

## **2022 NUCATS INSTITUTE PILOT AWARDS REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** **Submission Deadline: Monday, July 18, by 5:00 p.m. CT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Northwestern University Clinical and Translational Sciences (NUCATS) Institute announces this Request for Proposals for the 2022 **NUCATS Clinical and Translational Pilot Awards** and **NUCATS Dissemination and Implementation Pilot Awards**.

#### **NUCATS Clinical and Translational Pilot Awards Funding Mechanism**

**Maximum Funding Level: \$30,000; Maximum Funding Period: 9 months<sup>1</sup>**

**Anticipated Funding Start Date: October 1, 2022**

The NUCATS Clinical and Translational Pilot Awards Initiative is seeking proposals for highly innovative, multi-disciplinary clinical and translational research projects where the potential for strong clinical or translational impact on human health is clear. Proposals may also request funding for projects involving critical steps in the device and drug development pathway or for a need, while critical to translational science, that is too small to be suitable for conventional research funding mechanisms (e.g., biostatistics support for the development of preliminary data). Although proposals are encouraged from across the broad domains of clinical and translational research, we are especially interested in projects that:

- Include (an) aim(s) studying “translational science” (testing how to accelerate/improve the process of translation from basic science discovery through clinical trials to population impact)
- Maintain a high likelihood of translation to clinical or population health impact
- Align with the Chicago Department of Public Health’s Healthy Chicago 2025 goals
- Address health disparities/health equity

#### **NUCATS Dissemination and Implementation Pilot Awards Funding Mechanism**

**Maximum Funding Level: \$30,000; Maximum Funding Period: 9 months<sup>1</sup>**

**Anticipated Funding Start Date: October 1, 2022**

The NUCATS Dissemination and Implementation Pilot Awards Initiative is seeking proposals that explore innovative approaches to the dissemination and implementation (D&I) of research findings that address the gap between research discoveries and the translation of this knowledge into evidence-based programs, practices, or policies in the clinic or community to improve public health. (See pages 6 & 7 for supplemental instructions.)

### **Important Considerations for Submitting/Contact Principal Investigators (PIs)**

The NUCATS pilot awards are funded by our CTSA award from the NIH National Center for Advancing Translational Science (NCATS). Our funding agency does not permit no-cost extension requests for pilot awards. Therefore, applicants should be certain that all proposed activities will be completed during the maximum funding timeframe (as described above and in footnote #1). Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposed projects to the appropriate IRB/IACUC for review by the proposal deadline on this RFP.

### **PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR ELIGIBILITY**

Eligibility for these funding mechanisms is limited to Northwestern University faculty, who may or may not 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). Faculty applicants must be engaged in research and be eligible to apply for follow-on external grant funding as a PI or MPI. NUCATS Dissemination and Implementation Pilot Award applicants should review additional eligibility requirements described in the supplemental instructions on pages 6 & 7.

<sup>1</sup>All funding must be spent within this time period or by June 30<sup>th</sup> of the awarded project period, whichever comes first. No-cost extensions are not permitted. Data analysis, writing up findings, etc. may continue for up to 3 months beyond the 9-month maximum funding period. All activities related to the proposed project must be completed in full by the end of 12 months from funding start date.

## 2022 NUCATS Clinical and Translational Pilot Awards & NUCATS Dissemination and Implementation Pilot Awards

**Applicants who do not have prior or current NIH funding** (regardless of mechanism type or amount) are required to ask a Feinberg-based faculty mentor to (a) review the full pilot application prior to submission and (b) provide a 1-paragraph statement indicating their support for the proposed pilot project and willingness to mentor the applicant throughout the project period, if funded. Moreover, applicants should name this faculty mentor in the application and 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 here, but are not required to do so.

The NUCATS Pilot Scientific Review Panel will prioritize proposals led by junior faculty (Instructor and Assistant Professor ranks, regardless of track) who have not yet established a significant funding base. The lead principal investigator (PI) is the submitting/contact PI. Proposals led by junior faculty that include significant contributions from one or more senior faculty collaborators will be prioritized favorably as well.

Please note: Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine residents, clinical fellows, and postdoctoral fellows are not eligible to apply as a PI or co-PI. Such trainees are eligible to have a limited role on a proposal as a co-investigator. These mechanisms are intended for faculty to develop data supporting subsequent applications for independent external funding, and not for trainee career or proposal development. A fellow may be eligible to apply if a letter stating an appointment to the faculty is imminent is provided by their department chair or division chief and uploaded with the application; the imminent faculty appointment must be effective within the 9-month maximum funding period.

### ALLOWABLE AND NON-ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

- Examples of **allowable** expenses:
  - Salary expenses for Northwestern PI, Co-PI(s), and Co-I(s) (applying NIH salary cap at time of submission)
  - Salary expenses for the lead PI's Northwestern faculty mentor (up to 2% effort, applying NIH salary cap at time of submission)
  - Community Co-PI compensation (required for NUCATS Dissemination & Implementation Pilots)
  - Consultation with Northwestern faculty/staff with quantitative and/or qualitative analysis expertise
  - Computational Cluster CPU time to run specific analyses
  - Laboratory or hospital tests (e.g., CBCs)
  - 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 (NUCATS Dissemination & Implementation Pilots only)
  - Event expenses (NUCATS Dissemination & Implementation Pilots only)
- 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
  - 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.
- **Trial Phase:** Pilot research funds may not be used for clinical trials beyond phase IIA. This is a strictly enforced limitation by our funding agency at NIH.

## PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

- **Cover Sheet:** Complete the required cover sheet. (<https://www.nucats.northwestern.edu/docs/cover-sheet-nucats.docx>)
- **Scientific Research Strategy:** In 2,000 words or less, applicants should address the project's significance, hypothesis, aims, analysis plan, impact, deliverables, lack of alternate funding, and plans for future funding. The 2,000-word limit does not include figures or references, although applicants are encouraged to limit the cumulative space for figures to no more than 2 pages.
  - Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide detailed feasibility and analysis plans.
  - When describing plans for future funding, include as much specific detail as possible (e.g., intended mechanism and/or targeted RFA).
- **Budget:** NIH-style budget (including, when applicable, (a) specific line-item estimates from the applicable NU research cores and/or resources or (b) separate budget expenses/amounts for the academic and community co-PIs; <https://www.nucats.northwestern.edu/docs/budget-nucats.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).
- **Additional requirements for applicants who do not have prior or current NIH funding:**
  - 1-paragraph statement from the applicant's faculty mentor indicating that they reviewed the proposal, their support for the proposed pilot project, and willingness to mentor the applicant throughout the project period.
  - Faculty mentor's NIH-style biosketch.
- **Other Documents:** Formal, detailed cost estimate from a research core, such as the EDW, if utilized.

## PROPOSAL FORMATTING & UPLOAD

The proposal requirements listed above should be uploaded into NUCATS' Competitions application system (<https://competitions.fsm.northwestern.edu>) as a single, compiled PDF. The single PDF should follow the order outlined in the proposal requirements section. Please use the following filename convention for naming the PDF file: [Submitting/Contact PI's Last Name]-[Submitting/Contact PI's First Name]-NUCATSPilot-2022.pdf (e.g., DAquila-Richard-NUCATSPilot-2022.pdf). Incomplete proposal submissions will not be considered by the NUCATS Pilot Awards Scientific Review Panel.

## PRIOR APPROVAL REQUIREMENT

Our funding agency requires additional documentation prior to the release of funds for research involving human subjects or vertebrate animals. Applicants will be required to cite our grant in your IRB or IACUC documentation and related publications, and we will need to forward your IRB or IACUC approval, protocol, and consent form to the NIH for review and approval prior to the commencement of the project. This process typically takes 30-90 days, depending on the complexity of the proposal and potential risks to participants. Funds may not be used for clinical trials beyond phase IIA.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

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

## DEADLINE

The proposal submission deadline is **Monday, July 18, 2022, by 5:00 p.m. CT**. Submit electronic copies of proposals to: <https://competitions.fsm.northwestern.edu>. Proposals must be submitted by the submitting/contact PI using their Northwestern NetID and password.

## REVIEW CRITERIA

Ideal proposals will clearly demonstrate the following elements:

- Innovation and novelty of proposed research
- Be based upon a concept that is too preliminary to qualify for federal funding programs and for which it is feasible to add supporting preliminary data from a funded award
- A strong team and appropriate infrastructure to support the project (including a mentor, if required)
- A feasible timeline to complete all proposed activities within the approved funding period (with the understanding that no-cost extensions are not permitted)
- Strong potential to lead to meaningful impact on human health or study of the process of translation – successful proposals will provide a clear description of this impact
- Clear objectives, a detailed feasibility plan, analysis plan, timeline, anticipated results, and outcome measures
- A plan to apply to NIH for follow-on funding upon completion of the pilot project; identifying a NIH FOA to which there will be a response is strongly encouraged.

## QUESTIONS

Questions regarding the proposal process may be directed to Keith Herzog, NUCATS Institute Executive Director, at [Keith.Herzog@northwestern.edu](mailto:Keith.Herzog@northwestern.edu). Questions regarding NUCATS Competitions may be directed to [competitions@northwestern.edu](mailto:competitions@northwestern.edu). Please direct questions specific to the NUCATS Dissemination & Implementation (D&I) Pilot Awards to Juan Villamar at [juan.villamar@northwestern.edu](mailto:juan.villamar@northwestern.edu).

### **Additional Resource: DREAM TEAM RECOMMENDER TOOL**

Applicants are encouraged to use the Dream Team Recommender (DTR) tool to search for possible collaborators. *Use of this tool is entirely optional and has no impact on evaluation of an application.* DTR is a web application that was deployed to facilitate the assembly of scientific teams. The DTR application is based on the Northwestern Scholars database and uses matching and ranking algorithms for individual faculty members to self-assemble teams or for research managers to staff research teams based on individual attributes (such as skills or areas of expertise) and prior networks (such as co-authorship).

DTR has been developed and built by the Science of Networks in Communities (SONIC) Research Group at Northwestern University as part of a research project funded by NIH. If you wish to participate in SONIC's associated research study, you will have the option to do so by accepting the consent form. However, you may use DTR even if you decline to participate in the research study. The application is available at <https://dtr.soc.northwestern.edu/>. Users should login using NetID credentials.

**Additional Resource: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Is an InfoEd record required for the NUCATS pilot submission?**

No. This is an internal, institutional funding competition.

**Are indirect costs permitted?**

No. Indirect costs are not permitted.

**Does a department/division representative need to sign the submitted budget or budget justification prior to submission?**

No.

**Who should submit the pilot application in the online Competitions interface?**

The submitting/contact PI is required to submit the pilot application using their Northwestern NetID and password.

**Are no-cost extension requests accepted when needed & appropriately justified?**

No. The NUCATS pilot awards are funded by our CTSA award from the NIH National Center for Advancing Translational Science (NCATS). Our funding agency does not permit no-cost extension requests for pilot awards. Therefore, applicants should be certain that all proposed activities will be completed during the maximum funding timeframe.

**If required, when should the applicant submit the IRB or IACUC application associated with the proposed pilot project?**

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposed projects to the appropriate IRB/IACUC for review by the proposal deadline on this RFP.

**What are the most frequent proposal errors or issues that I should double-check prior to submission?**

- Proposals are submitted by someone other than the submitting/contact PI.
- Proposals include non-allowable expenses.
- Proposals do not provide detailed feasibility & analysis plans, including power calculations (when appropriate).
- Proposals are not clearly articulated for faculty reviewers with primary expertise in other domains (i.e., domains outside of the proposal they are reviewing).
- Proposals intending to use a research Core Service (either a Northwestern core or a research core(s) at the University of Chicago and University of Illinois at Chicago covered by the reciprocity agreement) neglect to include a formal, detailed cost estimate from the relevant Core(s).

**What is the typical funding rate for NUCATS Pilot Awards?**

Although this rate varies by year and type of pilot award, the typical funding rate is less than 20%. Competition for NUCATS pilot awards is robust, and applicants are encouraged to prepare thoughtful, innovative, and polished applications.

**Do you publish information about prior NUCATS Pilot Award recipients?**

Yes, for awarded pilots, we post round, PI name, PI department, and proposal title on the NUCATS website (<https://www.nucats.northwestern.edu/resources/funding/pilot-funding/nucats-voucher-and-pilot-programs.html>).

**NUCATS Dissemination & Implementation (D&I) Pilot Awards**  
**Supplemental Instructions**

NUCATS seeks proposals for NUCATS Dissemination & Implementation (D&I) Pilot Awards that support dissemination and implementation activities related to the translation of evidence-based practices, policies, and programs/interventions into community, clinical, and public health practice settings to improve the health of the public.

For purposes of these awards, dissemination is defined as the targeted distribution of information and intervention materials to a specific public health or clinical practice audience. The intent is to spread knowledge and the associated evidence-based program/intervention. Successful dissemination may occur quite differently depending on whether the audience consists of community members/patients, caregivers, practitioners, public health practitioners, policymakers, employers, administrators, or other stakeholder groups.

Implementation is the use of strategies to adopt and integrate evidence-based health interventions and change practice patterns within specific settings. Implementation efforts must seek to understand the behavior of health and healthcare professionals and support staff, health organizations, community members/patients and caregivers, and policymakers in context as key variables in the sustainable adoption, implementation, and uptake of evidence-based interventions.

NUCATS D&I Pilot Award proposals should explicitly describe how this pilot funding would (1) be critical to or enhance the chances of funding specific proposals in the future and/or (2) strengthen academic-community partnerships that can lead to future dissemination and implementation activities.

Proposals will typically fall into one of two areas:

- **Preparing for future grant submissions that involve dissemination and implementation.** Aims and activities of a NUCATS Dissemination & Implementation Pilot Award in this area might include:
  - Engaging with and establishing partnerships with key stakeholders required for successful implementation of a specific evidence-based practice/intervention
  - Conducting interviews and meetings with key stakeholders from multiple sectors (e.g., healthcare systems, public health, policy, payors, community groups, political groups, patients, and community members) to identify and examine contextual barriers and facilitators to implementation and/or to establish implementation plans
  - Identifying or tailoring implementation strategies (Powell et al., 2015) that may be tested in a future research grant
  - Developing appropriate practice/intervention adaptations to better align with the needs of community, healthcare system, or public health practice partners
  - Developing and pilot testing measurement tools for evaluating different aspects of dissemination and implementation research
  
- **Dissemination and implementation of evidence-based practices/interventions.** Aims and activities of a NUCATS Dissemination & Implementation Pilot Award in this area might include:
  - Training of community or healthcare providers to deliver (i.e., implement) a specific evidence-based practice/intervention
  - Conducting small scale (i.e., 1-2 sites) rollout and testing of dissemination and implementation activities
  - Distributing materials and information to potential practice/intervention adopters and evaluating their perspective on the likelihood they will adopt the practice/intervention

**NUCATS D&I Pilot Awards Eligibility**

NUCATS Dissemination & Implementation Pilot Awards proposals are required to include both Northwestern investigators and relevant stakeholders (e.g., community, clinicians, policymakers, public health practice partners).

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This includes an academic co-PI that is faculty in one of the NUCATS Institute's partner institutions and a community co-PI that is representative of the dissemination/implementation system. The proposal should illustrate that the submitting partnership is a collaborative effort between the researcher/research team and the major community/practice partner(s). The community/practice partner could be a community-based organization, clinical entity, or public health practice organization (e.g., Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago Public Schools). There should be established working relationships necessary to prepare and complete the proposed project and plans for further funding. NUCATS' Center for Community Health offers guidance and support for partnership development. To learn more, [click here](#).

### **NUCATS D&I Pilot Awards Selection Criteria**

NUCATS will fund projects that are focused on conducting dissemination and implementation on a small-scale or performing necessary, preliminary work to establish dissemination and implementation plans for subsequent research.

### **NUCATS D&I Pilot Awards Proposal Review**

Proposals are ranked on standard NIH criteria, including significance, investigator(s), innovation, approach, and environment. Proposals to this mechanism should be informed by appropriate frameworks or models appropriate for dissemination and implementation. Aims should address system level factors appropriate for the proposed pilot. Applicants should include quality and feasibility of stakeholder and academic partner engagement, quality and feasibility of proposed activities, potential for positive community impact, and consideration/plans for sustainability. Proposals that only address patient/client level factors will be considered non-responsive.

### **NUCATS D&I Pilot Awards Contacts**

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the Center for Community Health to discuss possible proposal ideas. Please direct questions specific to the NUCATS Dissemination & Implementation Pilot Awards to Juan Villamar at [juan.villamar@northwestern.edu](mailto:juan.villamar@northwestern.edu).

### **Reference**

Powell BJ, Waltz TJ, Chinman MJ, et al. A refined compilation of implementation strategies: results from the Expert Recommendations for Implementing Change (ERIC) project. *Implement Sci.* 2015;10. doi: 10.1186/s13012-015-0209-1.