

Call for Applications

NJHealth Early-Stage Scholar Data Access and Award Competition

What is the NJHealth Study? The *New Jersey Population Health Cohort Study* is a new Rutgers-led study designed to generate practical, actionable knowledge, and advance theory for improving overall population health and wellbeing in New Jersey and beyond. In spring 2026, NJHealth completed its first round of data collection with nearly 3,500 New Jersey residents ages 14 and older, including both a state-representative probability sample and a purposively recruited immigrant sample. The NJHealth questionnaire includes validated and novel questions including a comprehensive stress assessment, detailed self-reported behavioral and physical health metrics, and comprehensive demographic information. NJHealth is unique in the diversity of its sample, with about half being immigrants. NJHealth also collects DNA and blood biomarkers, administers cognitive exams, and links secondary source data (e.g., healthcare utilization) among subgroups of participants. Area-level measures can also be linked to NJHealth participants at a variety of geographic units. More information about NJHealth is available at: <https://njhealthstudy.rutgers.edu/en>.

What is the purpose of the NJHealth Early-Stage Scholar opportunity? As the first round of NJHealth data collection has come to an end, we are excited to offer early-stage Rutgers investigators *first access* to NJHealth survey and geocode data and facilitate analyses for publication in high-impact journals. As described below, we will competitively select up to three papers resulting from this opportunity for prizes of \$5,000 to \$10,000 provided by Rutgers Institute for Health.

Who is eligible to participate? Rutgers-based early-stage investigators including pre-tenured/early-stage faculty (instructor or assistant professor), equivalently ranked early-stage non-tenure-track faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and advanced doctoral students whose research interests and skills align with the NJHealth Study.

Investigators who have been awarded pilot funding from any source for analysis of NJHealth data may apply for data access but are ineligible to receive a monetary prize under this opportunity.

Applicants are limited to serving as principal investigator/first author on one application only. Applicants may participate in up to three proposals in total (e.g., one as PI/first author and two as co-I/co-author). Senior faculty mentors may be included in up to three applications as co-I's/co-authors.

How many projects will receive access to NJHealth data? NJHealth study leadership will approve data access for up to 10 projects. Approved projects will receive early access

to NJHealth Study data. The NJHealth Study team will provide only general support for using the data, thus applicants are encouraged to include senior collaborators/mentors on their teams who have experience conducting research and publishing work using NJHealth or similar data.

How will prize winners be selected? Upon completion of planned analyses, on a competitive basis, **up to three NJHealth Early-Stage Scholars will be awarded prizes including one \$10,000 first place award and two \$5,000 runner-up awards.** Financial awards will be based on the review committee's assessment of the project rigor, population health relevance, and contribution to the scientific case for future grant support for NJHealth. Awards will be deposited in discretionary research accounts for faculty and funds will be provided to doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows as allowable by Rutgers policy.

What research topics are of greatest interest for this initiative? NJHealth is well suited to study the impact of stressors and other influences on a broad array of health outcomes over the life-course. Research topics that contribute new knowledge of value for New Jersey and beyond for health improvement are of greatest interest. Proposed analyses that will help build the scientific case for future grant support for NJHealth are of special interest.

Research topics must be hypothesis-driven, and proposals may not use large language models that retain user-provided data for any purpose, including training the LLM (e.g., GPT, Llama). Scholars are forbidden to distribute data or other materials we supply (apart from study-level metadata and related publications described below) to other members, organizations, or individuals without the NJHealth leadership team's written permission.

What NJHealth data will be made available? NJHealth includes multiple data collection components including in-depth surveys, DNA, blood markers, cognitive exams, and linked secondary data. Small-areas identifiers (e.g., census blocks) enable linkage of secondary source area characteristics. *At this stage, only survey data and geocode data will be available.* Descriptions of the NJHealth study design and available data (e.g., data dictionaries, sample size tables) are available on the NJHealth webpage and in [this folder](#). Only existing data will be made available under this opportunity, and applicants should not propose adding questions or additional laboratory assays.

Will the Scholars collaborate with the NJHealth investigator team? Where interests align, members of the NJHealth leadership may be available to serve as collaborators. Arrangements for co-authorship will be discussed once proposed analysis projects are

accepted. *All manuscripts prepared by the Scholars will be subject to review and approval by the NJHealth leadership team.*

What will be required of selected NJHealth Scholars? Selected applicants will be provided with data and general technical support to pursue their approved projects. The Scholars will be expected to develop and submit at least one high-quality manuscript to an appropriate high-impact peer-reviewed journal. Selection of awards will be based on draft submission-ready manuscripts. Scholars will also be expected to participate in an **NJHealth Symposium** to present their preliminary findings.

Scholars will access data via the Rutgers Citrix platform and will be added to the study IRB (a new IRB application is not required). They will also be required to complete a Data Use Agreement and complete a LAN form. Approved PIs/lead authors will be responsible for ensuring that names and contact information all co-authors and project staff are registered with the NJHealth study team.

How should interested investigators apply for this opportunity? Applications are accepted at the following Qualtrics link:
https://rutgers.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ddrYXdTpU5M8irA. Applications are due by 5pm on July 6, 2026.

How will proposals for data access be selected? Submitted applications will be reviewed by NJHealth leadership. Applications will be selected based on 5 criteria: 1) alignment with the overall goals of the NJHealth Study, 2) analytic feasibility, 3) publishability, 4) likely contribution to establishing a strong scientific basis for future funding efforts to sustain the NJHealth study, and 5) research record and qualifications of the applicant (appropriate for career stage) and proposed co-authors/mentors. Where the proposed primary author lacks experience analyzing NJHealth or similar population data, a senior co-author with such experience must be included.

What is the timeline? A **pre-application webinar** will be held on June 9 at 1pm to 2pm. Register for the webinar [HERE](#). Applications may be submitted via Qualtrics (link provided above) any time before **5:00 p.m. on July 6, 2026**. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis, with consideration beginning on June 22, 2026 and ending on July 20, 2026.

Data access will be available on or about July 13, 2026. To be eligible for consideration for monetary Awards, draft submission-ready manuscripts will be due on May 31, 2027. All project PIs will be expected to present their findings at the NJHealth Symposium to be held in Spring 2027. Prize Awards will be announced by June 2027.

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