

B. Eligibility and Other Requirements

ELIGIBILITY

The following applies to all funding categories:

- Applicants must have a doctoral degree or equivalent professional degree (e.g., PhD, MD, DVM). Postdoctoral applicants should follow instructions in the "[PSR POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS](#)" section regarding degree completion.
 - Non-fellowship applicants must demonstrate appropriate experience to serve as an independent PI. The Neilsen Foundation encourages eligible PIs who represent a wide range of disciplines to apply; however, it is required that **relevant SCI and psychosocial expertise** be represented on the proposed research team.

- The grantee organization must be a nonprofit academic/research institution or rehabilitation facility located in the United States or Canada with the capability to conduct grant-funded research.
 - The Applicant named in a grant application must be employed by and deemed eligible by the grantee organization to apply for a grant and is expected to be responsible for conduct of the research. The Applicant is not required to be a citizen of the United States or Canada.
 - Each application must include the appropriate endorsement of an institutional official who is responsible for the administration of grant funds (hereafter known as the “Grants Administrator”).
- Nielsen Foundation grants are not awarded to individuals, private foundations, or non-functionally integrated Type III supporting organizations.
- A PI may submit only one application in each cycle in this portfolio (see PART 3, Section A., [Concurrent Grants Across Nielsen Foundation Portfolios](#)).
- The Nielsen Foundation does not recognize Co-Principal Investigators—if two or more investigators are working together on a research project, name only one as the Applicant; the other(s) should be listed as collaborator(s). Collaborators and/or consultants do not need to be affiliated with the same institution as the PI; a subcontract may be used to support a domestic or international collaborator or consultant.
- Multiple PIs from an institution may submit concurrent, independent applications in a given grant cycle. In such cases, each must be distinct, with non-overlapping Aims.
- The Nielsen Foundation discourages Postdoctoral Fellows and their mentor(s) from submitting concurrent applications *with overlapping Aims* to multiple funding categories within this portfolio.
- It may not be necessary to provide preliminary data. Nielsen Foundation funding may be sought to allow the Applicant to obtain data to establish a line of research if the proposal provides strong rationale (i.e., support from the literature or use in an indication other than SCI) that justifies testing the hypotheses with the proposed experimental design. However, if feasibility issues add an unacceptable risk of failure, reviewers may note that preliminary data to address this risk should have been provided.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- All application materials and communications (including IRB/IACUC approvals) must be in English, and budgets must be in U.S. dollars.
- The Nielsen Foundation values inclusion and accessibility to foster equitable opportunities and diverse points of view, and encourages grantees to promote them within their organization and the communities they serve.
- Applicants should carefully review each funding category to ensure they meet the requirements before submitting a Letter of Intent (LOI).
- Annual funding for multi-year awards is contingent on acceptance of annual progress and expenditure reports. Acceptance of final research and final expenditure reports is required at the end of the grant term to receive final payment.
- Perceived or real conflicts of interest (e.g., company shareholder providing a device for a study or program) must be disclosed in both the LOI and FGA.
- The grantee organization retains title to Intellectual Property developed with this funding.

- Human interventional studies funded by the Neilsen Foundation must be registered on [ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov).
- Rigor, transparency, and reproducibility in research are fundamental to scientific progress. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how the proposed experimental design, methodology, and analysis ensure well-controlled and unbiased results (see [Appendix 5](#)). Applicants should address the rigor of the research upon which the proposed study is based.
 - The Neilsen Foundation strongly encourages data sharing consistent with [FAIR \(Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Re-useable\) Data Principles](https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/) (<https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>) and open access (see PART 2, Section C., [Publication and Data Sharing](#)). Grantees should describe plans to make all reports and datasets openly accessible no later than one year after publication and will be required in any future applications to provide links to all reports and datasets from funded studies.
- Childcare cost reimbursement should adhere to the Grantee's institutional guidelines or, in the absence of such guidance, may include expenses for the care of children up to age 13, or children up to age 18 who are physically or mentally incapable of self-care. The Neilsen Foundation does not review the eligibility of dependents or caregivers.

C. Grant Categories

PSR POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS

Overview: This funding is for postdoctoral training in psychosocial methods and specialization in the field of SCI to prepare the applicant (Fellow) to move into an independent research position. Fellowships directly support the Fellow while they are mentored (or co-mentored) by an investigator experienced in psychosocial research as it pertains to SCI. The proposal should be written by the Fellow, with input from the mentor(s).

Key criteria include how the training and environment provided by the mentor(s) will enhance the Fellow's research career and qualifications, as well as the scientific merit of the proposal and its relevance to the Neilsen Foundation's mission. A full and current review of relevant literature should be presented as rationale for the proposed study. Activities such as focus groups should be justified based on a demonstrated gap in current literature.

Funding for the two-year Fellowship is up to \$100,000/year for a maximum total cost of \$200,000.

Details for PSR Postdoctoral Fellowships Funding Category:

- Fellows should have attained their doctoral degree or an equivalent terminal professional degree by no later than two months after the FGA submission deadline.
 - If the degree is expected within two months after the FGA submission date, a letter from the thesis advisor addressing the likelihood of degree completion is required. This letter should be uploaded as a separate PDF file in the "Proposal Narrative & Other Attachments" section in ProposalCentral.

- Fellows cannot have held their terminal professional degree longer than five years prior to the FGA submission deadline. For Fellows with a MD degree, the five-year period begins after completion of their residency program. Unique circumstances related to this criterion must be communicated to the Neilsen Foundation for approval prior to submission.
- Training Plan: A two-page Training Plan is required when submitting a FGA (see instructions in ProposalCentral). For LOIs, it is strongly recommended that a brief description of training and mentorship be included.
- Postdoctoral Fellowships are intended to directly support the Fellow. The proposal should be written by the Fellow with input from the mentor(s).

Allowable budget categories include:

- Personnel Costs: Fellowship budgets should cover 100% of the Fellow's salary plus fringe benefits up to 50% of salary. No funding for other personnel (e.g., technical staff) is allowed.
- Non-Personnel Costs: These costs should support the advancement of the Fellow's career in SCI research. The Neilsen Foundation will allow up to \$35,000 over the course of the two-year grant for non-personnel costs, provided the Fellow's salary and fringe (as noted above) are fully covered and total costs do not exceed \$100,000 per year. It is expected that the mentor(s) will make available necessary general office equipment and supplies; however, funds for travel, publication costs, supplies, and/or equipment can be expended in the categories listed below.
 - Travel: Support for conference travel is limited to \$6,000 during the grant term. Adequate justification is required for additional professional development-related travel for the Fellow. Travel for other personnel is not allowed.
 - Training/Education: Appropriate educational expenses for the Fellow, such as relevant coursework and SCI professional memberships, can be included.
 - Publications: Publication costs are allowed where the Fellow is a contributing author. Allowable costs include open-access fees; all publications resulting from Neilsen Foundation grant funding should be publicly available.
 - Supplies: All items other than those described below in Equipment are allowed. A computing device or computer software is considered a supply if the acquisition cost is less than \$5,000, regardless of the length of its useful life.
 - Equipment: An item having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit is considered equipment. Requests should not exceed \$10,000 for the two-year grant term. All requests must be justified and include a description of how the equipment will support the advancement of the Fellow's career.
 - Other Costs: Refer to Budget instructions in ProposalCentral and list under "Other."
 - Childcare costs are allowable up to \$2,500 per year.
 - Budget may include accommodations for a Fellow with a disability, which are not subject to the limit on non-personnel costs.
- Indirect Costs: The Neilsen Foundation does not allow indirect costs (i.e., administrative, overhead, per capita infrastructure costs, etc.) on its Postdoctoral Fellowships.

INVESTIGATIONAL GRANTS

Overview: This funding supports research to improve understanding of psychosocial issues, characterize barriers and facilitators to therapy and community living, and provide insights needed to develop approaches that improve the lives of people affected by SCI. Studies in this category may involve the development and early testing of an intervention, although this is not a requirement.

Applicants must have a doctoral degree or other equivalent terminal professional degree, be beyond the postdoctoral level (i.e., Instructor, Assistant Professor, or equivalent research position) at the time of the FGA submission, and demonstrate appropriate experience to serve as an independent PI.

Criteria for these grants include the scientific merit of the study design, the innovative nature of the proposed psychosocial research, and the likelihood that success will move the SCI field forward. Future application of the intended results must be specified.

Funding for Investigational Grants is for up to two years, for a maximum total cost of \$300,000. While yearly budget totals may vary over the two-year period, the justification and distribution of the budget should reflect the costs needed to complete the scope of work within the proposed timeline.

See "Details for Investigational Grants and Interventional Testing Categories" section below.

INTERVENTIONAL TESTING

Overview: This funding is intended to support work that leads to the creation, adaptation, and/or refinement of an intervention to address psychosocial challenges for those affected by SCI. Studies in this category must extend to initial efficacy testing of the developed intervention. Activities such as focus groups to define the target of the intervention must be justified based on a demonstrated gap in current literature.

Applicants must have a doctoral degree or other equivalent terminal professional degree, be beyond the postdoctoral level (i.e., Instructor, Assistant Professor, or equivalent research position) at the time of the FGA submission, and demonstrate appropriate experience to serve as an independent PI.

Criteria for these grants include the readiness and design of the interventional approach, the intervention's potential value to people with SCI, and qualifications of the investigative team. Future plans for the intervention being developed must be specified.

Funding for Interventional Testing is for up to three years, for a maximum total cost of \$350,000. While yearly budget totals may vary over the three-year period, the justification and distribution of the budget should reflect the costs needed to complete the scope of work within the proposed timeline.

DETAILS FOR INVESTIGATIONAL GRANTS AND INTERVENTIONAL TESTING CATEGORIES

- PIs can be at any stage of their research career, must be actively employed at the grantee institution at the time of FGA submission, and should provide evidence of a strong research background relevant to the proposed study.
 - For Applicants who are not in a tenure track position (e.g., Instructor, Research Assistant), a Letter of Assurance from the institution's Director or Department Chair is recommended at the LOI and FGA stage. Such a letter should confirm the Applicant's position as independent and affirm that all needed space and equipment are available to the PI.

Allowable budget categories include:

- PI Salary: The amount requested for the PI's support (salary plus fringe benefits) may be up to 25% of the total yearly cost of the grant.
- Collaborator(s): A collaborator is an individual who will make a significant contribution in the conduct of the research, whether paid or unpaid. In most cases, the collaborator provides needed expertise, such as a specific type of SCI research experience. Collaborators do not need to be affiliated with the same institution as the PI; a subcontract may be used for their support. If paid, the total amount requested for each collaborator's support (salary plus fringe benefits) may be up to 25% of the total yearly cost of the grant. Support for collaborators beyond this limit may be requested, with strong justification.
- Other Personnel: This category includes other key personnel (e.g., study coordinator, statistician, community interviewer) who will contribute directly and substantively. There is no restriction on the percentage of salary support for other positions. The Neilsen Foundation does not fund graduate student tuition or fees; however, stipends/salaries for graduate students can be included.
- Fringe Benefits will be supported at the institution's standard levels, up to 50% of salary for any listed personnel; institutionally defined fringe rates above this level are not supported by Neilsen Foundation grants.
- Consultants: Consultants are generally independent contractors who offer advice or work on specific aspects of a project. The Neilsen Foundation supports [Knowledge Translation Guiding Principles](#) for the conduct of SCI research partnerships. Including people with lived experience and/or knowledge translation expertise on research teams is encouraged.
- Subcontracts: A subcontract may be established by the grantee institution with another site to carry out selected activities of the proposed research. If a subcontract is included in the grant, the combined indirect cost amount for the PI's institution *and* the subcontractor's institution may not exceed 10% of the total cost of the grant.
- Supplies: All study-related items other than those described below in Equipment are allowed. A computing device or computer software is considered a supply if the acquisition cost is less than \$5,000, regardless of the length of its useful life.
- Equipment: An item having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit is considered equipment. Requests must be justified and should not exceed \$10,000 during the grant term. If equipment needs exceed this amount, a compelling explanation must be provided.

- Travel: Support for conference travel is limited to \$8,000 during the grant term. Adequate justification is required for any additional project-related travel support (e.g., research participant travel, travel to a collaborating site).
- Publications: Up to \$6,000 is allowed during the grant term for publication costs, including open-access fees. All publications resulting from Nielsen Foundation funding should be publicly available.
- Other Costs: Refer to Budget instructions in [ProposalCentral](#) and list under “Other:”
 - Accommodations for personnel with disabilities.
 - Childcare costs up to \$2,500 per PI/staff person, per year.
 - Data sharing/curation costs (see PART 2, Section C., [Publication and Data Sharing](#)).
- Indirect Costs: The maximum amount allowed for indirect costs (i.e., administrative, overhead, per capita infrastructure costs, etc.) is 10% of the total cost of the grant. Indirect costs are not allowed on individual pieces of equipment costing \$5,000 or more.
- Per Capita Infrastructure Costs: These costs cannot be charged as direct costs (e.g., IT, network, communications, or other charges not specific to the research Aims); indirect costs may be used to defray these charges, subject to the 10% total indirect cost cap.

PART 2: APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESSES

A. Submission Requirements

The 2027 application process begins with submission of a LOI from an eligible organization.

ON-TIME SUBMISSION

All application deadlines, dates, and times are strictly enforced. The online system used to review and manage grants, [ProposalCentral](#) (<https://proposalcentral.com/>), will automatically close at 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) on the deadline listed on Page 1. We strongly recommend that you complete the [ProposalCentral](#) application process well in advance of all deadlines.

If you need assistance as you prepare the application, contact Nielsen Foundation staff and they will be happy to assist you. Late submissions will not be considered, including those due to technical difficulties at the deadline.

ProposalCentral will not allow an LOI or FGA to be submitted until all required information is provided. To check for any missing information or files before submitting, click on the “Validate” button located in the “Validate” section.

APPLICATION TEMPLATES

Applicants are required to use the templates provided in [ProposalCentral](#) (<https://proposalcentral.com/>) for the current LOI and FGA processes. *Applicants may not modify any Nielsen Foundation template.* For example, Applicants should not change margins, delete template text (including instructions), or change font sizes on the templates. Modifications may lead to disqualification.

Completed LOI and FGA applications must be submitted online via ProposalCentral. Additional instructions are provided on the template and in ProposalCentral under Proposal Sections (located in the navigation bar).

APPLICANT INFORMATION

The Neilsen Foundation relies on accurate ProposalCentral contact information to communicate with its applicants and grantees. The Applicant must enter accurate contact information in ProposalCentral, including a *current* email address. The name entered in ProposalCentral should be consistent with the name listed on the application template.

To ensure receipt of important information, the Applicant and other organization contacts (e.g., grants administrator, signing official, financial officer) must keep their ProposalCentral information up to date. If the contact information is not current and we are unable to contact the Applicant, we will assume that they are no longer interested in funding from the Neilsen Foundation.

Applicants are advised to check the “Auto Notify” box in the “Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal” section in ProposalCentral for at least one other contact at the organization. The “Permissions” access level for other contacts can be set as view, edit, or administrator.

INFORMATION CONSISTENCY AND ACCURACY

- Respond to all template sections. If a section/question does not apply, enter “N/A.”
- The Applicant should carefully proofread all sections of the LOI and FGA materials for consistency and accuracy before submitting in ProposalCentral and verify that all PDF documents are legible.
- Inaccurate or incomplete submissions will be disqualified.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For technical questions regarding the online submission process, contact ProposalCentral Customer Service at (800) 875-2562 during business hours, Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time), or via email at pcsupport@altum.com. *There is no technical support available on weekends or holidays.*

ProposalCentral has a “[Grant Applicant Tutorials](#)” section on its website (<https://proposalcentral.com/help.asp>) that may be helpful in completing the application. The tutorials link can also be found by selecting “Contact Us” located in the “Help” dropdown menu.

B. Letter of Intent (LOI) Content and Review

REQUIRED INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN THE LOI

- Hypotheses/research questions and Specific Aim(s).
- Overview of the experimental design/methods.
- Relevance to the Neilsen Foundation.
- Brief preliminary budget for the entire project period. At the LOI stage, the budget should be broadly categorized. Eligible project costs, such as personnel, supplies, equipment, travel, etc., should directly support the Aims.

- Submissions are accepted from PIs in a wide range of disciplines; however, it is strongly encouraged that relevant SCI, psychosocial, and technical expertise are represented on the research team.
- The PI must submit a biosketch as described in the FGA section below. For Postdoctoral Fellowships, biosketches are required for both the Fellow and mentor(s). Biosketches from any major collaborator who provides essential expertise are not required at the LOI stage but are encouraged. Each biosketch should be provided as a separate PDF.
- A Letter of Assurance confirming the independence of an Applicant who does not hold a tenure track position (e.g., Instructor, Research Assistant), if applicable, should be included in the biosketch PDF and uploaded as a single document at the LOI stage.
- Resubmissions—Applicants are allowed one resubmission of a previously reviewed but not funded FGA. Up to a half-page of additional text may be included at the end of the LOI to respond to reviewer comments; this half-page does not count in the three-page limit.
- A bibliography is not required at the LOI stage. If the PI chooses to provide references, these can be included as a single page appended at the end of the completed LOI template in one PDF file.

LOI EVALUATION CRITERIA

LOIs will be reviewed based on relevance of the proposed Aims to the Neilsen Foundation, potential impact on the field of SCI research, creativity, and specific requirements of the funding category. See [Appendix 1](#) for a full list of LOI review criteria.

NOTIFICATION OF LOI RESULTS

Applicants will be notified via email whether they are invited to submit a FGA, or if the LOI has been declined.

C. Full Grant Application (FGA) Submission and Review

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

FGAs will only be accepted from Applicants invited through the most recent LOI competition.

It is strongly advised that Applicants review additional instructions in ProposalCentral under Proposal Sections (located in the navigation bar) and in the templates provided. Note the following:

Postdoctoral Fellowships

At the FGA stage, Postdoctoral Fellowship applicants must provide the following: 1) research plan; 2) Biosketch for the Fellow; 3) Biosketch for the mentor(s); 4) training plan; 5) letter of recommendation from the mentor(s); 6) two additional recommendation letters; and 7) thesis advisor's letter, if appropriate.

- Letters of Recommendation

A letter of recommendation from the Fellow's mentor is required. If the Applicant has co-mentors, one letter of recommendation should be provided and signed by both mentors.

Two other letters of recommendation must be submitted with the application. ProposalCentral will allow an application to be submitted with only one letter uploaded; however, the Neilsen Foundation will not review an application without all three reference letters. It is the Fellow's

responsibility to ensure that the letters of recommendation are submitted by the deadline. It is recommended that the Fellow notify their references of the deadline and follow up to ensure that the letters are submitted before the deadline.

- **Postdoctoral Fellowship Training Plan**

All postdoctoral applications MUST include a two-page Training Plan designed to enhance the postdoctoral experience through a program of structured activities focused on acquiring, expanding, and/or enhancing knowledge and expertise in SCI. The plan should delineate activities, opportunities, and experiences that align with the Fellow's long-term career goals. The Fellow's contribution to the mentor's research program(s) should also be addressed. Additional Training Plan Instructions are provided in ProposalCentral as a downloadable PDF document in the "Download Templates & Instructions" section. The plan should be developed collaboratively by the Fellow and mentor(s). The Training Plan document must be signed by both the Fellow and mentor; if co-mentors are listed, their signatures or a letter indicating agreement should also be included. It is the Fellow's responsibility to ensure that this document is signed and submitted by the deadline.

Biosketch

The PI must submit a Biosketch using the NIH Biosketch format; no other biosketch templates are allowed. Use of the personal statement to circumvent page limits by adding specific information on the proposed research plan is not allowed. **For Postdoctoral Fellowships**, the mentor(s) also **must** provide a biosketch.

Biosketches for all collaborators and other key personnel must be submitted with the FGA. Key personnel are defined as the PI, collaborators, and other individuals who contribute to the scientific development or execution of a project in a substantive, measurable way, whether or not salary or compensation is requested. Each Biosketch must be provided as a separate PDF.

Subcontracts

If the proposed research requires work to be carried out by another institution, the relationship must be disclosed in the Proposal Narrative and Budget sections of the application.

Other Research Support

The PI must provide information for all current and pending grants. **For Postdoctoral Fellowships**, both the Fellow *and* the mentor(s) must provide this information. Other key personnel are not required to provide other research support information.

After an application is submitted, the PI is required to immediately notify the Neilsen Foundation if a similar application to another funding source is submitted or if notification is received from another funding source that a substantially similar application has been **conditionally approved** for funding. **Failure to report other funding applications, pending or approved, will jeopardize the Applicant's current Neilsen Foundation grant application status.**

Publication and Data Sharing

The PI is expected to ensure that publications resulting from the grant are publicly available (e.g., through open-access journals or PubMed Central). It is expected that data generated from the funding will be shared according to [FAIR \(Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Re-useable\) Data Principles](https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/) (<https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>) on a curated open platform; contribution of datasets to the [Open Data Commons for SCI](https://odc-sci.org/) (<https://odc-sci.org/>) is strongly encouraged.

Summary results of clinical trials also should be reported on [ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov). Sharing costs should be listed as “Other Expenses” in the Budget Period Detail and explained under Additional Justification in the Budget Summary section. PIs who received prior Nielsen Foundation research funding must provide openly accessible links to any papers and datasets resulting from that funding during the current submission process.

OPTIONAL SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Supporting material may include up to two related manuscripts (submitted, in press, or published) and Animal or Human Research Approval Letter(s), if applicable and available. A Letter of Assurance confirming the independence of a PI who does not hold a tenure track position, and Letters of Support from collaborators or other stakeholders are encouraged.

These materials cannot be used as a continuation of the Proposal Narrative itself and may not include additional figures other than those in the manuscripts. All optional supporting materials must be compiled into a single PDF document.

REQUIRED SIGNATURES

In ProposalCentral under Proposal Sections, select “Print Signature Pages” (located in the navigation bar), press the “Print Signature Pages” button, and ***print only page one (Grant Application) of the PDF file***. The Nielsen Foundation accepts either ink or secure, dated e-signatures (e.g., DocuSign). Signatures that are “typed in” (e.g., in Word or Adobe) using special fonts are not acceptable. When two signatures are required, ***both must be provided***. Once this page is signed by the PI/Applicant AND the Signing Official, upload the PDF in the “Proposal Narrative & Other Attachments” section.

It is important that the Applicant view the uploaded documents to ensure all PDFs are legible. In the online Proposal Sections, return to “Print Signature Pages” and click on the “Print Signature Pages with Attachments” button to view the uploads.

FGA EVALUATION CRITERIA

FGAs are peer-reviewed by members of the Nielsen Foundation’s Review Board. The critique and evaluation of a FGA will be based on scientific merit, creativity, and relevance to the Nielsen Foundation. Reviewer comments and a summary statement, if applicable, will be available to the Applicant after the current grant cycle results are announced. See Appendix [2](#), [3](#), and [4](#) for a list of FGA review criteria.

D. Award Process

After review is completed, the Nielsen Foundation will notify Applicants, via email, whether an application has been approved by the Nielsen Foundation Board of Directors or declined for funding approximately five months after the FGA deadline.

Applicants approved for funding will be required to submit additional documentation before a grant is issued, including but not limited to: 1) signed Research Grant Agreement; 2) Notice of Other Funding & Conflict of Interest; and 3) IRB/IACUC Approval. Instructions for executing the additional documentation will be included in the award notification.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) / INSTITUTIONAL ANIMAL CARE AND USE COMMITTEE (IACUC) APPROVALS

Prior to receiving funding for an award, the PI must provide documentation of IRB/IACUC approval for use of human or animal subjects. For multi-center clinical studies, use of a single IRB of record or a central IRB is strongly encouraged.

Important: The IRB/IACUC approval notification must be in English or with an English translation provided. The approval notification must be sent from the IRB or IACUC committee and list the expiration date of the approval, the PI's or other key personnel name(s), and include the Neilsen Foundation project title. If the IRB/IACUC approval is for a broader protocol and the title on the approval notification differs from the Neilsen Foundation title, the notification must mention that it also covers the work funded by the Neilsen Foundation. If multiple IRB/IACUC approvals are required from multiple institutions, PIs must provide each notification as a separate PDF file.

ORGANIZATIONAL ELIGIBILITY AND DUE DILIGENCE

The grantee must be a nonprofit organization or rehabilitation facility located in the United States or Canada with the capability to conduct grant-funded programs or activities.

When applying, the Applicant must provide the following, in English:

United States-based organizations:

- A copy of the U.S. IRS Determination letter, which proves the entity's 501(c)(3) designation or tax-exempt status under Internal Revenue Code Section 170(c)(1).
- Organizations classified as a public charity under Section 509(a)(3) will be required to provide additional documentation (refer to IRS Notice 2006-109 and its subsequent modification in IRS Notice 2014-4). The Neilsen Foundation will request this information, when needed.

Canada-based organizations:

- If applicable, a copy of the U.S. IRS Determination letter proving the entity's 501(c)(3) designation or tax-exempt status under Internal Revenue Code Section 170(c)(1).
- Organizations that do not hold a U.S. IRS Determination letter must be a "registered charity" with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and provide a copy of the entity's CRA registration page. *Additional information will be required to determine that the Canadian organization is the equivalent of a U.S. public charity.*

Copies of tax returns, EIN letters, W-9s, or internal documents noting an organization's nonprofit status, in lieu of the U.S. IRS Determination letter are not acceptable.

DISBURSEMENT OF GRANT FUNDS

After the required documentation is accepted by the Neilsen Foundation and our due diligence process is complete, funds will be disbursed to the grantee organization.

FINAL REPORTS

At the end of the grant term, grantees will be required to report on final progress and expenditures. Applicable templates are available in the Deliverables section in ProposalCentral. Grantees that do not comply with this requirement, or submit unsatisfactory reports, will not be eligible for future Neilsen Foundation funding until receipt of acceptable required report(s).

E. Resubmission

Applicants are permitted one resubmission of a revised FGA that was favorably reviewed but not funded in a prior grant cycle. A new LOI is required for the resubmission but does not guarantee that the LOI will be invited to submit a revised FGA. Prior to resubmission, PIs are encouraged to reach out to the Program Officers for insight into key issues that drove reviewer scores. The LOI must briefly indicate how the PI plans to respond to the previous critiques. Up to a half-page of text is allowed and is not counted in the standard LOI page limit.

Given the recent change in this portfolio's grant structure, if a prior submission was a PSR Pilot Research Grant or Studies and Demonstration Project, it may be resubmitted with similar Aims and appropriate scope in the most suitable current category.

Aims that were unsuccessful in a resubmission may be submitted in a new grant application, using the standard template (i.e., no response to reviewer comments). A new LOI is required and previous acceptance of similar Aims does not guarantee approval for invitation as a FGA.

PART 3: NEILSEN FOUNDATION OVERVIEW

A. About the Neilsen Foundation

The Craig H. Neilsen Foundation is the largest private funder of spinal cord injury research, rehabilitation, clinical training, and programmatic support in the United States and Canada. The Neilsen Foundation partners with scientific, charitable, and educational organizations conducting spinal cord injury research, training in spinal cord medicine, and supports grassroots organizations providing services to assist individuals affected by spinal cord injury. The Neilsen Foundation values inclusion, and accessibility to foster equitable communities, and is dedicated to improving the world for persons with spinal cord injury.

Vision

Individuals with spinal cord injuries, and those who care for them, live full and productive lives as active participants in their communities.

Mission

Craig H. Neilsen Foundation's funding is dedicated to supporting both programs and scientific research to improve the quality of life for those affected by and living with spinal cord injury.

Values

Our values are inspired by our Founder, Craig Neilsen, who overcame barriers during his lifetime, empowered others to do the same, and created this organization to impact the field today and expand solutions for tomorrow. These are foundational to what we are and aspire to be: Leadership, Inclusion, Excellence, Creativity, and Collaboration.

ABOUT OUR FOUNDER

Craig H. Neilsen was an American entrepreneur well known for his attention to detail, uncompromising demand for excellence, and an ability to inspire those around him. In his personal life, he was also known for his generosity and led by example with his charitable giving. In 1985, a collision with a semi-truck left Craig with a severe spinal cord injury, and in 2002, he applied his entrepreneurial spirit to his charitable pursuits and established the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation to improve the quality of life for people living with SCI.

NEILSEN FOUNDATION ONGOING PORTFOLIOS

The Neilsen Foundation supports research grants, programmatic grants, and education grants. For information about our portfolios, please visit the [Craig H. Neilsen Foundation website](http://www.chnfoundation.org) (www.chnfoundation.org).

Research Grants:

- Spinal Cord Injury Research on the Translational Spectrum (SCIRTS)
- Psychosocial Research (PSR)

Programmatic Grants:

- Creating Opportunity & Independence (CO&I)

Education Grants:

- Spinal Cord Injury Medicine Fellowships (SCIMF)
- Neilsen Scholarship Program (NSP)

CONCURRENT GRANTS ACROSS NEILSEN FOUNDATION PORTFOLIOS

Applicants may hold only one Neilsen Foundation grant within any portfolio at one time. To be eligible for the current cycle, a grantee must fulfill the obligations of a current grant (i.e., submission of the Final Report and Final Expenditure Report) before the FGA deadline noted on page one.

- **All Neilsen Foundation portfolios:** Non-trainee Applicants may apply for one grant per cycle per portfolio (i.e., SCIRTS, PSR, and CO&I), and may hold one grant in each portfolio at a time. Such applications will be evaluated independently, according to each program's timelines, guidelines, and review criteria.
- **Fellowship/Training grants:** Postdoctoral Fellows may not apply for a non-training Neilsen Foundation grant. Fellowship budgets are intended to cover 100% of the salary support for the Fellow so they may focus on a defined training program specific to the needs of their research interests. Postdoctoral Fellows may not hold multiple concurrent grants in different Neilsen Foundation portfolios; however, funded Fellows may be listed as participants on other grants, within or outside the Neilsen Foundation, without salary or fringe support on those grants.

B. Contact Information

APPLICATION SUBMISSION CONTACTS

- For technical questions regarding the online submission process, contact ProposalCentral Customer Service at (800) 875-2562 or via email at pcsupport@altum.com during business hours,

Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time). *There is no technical support available on weekends or holidays.*

- ProposalCentral has a “[Grant Applicant Tutorials](#)” section on its website (<https://proposalcentral.com/help.asp>) that may be helpful in completing the application. The tutorials link can also be found by selecting “Contact Us” located in the “Help” dropdown menu.

NEILSEN FOUNDATION CONTACTS

- For questions regarding an application’s submission status, contact Ehrica Hernandez, Grants Management Associate, at ehrica@chnfoundation.org.
- For questions regarding the PSR portfolio, contact Constanza Svidler, Program Officer, at constanza@chnfoundation.org.

Applicants are strongly discouraged from contacting Neilsen Foundation Review Board members during the application process. Such contact will result in disqualification of the LOI or FGA.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF INTENT—REVIEW CRITERIA PSYCHOSOCIAL RESEARCH

SCORING CRITERIA/APPROACH

The Letter of Intent (LOI) review process is intended to identify work that should be invited to submit a Full Grant Application (FGA). We use general criteria that apply to all LOIs, specific criteria relevant to each category (Postdoctoral, Investigational, or Interventional), and, to a limited extent, scientific merit. The primary focus of the evaluation is relevance to the Neilsen Foundation's mission and creativity in the approach to critical gaps in the field of psychosocial research as it pertains to SCI. The LOI format does not allow Applicants to provide a great deal of information on methodology, therefore, reviewers should not focus on experimental detail, which will be evaluated in the invited proposals. However, notable feasibility concerns should impact the LOI's score.

RELEVANCE AND IMPACT

1. To what extent is the LOI relevant to the Neilsen Foundation, the field of SCI, and the stated goals of the grant program to which it is applied?
2. What is the likelihood that the study, if successful, will make an original and significant contribution to address an unsolved problem/important issue, improve clinical practice, and/or quality of life for persons with SCI?
3. Is the research and approach innovative versus incremental?

APPROACH

Is the conceptual framework for the proposed study appropriate for the stated hypotheses/research questions and will the study Aims address these issue(s)?

1. Feasibility

Does the scope of work appear feasible within the proposed grant period given the investigators' experience and expertise, past progress, and available resources?

2. Categorical Criteria

- a. Postdoctoral Fellowships: Will the training, mentor, and research area increase the skill set of the Fellow and help establish their independent career in SCI research?
- b. Investigational Grants: Will this work help improve understanding of important psychosocial issues, and/or develop or advance a promising treatment approach?
- c. Interventional Testing: Will the proposed work lead to the creation, adaptation, and/or refinement, *including testing*, of an intervention to address psychosocial challenges for those affected by SCI?

RESEARCH DESIGN

1. Theoretical Basis and Investigator

- a. Does the application provide adequate theoretical and/or preliminary support for the proposed research as well as its potential impact and feasibility?

b. Does the application address the expertise of the investigators in relation to the study goals?

2. Research Plan

- a. Is the general design appropriate for solving the stated problem(s)?
- b. For clinical research: Is the scope and type of the planned study clearly described and is it likely to be feasible within the resources provided by the grant?

PRESENTATION

Is the application clearly written and free of excessive typographical/spelling errors?

BUDGET

Is the estimated budget appropriate to the nature and scope of the study?

RESUBMISSIONS

At the LOI stage, applicants are allowed a half-page response to reviewer comments from a previously reviewed FGA. Please note whether the applicant has adequately indicated how they will respond to reviewer comments at the FGA stage.

APPENDIX 2: POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS—FGA REVIEW CRITERIA PSYCHOSOCIAL RESEARCH

Fellowships provide mentored opportunities to foster specialization in the field of psychosocial research as it pertains to SCI and support the advancement of the Fellow's research career. The Fellow should be mentored or co-mentored by an experienced investigator in SCI and psychosocial research. Reviewers will focus on how the training plan and environment provided by the mentor(s) will enhance the Fellow's research career, the scientific merit of the proposal, and relevance to the PSR portfolio.

OVERALL IMPACT

Considering all criteria, summarize the significant strengths and weaknesses of the application and training plan, then rate the likelihood that Neilsen Foundation funding would support this Fellow in becoming an important contributor to the field of SCI psychosocial research.

SIGNIFICANCE

1. If the study Aims and training plan goals are achieved, how would this work change or enhance current methods, services, or interventions?
2. How will the Fellow's scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical skills be improved by undertaking this study?
3. Does the proposal identify an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field of SCI?

RELEVANCE

1. How is this proposal relevant to the mission of the Neilsen Foundation and goals of the PSR portfolio?
2. Does the study design/team incorporate the perspectives of persons with lived experience in a meaningful way?

INVESTIGATOR(S)

1. Are the Fellow, mentor(s), and other contributors well suited to the work—is there evidence of a match between the Fellow and the mentor(s) research interests and commitment?
2. Does the *Fellow* have the potential to develop as an independent and productive SCI researcher?
3. Does the Training Plan provide the Fellow with the requisite individualized and supervised experiences that will develop their psychosocial research skills, including qualitative methodologies?
4. Are the *mentor(s)*' psychosocial research qualifications, including track record of funding and mentoring, appropriate for the proposed Fellowship?

CREATIVITY

1. Does the study challenge and seek to shift current research paradigms?
2. And/or does this application apply concepts, approaches or methodologies, or interventions from another field of research to SCI?
3. And/or is it a refinement of prior theoretical concepts, approaches, or interventions?

APPROACH

1. Is the research plan of high scientific quality and does it relate to the applicant's Training Plan?
2. Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the Specific Aims?
3. Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented?
4. Are data sharing and open access to the results of the work addressed? Will the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke Common Data Elements be used? If not, is this justified?
5. Are the plans for recruitment sufficient and is protection of human subjects properly described?

ENVIRONMENT

1. Are the institutional environment and commitment appropriate to fostering the Fellow's training?
2. Are the physical equipment, and other resources available to the investigator(s) adequate for the proposed study and to provide the applicant with individualized, supervised experiences that will develop skills needed for their research career?
3. Will the Fellow and work benefit from unique features of the environment, subject populations, or collaborative arrangements?

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

(Administrative topics considered separately from the Overall Score)

1. Budget
2. Overlapping Funding
3. Ethics/Safety—Protection of human subjects, including safety and data monitoring
4. The Neilsen Foundation values inclusion and accessibility to foster equitable opportunities and diverse points of view. Does the application include an institutional statement or describe information about efforts to promote inclusion and accessibility?
5. Conflict of Interest (COI) Disclosure—Applicants must disclose any real or perceived COIs. If you have questions or concerns regarding COIs, please contact the Program Officer.

RESUBMISSION

When reviewing a resubmission, evaluate the application as now presented, taking into consideration the response to comments from the previous review group and changes made to the study, but base your final score on the overall merits of the current proposal.

APPENDIX 3: INVESTIGATIONAL GRANTS—FGA REVIEW CRITERIA PSYCHOSOCIAL RESEARCH

Investigational Grants support research to improve understanding of psychosocial issues and provide insights needed to develop approaches that improve the lives of people affected by SCI. Studies in this category may involve the development and early testing of an intervention, although this is not a requirement. Future application of the results should be specified.

OVERALL IMPACT

Considering all criteria, summarize the significant strengths and weaknesses of the application. Does the study scope suit the funding category?

SIGNIFICANCE

1. Does the study address an important problem or a critical barrier in the field and does it have the potential to exert a sustained powerful influence on, and/or be an important contribution to, the field of SCI psychosocial research?
2. If the study aims are achieved, how would this work change or enhance current methods, technologies, treatments, services, or interventions?
3. Is the future applicability of the results or next steps discussed?

RELEVANCE

1. How is this study relevant to the mission of the Neilsen Foundation and to the goals of the PSR portfolio?
2. Does the proposal adequately identify how this line of research would impact individuals with SCI?
3. Does it incorporate the perspectives of persons with lived experiences in a meaningful way?

INVESTIGATOR(S)

1. Are the PI, collaborators, and other contributors well suited to the study? Are relevant SCI and psychosocial research expertise represented on the proposed study team?
2. If the PI is a junior investigator, do they have appropriate experience, training, and facilities to do the proposed work?
3. If the PI is an established investigator, have they demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have advanced their field(s)?

CREATIVITY

1. Does the study challenge and seek to shift current research paradigms?
2. Does this application apply concepts, approaches or methodologies, or interventions from another field of research to SCI?
3. And/or is it a refinement of prior theoretical concepts, approaches, or interventions?

APPROACH

1. Is the work well suited to the Investigational category?
2. Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the Specific Aims within the proposed study period and by the study team described? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented?
3. If the study is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility and will particularly risky aspects be managed adequately?
4. If the study involves clinical and/or community-based research:
 - a. Does the timeline include plans for study start-up time (including IRB approval) and is it sufficient for subject recruitment, if needed?
 - b. Is there a plan for incorporating a participant sample that represents the overall population of individuals with SCI; if not, is a reasonable explanation provided?
 - c. Will the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Common Data Elements be used? If not, is justification provided?

ENVIRONMENT

1. Will the institutional environment contribute to the probability of success?
2. Are the institutional support, equipment, and other resources available to the investigator(s) adequate for the proposed work?
3. Will the research benefit from unique features of their environment, subject populations, or collaborative arrangements?

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

(Administrative topics considered separately from the Overall Score)

1. Budget
2. Overlapping Funding
3. Ethics/Safety—Protection of human subjects, including safety and data monitoring
4. The Neilsen Foundation values inclusion and accessibility to foster equitable opportunities and diverse points of view. Does the application include an institutional statement or describe information about efforts to promote inclusion and accessibility?
5. Conflict of Interest (COI) Disclosure—Applicants must disclose any real or perceived COIs. If you have questions or concerns regarding COIs, please contact the Program Officer.

RESUBMISSION

When reviewing a resubmission, evaluate the application as now presented, taking into consideration the response to comments from the previous review group and changes made to the study, but base your final score on the overall merits of the current proposal.

APPENDIX 4: INTERVENTIONAL TESTING—FGA REVIEW CRITERIA PSYCHOSOCIAL RESEARCH

Interventional Testing grants support work that leads to the creation, adaptation, and/or refinement *and testing* of an intervention to address psychosocial challenges and have a positive impact for those living with SCI.

OVERALL IMPACT

Considering all criteria, summarize the significant strengths and weaknesses of the application. Does the research scope suit this funding category, and does it have the potential to exert a sustained powerful influence on, and/or be an important contribution to, the field of SCI psychosocial research?

SIGNIFICANCE

1. Does this research address important gaps, propose cutting-edge ideas or interventions, and/or test approaches that have great potential to have a positive impact for those living with SCI?
2. If the Specific Aims are achieved, how would this work change or enhance current methods, technologies, services, or interventions?

RELEVANCE

1. How is this work relevant to the mission of the Neilsen Foundation and the goals of the PSR portfolio?
2. Does the proposal adequately identify how this line of research would impact individuals with SCI?
3. Does it incorporate the perspectives of persons with lived experiences in a meaningful way?

INVESTIGATOR(S)

1. Are the PI, collaborators, and other contributors well suited to the work? Are relevant SCI and psychosocial research expertise represented on the proposed study team?
2. If the PI is a junior investigator, do they have appropriate experience, training, and facilities to do the proposed work?
3. If the PI is an established investigator, have they demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have advanced their field(s)?

CREATIVITY

1. Does the study challenge and seek to shift current research paradigms?
2. Does this application apply concepts, approaches or methodologies, or interventions from another field of research to SCI?
3. And/or is it a refinement of prior theoretical concepts, approaches, or interventions?

APPROACH

1. Is the study well-suited to the Investigational category?
2. Is the future applicability of the findings or next stage discussed (e.g., how will it impact current practices and approaches, and/or lay necessary groundwork for future trials)?

3. Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the Specific Aims and by the study team described? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented?
4. Are preliminary data provided to support feasibility of the work within the proposed grant period? Are any particularly risky aspects managed adequately?
5. If the study involves clinical and/or community-based research:
 - a. Does the timeline include plans for study start-up time (including IRB approval) and is it sufficient for subject recruitment?
 - b. Is there a plan for incorporating a participant sample that represents the overall population of individuals with SCI; if not, is a reasonable explanation provided?
 - c. Will the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Common Data Elements be used? If not, is justification provided?

ENVIRONMENT

1. Will the institutional environment contribute to the probability of success?
2. Are the institutional support, equipment, and other resources available to the investigator(s) adequate for the proposed work?
3. Will the research benefit from unique features of their environment, subject populations, or collaborative arrangements?

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

(Administrative topics considered separately from the Overall Score)

1. Budget
2. Overlapping Funding
3. Ethics/Safety—Protection of human subjects, including safety and data monitoring
4. The Neilsen Foundation values inclusion and accessibility to foster equitable opportunities and diverse points of view. Does the application include an institutional statement or describe information about efforts to promote inclusion and accessibility?
5. Conflict of Interest (COI) Disclosure—Applicants must disclose any real or perceived COIs. If you have questions or concerns regarding COIs, please contact the Program Officer.

RESUBMISSION

When reviewing a resubmission, evaluate the application as now presented, taking into consideration the response to comments from the previous review group and changes made to the study, but base your final score on the overall merits of the current proposal.

APPENDIX 5: RIGOR, TRANSPARENCY, AND REPRODUCIBILITY PSYCHOSOCIAL RESEARCH

Rigor, transparency, and reproducibility are essential for scientific progress. Applicants should demonstrate how their trial design, methodology, and analysis will ensure well-controlled and unbiased results. These principles should guide both the study design and the reporting of data at the conclusion of the research.

Applicants are encouraged to provide clear rationale and justification for the chosen patient population in the research design and data analysis plan. Applicants should also detail randomization and stratification of subjects, and blinding strategy, if appropriate. If these methods cannot be used, a justification should be provided. When outlining statistical methods, applicants should explain the appropriateness of the chosen tests, as well as the sample size, and measures of uncertainty.

In preparing your application, addressing the following points is strongly recommended:

1. A clear rationale should be provided for the selected methods and endpoints.
2. Adequate control or comparison groups should be used and clearly defined.
3. Appropriate statistical methods should be used in the analysis and interpretation of results, including adjustments for multiple comparisons.
4. Authors should discuss sample sizes (with power analysis or other justification), along with a valid measure of uncertainty.
5. Strategies for randomization and/or stratification of subjects should be described.
6. Criteria and rationale for inclusion/exclusion of subjects or in data analysis should be clear.

Condensed from:

Landis SC, et al. A call for transparent reporting to optimize the predictive value of preclinical research. Nature. 2012 Oct 11;490(7419):187-91. doi: 10.1038/nature11556. PMID: 23060188; PMCID: PMC3511845.