

2025 Eisenberg Pilot Awards Funding Opportunity Announcement

The Northwestern University Clinical and Translational Sciences (NUCATS) Institute announces this Request for Applications (RFA) for the **2025 Eisenberg Pilot Awards**. The Eisenberg Pilot Award offers up to \$25,000 in support for translational medicine projects proposed by teams of investigators within the Feinberg School of Medicine and its affiliate partners (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 introduction of new therapies or devices, ultimately benefiting patients. This award is designed to support early-stage research that may require preliminary findings, providing a critical foundation for future, larger-scale studies. Early-career investigators are especially encouraged to apply, as this funding opportunity seeks to nurture and develop the next generation of leaders in translational medicine.

Deadlines and Award Timeline

RFA Issued	September 2, 2024
Optional Consultations ¹	Available upon request
Proposal Submission Deadline	November 1, 2024
Notice of Award	December 16, 2024 (Anticipated)
Earliest Anticipated Funding Start Date	January 1, 2025
Funding Period	1 year

¹Applicants are encouraged (but not required) to request a consultation through NUCATS resources prior to submission, if relevant (see Proposal Eligibility section). The request form is available on the [NUCATS website](#).

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).

Priority for funding will be given to PIs (or submitting/contact MPIs) who have not yet received an NIH R01-equivalent award.

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-2025.pdf
(e.g., DAquila-Richard-Eisenberg-2025.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 proposal bridges the gap between laboratory development and clinical application. 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 detailed feasibility and analysis plans.
 - 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, 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 MPIs; <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 pilot project, and willingness to mentor the applicant throughout the project period if funded;
- and provide an NIH-style biosketch.

Applicants are encouraged to choose a mentor early. 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)
 - Compensation for community partners to serve as MPI or Co-I on the proposal (highly encouraged for DIR or other proposals with community partners)
 - Consultation with Northwestern faculty/staff with quantitative and/or qualitative analysis expertise
 - 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
 - Event expenses
- 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. In addition to other budget items, proposals may request funds for [biostatistics/research design](#) or [informatics support](#), [D&I consultation](#), [Clinical Research Ethics and Equity Consultation support](#) (select CREEC on the request form), or [other NUCATS Resources](#).

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.

REVIEW CRITERIA

The proposal will be evaluated on the originality and novelty of the research concept, approach, or methodology. Reviewers will assess whether the project introduces new paradigms, challenges existing ones, or offers innovative solutions that have the potential to significantly advance translational science. The anticipated impact on patient care, as well as the potential for the research to bridge the gap between laboratory findings and clinical application, will be key considerations.

Ideal proposals will clearly demonstrate the following elements:

- A concept that is too preliminary to qualify for federal funding programs and for which supporting preliminary data would greatly enhance the likelihood of receiving a subsequent NIH-funded award.
- Appropriate infrastructure to support the project (including plans to access NUCATS consultation services for support in areas such as D&I, community stakeholder engagement, biostatistics, and informatics)

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- A feasible timeline to complete all proposed activities within the approved funding period. Clear objectives, 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 with as much detail as possible; identifying a specific NIH FOA to which there will be a response by a specific submission date is strongly encouraged.

The Eisenberg Scientific Review Panel will **prioritize proposals led by early-career faculty** who have not yet established a significant funding base (PI or MPI on an NIH R01-equivalent award), regardless of rank, track, or contributions on the proposal from more established faculty collaborators. The lead principal investigator (PI) is the submitting/contact PI. Applicants with well-established federal funding bases will not be prioritized for funding.

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.

Questions regarding NUCATS Competitions may be directed to competitions@northwestern.edu.