

## 2027 Eisenberg Pilot Awards Funding Opportunity Announcement

The Northwestern University Clinical and Translational Sciences (NUCATS) Institute announces this Request for Applications (RFA) for the **2027 Eisenberg Pilot Awards**. The Eisenberg Pilot Award offers up to \$25,000 in support for translational medicine projects proposed by teams of investigators from one or more of the following: any Northwestern University (NU) School and any NU clinical affiliate partner (Northwestern Memorial HealthCare, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, or Shirley Ryan AbilityLab). These awards aim to support innovative projects that bridge the gap between research laboratories and the clinical development of new therapeutics or devices for disease intervention or prevention. This award is designed to support early-stage research that requires preliminary data to establish feasibility and provide a foundation for future externally funded studies. Teams either led by or including investigators who are new to translational research (defined in this case as discovery and development of a therapeutic or device) are encouraged to apply, as this funding opportunity seeks to further expand the already-strong capacity at NU for such research.

### Deadlines and Award Timeline

|                                         |                                 |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| RFA Issued                              | September 1, 2026               |
| Proposal Submission Deadline            | October 31, 2026                |
| Notice of Award                         | December 18, 2026 (Anticipated) |
| Earliest Anticipated Funding Start Date | January 1, 2027                 |
| Funding Period                          | 1 year                          |

### PI Eligibility

Eligibility is limited to Northwestern University faculty.

- Faculty applicants must be engaged in research and be eligible to apply for follow-on external grant funding as a PI or MPI.
- Faculty applicants may also hold appointments in one of the NUCATS Institute's clinical affiliate institutions (Northwestern Memorial HealthCare, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, or Shirley Ryan AbilityLab).

Funding priority will be given to proposals judged by reviewers as most likely to gain a future NU, federal, or foundation award following Eisenberg Pilot funding. Such a follow-on award should aim to accelerate clinical development or the use of a new intervention to benefit health and extend beyond basic science discovery.

Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine residents, clinical fellows, and postdoctoral fellows are not eligible to apply as a PI or MPI.

- Such trainees are eligible to have a limited role on a proposal as a co-investigator.
- A fellow may be eligible to apply if a letter stating that a faculty appointment is imminent is provided by their department chair or division chief and uploaded with the full application. In this case, the imminent faculty appointment must become effective during the funding period.

## Application Requirements

In the order they are outlined below, applications must compile all requirements into a single PDF and use the following filename convention:

[Submitting/Contact PI's Last Name]-[Submitting/Contact PI's First Name]-Eisenberg-2027.pdf  
(e.g., DAquila-Richard-Eisenberg-2027.pdf).

Incomplete proposal submissions will not be considered by the Eisenberg Awards' Scientific Review Panel.

- **Cover Sheet:** Complete the required cover sheet. (<https://www.nucats.northwestern.edu/docs/nucats-pilot-coversheet.docx>)
- **Scientific Research Strategy:** In no more than 5 pages, single-spaced with Arial 11 font and 0.5" margins and inclusive of all figures and tables, applicants should address the project's significance, aims and associated hypotheses, analysis plan, impact, deliverables, lack of alternate funding, and plans for future funding. Applicants should specifically describe how the proposed project advances a discovery, intervention, device, diagnostic, software, or implementation strategy along the translational continuum toward clinical application and patient benefit. Please describe any intellectual property protection/licensing that has already been obtained or is planned to occur during the project period. The 5-page limit does not include references, though applicants are encouraged to limit the number of references to no more than 30.
  - Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide clear and detailed feasibility and analysis plans that demonstrate the likelihood of project completion within the proposed funding period.
  - Following NIH guidelines, applications must address how sex as a biological variable will be factored into research designs, analyses, and reporting in vertebrate animal and human studies. Strong justification from the scientific literature, preliminary data, or other relevant considerations must be provided for applications proposing to study only one sex.
  - When describing plans for future funding to accelerate clinical use of a new intervention studied in the proposed Pilot, include as much specific detail as possible, including the anticipated sponsor(s), funding mechanism(s) targeted funding opportunity announcement(s) (FOA), and expected submission timeline(s), if known.
- **Budget:** NIH-style budget (including, when applicable, (a) specific line-item estimates from the applicable NU research cores and/or resources, and/or (b) separate budgets for NU and subcontract expenses; <https://www.nucats.northwestern.edu/docs/nucats-pilot-budget.docx>).
  - Note: If the proposed project has secured support for expenses in excess of the maximum budget cap allowed in this request for proposals, the applicant must clearly document guaranteed complementary funding.
- **Budget Justification:** NIH-style budget justification describing all proposed expenses in detail.
- **Biosketch(es):** NIH-style biosketches for all key personnel (principal investigator, co-investigators, other significant contributors).
- **Other Support:** NIH-style other support document for all key personnel (principal investigator, co-investigators, other significant contributors).
- **Other Documents:** Formal, detailed cost estimate from a research core, such as the Northwestern Medicine Enterprise Data Warehouse (NMEDW), if utilized.

### **Additional requirements for applicants who do not have prior or current NIH funding:**

Applicants without prior or current NIH funding are required to ask a Feinberg-based faculty mentor to

- review the full pilot application prior to submission;
- provide a 1-paragraph statement in the full application indicating their review of the proposal, support for the proposed project, and willingness to mentor the applicant throughout the project period if funded;
- and provide an NIH-style biosketch.

Applicants are encouraged to identify and engage a mentor early in the application development process.

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Applicants may request up to 2% effort for the mentor in the application (applying NIH salary cap at time of pilot submission) or use other effort already designated for this specific mentoring responsibility.

Applicants with prior or current NIH funding may choose to engage a faculty mentor as described above but are not required to do so.

## Budget Requirements

### Maximum Funding Level: \$25,000.

- Examples of **allowable** expenses:
  - Salary expenses for Northwestern PI, MPI(s), and Co-I(s) (applying NIH salary cap at time of pilot submission)
  - Salary expenses for the lead PI's Northwestern faculty mentor (up to 2% effort, applying NIH salary cap at time of pilot submission)
  - Consultation with Northwestern faculty/staff with quantitative and/or qualitative analysis expertise.
  - The use of an [Northwestern-approved](#) FDA consultancy firm.
  - Computational Cluster Central Processing Unit (CPU) time to run specific analyses
  - Laboratory or hospital tests (e.g., complete blood count (CBC) tests)
  - Participant recruitment stipends
  - Regulatory support from NUCATS
  - Analysis of samples by a Northwestern University or affiliated research core facility (including research cores at the University of Chicago and University of Illinois at Chicago covered by the reciprocity agreement)
  - Design/printing of materials
- Examples of **non-allowable** expenses:
  - Consultants, except as noted above
  - Student or temporary employee salary expenses
  - Subcontracts with or payments to other academic institutions or other public/private organizations (beyond clinical affiliate institutions identified above or research cores covered by the reciprocity agreement)
  - Technology development activities intended primarily for commercial product development
  - Travel
  - Tuition expenses

**Indirect Costs:** Indirect costs are not permitted and will not be funded. Applicants with primary appointments at a clinical affiliate institution should confirm the institution's acceptance of these terms prior to submission.

## Application Review Process

Proposals will be reviewed by a multidisciplinary standing review committee comprised of faculty with expertise in clinical and translational science, all of whom will be required to complete training in equitable review practices.

Reviewers will assess the significance and innovation of the proposed project, the rigor and feasibility of the proposed approach, and the extent to which the project is positioned to generate the preliminary data needed to support future NIH funding. Particular emphasis will be placed on projects that bridge the gap between laboratory discoveries and clinical application and demonstrate a clear path toward follow-on extramural funding.

Competitive applications should clearly demonstrate:

- **Translational Impact and Innovation:** A novel or highly impactful research concept with the potential to advance translational science, improve patient care, or accelerate the development of new therapies, devices, diagnostics, or healthcare interventions.
- **Need for Pilot Funding:** A project that is too preliminary for federal, other external funding, or NU Ryan Acceleration Fund mechanisms but is well-positioned to benefit from pilot support. The proposed project should generate critical preliminary data, establish feasibility, or address key knowledge gaps that will strengthen a future application to either an external funder or the Ryan Acceleration Fund.
- **Scientific Rigor and Feasibility:** Well-defined objectives, a rigorous and feasible approach, an appropriate analysis plan, measurable outcomes, and a realistic timeline for completion within the proposed funding period.
- **Investigator Team and Resources:** Access to the expertise, collaborations, institutional resources, and infrastructure necessary to successfully complete the proposed project. Applicants are encouraged to leverage available NUCATS resources and consultation services, including dissemination and implementation science, community and stakeholder engagement, biostatistics, regulatory support, and informatics, as appropriate.
- **Future Funding Potential:** A clear and compelling plan for pursuing funding as indicated above upon completion of the proposed project. Applicants should identify the anticipated funding mechanism(s), target sponsor(s), and projected submission timeline. Identification of a specific internal or external funding opportunity announcement and target submission date is strongly encouraged. Projects should clearly describe how the award will strengthen the competitiveness of a future funding application.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Proposals are reviewed internally and are considered confidential information, not to be disclosed to anyone outside the review process.

## QUESTIONS

Questions regarding the application process may be directed to [NUCATS-Funding@northwestern.edu](mailto:NUCATS-Funding@northwestern.edu).

Questions regarding NUCATS Competitions may be directed to [competitions@northwestern.edu](mailto:competitions@northwestern.edu).