PILOT PROGRAM FULL APPLICATION (PHASE 2) GUIDELINES

OVERVIEW:

The Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS) Pilot Grant Program serves a vital function in advancing translational research by funding a combination of broad translational and multidisciplinary projects and targeted priority areas as identified by the CTSA Program. The Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS) announces the availability of pilot grant funding for research project development. **These pilot grant awards will be for <u>one-year</u>, up to $25,000, with an anticipated start date in the summer of 2025.**

P.I. ELIGIBILITY:

Principal Investigators must be clinical, research, or tenure track UIC faculty or Senior Scientists at UIC. Although adjunct faculty cannot serve as PIs, they may serve as named investigators, collaborators, or key personnel. Post-doctoral fellows may also serve as key personnel but cannot be PIs.

DUE DATE:

Friday, March 21st, 2025 at 5:00pm CDT, through the CCTS Awards site: https://awards.ccts.uic.edu/

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

Applications will **ONLY** be accepted via electronic submission in the Awards system from **December 16th, 2024 through March 21st, 2025 at 5:00pm CDT**. To submit your full application, navigate to the CCTS Awards site homepage using your UIC credentials (via Shibboleth). Upon login, on your "My Projects" homepage, you will see your submitted LOI with access to the full application.

APPLICATION DATA FIELDS:

The following information will be completed in the data fields in the electronic application system in addition to demographic information:

- **Lay Summary**: Paragraph (250 words) that describes the overall goal and specific aims of the project, and research design. This should be understandable at an eighth-grade reading level for a person with no science experience.
- **Community Impact Statement:** Paragraph on community relevance (maximum 100 words) that includes the project title and is understandable at an eighth-grade reading level for a person with no science experience. Paragraph should answer the following question, "How important is funding this research to improving human health, either in the near or distant future?"
- **Suggested Grant Reviewers:** The names and emails of three potential faculty reviewers can be included in the application. Suggested grant reviewers cannot have any significant conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest include being in the same division/department, being a member of the same lab, publishing together or

collaborating in the last 5 years, etc. Final reviewers and reviewer eligibility will be determined by the CCTS.

- **Plans for External Funding:** Paragraph (300 words maximum) describing a detailed plan for submission of competitive applications to external funding agencies (priority will be given to applications planned for NIH funding). Program announcements and other pertinent NIH initiatives should be included. If known, applicants should specify the institute and program officer for the planned submission.

APPLICATION DOCUMENTS:

The below documents will be uploaded in the electronic application system in their respective fields under the "Uploads" section. The documents can only be uploaded as PDFs. Your application should address the scoring criteria defined in the Review Criteria section..

> Note that the FIRST scoring criteria is if research is translational science. **If the proposal does not meet criteria of translational science, it will not be considered for funding.** Refer to the RFA for a detailed definition of translational science.
> Please request a consultation if you have any questions or would like verification.

1. **RESEARCH PLAN** (maximum of 5 pages) divided into the following sections:
   a. **Specific Aims and Hypotheses:** Indicate the specific aims that the applicant intends to accomplish with this award and the associated hypotheses. Indicate the translational science barrier the research is addressing, the generalizable translational science question that is being answered, and how this specific research proposal addresses this barrier and question.
   b. **Significance and implication of results:** Discuss the relevance to clinical translational science. Describe the scientific knowledge that led to the stated hypothesis and specific aims, why this project is novel, the importance of the proposed research and its potential relevance, if successful.
   c. **Research Strategy**: Briefly describe the procedures and methodology that will be used to accomplish the specific aims, and discuss how potential pitfalls might be avoided. Include:
      i. **Study design**
      ii. **Investigative team and partners**
      iii. **Study sample** (include recruitment if applicable)
      iv. **Outcomes and data collection plan**
      v. **Sample size estimations** (if applicable)
      vi. **Analysis plan**

2. **MILESTONES**: Prepare a milestone-based workplan that includes a description of operational milestones, completion criteria, expected start and completion dates. An "operational milestone" is an objective, measurable event that is indicative or project progress occurring as proposed in the application. Milestones should not exceed 3 months from start to completion. Plans for future grant submission and publications are required milestones. Note that the funding period will be 12-months only with NO EXTENSIONS. See the following example:

	Milestone	Completion criteria	Anticipated start date	Anticipated completion date
1	Obtain IRB approval	IRB approval letter	June 1, 2024	June 28, 2024
2	Hire research assistant (RA)	Hired and trained RA	June 1, 2024	Sep 1, 2024
3	Recruit for focus groups	Full sample recruited	Sep 1, 2024	Nov 30, 2024
	Etc			
12	Submit R21 to NIMHD	Submitted grant	March 1, 2025	May 31, 2025

3. **REFERENCES:** Provide a short list (not more than 30) of applicable literature citations. Literature citations are not part of the 5-page limit for the application.

4. **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:** Use the NIH format for all PI and Co-Investigators (5-page NIH format limit https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm). All biosketches should be merged into one pdf document prior to uploading.

5. **BUDGET & BUDGET JUSTIFICATION:** Use NIH detailed budget Form 4 (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/fp4.pdf). All guidelines pertaining to allowable expenses on federal grants will be applicable for these awards. A **budget justification is also required** (no template required) for all expenses. In addition, please note:
    a. Funding should start August 2025 and end July 2026. (These dates might change depending on when funding becomes available.)
    b. No funding is allowed for Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator Salary.
    c. No funding will be provided for books and subscriptions, membership fees, graduate student tuition remission.
    d. If equipment is budgeted, it will need a thorough justification.

6. **ANIMAL CARE REQUIREMENTS (IF APPLICABLE):** If projects involve animals, investigators must have IACUC approval by the funding start date OR should provide a brief explanation of pending review.

7. **PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (IF APPLICABLE):** For projects involving human participants, proof of IRB approval or exemption should be included in the application. Alternatively, the investigator may provide evidence of IRB submission/pending review or a timeline of their submission plan.

8. **LETTER OF SUPPORT:** A signed letter of support is required from the PI's Department Head outlining the importance of the project, the need for this pilot funding, and other resources that are available to the PI (including if the PI already has start-up funds being used for research in the related area). The letter must also provide a statement of the protected time needed to perform the pilot study. You may also include any required letters of support (e.g. from clinical sites or community collaborators).

REVIEW PROCESS:
We invite applicants to submit the names of up to three potential reviewers (see prior section for descriptions of reviewer conflicts of interest). Reviewers will score the proposals and forward their recommendations to the CCTS Executive Review Committee. Scoring will occur based on the 9-point NIH scale and will evaluate the following factors:

- **<u>Relevance to Clinical Translational Science</u>**: Does the project address a barrier in clinical translational science? Might the results lead to generalizable lessons learned and be applicable to more than one specific disease or disorder?
  - **This criteria must be met in order to be considered for funding**.
- **Significance:** Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved? How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?
- **Approach**: Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility and will particularly risky aspects be managed?
- **Investigators**: Are the PIs, collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project? If early-stage investigators, new investigators, or in the early stages of independent careers, do they have appropriate experience and training? If established, have they demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have advanced their field(s)? If the project is collaborative or multi-PI, do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise; are their leadership approach, governance, and organizational structure appropriate for the project?
- **Innovation**: Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions? Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel to one field of research or novel in a broad sense? Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed?
- **Collaboration**: To what extend does this project encourage interdisciplinary teams of investigators that spans across Colleges and campus to develop collaborations or new research avenues; promote interactions between basic and clinical scientists; and / or support research collaborations with community partners and organizations?
- **Feasibility**: Can the study feasibly accomplish the proposed aims within 12 months? Is the requested budget appropriate for the proposed research?
- **Community Impact**: To what extent, does this research have the potential to improve human health, either in the near or distant future?
- **Future Funding Potential**: How likely is this research to be successfully submit and receive funding for an R-level or similar external grant application within one year of completion?
- **Future Publications**: What is the probability this research will result in future publications within one year of completion?

- **Overall Impact:** Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved, considering the above review criteria.

The CCTS Executive Review Committee will serve as the council making final funding recommendations. We aim to announce award decisions by May 2025.

FUNDING & COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS:

Funded projects are required to submit brief semi-annual progress reports as well as a final report. Investigators must acknowledge CCTS funding in all publications and presentations. Investigators will also be invited to participate in further activities with the CCTS as appropriate (e.g., seminar presentations, training course lectures, and review of future applications). No pilot funds will be released without complete IRB and/or IACUC approval or exemption from UIC's Internal Review Board as well as the NIH NCATS Scientific Review Committee. Additionally, all pilot awardees must comply with the NIH Public Access Policy and are required to submit journal articles that arise from NIH funds to the digital archive PubMed Central.

APPLICATION FORMAT:

Applications should adhere to the following formatting specifications:
- Maximum of 5 pages for the Research Plan
- 11-point Arial font
- Single-spaced
- 0.5 inch margins on all sides
- 8 1⁄2" x 11" (i.e. standard size) paper
- Pages numbered
- PDF files only

QUESTIONS

Contact Mary Murray, Pilot Program Coordinator, Center for Clinical and Translational Science, at **mcampb22@uic.edu**.