

## Request for Applications

CFAR Pilot Grant Program – REVISED 10/16/23



*This announcement has been revised to include a new joint pilot opportunity between the CFAR and the Penn Institute for RNA Innovation*

The Penn Center for AIDS Research (Penn CFAR) invites Pilot Grant applications. All areas of HIV/AIDS are acceptable including clinical, basic, behavioral and implementation science research. This year, we especially encourage projects focused on:

- HIV & Aging\*
- Implementation Science\*
- Single cell HIV reservoirs and immune analysis\*
- Research on the impact of HIV Communication and Policy (see p.3 for more information)\*
- Applying modified RNA technology to HIV research † *with joint funding from the Penn Institute for RNA Innovation:*

\* Pilot projects for investigators without prior R01-level funding *in AIDS*

† Open to all investigators, including those who have been previously funded (*in or out of the AIDS field*), as long as the proposal reflects a major new research direction involving applications of modified RNA technology.

### Pilot projects are intended to lead to independent HIV/AIDS funding.

All proposals must address high or medium priority areas in the NIH Priorities for HIV/AIDS:

<https://www.oar.nih.gov/hiv-policy-and-research/research-priorities>

### Pilot Award eligibility Include:

- New investigators without prior R01 level funding from NIH
- Established investigators who have not previously been funded by the NIH for work *in HIV/AIDS*.

### Two types of pilot award are available:

1. General Pilot Research Awards
2. Mentored Research Scholar Awards.

The award types are described below.

(\*Note that researchers who are not eligible for these awards may be eligible for CFAR microgrants which are awarded on a rolling basis throughout the year: <https://www.med.upenn.edu/cfar/microgrants.html>.)

**Amount:** Awards are for a maximum of **\$50,000** per grant\*. Applications for smaller awards are encouraged. Applicants should provide justification for the proposed budget. Grants are for one-year and are not renewable. IRB approvals must be in place before funds can be dispersed.

*\*For exceptional mRNA-based projects, due to provisions of the co-funding agreement, well-justified requests up to \$100k will be considered*

**Application Details:** The required cover page and instructions can be found on the [Developmental Pilot Awards](#) page of the CFAR website.

**Application Deadline:** January 30, 2024

**Funding release expected:** July 1, 2024

## AWARD TYPES AND ELIGIBILITY

### **General Pilot Awards: Faculty members**

Eligible applicants must have a faculty appointment of at least Assistant Professor or its equivalent at a Penn CFAR institution. It is also acceptable to have an appointment by the award date.

For junior faculty applicants, a one-page mentorship plan with a senior faculty member is strongly encouraged; for non-HIV/AIDS investigators, a partnership plan with an established HIV/AIDS investigator is strongly encouraged. Contact the Developmental Core leadership for assistance with identifying HIV-focused mentors and partnerships.

### **Mentored Research Scholar Awards: Young Investigators (Pre-Faculty)**

Young investigators at the Instructor, Research Associate, Wistar Staff Scientist, or Wistar Research Assistant Professor level are eligible for mentored awards. *Senior fellows will also be considered if they have institutional commitment for a pre-faculty position* at the time the award will start. Applicants should be poised to begin an independent research program. If you have any questions about eligibility, please contact Developmental Core Director (Liz Lowenthal, MD MSCE; [lowenthale@chop.edu](mailto:lowenthale@chop.edu)).

Mentored Research Scholar Award applications must include a letter of support from their scientific mentor. For fellows, an institutional letter of support is also required. In addition to these letters, a one-page mentorship plan is required.

**Community-based Organizations & Department of Health:** Investigators at partner institutions may be eligible in collaboration with Penn, CHOP, or Wistar faculty. If you have any questions about eligibility, please contact Developmental Core Director (Liz Lowenthal, MD MSCE; [lowenthale@chop.edu](mailto:lowenthale@chop.edu))

**Clinical Studies:** The NIH restricts CFAR Pilot Grants from funding NIH-defined “Clinical Trials.” If you are planning to propose a human intervention study (biomedical, behavioral, etc.), please contact Dr. Lowenthal so we can help ensure that your study, if approved, could be supported by available funds.

**Use of Fetal Tissue:** Research plans using fetal tissue are not permitted in pilot awards.

**International Applications:** Applications with international components must be approved by the International Core Director (Robert Gross, MD MSCE [grossr@penncmedicine.upenn.edu](mailto:grossr@penncmedicine.upenn.edu)) prior to preparation of the application.

Successful awardees will be required to submit periodic progress reports and to take part in mentoring activities and feedback seminars. Pilot recipients will be followed for at least 5 years after the funding period ends for NIH reporting.

We strongly encourage all applicants to reach out to the Developmental Core prior to submission for help identifying resources including potential investigative partners.

**Elizabeth Lowenthal, MD MSCE**  
**Director, CFAR Developmental Core**  
**(Clinical/Population Science)**  
[lowenthale@chop.edu](mailto:lowenthale@chop.edu)

## CFAR Pilot Grant RFA Addendum

**Pilot grant applicants are encouraged to seek support from CFAR Cores and Scientific Working Groups (SWGs). Cores and SWGs provide resources that often help to expand the impact of HIV research.**

For work in Implementation Science, consultation with the IS Core is strongly recommended. Please use this link to schedule: [https://upenn.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_cSIVKprCvxbCnQy](https://upenn.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cSIVKprCvxbCnQy)

To support work related to HIV Communication and Policy, the Penn CFAR is excited to announce the availability of a new HIV Communication and Policy Scientific Working Group (SWG). This SWG is particularly eager to support work in the following areas:

- Understanding the role of policy communication in improving/exacerbating racial ethnic disparities
- Updating the SAVA (Substance Abuse, Violence, HIV/AIDS) syndemic model to include climate change, policy, environment, and the COVID pandemic.
- Novel methods for improving HIV policy communication
- HIV-related information pathologies (misinformation and disinformation): Prevalence, temporal patterns, intended audiences, and topic mixture (where pathologic HIV messages are mixed with others, including political, policy, and healthcare in general)
- Impact of incorrect perceptions and inadequate communication about HIV policies
- Modeling the impact of HIV policy
- Conspiracy theories about infections that disproportionately burden vulnerable groups (e.g., M-Pox and HIV); models that allow us to anticipate future misconceptions

For support from the HIV Communication and Policy SWG, please contact one of the following SWG leaders:

Dolores Albarracin, PhD (Director): [dalba@upenn.edu](mailto:dalba@upenn.edu)

John Holmes, PhD, FACE, FACMI (Co-Director): [jholmes@penmedicine.upenn.edu](mailto:jholmes@penmedicine.upenn.edu)

Bitia Fayaz-Farkhad, PhD (Co-Director): [bita.fayazfarkhad@asc.upenn.edu](mailto:bita.fayazfarkhad@asc.upenn.edu)

**Please refer to the CFAR website for details of other Core and SWG services:**

<https://www.med.upenn.edu/cfar/cores/>

<https://www.med.upenn.edu/cfar/scientific-working-groups/>