



# Heiser Program for Research in Leprosy Request for Proposals 2026

**(Proposals are due by 5:00pm on Thursday, July 30, 2026)**

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***Questions about the RFP: email Irfan Hasan, Interim Chief Program Officer at [ihasan@thenytrust.org](mailto:ihasan@thenytrust.org).***

***Assistance with navigating the Grantseeker Portal or uploading the proposal: email Marc Schell, Program Department Manager at [mschell@thenytrust.org](mailto:mschell@thenytrust.org).***

## I. Overview

### The New York Community Trust

Established in 1924, [The New York Community Trust](#) (The Trust) The New York Community Trust advances innovative philanthropy across New York City, Long Island, and Westchester by leveraging the expertise of its staff and partners to support donors' priorities. The Trust leads competitive grantmaking through donor legacies, manages donor-advised funds, and convenes collaborative initiatives addressing critical regional needs. In 2025, The Trust awarded nearly 11,000 grants totaling approximately \$230 million. The Trust is also home to several funds with purposes that reach beyond New York, such as the one that fuels the work of this Request for Proposals.

### 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 \$21 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. This RFP is 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 fellowships for early-career scientists to conduct leprosy research. The Trust's Heiser Program expects to award grants between \$100,000 to \$250,000 over two years (\$50,000 to \$125,000 a year) to support three (3) to five (5) fellowships. The Trust is particularly interested in supporting projects that include scientific studies associated with new clinical trials for leprosy interventions. Strong proposals should combine clinical trial components with basic science research to improve data analysis and endpoint selection. Such proposals will potentially include molecular analytics for determining clinical outcomes, microbial killing, and drug targeting mechanisms as well as research on nerve damage mechanisms in patients with leprosy. Recognizing that research will require accessing skin biopsies from clinical trials, including from sites outside the United States, and that such access can be cumbersome, potential collaboration between different research groups using the same samples is encouraged, as much as possible. Specifically, this RFP seeks proposals 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, over the grant period, with the SAC at The Trust offices in New York City.

Applicant institutions (United States-based and international) should note The Trust's 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 per 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 that it is for the [Heiser Fund for Leprosy Research-2026](#), **not** The Trust's regular competitive grants program or another RFP. The Heiser Fund RFP can be found on the [Grantseeker Portal](#) section of The Trust's [website](#) (click on the Apply button). 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 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 in-kind time provided by the institution or partner institutions to support the project. Budgets 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, terms, and note any directors that are related and/or paid.**

9. **Applicant institution audited financial statements or signed IRS Form 990.** Statements or 990 must be for fiscal year 2024 or 2025 (most recent available).

*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, co-PI, advisor, 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 Cover Sheet for the Heiser Program for Leprosy Research RFP on The Trust’s website (this should open when you click apply in the RFP).
  - 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 Cover Sheet 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 (do not enter your organization’s EIN if you are using a funds administrator).
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. Note that the Submission Materials and 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](mailto: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 institution's 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. Because The Trust's grantseeker portal is only set up to receive proposals from United States-based organizations with an IRS issued EIN (or funds administrators with those credentials that will receive funds on behalf of that applicant), International/non-United States based entities must follow one of the following options:

- a) Have an agreement in place with a United States based IRS registered nonprofit to receive funds on its behalf (considered the funds administrator) and use that organization's EIN in the funds administrator category.
- b) If there is no United States based funds administrator, submit the application using The Trust's EIN: 13-3062214 as the funds administrator.

**Use of The Trust's EIN is just for administrative ease so the proposals can be submitted through our Grantseeker Portal.**

**If a non-US entity's project is selected for funding, The Trust will make the grant to the applicant organization (assuming other due diligence approval).**

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](mailto: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 **5:00 pm (EST) Thursday, July 30, 2026** and must be submitted electronically via The New York Community Trust's [portal and website](#)). Emailed copies or hard copies will not be considered.
2. Grant approvals and declines issued by **the end of February 2027**.
3. For proposals that are recommended for funding, the grant period will be from **March 1, 2027 to February 28, 2029**

## **VII. Scientific Advisory Committee (affiliations as of May 2026)**

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. Mary Jackson, PhD; Professor of Bacteriology, Colorado State University
7. David Scollard, MD, PhD; Former Director, National Hansen's Disease Programs