Center for Clinical and Translational Research
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

ClinTrUSC PILOT AND DEVELOPMENTAL RESEARCH PROJECT PROGRAM NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)

*****PRE-APPLICATION REQUIRED*****

The Center for Clinical and Translational Research at the University of South Carolina (ClinTrUSC) solicits applications for the Pilot and Developmental (P&D) Research Project Program.

P&D proposals should:

1. Advance Clinical and Translational Research at USC
2. Focus on health conditions that affect populations in the Midlands of South Carolina
3. Articulate a realistic path toward extramural funding

Important General Considerations:

The P&D Project Program, housed in ClinTrUSC's Health Research Core, aims to foster translational research that directly addresses pressing health-related issues affecting individuals and communities in the Midlands region of South Carolina. These projects should be designed to generate solutions to the region's most significant health challenges. By focusing on conditions prevalent in this region, the P&D Program seeks to create impactful research that will improve health outcomes for these communities. The P&D Program encourages collaboration across disciplines, ensuring that research efforts are not only innovative but also closely aligned with the clinical needs and public health priorities of the Midlands.

P&D projects are aimed at generating preliminary data and results that will be essential for securing subsequent external funding. These projects are expected to produce robust, pilot-level findings that can serve as a foundation for larger-scale grant proposals.

The program prioritizes research that is clearly positioned along the clinical and translational research continuum and driven by current NIH priority areas including:

- in the causes, diagnosis, prevention, and cure of human diseases;
- in the processes of human growth and development;
- in the biological effects of environmental contaminants;
- in the understanding of mental, addictive, and physical disorders.

Projects should engage human subjects, human-derived data or biospecimens, or health systems data. Pre-clinical or basic science research, including studies conducted primarily in animal models without a direct and clearly articulated path to clinical application will not be considered responsive. Applications proposing animal model or pre-clinical components must demonstrate that such work is explicitly subordinate to, and directly in service of, a primary human-focused translational aim; standalone preclinical projects will not be considered for review. If a preclinical study, post-award investigations must clearly explain why they are necessary for their preclinical research, why the study cannot be conducted using clinical research methods, and how the outcomes of the preclinical study will inform and lead to clinical research. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the Health Research Core prior to submission to confirm the translational responsiveness of their proposed work.

The evaluation of P&D project proposals will place significant emphasis on two criteria: the potential for the research to generate meaningful preliminary data, and the likelihood that these data will both expand our portfolio of clinical and translational research and support successful applications for external funding.

Midlands Region:https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:va6c2:24429a4e-f9be-4633-8154-b91a50bfbfe3

Important Dates:

1. Deadline for submission of pre-application: 5:00 pm on June 22, 2026
2. Deadline for submission of full application: 5:00 pm on August 3, 2026
3. Funding decisions: October/November 2026
4. Expected project start date: February 1, 2027

Award Type and Amounts:

- **Pilot Projects** are 1-year feasibility projects (maximum budget of $100,000) to allow investigators to test ideas suitable for development into independent applications aimed at clinical and translational research. This category would include small (e.g., NIH R03- or R21-scale) research project grant awards or career development awards (i.e., K awards). Indirect costs are not allowed.
- **Developmental Projects** include 1- or 2-year projects (maximum budget of $200,000 divided into two 1-year budgets up to $100,000 each). Developmental projects are suitable for supporting subsequent investigator-initiated applications (i.e., NIH R01 or U01). Indirect costs are not allowed.

Number of awards per cycle:

The number of awards in each category is contingent on the quality of the applications and available funding.

Eligibility:

1. Individuals holding a faculty position at research institutions dedicated to higher education in South Carolina can lead P&D Projects.
2. All applications must include at least a co-investigator from the University of South Carolina.
3. All applications must include a clinical collaborator affiliated with a clinical facility in the broad Midlands of South Carolina (the "clinical collaborator"). Note the link above and on our website for a description of the regional locations that qualify as the broad Midlands of South Carolina. Details regarding the required process for engagement with a clinical collaborator affiliated with Prisma Health are provided in Appendix 1.
4. Further information on the inclusion of a clinical collaborator is provided in the question-and-answer section below. ClinTrUSC's Community Engagement and Outreach (CEO) Core can assist with matching project leads with clinical collaborators.
5. Clinical fellows can lead Pilot Projects, which are suitable for developing into NIH career projects (K-series). However, they are expected to work with a research mentor when leading these projects.

Restrictions:

1. Funds cannot be used for graduate student or postdoctoral stipends, but students and postdocs may receive salary support as research staff from an awarded project. More specifically, although the grant cannot be used for stipends, it allows for students and postdocs to be compensated if they are hired as research staff. This means they can receive a salary for work performed on the project, but not a stipend which is usually tied to their academic or training status.
2. Postdoctoral scholars and others holding non-independent positions are not eligible to lead any Health Research Core projects, except clinical fellows, who may lead Pilot Projects.
3. Projects may not overlap with ongoing funded projects.
4. Project leads may not receive simultaneous research support as project leads from ClinTrUSC or from another IDeA parent award (e.g., COBRE, INBRE, IDeA-CTR, CTR-N, or CTR-D) but may be eligible to serve as a project lead of a supplement to an IDeA award. Project leads can receive research support from other NIH grant funding or other sources not listed above.
5. Foreign components, as defined in the NIH Grants Policy Statement, are not allowed. Collaborations with investigators at a foreign site, anticipated to result in co-authorship constitutes a foreign component.

Only one proposal per funding period will be accepted from an individual faculty member.

Responsiveness:

We will consider proposals to be responsive to this call if they:

1. Address any topic covered within the broad scope of the NIH or other funding agencies focused on human health. That is, there is no restriction as to outcomes, risk factors, or other covariates;
2. Focus on a problem in public health or clinical medicine that is documented to exist in our geographical region;
3. Incorporate human-focused methodologies, including clinical research, patient-derived data or specimens, and emerging alternative model systems that improve translational applicability;
4. Describe a realistic path toward obtaining extramural research funding within 1-3 years;
5. Clearly show the meaningful involvement of a clinician;
6. Support clinical and translational research infrastructure by use of ClinTrUSC Cores.

Highly innovative projects that address a serious health disparity within ClinTrUSC's catchment area will be given special consideration.

Proposal Preparation Instructions:

All documents must be completed according to the NIH PHS 398 guidelines. Proposals must be prepared with 0.5" margins all around, using Arial (or similar sans serif font; font size no smaller than 11 pt). The application forms package can be accessed via REDCap (links included below).

NIH Required Documents.

- **NIH Form Page 2.**
- **Biographical Sketch (NIH Common Form).** Include a biosketch for the Project Lead, Senior/Key Personnel, and Other Significant Contributors. (NIH-format)
- **Biographical Sketch Common Form of the Mentor.** (if applicable)
- **Letters of Support.**
- **Budget Form Pages and Budget Justification.** Salary is allowed for the Project Lead and Co-Investigators.
- **Specific Aims.** 1 page
- **Research Strategy.** Provide a description of the scientific premise for the proposed project, including consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of published research or preliminary data crucial to the support of the project, and a description of the experimental design and methods proposed and how the investigator will achieve robust and unbiased results. Page limits are: 3 pages for Pilot Projects and 6 pages for Developmental Projects.
- **Bibliography**. No limit.
- **Authentication of Key Biological/Chemical Resources**. (if applicable)
- **Resource Sharing Plan**. (if applicable)
- **Human Subjects**. If research involves human subjects, PHS Human Subjects and Clinical Trials Information Form information is required. Prior to final approval of funding by the NIH, Human Subjects Education Certification, GCP Training, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval are required.
- **Clinical Trials.** In addition to Human Subjects requirements above, if the proposed project involves clinical trials, additional PHS Human Subjects and Clinical Trials information is required. Refer to the NIH's Definition of a Clinical Trial and use of human subjects in research: https://grants.nih.gov/ct-decision/index.htm.
- **Vertebrate Animals**. If the project involves vertebrate animals, provide the Vertebrate Animals Section (see https://olaw.nih.gov/guidance/vertebrate-animal-section.htm for additional information). Prior to approval of funding by NIH, IACUC approval is required.

Additional ClinTrUSC Required Documents

- **Plans for Core Usage:** State plans for participation in the Professional Development (PD) Core, the Community Engagement and Outreach (CEO) Core, and the Research Design, Compliance, and Data Management (RCDC) Core.
- **Plans for Dissemination of Findings and Grant Submissions**. Describe plans for publication and plans for submission of external grant applications.
- **Letter of support from Clinical Collaborator.**
- **Letter of support from Mentor (if applicable).**

Review

The Health Research Core will review pre-applications to determine responsiveness to the NOFO and eligibility of the applicant. Full applications will be evaluated for completeness and inclusion of information regarding human subjects and vertebrate animals. Applications deemed incomplete, ineligible, or not responsive will not be considered for funding.

All proposals that meet the eligibility requirements and guidelines will be independently evaluated by ClinTrUSC's Scientific Review Committee. Reviewers will apply the following review criteria:

- Scientific merit of the proposed project as evidenced by 1) Importance of the Research, 2) Rigor and Feasibility, and 3) Expertise and Resources.
- Qualifications of Clinical Collaborator(s) and Mentor(s) (if applicable).
- Consistency with Responsiveness Criteria.
- Potential to lead to a competitive extramural grant proposal focused on clinical and translational research.
- Potential for publication.
- Utilization of ClinTrUSC support cores.

Final decisions on funding will be made by:

1. ClinTrUSC's Executive Committee
2. ClinTrUSC's External Advisory Committee
3. NIH/NIGMS
    a. Projects recommended for funding will be submitted through ClinTrUSC to NIH/NIGMS. This may include requests for revisions and for the applicant to provide additional information and/or materials needed for the submission.

Awards and Reporting Requirements

All applicants will receive a notice of award/declination and copies of the reviewers' comments via email. Award recipients are required to provide the ClinTrUSC Administrative Core with project data for evaluation and reporting purposes, as follows:

1. Award recipients will be contacted quarterly to request updates on the supported activity, summary of expenditures, and any project achievements to date (publications, presentations, proposals submitted/funded, new collaborations, new appointments, honors or awards, and citations). P&D award recipients are expected to publish their results and present them at regional and/or national conferences. Awardees are also expected to apply for extramural support as soon as possible during or after the completion of their P&D award work.
2. A comprehensive final report is due 30 days after the end date of the award.
3. All publications, resulting even in part from work supported by ClinTrUSC, must acknowledge ClinTrUSC support and a PMCID must be obtained for each publication in a timely fashion. PMCID information must be provided to the ClinTrUSC administrative staff as soon as available.

After the expiration date of each award, ClinTrUSC will continue to contact awardees for outcome-related data such as grants, publications, etc. All publications emanating from P&D Projects must acknowledge CLINTRUSC funding (P20 GM155896). Failure to provide any requested materials for award or evaluation purposes will constitute default under this program and disqualify the P&D recipient from further ClinTrUSC support.

Application Submission Instructions and Contact Information

The pre-application must be submitted online via REDCap by 5:00 pm on June 22, 2026. It should include the title, names, and affiliations of investigators, and a short description of the project (limited to 300 words for the project summary only). https://redcap.research.sc.edu/CLINTRUSC PD Pre-App

Full applications must be submitted online via REDCap no later than 5:00 pm on the deadline of August 3, 2026.

https://redcap.research.sc.edu/CLINTRUSC PD Application Cycle III

If you have any questions relating to this NOFO please contact:

Dr. Leonardo Bonilha, Dr. Angela Murphy, or Tristen Grantham at clintruscHRcore@uscmed.sc.edu

Questions and Answers Related to Clinical Collaborator

Q: Why is clinician participation important in this project?
A: Clinician participation ensures that the project is grounded in real-world clinical experience, which is essential for identifying and addressing healthcare problems effectively. Their insights help align research objectives with practical healthcare needs, enhancing the project's relevance and impact. It also will build necessary research capacity within ClinTrUSC.

Q: How will clinicians be involved in the project?
A: Clinicians will collaborate closely with the research team, providing clinical expertise and ensuring that the research is applicable and beneficial to patient care. Their involvement will be integrated throughout the project, from planning to implementation, to ensure the outcomes are aligned with clinical needs.

Q: What is the expected impact of clinician involvement on the project's outcomes?
A: By involving clinicians, the project aims to produce research that directly translates into improved patient care and health outcomes for South Carolinians. The collaboration ensures that the research addresses real-world issues and meets the healthcare needs of the community.

Q: Does it need to be explicitly stated in the proposal where the clinician provided input?
A: No, it does not need to be explicitly stated. However, the clinical collaborator's involvement should be evident, and sections of the grant should be clear in framing the research from a clinical perspective to ensure its optimal translational potential.

Q: Does the clinician need to draw salary support from the project?
A: Not necessarily. Provided that the research is framed in the context of clinical translation, it is at the discretion of the Project Lead whether the clinician should or should not receive salary support. Both options are permissible."

Appendix 1: Clinical Collaborator Requirement – Prisma Health

Applicants proposing to include a clinical collaborator affiliated with Prisma Health must complete an additional pre-submission review and approval process. Failure to complete this process prior to application submission may result in delays or the application not being considered. Applicants are strongly encouraged to initiate this process as early as possible to allow sufficient time for review.

Requirement
All proposals involving a Prisma Health clinical collaborator must be reviewed in advance by the Prisma Health Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP). The OSP will coordinate review and obtain approval from the clinical collaborator's departmental leadership.

Process for Prisma Health Clinical Collaborators
Applicants should coordinate with their Prisma Health clinical collaborator to complete the following steps:

1. The clinical collaborator must contact the Prisma Health Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) by emailing grants@prismahealth.org to initiate the review and approval process.
2. The OSP will review the request and coordinate with appropriate departmental leadership for approval.
3. The OSP will provide confirmation once approval has been obtained.

Required Information
The following information must be submitted to the Prisma Health OSP as part of the request:

1. Project Title
2. Project Dates
3. Principal Investigator Name
4. Principal Investigator Email
5. Project Summary
6. Role of the Prisma Health Clinical Collaborator
7. Proposed Level of Effort for the Clinical Collaborator
8. Deadline by which Prisma Health approval is required
9. Copy of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Contact Information:
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