

**DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT-MEDICAL
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMAND (DHA R&D-MRDC)
CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS (CDMRP)
FISCAL YEAR 2025 (FY25) AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS RESEARCH
PROGRAM (ALSRP)**

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW PROCEDURES

The FY25 ALSRP called for applications in response to program announcements (PAs) for four award mechanisms released in April 2025:

- Clinical Outcomes and Biomarkers Award (COBA)
- Pilot Clinical Trial Award (PCTA)
- Therapeutic Development Award (TDA)
- Therapeutic Idea Award (TIA)

The ALSRP received pre-applications for the COBA, PCTA, TDA, and TIA in June 2025 and screened them in July 2025. The screening followed the pre-application evaluation criteria specified in the PAs to determine which investigators to invite to submit full applications. The ALSRP received applications in August 2025, and they underwent peer review in October 2025. The ALSRP conducted programmatic review in December 2025.

In response to the COBA PA, the ALSRP received 83 pre-applications and invited 36 of these to submit a full application. The ALSRP received 29 compliant applications and recommended funding 7 (24.1%) for a total of \$7.0 million (M).

In response to the PCTA PA, the ALSRP received 35 pre-applications and invited 17 of these to submit a full application. The ALSRP received 13 compliant applications and recommended funding 2 (15.4%) for a total of \$5.6M.

In response to the TDA PA, the ALSRP received 49 pre-applications and invited 21 of these to submit a full application. The ALSRP received 18 compliant applications and recommended funding 3 (16.7%) for a total of \$5.5M.

In response to the TIA PA, the ALSRP received 205 pre-applications and invited 79 of these to submit a full application. The ALSRP received 69 compliant applications and recommended funding 19 (27.5%) for a total of \$15.9M.

Table 1 shows submission and award data summarized for the FY25 ALSRP.

Table 1. Submission/Award Data for the FY25 ALSRP*

Mechanism	Pre-Applications Received	Pre-Applications Invited (%)	Compliant Applications Received	Applications Recommended for Funding (%)	Total Funds
Clinical Outcomes and Biomarkers Award	83	36 (43.4%)	29	7 (24.1%)	\$7.0M
Pilot Clinical Trial Award	35	17 (48.6%)	13	2 (15.4%)	\$5.6M
Therapeutic Development Award	49	21 (42.9%)	18	3 (16.7%)	\$5.5M
Therapeutic Idea Award	205	79 (38.5%)	69	19 (27.5%)	\$15.9M
Total	372	153 (41.1%)	129	31 (24.0%)	\$34.0M

*These data reflect funding recommendations only. Pending FY25 award negotiations, final numbers will be available after September 30, 2026.

THE TWO-TIER REVIEW SYSTEM

The CDMRP developed a review model based on recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences report *Strategies for Managing the Breast Cancer Research Program: A Report to the Army Medical Research and Development Command*. The report recommended a two-tier review process that reflects not only the traditional strengths of existing peer review systems but is also tailored to accommodate program goals. The CDMRP adheres to this proven approach for evaluating competitive applications. An application must be favorably reviewed by both levels of the two-tier review system to be funded.

THE FIRST TIER—Scientific Peer Review

The ALSRP conducted peer review of the COBA, PCTA, TDA and TIA applications in October 2025 utilizing nine panels of researchers, clinicians and consumer advocates. The panel members based their evaluations on the criteria specified in the PAs.

The ALSRP conducted a peer review via teleconference for the COBA utilizing two panels (18 scientists, three specialists, and four consumer reviewers), for the PCTA utilizing two panels (16 scientists, six specialists, and three consumer reviewers), for the TDA utilizing one panel (eight scientists and two consumer reviewers) and for the TIA utilizing four panels (38 scientists and eight consumer reviewers).

Each peer review panel included a Chair, an average of eight scientific reviewers, an average of two consumer reviewers, and a nonvoting Scientific Review Officer. The panelists' primary

responsibility was to review the technical merit of each application based upon the evaluation criteria specified in the relevant PA.

Individual Peer Review Panels

The Chair for each panel presided over the deliberations. The panels discussed each individual application. The Chair called on the assigned reviewers for an assessment of the merits of each application using the evaluation criteria published in the appropriate PA. Following a panel discussion, the Chair summarized the strengths and weaknesses of each application, and the panel members then rated the applications confidentially.

Application Scoring

Evaluation Criteria Scores: Panel members rated each application based on the peer review evaluation criteria published in the appropriate PA. The panel members used a scale of 10 to 1, with 10 representing the highest merit and 1 the lowest merit, using whole numbers only. The purpose of obtaining the criteria ratings was to (1) place emphasis on the published evaluation criteria and provide guidance to reviewers in determining an appropriate overall score and (2) provide the applicant, the Programmatic Panel and the CDMRP with an informed measure of the quality regarding the strengths and weaknesses of each application. The evaluation criteria scores were not averaged or mathematically manipulated in any manner to connect them to the global or percentile scores.

Overall Score: To obtain an overall score, panel members used a range of 1.0 to 5.0 (1.0 representing the highest merit and 5.0 the lowest merit), with scoring permitted in 0.1 increments. The ALSRP averaged the panel member scores and rounded them to arrive at a two-digit number (1.2, 1.9, 2.7, etc.) that corresponds to the following adjectival equivalents used to guide reviewers: Outstanding (1.0–1.5), Excellent (1.6–2.0), Good (2.1–2.5), Fair (2.6–3.5) and Deficient (3.6–5.0).

Summary Statements: The Scientific Review Officer on each panel was responsible for preparing a Summary Statement reporting the results of the peer review for each application. The Summary Statements included the evaluation criteria and overall scores, peer reviewers' written comments, and the essence of panel discussions. The ALSRP staff used this document to report the peer review results to the Programmatic Panel. In accordance with DHA R&D-MRDC policy, Summary Statements are available to each applicant after completion of the review process.

THE SECOND TIER—Programmatic Review

The FY25 Programmatic Panel conducted programmatic review in December 2025. The panel included a diverse group of basic and clinical scientists and consumer advocates, each of whom contributed special expertise or interest in ALS. Programmatic review is a comparison-based process that considers scientific evaluations across all disciplines and specialty areas. Programmatic Panel members do not automatically recommend funding applications that received high scores in the technical merit review process; rather, they closely examine the eligible applications to allocate as wisely as possible the limited funds available.

The programmatic review criteria published in the COBA PA were as follows: ratings and evaluations of the scientific peer review panels, relative impact, program portfolio composition, adherence to the intent of the award mechanism and appropriateness of the data and research resources sharing plan.

The programmatic review criteria published in the PCTA PA were as follows: ratings and evaluations of the scientific peer review panels, programmatic relevance, relative clinical impact, program portfolio composition and adherence to the intent of the award mechanism.

The programmatic review criteria published in the TDA PA were as follows: ratings and evaluations of the scientific peer review panels, relative impact including transition potential and/or military benefit, program portfolio composition and adherence to the intent of the award mechanism.

The programmatic review criteria published in the TIA PA were as follows: ratings and evaluations of the scientific peer review panels, relative impact, innovation and/or military benefit, program portfolio composition, appropriateness of the data and research resources sharing plan and adherence to the intent of the award mechanism.

After programmatic review, the ALSRP routed the applications recommended for funding to a designated official for review and approval.