



2026 Request for Applications

The Tri-Institutional Clinical and Translational Research Pilot Program

Funding Opportunity Purpose:

This RFA solicits pilot project applications from investigators at Rutgers University and the New Jersey Institute of Technology. [Please note that Princeton has already awarded its funds for 2026; however, they can serve as collaborators with Rutgers or NJIT]

Release Date: January 30, 2026

Pre-submission Webinar: February 12, 2026, from 4:00-5:00 pm. Register at:
<https://rutgers.zoom.us/meeting/register/5PGML84nSZ667dxcV7rrow>

Letter of Intent Deadline: February 20, 2026 (required)(midnight) via REDCap link:
<https://redcap.rutgers.edu/surveys/?s=REFN3K3AX3DT9DY8>.

Application Deadline: March 13, 2026 (midnight) via REDCap link

Award Notification: April 2026

Earliest Start Date: May 1, 2026 (Dependent on regulatory approvals)

Table of Contents

Highlights	3
Overview of Clinical and Translational Research (CTR) Pilot Program	4
Identifying Collaborators/Partners	6
Application Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Eligibility Confirmation<input type="checkbox"/> Letter of Intent<input type="checkbox"/> Application Submission<input type="checkbox"/> Institutional Review<input type="checkbox"/> Requirements<input type="checkbox"/> Application Requirements<input type="checkbox"/> Budget Guidelines<input type="checkbox"/> Regulatory Approvals<input type="checkbox"/> Proposal Review	7
Post-Award Management <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget and Financial Management• Award Recognition• Other Notices	12

Highlights

- **Mandatory Letter of Intent (LOI):**

- The LOI requires both an abstract and specific aims (both can be in draft form).
- LOIs will be completed and submitted using REDCap. See page 7 for details regarding what must be submitted and a link to the REDCap form.
- LOIs will be reviewed not only to ensure that the project meets the definition of clinical and translational research but also for competitiveness.

- **Pre-submission Webinar:**

The leaders of the Pilots Program will host a webinar to explain the categories of funding, proposal requirements, regulatory requirements and approval processes, and to answer questions from participants. The Pre-submission Webinar will be held on February 12, 2026 from 4:00-5:00 pm. To register: <https://rutgers.zoom.us/meeting/register/5PGML84nSZ667dxcV7rrow>

- **Application:**

- PIs/Co-PIs are limited to one application per cycle. The sole exception is clinicians who may have a specific expertise or patient population relevant to multiple proposals. A rationale for qualifying for this exception should be clearly described in both the LOI and the application.
- By February 27, 2026, applicants will receive a custom link to the REDCap application form or an email indicating they were not selected to advance to the application stage.
- Applicants are not asked to suggest reviewers. Applicants can, however, indicate potential reviewers who they feel should be excluded due to conflict of interest.
- Additional demographic data is requested to support our review of the program.

- **Funding Amounts and Duration**

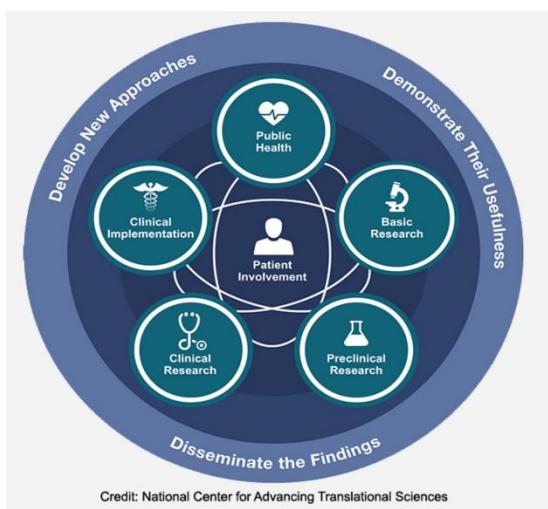
- Proposals from Rutgers may request between \$50,000 and \$100,000; NJIT proposals may request \$50,000. Collaborative proposals between institutions may request no more than \$100,000.
- Awarded budget may be reduced based on the number of highly meritorious proposals.
- Project period is one year; one no-cost extension of 12 months is permitted (assuming sufficient progress and reasonable justification).

Overview

Tri-Institutional Clinical and Translational Research Pilot Program

The New Jersey Alliance for Clinical and Translational Science, the academic and clinical alliance comprised of Rutgers University, Princeton University, New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), and RWJBarnabas Health is committed to advancing clinical and translational research to develop new therapies and preventive approaches in order to improve health and health care in New Jersey.

One of the major objectives of our alliance is to successfully translate biomedical discoveries to clinical applications by promoting creative and innovative science, by providing pilot support for hypothesis generation and testing, and building teams to address questions in translational research. Translational research is a 5 step continuum in which research findings are moved from the researcher's bench to the patient's bedside and community. In this continuum are three stages: 1) develop new approaches and the transfer of applying discoveries from basic research; 2) demonstrate their usefulness through clinical trials and studies, and 3) disseminate the findings to enhance best practices in the community and to impact policy to improve human health.



The Tri-Institutional Clinical and Translational Research (CTR) Pilot Program offers pilot grants to develop and advance innovative clinical and translational research, provide a path to sustainable, extramurally-funded independent research and encourage the development of innovations with the potential for commercialization. The projects are expected to develop the key preliminary data needed for sustained extramural funding. This program differs from the NJ ACTS Translational Science Pilot Program, which is funded by NCATS and which is limited to **clinical and translational science**.

Together, the three institutions have committed \$250,000 toward pilot projects this year. The program is funded through the generous support of each of the academic partners: Princeton University, New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), and Rutgers University. Princeton has already committed its funds for a 2026 project; however, Princeton Faculty can serve as collaborators with NJIT or Rutgers.

Distinguishing Clinical and Translational *Science* from Clinical and Translational *Research*

NIH defines **Translational Research** as “a unidirectional continuum in which research findings are moved from the researcher's bench to the patient's bedside and community and divides it into 6 translational phases. It can also be seen as 1) the process of applying discoveries generated during research in the laboratory, and in preclinical studies, to the development of trials and studies in humans, and 2) research aimed at enhancing the adoption of best practices in the community.

Translational Science, in contrast, generates innovations that overcome longstanding challenges along the translational research pipeline. These include scientific, operational, financial, and administrative innovations that transform the way that research is done, making it faster, more efficient, and more impactful. Think of the processes of science broadly and how to improve them, whether in the lab, the clinic, from a regulatory or administrative point of view. NCATS has generated 7 key principles listed below that inform translational science and apply to research anywhere along the translational continuum.

Tri-Institutional Clinical and Translational Research Pilot Program

The funding will be used to support pilot projects in the areas outlined below. All projects must demonstrate clinical relevance. Applications are encouraged, but do not require, Co-PIs from two or more alliance partners (Rutgers, NJIT, Princeton or RWJBarnabas Health). Princeton faculty and RWJBH clinicians may NOT serve as PI's but MAY serve as Co-PIs or Co-Is with a Rutgers or NJIT PI.

- **Clinical and Translational Research Projects** can be anywhere along the entire range of the translational research continuum (T0-T4), including laboratory-based, clinical, health services, epidemiology, community engagement and diversity research. Projects that focus on novel aspects of the heterogeneity of disease and response to therapy are encouraged.
- **PROPEL Projects** are high-risk, high-reward, designed to advance extraordinarily promising projects to explore new areas, augment studies, or pursue major new opportunities. These awards catalyze scientific discovery by supporting proposals to explore novel ideas, adding new technologies or research methods to a project (such as developing innovative laboratory correlates of clinical studies; e.g. single cell RNA sequencing, etc.), enable clinical data acquisition, purchase of small equipment or licenses to data sets.
- **Valued Partner Projects** support team research and build liaisons with key partners in industry, government, non-profits, other CTAs and/or insurance companies. Projects must leverage institutional support with partner in-kind services or funding. In-kind contribution can include specialized data analyses, access to equipment, imaging, genomic or epigenetic testing, proprietary database access, staffing, etc. Proposals must include a detailed description of the in-kind support, and a letter of support from the partner organization. Applications require Co-PIs from industry, government, health care, community, non-profits, insurance companies, or other CTSA Hubs.

The number of awards is flexible and will depend on the quality of the applications submitted in each category. A faculty review committee comprised of representatives from all three academic institutions will evaluate all applications and submit its recommendations to the Pilot Program Leadership committee, which will make the final funding decision.

Identifying Collaborators/Partners

If you have a project idea, but are looking for a collaborator, the information below may be of help. You may also email njacts@rbhs.rutgers.edu.

A. Academic Partners: Each of the partner institutions has a faculty search mechanism: Princeton:

<https://researchwith.princeton.edu/>

NJIT: <https://research.njit.edu/researchers>

Rutgers: <https://www.researchwithrutgers.com/>

RWJBH: <https://www.rwjbh.org/doctors/search-results/>

For additional help, contact:

- Princeton: Daniel Notterman, MD, MA dan1@princeton.edu
- NJIT: Shawn Chester, PhD, shawn.a.chester@njit.edu
- Rutgers: Reynold Panettieri, MD, rp856@rbhs.rutgers.edu
- RWJBH: Joseph Jaeger, DrPH, MPH, Joseph.Jaeger@rwjbh.org

B. Community Partners:

The NJ ACTS Community Engagement Core can connect you to experts in the NJ ACTS **Network of Networks** and resources you need through an introductory email or telephone call. Community Engagement staff can even help foster and facilitate the development of long-term partnerships. Request a referral to get connected by completing the form at: https://go.rutgers.edu/CEC_ServiceRequest.

C. Industry Partners:

Each of the academic partners have institutional officials who help develop and nurture relationships with industry. These include:

- Princeton: Dean R. Edelman, Corporate Engagement and Foundation Relations, Dean.edelman@princeton.edu.
- NJIT: Jennifer Kosakowski, Senior Executive Director, Corporate & Foundation Relations, jennifer.kosakowski@njit.edu
- Rutgers: Vincent Smeraglia, Executive Director, New Ventures, vincent.smeraglia@rutgers.edu or Marika Dunn, Executive Director, Research Relationships, mdunn@rutgers.edu.

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Application Process

Eligibility:

pplication must include at least one Principal Investigator (PI) who holds a faculty appointment (or equivalent) at one of the two partner institutions: Rutgers or NJIT.

- Princeton faculty and RWJBH investigators may serve as Co-PIs, but cannot submit applications for the 2026 RFA.
- Please note: Schools **within** an institution are not considered separate from the parent institution.
- Faculty members at all ranks are eligible. Junior faculty members are especially encouraged to apply.
- Co-principal investigators participating in the project need not be faculty, and may include postdoctoral fellows, residents, clinical fellows, and professional and terminal degree students.
- Past Pilot awardees are not eligible to apply unless or until their final project report has been submitted. If a current awardee has not yet submitted a final report, contact njacts@rbhs.rutgers.edu for questions regarding eligibility. Generally, PIs are not funded in 2 consecutive competitions.
- PIs/Co-PIs are limited to one application per cycle. The sole exception is clinicians who may have a specific expertise or patient populations and be relevant to more than one proposal. The rationale for this exemption must be clearly stated in the LOI and application.

Letter of Intent:

All applicants are required to submit a brief Letter of Intent (LOI) form via a REDCap link by the deadline. The Letter of Intent comprises: Co-PI names, titles, and institutional affiliations; project abstract (limited to ½ page); specific aims (limited to ½ page). NIH Common Form Biosketches should also be submitted for key personnel.

The PI or first Co-PI listed will serve as the contact PI. LOIs do not require institutional review before submission.

The goal of the LOI process is to ensure that applications meet the definition of clinical and translational research and ensure that the rationale and research directions are competitive.

Applicants will be notified by **February 27, 2026**, if there are concerns or if the project is not selected to advance to the application stage. Concerns may include, for example, an ineligible Co-PI, if a project does not appear to be clinical and translational research, or if the project is viewed to not be competitive.

To submit the LOI materials, applicants must use the LOI on-line form accessed via REDCap at: <https://redcap.rutgers.edu/surveys/?s=REFN3K3AX3DT9DY8>

Application Submission:

By February 27, 2026, the contact PI for projects selected to advance to the application stage will be emailed a customized on-line Application Form that can be accessed via REDCap. You can save the on-line Application Form and access it as often as you need before submitting it via REDCap. You must re-use the same code each time to access the saved Application Form. Should you encounter technical problems, contact: niacts@rbhs.rutgers.edu.

Institutional Review Requirements:

NJIT

For any NJIT participants for pilot project proposals they must go through the normal proposal preparation and submission protocols, including adhering to the NJIT proposal timeline and guidelines requirements by working with their assigned College director and using Streamlyne for internal documentation and approvals for budget and compliance checks.

Rutgers

This is an internal application and **does not** require review by Rutgers Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP).

The application may require approval of the Dean/Chair of the Co-PIs based on school/departmental policy or if the project involves in-kind support.

Application Requirements:

To be considered complete, a proposal **must** contain the following elements. Some are entered into the REDCap form. Other information is uploaded as a pdf; this includes sustainable funding, timeline, references, NIH Current and Pending (Other Support Common form), budget, NIH Common form biosketches, and letters of support.

Please label the pdf as [Co-PI Last Name _ Co-PI Last Name].

	Page Limits
Clinical and Translational Research Pilot Application Form	REDCap Form
Additional elements to be submitted as a single PDF in this order:	
Research Strategy	6 pages
• Project Abstract	Up to ½ page
• Specific Aims (note: abstract/specific aims should equal 1 page)	Up to ½ page
• Background/Preliminary Data	Up to 2 pages
• Research Plans	Up to 3 pages
How will Pilot Program funding lead to independent or sustainable funding?	Up to 1 page
Project Timeline by month	Up to 1 page
References	As needed
Other Support Information for Co-PIs (NIH Current and Pending Common Form)	As needed
Detailed Budget (NIH PHS 398): 1 for each participating institution and Budget Justification (1 for each participating institution), plus cumulative Budget	As needed for each PI/Institution
Co-PI's NIH Common Form biosketches	Up to 5 pages
Key personnel NIH Common Form biosketches	Up to 5 pages each
Letters of support from affiliates, partners, or others	Up to 1 page each

Candidates **MUST** use the application and budget templates.

Font and Margin Requirements: 0.5" margins and Arial 11 Font.

Budget Guidelines:

- Project period is one year. One no cost extension of 12 months is permitted, assuming sufficient progress to date and reasonable justification. All funds awarded must be used per the Scope of Work of the project.
- PI effort: While faculty PI/Co-PI salary is not allowed, effort levels for the PI or each Co-PI must be specified.
- Applicants may not request salary support for faculty PIs or Co-PIs. Salary support is allowable for staff, postdocs, and students, as well as Co-PIs who are postdoctoral fellows, residents, clinical fellows, and professional and terminal degree students.
- Name, title/role, percent effort, salary and benefits for each participant must be provided.
- Supplies and other costs should be itemized in detail by type and number in the budget and budget justification.
- Equipment requests and service contracts must be detailed in the budget and budget justification; quotes must be attached.
- For those projects which have partner institutions/organizations, complete a budget and budget justification for each institution and a cumulative budget page. Budgets should clearly show what project costs will be expended at each institution/organization.
- Facilities and Administration costs are not permissible.
- In-kind support is permitted and requires School Dean/Department Chair approval.
- Foreign subcontracts are not permitted under this mechanism.

Regulatory Approvals:

- Awardees must obtain all regulatory approvals (e.g. IRB, IACUC, or Radiation Safety) and meet all compliance requirements prior to receiving funds and maintain approvals during the entire length of the award.
- Projects that involve human subjects research or live vertebrate animals require additional **approvals** before an award can be made and funding released. These projects **MUST** have IRB or IACUC approval **prior** to funding. **Therefore, all applicants are urged to seek IRB or IACUC approval concurrent with the submission of the pilot application.**
- When you apply for IRB/IACUC approval, indicate that your research is supported by the [name of your institution] and the Tri-Institutional Clinical and Translational Research Pilot Program.
- You must keep your IRB/IACUC approval(s) current and active for the duration of the award period. Copies of the approval letters need to be sent to the Tri-Institutional Pilot Program Administrator at NJACTS@rbhs.rutgers.edu.
- Studies that meet the definition of a NIH Clinical Trial are **not** permitted under this Pilot Program. The NIH decision tree is available at: <https://grants.nih.gov/policy-and-compliance/policy-topics/clinical-trials/definition>.

NIH Clinical Trial Definition

A research study in which one or more human subjects are prospectively assigned to one or more interventions (which may include placebo or other control) to evaluate the effects of those interventions on health-related biomedical or behavioral outcomes

Proposal Review Process:

The review process includes: administrative review for completeness of the application and meeting eligibility requirements; solicitation of expert reviews; and final review by the Leadership Committee, comprised of the Co-chairs of the Tri-Institutional Pilot Program Committee, Arnold Rabson, MD, Rutgers University, Samuel Wang, PhD, Princeton University, Jonathan Grasman, PhD, NJIT and Joseph Jaeger, DrPH, MPH, RWJ BH and institutional leadership.

Post-Award Management

Budget and Financial Management:

- Funds must be spent according to the approved budget. Prior approval is required to amend the budget.
- If you wish to amend your budget, send a copy of the original budget and the proposed amended budget with a justification for the budget changes to the Tri-Institutional Pilot Program Administrator at NJACTS@rbhs.rutgers.edu.
- If your project runs over budget or you charge something that is not allowable, you/your department/school are responsible for the charges and will be asked to provide an alternate project number for those costs.

Reporting Requirements:

- A final scientific report is required for all completed awards. Program Administrators will send a report form to PIs/Co-PIs for all completed projects.
- PI/Co-PIs will be expected to complete an annual report that summarizes progress on the project, as well as all abstracts, presentations, publications, and proposals/funded awards that resulted from the pilot grant. This is required for reporting and evaluation functions.
- Failure to submit any required progress reports will result in the award being terminated.
- Co-PIs with outstanding final reports will not be allowed to compete for any other pilot program.

Additional Requirements:

- All awardees will be invited to present their results at a NJ ACTS Scientific Symposium or other similar event.
- PIs/Co-PIs will be asked to serve as reviewers of future applications.

Award Recognition:

Any publication or patent that results from this funding must: include the following language; receive a PMCID number: and be linked in My Bibliography:

“Research reported in this publication was supported by [name of institution(s)] through the Tri-institutional Clinical and Translational Research Pilot Program. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the institution.”

Other Notices:

- Abstracts and names of Co-PIs may be posted on the RITMS and/or NJ ACTS or institutional websites.
- Awards are not transferable or renewable.

Questions/Inquiries:

For Inquiries, please email: NJACTS@rbhs.rutgers.edu