

# American Heart Association



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[www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)



## Mission

The American Heart Association is the nation's oldest, largest voluntary organization devoted to fighting cardiovascular disease and stroke. Founded in 1924, the association now includes a national office and nearly 150 local offices. The mission of the AHA is to build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular disease and stroke.

## Strategy/Approach

The American Heart Association funds innovative research, advocates for stronger health policies and provides critical tools and information to save and improve lives. Additionally the AHA is the nation's leader in CPR science, education and training.

The association has set out to improve the cardiovascular health of all Americans by 20% while reducing deaths from cardiovascular diseases and stroke by 20% by the year 2020. To do this, AHA targets its work into healthy living, treatment and education, and emergency and hospital care, all of which are guided by groundbreaking research in cardiovascular disease and stroke. Investing more than \$3.5 billion in research, more than any organization outside of the federal government, the AHA has funded 13 Nobel Prize winners and many lifesaving advancements.

The AHA funds a variety of types of research, including applied, basic, clinical, outcomes, population health, targeted, and translational research. The research program is guided by 12 essential elements:

- Develop innovative research models which integrate with AHA research values;
- Fund both investigator-initiated and strategically focused research;
- Support research in all areas of cardiovascular and stroke science that drive to AHA's 2020 goals and overall mission;
- Identify key questions that if answered could provide extraordinary impact in science toward the Mission;
- Ensure funding mechanisms for investigators at all career stages and across disciplines;
- Provide programs which in addition to supporting the pursuit of research in question, also facilitate expansion of investigator skills;
- Focus peer review on funding outstanding individuals, in addition to excellent science;
- Clearly define and report research outcomes to all stakeholders;
- Ensure that best practices are used for all governance and operational practices;

- Ensure that all stakeholders—researchers, donors, and other volunteers—are involved as appropriate in research activities;
- Fund research which could provide a return on investment which will be funneled back to fund more future research;
- Expand collaboration to leverage research dollars and outcomes.

## Research Portfolio

AHA funded research includes student fellowships, scientist development programs, clinical research programs, an innovative research grant, and established investigator awards, among other award types, currently funding more than 2100 scientists around the United States.

Opportunities for funding are offered through the AHA national center and seven geographical affiliates: Western States, Southwest, Midwest, Greater Southeast, Mid-Atlantic, Greater Rivers, and Founders Affiliates. National programs are available to eligible investigators and institutions nationwide, while affiliate programs are limited to investigators and institutions in their respective geographical areas. For every publically donated dollar, 13 cents supports the National Research Program and at least 15 cents supports the affiliate research programs.

Research awards that the AHA grants include:

- Undergraduate Student Research Program—*encouraging promising students to consider research careers*
- Pre-doctoral Fellowship—*helping students initiate careers in cardiovascular and stroke research by providing research assistance and training*
- Postdoctoral Fellowship—*helps trainees initiate careers while obtaining significant research results under the supervision of a sponsor or mentor*
- Mentored Clinical & Population Research Award—*encourages early career investigators to engage in introductory and pilot clinical studies*
- National Fellow-to-Faculty—*funding for trainees during the period of career development for physician-scientists that spans completion of research training through the early years of staff/faculty positions*
- Beginning Grant-In-Aid—*promotes independent status of promising beginning scientists*
- Scientist Development Grant—*supports beginning scientists by encouraging and adequately funding research projects that bridge completion of research*

training to readiness for successful competition as an independent investigator

- Medical Students Research Program—allows students to work for 8,10, or 12 weeks with a faculty/staff member on a project broadly related to cardiovascular disease or stroke, encouraging students to consider a future academic career in this area
- Grant-In-Aid—encourages and adequately funds the most innovative and meritorious research projects from independent investigators
- **New Program:** Collaborative Science Award—allows two primary investigators from disparate disciplines to foster innovative, unique, and novel discoveries from basic, clinical, population, and/or translational research
- **New Program:** Mentor/AHA Mentee Award—funds mentors to work with AHA early career grantees who are: working in new/difficult areas, underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in science, or conducting research in NIH AREA-designated institutions

**The Strategically Focused Research Programs** partner giving foundations with the AHA to create driving initiatives which can assist in reaching the AHA’s 2020 Goals and overall mission. Past initiatives include support from the Jon Holden DeHaan Foundation to understand mechanisms underlying the development of specific cardiac myocytes, and the AHA Pharmaceutical Roundtable to fund four centers for cardiovascular and stroke outcomes research. Starting in 2014-2015, the AHA will begin funding two Strategically Focused Research Networks (SFRNs) each year. Each network will be comprised of 3 to 4 institutions working on three projects focused in one area of the AHA’s mission.

## Partnership Practices

The Science & Technology Accelerator Program, now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year, identifies revolutionary, transformational emerging technologies and brings innovators together with investment capital and expert advisors and mentors to accelerate these technologies from bench to bedside. A panel of donors with expertise in biotechnology, drug development and other areas, collectively screen applications.

The first company chosen for investment was **CytoVas**, allowing a proof-of-concept trial for a blood test that would identify people at risk of cardiovascular events even if they do not have symptoms. The AHA’s involvement in the proof-of-concept trial de-risked the technology sufficiently that a major industry investor formed a partnership with CytoVas before the first patient was enrolled in the trial.

The second project, an investment in **BioKier** was in collaboration with Broadview Ventures and North Carolina Biotech aimed at creating a revolutionary treatment for type II diabetes patients.

The AHA has also established partnerships with other health organizations to fund critical need and high impact research programs such as the **American Brain Association, The**

**Gerontological Society of America, Children’s Cardiomyopathy Foundation, and The Myocarditis Foundation.**

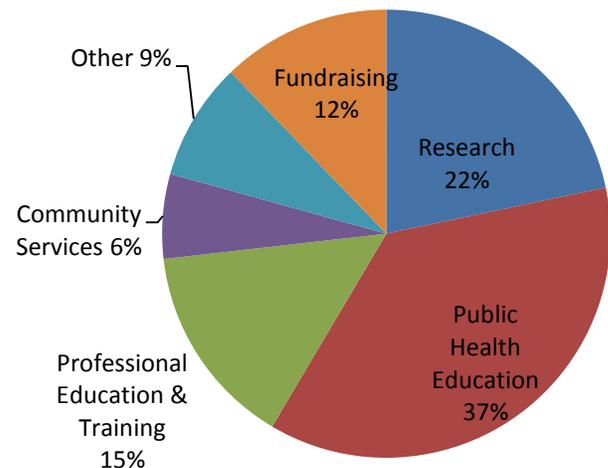
## Financials

The AHA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The most recent financial information available is from fiscal year 2013.<sup>1</sup>

Year Ending 6/30/13

- Revenue (including gifts): \$686,530,000
- Total Assets: \$1,101,730,000
- Research Grants: \$133,628,000
- Expenditures: \$614,605,000
  - See figure below for breakdown of total expenses

## 2012/2013 Expenses



## Key Accomplishments

- In 2013 funded 978 research projects chosen from over 6,000 applicants
- Professional membership includes more than 30,000 members in 110 countries, representing 75 specialties
- AHA sponsored journals earned top rankings in importance and influence from Journal Citation Reports
- First Science & Technology Accelerator Program recipient, CytoVas, is undergoing a clinical trial
- Gave \$121.6 million in 2013 to fund research awards, a \$4.8 million growth from 2012

## Leadership

The AHA is governed by a board of directors, headed by Bernard P. Dennis, Chairman of the Board.

<sup>1</sup> Information obtained from the AHA 2012-2013 Annual Report. [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/General/2012-2013-Annual-Report\\_UCM\\_448427\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/General/2012-2013-Annual-Report_UCM_448427_Article.jsp)

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