Third Coast Center for AIDS Research in Chicago

Pilot Awards for HIV/AIDS Research
RFA Issued: June 14, 2016
Letter of Intent Due: August 22, 2016
Applications Due: September 14, 2016
Awards Announced: Oct-Nov 2016

Funding Opportunity Description

Third Coast Center for AIDS Research (TC-CFAR) pilot awards are intended for key preliminary studies in HIV/AIDS-related basic, clinical, or behavioral research that will enable new NIH grant submissions. A proposal must be for a new project that is distinct from any currently funded project. New investigators (never served as principal investigator (PI) on a substantial NIH research award) and established investigators new to AIDS/HIV research are eligible to apply. The proposed research project must align with NIH HIV/AIDS research priorities (NOT-OD-15-137) with preference given to topics in "high" priority categories. Teams that include TC-CFAR members from across Chicago institutions and across disciplines are encouraged.

Funds Available

Up to $50,000 in direct costs are allowed and smaller budgets may be awarded. Indirect costs will be determined at the time of award. We plan to award up to 3 grants in this cycle, depending upon the availability of funds. Awards are for one year of support. Funded investigators may submit a new, competitive application to request a second year of funding. Successful competition for a second year of funding will generally require evidence of need to support a planned NIH grant proposal.

Eligibility

The PI on the application must be a new, or new to HIV/AIDS, investigator by NIH definition. The PI must also be a TC-CFAR faculty member. TC-CFAR faculty membership is available to any faculty or staff person at Northwestern University, University of Chicago, and Lurie Children's Hospital, ***who is allowed to apply for NIH grants as a principal investigator at their institution.*** Investigators at other academic and community organizations in the Chicago-area are encouraged to serve as a co-PI or co-Investigator (co-I) on these projects. All investigators on the application should go to the TC-CFAR membership page (http://www.thirdcoastcfar.org/membership/) and register. New investigators are required, and new to HIV/AIDS investigators are encouraged, to include an established HIV/AIDS researcher as a mentor on the application.

Investigators previously funded in this program are not precluded from applying for a pilot award to continue with a second year of funding for an existing pilot or for a new project. However, they must include a letter of eligibility from one of the TC-CFAR Developmental Core directors with the application. Contact Brian Mustanski at Northwestern University or John Schneider at University of Chicago to discuss your ideas and need for pilot funding. The goal of the pilot program is to support submission of competitive NIH applications. You will be asked to provide a written justification to include with the letter of eligibility.

Project Information

Proposals must be related to HIV/AIDS and preference will be given to projects that align with high priority topics as defined by the NIH Office of AIDS Research and outlined in NOT-OD-15-137. This notice designates topics as high, medium, or low priority for AIDS funding. The high priority topics for research are:

1. Reducing incidence of HIV/AIDS
2. Next generation of HIV therapies
3. Cure for HIV/AIDS
4. HIV-associated co-morbidities and co-infections
5. Basic research and research to reduce health disparities that cross-cut the four topics above is also considered high priority.

Applications that fall into lower priority areas as described in NOT-OD-15-137 may still be considered for pilot funding as alignment with NIH research priorities is only one review criteria.

Studies involving human subjects may be subject to additional NIH review prior to initiating the study, which may cause delays. If the project or any project-related activities will occur outside of the US, additional NIH review will be required, which may cause delays.

Review Criteria

The primary criteria for evaluation of the application are scientific merit and the concomitant likelihood that the pilot project will lead to an AIDS fundable grant submission to NIH.

Reviewers will use the NIH scoring system and a modified set of criteria listed below.

1. **Significance:** Does this study address an important problem? If the aims of the application are achieved, how will scientific knowledge be advanced? What will be the effect of these studies on the concepts or methods that drive this field?
2. **Approach:** Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well-integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?
3. **Innovation:** Does the project employ novel concepts, approaches or method? Are the aims original and innovative? Does the project challenge existing paradigms or develop new methodologies or technologies?
4. **Investigative team:** Is the PI a new investigator or an established investigator new to HIV/AIDS research? Is an appropriate plan in place to provide mentoring? Is an appropriate plan in place for collaborative work across disciplines and organizations?
5. **Transdisciplinary nature of the research:** Proposals that successfully bring more than one scientific discipline to bear on research questions of interest are encouraged.
6. **Alignment with Office of AIDS Research Priorities:** Does the work align with areas of the research topics of high priority as designated by the OAR in NOT-OD-15-137?
7. **Competitiveness for NIH AIDS funding:** Is the pilot project targeted at development of an NIH grant proposal? Will completion of the pilot project increase the probability of obtaining AIDS funding from NIH?

Application and Submission Information

Letter of intent due August 22, 2016:

Email a succinct letter of intent to cfar@northwestern.edu. Include:

- Principal investigator(s): name, position, institution, email and telephone contacts
- Designate if the PI is a new investigator (no prior substantial NIH independent research award) or new to HIV/AIDS research
- Mentor: name, position, institution, email
- Other expected key personnel: name, position, institution, email
- Preliminary title of proposal
- List the NIH HIV/AIDS research priority with which the project aligns
- Short description of project

The TC-CFAR Developmental Core will review letters of intent for eligibility and alignment with NIH HIV/AIDS research priorities. You will be contacted if additional information is needed.

Content and form of application due September 14, 2016:

The application is an abbreviated NIH R01-style format and NIH forms are used as indicated in the table below. Forms can be downloaded from http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html. Applications are expected to use NIH formatting standards (single-spaced, 0.5 inch margin minimum, Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype, or Georgia typeface in black in at least 11 pt size).

An application submission link will open on the Third Coast CFAR website after the LOI due date. Instructions will be emailed directly to the PI listed on the letter of intent.

Required Components	Format and Notes
Letter of Eligibility and Justification Required only for applicants who have previously received TC-CFAR pilot funding and are requesting a second year of funding or proposing a new project. A TC-CFAR Developmental Core director can provide after reviewing the written justification.	No form
Introduction Required only for applicants who are submitting a revision of a previously unfunded project. Respond to critiques from the prior submission and explain changes that have been made to improve the proposal.	1 page limit No form
Project Summary (Abstract) The **Project Summary** is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work when separated from the application	Limited to 30 lines No form
Specific Aims State concisely the goals of the proposed research and summarize the expected outcome(s).	1 page limit No form
Research Strategy Similar to an NIH R01-style application, include the following sections: 1. Significance: Explain the importance of the problem, the scientific premise, and gaps in current knowledge. You may include preliminary data, if available (not required), in this section or the approach section. 2. Innovation: Explain how the work will shift current paradigms, or the use of novel technologies/methods, approaches, and theoretical concepts. 3. Approach: Describe the overall strategy to achieve the specific aims. Describe the experimental design and methods in sufficient detail to allow the reviewers to see how you will achieve robust and unbiased results. Discuss potential problems and alternative strategies.	5 page limit No form
Bibliography Include title and names of all authors. Follow same formatting and type size rules as for the research strategy.	No limit No form
Plans for future NIH proposal submission Briefly explain how this pilot project will add value to plans for future NIH proposals. If a specific NIH submission date is planned, please include. If the applicant has previously received pilot funding, provide information on any NIH grant submissions to date, and explain how additional funding will support a successful NIH grant submission.	1 page limit No form
Detailed Budget for Direct Costs • Allowable expenses include salary and fringe benefits for the research team, supplies, patient incentives, assays, computer time, data analysis, and core services. Identify all services to be purchased from core facilities and provide the name of the facility. • Applicants are encouraged to utilize TC-CFAR core services. Contact core directors or the TC-CFAR assistant directors, Fern Murdoch and Justin Schmandt to confirm available services and generate an estimate of costs. • Salary for the mentor should generally not be included, unless they are doing work on the project.	Use PHS 398 Form Page 4

• Investigators on K-awards may be restricted from accepting salary. • It is not the purpose of these grants to provide support for training and graduate student stipends. Training and tuition cannot be supported. Salary may be requested for a graduate student or postdoctoral scientist with a clear justification of the work they will do on the project. • Travel and equipment are not allowed unless essential for execution of the research. • Sub-awards are permitted. Use a second Form Page 4 to detail the sub-award budget. Indirect or F&A costs should be listed on the sub-award budget form, but do not count against the $50,000 maximum budget. Add the direct costs of the sub-award to the Budget form for the overall project. • Do not include indirect or F&A costs for the primary site. These will be added at the time of funding.	
Budget Justification • Provide a justification for each line item on the Budget, including all items on a sub-award budget. • Specifically identify any core facilities that will be used and how costs were calculated. • If the project is not utilizing TC-CFAR core services, provide an explanation. Include information such as services desired, but not available, or more expensive than at other facilities. This information is solicited to help TC-CFAR build and improve services to its members.	No limit No form
Biosketch Provide for PIs, co-Is, Mentor and other key personnel	New NIH Biosketch 5 page limit Use NIH template
Mentor Letter New investigators must have a mentor with HIV/AIDS research experience and a mentor is suggested for established investigators new to HIV/AIDS. The letter from the mentor should describe the relationship between the mentor-mentee and the mentoring plan. Investigators may contact TC-CFAR (see below) for assistance in identifying a mentor.	No form
Sub-recipient Commitment Form Work with the investigator the sub-recipient site to complete this form. Budget, F&A rate, and the signature of an authorized official at the sub-recipient site must be included.	Use NU Form

Application Processing

A note regarding Office of Sponsored Research: This funding mechanism uses internal funding and does not require review or approval by an Office of Sponsored Research. Applications are submitted directly to the TC-CFAR by investigators.

An application submission link will open on the Third Coast CFAR website after the LOI due date. Instructions will be emailed directly to the PI listed on the letter of intent.

Applications must be received no later than 11:59 PM on the application receipt date(s) described above. Upon receipt, applications will be evaluated for completeness and responsiveness.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of human subjects and/or approval of animal use protocols are not required prior to review of an application. However, all necessary or applicable regulatory reviews will be required prior to release of funding.

Obligations of the Pilot Award Recipient PI

1. Investigators awarded funding will be required to provide an interim report on the progress of their study and a final report detailing the outcome of their project. Specific due dates for reports will be provided in the Notice of Award and are chosen to support preparation of TC-CFAR reports to NIH and advisory boards.

2. In order to evaluate the long-term outcomes of the program, and in accordance with NIH reporting requirements for TC-CFAR, brief, non-narrative annual reports will be solicited from the PI for five years following the completion of their project indicating:
   - The number of subsequent grant applications
   - The funding outcome of these applications
   - Any publications or presentations that may have been based on the pilot grant

3. Awardees are expected to present their work at a TC-CFAR forum, upon invitation, at least once.

4. Awardees must agree to credit the Third Coast Center for AIDS Research in any publication or applications that result from awards. For example: "This *[insert: abstract /publication/ presentation/ grant proposal]* was made possible with help from the Third Coast Center for AIDS Research (CFAR), an NIH funded center (P30AI117943), which is supported by the following NIH Co-Funding and Participating Institutes and centers: NICHD, NIAID, NIMHD, NIA, NIGMS, NIDDK, NIDA, NCI, NHLBI, OAR. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health."

5. All publications that benefit from support provided by the TC-CFAR must comply with the NIH Public Access Policy.

6. Awardees must provide and agree to allow information about research awarded under this program, subsequent awards, and publications to be posted on the TC-CFAR website.

Additional Information and Questions

It is the mission of the Developmental Core of the Third Coast Center for AIDS Research to provide strong support for new investigators and established investigators new to HIV/AIDS research. Please contact us with questions or requests for assistance at any point in the application process.

Requests for additional information and questions may be directed to:

> Fern E. Murdoch, Ph.D.
> Assistant Director for University Interactions and Strategic Growth
> Third Coast Center for AIDS Research
> http://www.thirdcoastcfar.org/
> Northwestern University
> Rubloff Building – Room 9-917
> 750 N. Lake Shore Drive
> Chicago, Illinois 60611
> Voice: 312-503-4624
> Email: cfar@northwestern.edu