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Annual Request for applications (RFA) open each spring and are aimed at senior postdoctoral fellows who intend to seek tenure-track faculty positions during the upcoming academic year. Awardees will receive a commitment of \$495,000 over three years, activated upon assumption of a tenure-track professorship.

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## [Policies and Procedures](#)

Letters of recommendation and LOIs due  
August 8, 2019



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## Background

The autism research community has expanded substantially in recent years and SFARI has contributed to this change by attracting outstanding established scientists to the field of autism. In order to sustain this level of scientific excellence in future years, SFARI is extending our support to promising early-career investigators. One of the most salient milestones in a scientific career is the transition from formal mentorship to an independent position. Unfortunately, making this transition has become increasingly difficult in recent years, in part because of the decreasing number of tenure-track faculty positions, compounded by the increasing number of Ph.D. graduates and postgraduate traineeships<sup>1</sup>. SFARI created the Bridge to Independence (BTI) Award program in 2015 to address this issue and to encourage continued excellence in the autism research field.

# Program Overview

The BTI Award program promotes talented early-career scientists by facilitating their

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Importantly, although eligible applicants must be currently in a postdoctoral training position, the BTI Award itself is not a training fellowship but a research grant to newly appointed faculty. The program's selection process is uniquely designed to enhance the BTI awardees' job prospects by providing a letter that specifies SFARI financial commitment to the research project once the BTI awardee has secured a suitable faculty position. For more information on eligibility requirements and the funding process, see the [RFA section](#).

The BTI Award program welcomes applications that span the breadth of science that SFARI normally supports, including genetics, molecular mechanisms, circuits and systems, and clinical science. For reference, please see past [BTI awardees](#) and a list of all [SFARI Investigators](#), as well our postings on [SFARI scientific priorities](#).

While we encourage applications from postdoctoral fellows who are working on autism-related projects, we would like to stress that this award is also open to researchers who are not currently working on autism but who are interested in starting research projects in this area and who have expertise that could be brought to bear on this complex disorder.

## Current Awardees

The program currently supports 23 awardees, many of whom have secured prestigious tenure-track faculty positions and are actively carrying out their SFARI research projects. For more information, see a list SFARI's [current BTI awardees](#), as well as SFARI Conversations with [Seth Shipman](#) (a 2017 BTI Investigator) and [Sung Han](#) (a 2015 BTI Investigator).