UTHealth Houston
Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences

UTHealth Houston
Institute for Implementation Science

Implementation Research Pilot Award Program

The Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS) in partnership with UTHealth Houston Institute for Implementation Science is accepting applications for Implementation Research Pilot Awards

The Pilot Award Program aims to support implementation research studies that address barriers to the adoption, adaptation, integration, scale-up, and/or sustainability of evidence-based guidelines, interventions, tools, policies, or other innovations. This opportunity supports research that addresses questions on how to move proven approaches into practice across diverse settings. Settings can include healthcare, community, or policy environments.

I. Background

Each year, the United States invests billions of public dollars in biomedical research and hundreds of billions in delivering health services. Yet only a small fraction is dedicated to understanding how the products of research can be effectively adopted, implemented, and sustained in real-world clinical and public health settings. As a result, many evidence-based interventions never reach the patients, families, and communities they are designed to benefit.

Even when interventions advance beyond efficacy trials into real-world effectiveness studies, critical questions remain about cost, workforce needs, integration into existing systems, and strategies for reaching underserved populations. Similar challenges arise when implementing evidence-based guidelines and policies, including those from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and the Community Guide to Preventive Services. Understanding factors that influence implementation, what strategies can accelerate and improve the process, and how contextual factors shape their success, is essential to maximizing their public health impact.

Advancing the science of D&I is critical to ensuring scientific discoveries translate into measurable improvements in health outcomes and that all communities benefit from the nation's substantial investments in research.

For the purposes of this Pilot Award program, the following distinctions apply:

Dissemination research focuses on how best to spread information and evidence-based interventions to specific public health or clinical audiences. It examines how, when, by whom, and under what conditions information reaches stakeholders such as agencies, frontline workers, practitioners, policymakers, and consumers. This work seeks to understand the processes that shape the creation, transmission, and uptake of evidence across diverse settings so that knowledge can be packaged and shared effectively to support improved public health and clinical care.

Implementation research studies how evidence-based interventions are adopted, integrated, and sustained within real-world clinical and community settings. It explores how the behaviors of healthcare professionals, organizations, consumers, families, and policymakers influence the use of proven interventions, recognizing that local context matters and that information alone rarely changes practice. This research aims to identify the strategies, models, and frameworks that support effective, context-sensitive implementation through collaborative, stakeholder-engaged approaches. Curran (2020) describes the intervention, practice, or innovation as the 'thing' you are wanting to implement.

Dissemination and Implementation (D&I) Research integrates interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methods to understand both how evidence is spread and how interventions are put into practice. Drawing on fields such as

information science, organizational theory, behavioral science, economics, and engineering, D&I studies often involve close collaboration with stakeholders across public health and clinical settings. These studies use rigorous and relevant designs to assess outcomes, costs, and mechanisms of action, generating evidence on not only whether dissemination or implementation strategies work but also how and why they are effective for specific populations and contexts.

Through this Pilot Award Program, we aim to catalyze innovative D&I research that accelerates the movement of evidence into action, ensuring that proven discoveries reach the people and communities who need them most.

II. Program Overview

The Implementation Research Pilot Award Program will support two awards for a 12-month project period, providing $25,000 each for project-related costs.

The Pilot Award Program offers seed money to support implementation research pilot and proof-of-concept projects leading to the development of larger implementation science proposals for extramural funding opportunities. Projects should have strong potential for converting to larger research grant proposals.

Projects must propose an implementation research study aimed at understanding the implementation context, enhancing implementation measures and methods, improving the implementation process to promote equitable intervention outcomes across any setting. In addition to context, methods, and process improvement studies, projects may include:

(1) rapid-cycle feasibility or acceptability tests of implementation strategies
(2) pilot hybrid effectiveness–implementation designs
(3) development or refinement of implementation tools (e.g., decision-support, audit-and-feedback reports, workflow integration aids)
(4) qualitative or mixed-methods studies to identify barriers and facilitators to implementation
(5) adaptation of evidence-based interventions for new populations, settings, or delivery models
(6) small-scale implementation strategy trials
(7) preliminary work to establish cross-site infrastructure, data harmonization processes, or practice-partner engagement models needed for larger multisite implementation studies
(8) studies designed to de-implement or reduce the use of practices that lack evidence, were adopted prematurely, provide minimal benefit, or are potentially harmful or wasteful

By supporting both implementation and de-implementation science, this program seeks to accelerate the use of what works, and responsibly phase out what does not, to strengthen the impact of evidence-based approaches and ultimately improve health outcomes.

Applications must center on an implementation or de-implementation research question. Those focused primarily on intervention or practice development, efficacy, or effectiveness will be considered nonresponsive and will not be reviewed.

III. Eligibility

This funding opportunity is open to full-time faculty at any CCTS Institution (UTHealth Houston, MD Anderson Cancer Center, Rice University, UT Rio Grande Valley, UT Tyler, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center at El Paso) who hold a terminal clinical or research degree (e.g. MD, DO, DNP, PharmD, DDS, PhD, DrPH, ScD or equivalent). Postdoctoral fellows are not eligible for this opportunity. Ideal applicants are early-stage investigators with a strong interest in D&I research who have not previously served as a PD/PI on a substantial independent research award. Priority will be given to cross institutional and/or regional collaborations. UTHealth Houston Institute for Implementation Science Core Faculty are not eligible to apply as PI.

IV. Key Dates

Applications are due by 5pm CST on December 31, 2026.

Activities	Dates
Applications Open	November 2, 2026
Full Proposal Due	December 31, 2026
Award Decisions	March 2027
Earliest Project Start Date	July 1, 2027

V. Application Requirements

1. Applicant Details
    a. Applicant Information: Name, contact information, positions and affiliation(s).
    b. Project Details
    c. Project title: Full project title
    d. Brief statement describing plans for seeking external research funding and how the proposed project will provide preliminary data or evidence for future implementation research studies.
2. Attachments
    a. NIH SciENcv Biosketch for PI(s) and Co-Investigators
        i. Submitted as a single PDF-packet with the PI Biosketch first.
    b. Specific Aims (1 Page)
    c. Pilot Project Plan: Maximum three (3) pages for the following required elements (including all figures and tables).
        i. Background and Significance
        ii. Preliminary Studies/Rationale
        iii. Design and Methods
        iv. Timeline
        v. References (not included in page limit)
    d. Budget and Budget Justification
        i. Itemized budget and justification (should not exceed two pages).
        ii. PI and other faculty salaries, Facilities and Administrative (F&A, indirect costs) expenses or purchases of capital equipment are not allowed.
        iii. Allowable expenses include non-faculty support staff, travel, dissemination costs, project supplies and equipment, consultant, and patient or participant costs are allowable.

Formatting requirements: ½" margins, single-spaced, size 11 font (tables/figures can be smaller), Arial, Aptos, or Times New Roman font preferred. Any budget template can be used.

VI. Award Requirements

All awards are subject to CCTS review and require NCATS approval. Upon award notification, PIs will be required to obtain IRB approval and prepare required documents for submission of the study to the NIH eRA Human Subject System. Any modifications to the submitted budget must be discussed and approved before funding for non-budgeted items can be granted.

Projects are expected to be completed within one year. A final report is required at the end of the project. Awardees should acknowledge the Implementation Research Pilot Award Program and the CCTS grant (UM1TR004906) in any relevant publications, abstracts, chapters, and/or posters.

Please contact Rikki Ward, Implementation Research Pilot Award Program Manager, at rikki.ward@uth.tmc.edu or 972-546-2933 with any questions.