

TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE PILOT AWARD

INTRODUCTION

[The Irving Institute for Clinical and Translational Research \(Irving Institute\)](#), home to Columbia University's [Clinical and Translational Science Award \(CTSA\)](#) Program hub, is one of over 60 medical research institutions across the nation that work together to speed the translation of research discovery into improved patient care.

The Irving Institute's [Pilot Program](#) oversees dynamic and innovative pilot awards that fund novel, high-impact work and stimulate clinical and translational research (CTR) across Columbia University Irving Medical Center, helping investigators pursue new research directions and build the foundation for larger extramural funding. Our programs include both general pilot funding designed to flexibly respond to institutional, local, and national priorities and a dedicated arm focused on clinical and translational science (CTS), which aims to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the research process itself. Across both arms, we aim to identify emerging gaps and opportunities, and to develop, refine, and disseminate innovative solutions with the potential to transform health locally and nationally.

PROGRAM GOALS

This [Translational Science Pilot Award](#) focuses on [translational science](#) projects that seek to **overcome barriers to research and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the research process across diseases and domains**. Translational science is distinct from translational research. Translational research aims to advance interventions or diagnostics for specific diseases, translational science seeks to improve the research process itself by developing solutions to challenges that occur across diseases and stages of research. Addressing these scientific and operational roadblocks can accelerate the translation of discoveries into improvements in human health.

We invite innovative projects across the translational spectrum from **basic science** to **clinical implementation** to **community and public health delivery and scale-up**. Disease-specific projects are welcome as they can solve pressing problems and offer important insights into broader translational science challenges. However, applicants should demonstrate how the proposed work addresses a broader need and generates knowledge, methods, or tools that extend beyond a single disease area.

We are looking for **innovative and disruptive ideas** that address barriers to research.

- Is there a roadblock in your field that prevents you from doing the type of research you want to do?
- Is your field in need of innovation to solve a persistent problem?

Proposals should:

- Propose an innovation and/or identify a barrier or problem they seek to address
- Propose a plan to test the innovation and/or mitigate the barrier
- Describe how they will evaluate the effectiveness of the project
- Describe how the proposed innovation/solution can be broadly applied across diseases and conditions and a translational science deliverable (e.g., playbook, toolkit, method, software etc.) that can help extend its use beyond the proposed project

Examples:

- CRISPR screening technology that addresses barriers to target identification or validation across multiple disease areas
- Generative AI methods or applications that address barriers to clinical research (e.g., curation and integration of disparate datasets like EHR / genomics / imaging)

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- Innovations in clinical trial design with the potential to impact multiple disease areas or types of interventions
- Innovative methodologies that expand the reach of community-based research
- New implementation science approaches to promote adoption of health interventions across multiple populations or disease areas

Funding and Timeline

This is a one-time pilot award of up to \$50,000. We expect to fund up to eight pilot awards.

- **Application Deadline:** November 24, 2026
- **Award Notification:** Late January 2027
- **Project Start:** June 1, 2027
- **Project End:** May 31, 2028

All funds must be spent by May 31, 2028. No-cost extensions are not allowed for these NIH/NCATS-funded pilot awards.

To ensure that funded projects can start in a timely manner, applicants should submit their protocols to the Columbia IRB at the time of submission.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. All applications must be submitted through the web-based [SurveyMonkey Apply](https://irvinginstitute.smapply.io/prog/translational_science_pilot_award) portal. Log in with your Columbia UNI, select the 'Applicant' role (if prompted), navigate to 'Translational Science Pilot Award' and create an application. (https://irvinginstitute.smapply.io/prog/translational_science_pilot_award)
2. Fill out all parts of the web-based application form:
 - A. Project Team
 - i. List all team members with their roles, academic titles, and contact information.
 - B. Project Information – Project Title, keywords, abstract, lay summary, and potential impact.
 - C. Regulatory Approvals and Research Areas
 - D. Proposal – *Upload a PDF with a 3-page proposal that lists your Project Title in the header. References can be included in subsequent pages. Provide at least one-half inch margins (½"); 11- or 12-point font required; Arial typeface preferred. **Required format:***
 - I. Background, Significance, and Specific Aims
 - a) What innovation or barrier in your domain does this project address?
 - b) How is this innovation or barrier generalizable across diseases or domains?
 - c) List the Specific Aims.
 - II. Approach
 - a) Describe the intervention or innovation designed to address the barrier, including the roles of multidisciplinary team members.
 - b) What generalizable translational science deliverable will result from this project (e.g., playbook, toolkit, method, software, etc.) to help extend its impact beyond the proposed project?
 - c) What mechanisms or processes are hypothesized to make the innovation effective?
 - III. Evaluation
 - a) How does the project differ from or advance beyond existing approaches?
 - b) How will you evaluate the effectiveness of your project? How will the data be collected?
 - c) What barriers might arise during project implementation or dissemination of findings? How will you address them?

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IV. Future Plans and Impact

- a) If successful, what would be the next stage of implementation and dissemination?
Describe plans for future publications and follow-on funding.
- b) What is the project's potential long-term impact?

E. Budget

- i. This is a one-time award for the base amount of \$50,000. List the requested amount and upload your budget and a budget justification.

Budget guidelines:

- Budget must directly support your project.
- Expenses may include: technologist/staff salary and fringe, supplies, participant remuneration, or research related services. Please calculate any salaries using [Columbia's fringe rate for government grants](#).
- Non-allowable costs:
 - **Faculty salary cannot be funded by this pilot award.**
 - Major equipment (>\$5,000), indirect costs, publication fees, travel, and subawards are not permitted.

F. Biosketches: Upload a single PDF with NIH-style SciENcv biosketches for each investigator.

G. Submit the full proposal application by selecting the "Submit Your Application" button in the web-based system, https://irvinginstitute.smapply.io/prog/translational_science_pilot_award. **All applications must be submitted by 11:59 PM ET on November 24, 2026.**

ELIGIBILITY

- Principal investigator(s) must have a faculty appointment at Columbia University of assistant professor or higher.
- Postdoctoral fellows and residents are not eligible to apply as Principal Investigator.
- Teams may include outside consultants/collaborators (e.g., community stakeholders, other academic organizations, and industry partners) with unique experience or expertise in innovative approaches not currently available at Columbia. However, subawards are not permitted.
- Only one submission is permitted per principal investigator (PI). However, PIs may be listed as co-investigators or consultants on other applications.
- Program Directors and senior leadership of the Irving Institute may be consulted during the preparation of the application, but they should not be included as co-investigators or consultants on the application.

REVIEW PROCESS

Proposals will be reviewed for strength of the generalizability and translational science approach; scientific merit; innovation; potential impact; and feasibility of submitting pilot findings for external funding or publication, as well as alignment with goals, priorities and directions of the Irving Institute/CTSA.

PROGRAM CONTACTS

Applicants may request a pre-submission consultation to discuss their proposal and program requirements.

Area

Questions about the application, budget, or eligibility

Contact

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Questions about the scientific content

Peter Sims, PhD
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INSTITUTIONAL AND FUNDER APPROVALS

This pilot award is federally funded through the Irving Institute's CTSA award from the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS). All projects involving human subjects and/or vertebrate animal research that are chosen for potential Irving Institute pilot funding, are conditionally selected until appropriate approvals are received. These include **IRB and/or IACUC approval** and in many cases **NIH-NCATS prior approval**. IRB/IACUC is required in order to receive NIH-NCATS prior approval. Full Proposal applicants are expected to submit their protocol for IRB/IACUC review at the time of their application. In addition, for conditionally selected projects that require NIH-NCATS prior approval, documentation must be submitted to Irving Institute administration immediately after IRB/IACUC approval is received and within seventy-five (75) days of notification of potential funding. Only complete prior approval packets will be sent to NIH-NCATS. **Dispersal of funds cannot occur until all required approvals are obtained.**

Teams submitting full proposals should submit their protocols to the Columbia IRB at the time of submission.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

This pilot award is funded through the Irving Institute's CTSA award from NCATS. All funds must be expended by the close of the grant year, May 31, 2028.

Awardees will be provided with an Irving Institute chart string. The home department of the awardee must make all financial transactions and purchases on behalf of the awardee using the Irving Institute chart string. The awardee's home department will process the transactions and then alert Irving Institute financial staff if approval is needed in the financial system.

AWARDEES PROGRESS REPORTING

As part of our ongoing evaluation of our CTSA Programs mandated by the NIH, we will periodically request information from awardees about the progress of your research. Awardees will submit progress reports and may meet with program leadership to review progress toward meeting study milestones. After the funding period ends, we will continue to ask at least once a year for a brief update about the ongoing progress of the pilot research and associated products.