

The New York Community Trust

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Heiser Program for Research in Leprosy Request for Proposals 2025

(Proposals due by 5:00pm on Thursday, September 25, 2025)

Table of Contents

Overview The New York Community Trust Heiser Program for Research in Leprosy	Page 1
Request for Proposals and Eligibility Criteria	page 2
Submission Materials and Directions For United States-based Applicants	page 3
Submission Materials and Directions For International/non-United States-based Applicants	Page 4
Important Dates, Scientific Advisory Committee, and Questions	page 6

I. Overview

The New York Community Trust

[The New York Community Trust](#) (The Trust), established in 1924, is New York’s community foundation—one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the United States. The Trust’s mission is to foster and engage in enduring and innovative philanthropy. To meet the mission, The Trust:

- supports donors charitable giving through their Trust donor advised funds;
- offers philanthropic advising to Trust donors as well as other individuals, foundations, and institutions to meet shared giving interests and goals;
- makes competitive grants from funds, most derived from donor legacies using strategies approved by The Trust’s Board, to address issues affecting New York and beyond; and
- convenes and collaborates with nonprofit, government, foundation, and partners from other civic and social sectors to make communities we care about better places for all.

The Heiser Program for Research in Leprosy

The Trust’s Heiser Program for Research in Leprosy (Heiser Program) was established by the will of [Dr. Victor G. Heiser](#) (1873 – 1972), an American physician and researcher who spent his professional life studying and caring for people with leprosy. Like hundreds of other donors, Dr. Heiser left his estate to The Trust to carry out his interests in perpetuity: research in leprosy. Today, the Heiser Program is part of The Trust’s biomedical research competitive grants program. Since it began making grants in 1975, it has made approximately 200 grants totaling more than \$20 million.

Over the decades, Heiser Program grants have supported Fellowships for early-career researchers as well as seminal research projects led by senior scientists. Grants helped increase available tools for diagnosis and blocking leprosy transmission; develop new and improved treatment with a leprosy elimination goal; and expand dynamic “seek-and-treat” surveillance programs. Heiser Program grants were a primary source of support for the whole genome sequencing of *M. leprae*. And, for a brief period, the Heiser Program supported research in tuberculosis. The Heiser Program is now solely focused on leprosy research.

A volunteer Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of expert leprosy researchers and scientists review proposals and make funding recommendations to The Trust’s Board of Directors. The SAC sets priorities for funding, monitors projects, and convenes grantees for shared learning. Current SAC members are listed at the end of this RFP.

II. Request for Proposals

The New York Community Trust's Heiser Program invites proposals to support two-year Fellowships in leprosy research conducted by an early-career scientist. Grants totaling \$1 million will support three (3) to five (5) Fellowships to conduct research in one or more of the following areas including human experimental medicine studies:

1. investigate mechanisms of nerve damage and reactions in patients with leprosy;
2. develop more effective chemoprophylaxis, immunoprophylaxis, and rapid bactericidal drugs to treat active disease;
3. understand the organism, and/or its pathogenicity to identify the immunological spectrum the bacilli can induce and/or to identify new drugs or drug targets;
4. investigate host-directed therapies for leprosy, including a range of approaches from pre-clinical to clinical areas of research.

III. Eligibility Criteria

Potential Fellows must investigate the pathogenesis of leprosy in a post-doctoral position, a non-tenured associate/assistant professor position, or an early-career scientist at an independent research institute. Preference is for grants to be made to United States-based non-profit colleges, universities, or other research institutes. The applicant must be the institution at which the proposed Fellow is employed. Leprosy research can focus on cases in the United States and/or other parts of the world, with preference for geographies with high levels of incidence and/or transmission. If the application is from a United States institution, potential Fellows must have existing legal authorization to be employed in the United States. Potential Fellows will be considered from applicants that are colleges, universities, and/or medical research institutions not based in the United States if the applicant institution can satisfy requirements to receive philanthropic funds from The Trust such as their charitable purposes, independent governance, fiscal capacity, and other criteria that may be required by The Trust.

The Fellowship can cover salary and fringe for the Fellow; research equipment and supplies; and travel to research sites (if applicable). Other staff from the applicant or partner institutions involved in research are expected to cover their own costs. Budgets must include allocations to cover travel costs for the Fellow to two (2) mandatory one- or two-day in-person meetings with the SAC in New York City over the grant period.

Applicant institutions (United States-based and international) should note The Trust policy for overhead costs for grant administration at universities, hospitals, academic medical centers, and affiliated nonprofit fiscal sponsors (e.g. foundations that receive private funds on behalf of the institution). Overhead costs for grant administration may not exceed five (5) percent of the total project budget/grant. Administrative costs related to carrying out the grant activities, such as space, supplies, and technology for project staff, are not subject to the five percent limit, and should be itemized separately in the budget. Grants will be \$100,000 to \$250,000 over two-years (\$50,000 to \$125,000 a year) including grant administration costs.

IV. Submission Materials & Directions for United States-based Institutions

Submission Materials (United States-based applicants)

1. A **Cover Sheet**. Please make sure the top of the Cover Sheet you fill out states it is for the [National: Heiser Fund for Leprosy Research 2025 RFP](#), not The Trust's regular competitive grants program or another RFP. This RFP can be found on the New York City section of The Trust's [website](#) under information for non-profits. Details on how to complete this form are in the Submission Directions section.
2. A **cover letter** on the applicant institution's letterhead signed by the principal investigator (i.e., potential Fellow) **and** department chair and/or other institutional official authorized to request and receive grant funds on behalf of the institution.
3. An **executive summary in layperson's language** (up to 500 words) which outlines:
 - need for the grant;
 - why the Fellow and applicant institution are well positioned to conduct the research;
 - specific work to be conducted and its importance to the field of leprosy research; and
 - measurable outcomes by the end of the grant period (3 to 6 bulleted items).
4. A **proposal detailing the research to be conducted by the Fellow**. This proposal should not exceed six (6) single-spaced, typewritten pages, exclusive of bibliography, reference tables, figures, charts, budgets, and other required attachments detailed below. Please follow National Institute of Health guidelines for margins, font and size of type.
5. An **itemized project budget** with expenses and (if applicable) confirmed or pending sources of support for the project. Identify any in-kind time provided by the institution or partner institutions to support the project. Budget can cover salary or research costs.
6. **Proposed Fellow's curriculum vitae or NIH-style bio sketch** and, if applicable, those of other researchers involved with the project.
7. **Current year departmental and institution annual operating budgets** (revenues and expenses)
8. **Applicant institution board of directors with professional affiliations and terms**. Note any directors that are paid.
9. **Applicant institution audited financial statements or signed IRS Form 990**. Statements or 990 must be for fiscal year 2022 or 2023 (most recent available).

Heiser Program for Research in Leprosy- Request for Proposals (2025)

If applicable, include items 10 and 11:

10. If the applicant institution/potential Fellow has a current or former affiliation with any Heiser SAC members, please note the specific affiliation (e.g., employee, advisor, co-PI, relative, etc.)
11. If human studies are involved, a statement of intention to apply for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. IRB approval will be required before funds are released. IRB approval is not needed prior to submission.

Submission Directions (United States-based institutions)

1. Merge items **2 to 9 (and 10 to 11, if applicable)** from the Submission Materials section into a single PDF file no more than 25 MB in size. Name it in the following format: *“Fellow Last Name, Fellow First Name, Applicant Organization Name.pdf”*.
2. Complete a Proposal Cover Sheet for the Heiser Program for Leprosy Research RFP available through The Trust’s website.
 - a) For purposes of the staff and board ethnicity breakdown, please provide information for the entire institution, not just the department where the Fellow works. Fields cannot be left blank. Applications without this information will not be considered.
 - b) If you are applying from an academic institution or research university, your department administrator can provide the EIN, staff composition, and/or other information requested on the Cover Sheet. Some applicants prefer to have the funds go to a funds administrator. The proposal coversheet allows this option. You will need to (i) check the box noting that is your preference, and (ii) enter the funds administrator EIN on the form in the appropriate location.
3. Please make sure that all the Submission Materials (items 2 to 9 or 2 to 11) are in a single PDF prior to starting the Cover Sheet. The Submission Materials and Proposal Cover Sheet are submitted at the same time. You will know your submission has been successful when after uploading the document you see “You have successfully uploaded your PDF.” on your screen.
4. Once uploaded, check the certification box at the end and click submit. You will get an email confirming the proposal was received and include a PDF of the Cover Sheet you just completed. The email will be sent to the email address entered in the “Information about Person Completing this Form” field on the Cover Sheet.
5. The Trust’s communications about the result of your submission will be by email, whether notification of a decline or grant. Please add noreply@thenytrust.org to your address book so important communications do not get caught in your spam filters.

V. Submission Materials and Directions for Applicants from International/non-United States-based Institutions

Submission Materials (International/non-United States-based Institutions)

1. Provide items 2 through 11 as detailed in the section **IV** above (page 3): **Submission Materials for United States Applicants**. This includes:
 - **item 2** (cover letter)
 - **item 3** (layperson executive summary)
 - **item 4** (proposal)
 - **item 5** (itemized project budget)
 - **item 6** (curriculum vitae)
 - **item 7** (department and institution budgets)
 - **item 8** (board of directors)
 - **item 10** (affiliation with the Heiser SAC, if applicable)
 - **item 11** (human studies approval, if applicable).
2. In addition, please make sure the following information is included in the submission as an addendum entitled Institutional Information (**consider this to be item 12**):
 - Legal name of the institution receiving the funds. This should match the name of bank account where grant funds will be wired.
 - The name, email, and phone number of the applicant institutions paid staff head and governing board chair.
 - The charitable or government registration number associated with the institution.
 - Authorization documents from a government entity establishing/recognizing the institution as a charitable entity, non-profit institution, or international non-governmental organization.
 - Independent audit of financial statements of the institution.
 - Name, title, email, and phone number of person(s) to contact regarding the administrative/financial review of the application.

Submission Directions (International/non-United States-based Institutions)

1. Merge items 2 to 8, items 10 and/or 11 (if applicable), and item 12 from the Submission Materials from section above into a single PDF file no more than 25 MB in size. Name it in the following format: "Fellow Last Name, Fellow First Name, Applicant Organization Name.pdf".
2. Email the PDF file to heiser@thenytrust.org.
3. The Trust's communications about the result of your submission will be by email, whether notification of a decline or grant. Please add noreply@thenytrust.org to your address book so important communications do not get caught in your spam filters.

VI. Dates for Proposal Submission and Funding Decisions

1. All proposals are due by **5pm (EST) Thursday, September 25, 2025.**
 - US-based applicants must submit electronically via The New York Community Trust's portal/[website](#))
 - Non-US-based applicants must submit by email following directions in V above by emailing the proposal to heiser@thenytrust.org.
2. Grant approvals and declines issued by **Friday, February 20, 2026.**
3. For proposals that are recommended for funding, the grant period will be from **March 1, 2026 to February 28, 2028.**

VII. Scientific Advisory Committee (affiliations as of February 2025)

1. Gilla Kaplan, PhD (Chair); Former Director, Global Health Program/Tuberculosis, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
2. Stewart Cole, PhD; Former Director General, Pasteur Institute, Paris France
3. Rhea Coler, PhD; Senior Investigator, Seattle Children's Hospital
4. Sabine Ehrt, PhD; Professor of Microbiology and Immunology, Weill Cornell Medical College
5. Thomas Hawn, MD, PhD; Professor of Medicine, Allergy and Infectious Diseases, University of Washington
6. David Scollard, MD, PhD; Former Director, National Hansen's Disease Programs

VIII. Questions

If you have questions about the RFP, please email Irfan Hasan, Vice President, Programs and Grants at ihasan@thenytrust.org.

If you need assistance with navigating the portal or uploading the proposal, please email Marc Schell, Program Department Manager at mschell@thenytrust.org.