



## NCATS Pilot Funding Request for Applications (RFA)

### Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences

The Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences (CCTS) is now accepting applications for pilot study proposals. This pilot funding will support new, unfunded, clinical research projects that focus on translational research and translational science. The awarded dual-scoped proposals of translational research and translational science are expected to generate preliminary data for extramurally awarded investigator-initiated trials. Three to four pilot grants of **up to \$25,000 each** will be awarded.

The application deadline is: **Monday, February 16, 2026, at 5 PM (CST).**

In alignment with the CCTS's goal to reshape the translational landscape to be faster, more efficient, and more impactful, the primary goal of this RFA is to promote clinical translation's scientific knowledge and operational innovations to address existing roadblocks that have hindered moving research innovations into clinical practice.

The principal investigator (PI) must not have prior significant research funding (i.e., history of a RO1 or large grant) and have a faculty appointment at one of the six CCTS partner institutions: **UTHealth Houston, UT MD Anderson Cancer Center, Texas Tech Health El Paso, Rice University, UT-Tyler or UT- Rio Grande Valley**. No portion of the funding can be transferred to any other institution different than the listed above and all funds must be used within the project funding cycle (07/01/2026 to 06/30/2027).

The PI must identify a translational research (TR) mentor. A translational science (TS) mentor will be selected by the CCTS. The mentors will provide expertise and assist with the design and execution of the work described in the proposal. All mentors must be employed by or have a faculty appointment at one of the six CCTS partner institutions.

The TR mentor should be an expert in the project's related clinical field (e.g., neurologist, pulmonologist, etc.) The TR and TS mentors must create a structured mentoring program for the PI and team to assist in facilitating connections and creating a supportive learning environment.

**The overall proposal will be required to involve at least 2 separate CCTS partner institutions working together in the proposed research.**

The proposal must include two Specific Aims: one Specific Aim related to TR and another Specific Aim related to TS. The TR Aim must address a problem with applicable results that may directly benefit human health. The TS Aim should address and test an improvement to an impediment of the successful adoption or dissemination of the proposal's primary TR aim. Thus, the TS Aim will address the challenges of moving the clinical research innovation (TR Aim) to the bedside or into the community. More information TS can be found on page four of this RFA.

This proposal is expected to allow approximately 10 months of research and 2-4 months of preparation and training. The TS training will begin before the grant cycle of 7/1/26, see the proposal timeline table. The PI is expected to begin research work as soon as the award is announced. The NCATS funds are under guarantee by Dr. David McPherson, PI of the CTSA grant, to avoid delay while research finance and contracts are being completed.

The submitted proposals will undergo an initial review to identify the 3-4 proposals most likely to generate a TR and TS significant and innovative contribution. The 3-4 junior PIs will be selected by the Pilot Research Committee (PRC) and will be required to complete translational science training and mentorship supported by the Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) program. The selected PIs will also be expected to work with their TS mentors on the TS Aim revision and complete all training. They will submit their revised TS Aim and proposal to the Pilot Research Committee **by Wednesday, May 20, 2026, at 5 PM (CST)**. The Committee will review the 3-4 resubmitted proposals and will either accept the TS Aim, suggest further revision, or reject the proposal.

If the PIs have successfully revised the TS Aim and proposal, and obtained necessary IRB approval, their proposals will be funded, based on final NCATS approval. If these criteria are not met, the proposal(s) will not be funded. Finally, the awarded proposal (s) are set to begin the 2026-2027 funding cycle. The selection and review processes and activities are summarized in the Proposal Selection and Revision Timeline shown below.

#### Proposal Selection and Revision Timeline

Date	Activity
Mon, 2/16/2026	Deadline for submission of applications; including proof of proposal submission to the IRB
Mon, 03/02/2026	Review of TR Aims by TR specialists at CCTS
Mon, 03/16/2026	Review of TS Aims by TS specialists & selection of 3-4 proposals by PRC
Fri, 03/20/2026	Final 3-4 candidates announced and selected proposal PIs begin TS training to finalize TS Aim and proposal
Wed, 05/20/2026	Deadline for re-submission of revised proposal to the PRC
Fri, 06/05/2026	PRC selects awarded proposal(s) and notifies the CCTS for NCATS approval
Wed, 07/01/2026	Awarded proposal(s) begin the 2026-2027 funding cycle
Thu, 07/02/2026	Awarded PIs begin research

Applicants must submit the documents listed in the Application Checklist (page 3 of this RFA) in the order as indicated, along with the completed Application Checklist (see page 3 below). Applications are required to use a one single-spaced, Arial 11-point font with ½" margins PDF file format. **Applications that are not in the correct format may not be reviewed.**

Applications and questions should be emailed to Yuko Yamamura at [Yuko.Yamamura@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:Yuko.Yamamura@uth.tmc.edu) by **Monday, February 16, 2026, at 5 PM (CST)**.

## Collaborative Research Pilot Project Awards Program - Application Checklist

1. ☐ Title of project
2. Does the study involve human subjects? YES ☐ NO ☐  
If answer is YES, additional documents will be required if application is awarded)  
If you are unsure whether your project qualifies for human subject's research, please refer to this link:  
<https://grants.nih.gov/policy/humansubjects/research.htm>
3. ☐ Current valid IRB protocol approval letter for the study, OR
  - ☐ Check here if IRB approval has been applied for but not yet obtained  
(Proof of completed IRB submission can be a screenshot as it will be vetted with the IRB. In-progress submissions will not be accepted)
  - ☐ Check here if an IRB approval is not needed (provide rationale)

Important: If the pilot grant is an offshoot of a parent study, the pilot study must be novel and have its very own IRB submission listing the applicant PI as the main PI for the submitted pilot study
4. ☐ Name of Principal Investigator (PI), department/school and CCTS partner institution
5. ☐ Names of Co-Investigator (s) (Co-I) if any, department/school and CCTS partner institution
6. ☐ Names of the TR mentor, department/school and CCTS partner institution.
7. ☐ One-page structured proposal (with the subheadings: Introduction; Hypothesis; Specific Aims (Specific Aim 1 will be the TR Aim, and Specific Aim 2 will be the TS Aim); Methods, Analysis, and Anticipated Results) describing the proposed study. Include References on a separate page
8. ☐ NIH biosketch and completed NIH Other Support form for the PI, Co-I (s) and mentors. Forms and examples available at: <https://www.nsf.gov/policies/nspm-33/common-form-biosketch>  
<https://www.nsf.gov/policies/nspm-33/common-form-cps>
9. ☐ One-page budget with a brief explanation of the purpose and necessity of each listed item. Items such as salaries, equipment, supplies, and patient-care costs may be included. Salaries cannot be more than 60% of the budget. This includes PI funding which is capped at no more than 5% of their salary  

Important: The minimum required effort for the PI and Co-I/s is 2% while there is no effort requirement for mentors. No indirect costs will be paid and the following are not allowed budget items: faculty salary, travel, or subcontracts
10. ☐ All items in one single-spaced pdf, in Arial 11-point font with ½" margins

## Information handout: What is Translational Science (TS)

Pilot funding is provided by the National Center of Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) via the Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS) at UTHealth Houston, one of over 60 CTSA Hubs across the country. NCATS defines translational science (TS) as the systematic process of identifying and overcoming factors or variables that limit or stop the translation of research from one stage to the next. Examples of translational science include, but are not limited to, identifying causes and applications of strategies to overcome:

- incorrect predictions of toxicity or efficacy of new drugs
- inefficient clinical study/trial operations
- factors that inhibit clinical adoption and patient knowledge/engagement
- ineffective clinical study/trial recruitment/retention/diversity
- inefficient clinical research administrative and regulatory processes
- gaps in public health crisis preparedness, health policy changes and dissemination
- lack of data interoperability or the inability of different information systems, applications or devices to access, exchange, integrate and cooperatively use data

Translational issues can affect all research, regardless of the specific disease or clinical condition.