

Objective

To expand the HIV/AIDS research portfolio at Duke by supporting investigators through two Duke CFAR award mechanisms.

1. CFAR Microgrants are one-year awards for up to \$20,000 direct costs that are intended to provide modest, but essential support for small HIV/AIDS-related research projects that do not warrant a full Pilot grant.
2. CFAR Pilot Grants are one-year awards for up to \$60,000 direct costs and are intended to support innovative and impactful early-stage research projects with strong potential to secure future independent HIV/AIDS funding.

**The CFAR particularly encourages applications from new investigators and from established investigators who are turning their research focus to HIV/AIDS.

CFAR awards may be used to fund most HIV/AIDS research-related activities, including salary/wages (e.g., temporary employee to assist in data collection or analysis), consultant costs, supplies, and study subject incentives. (NO Clinical Trials or International Projects are allowed by this mechanism)

All applications should address the [Research Priorities established by the Office of AIDS Research](#). These research priorities outline the NIH's broad HIV/AIDS research agenda, guide decision-making processes related to HIV funding, and inform the development of the [NIH Strategic Plan for HIV and HIV-Related Research](#):

- [Reduce the Incidence of HIV](#), including supporting the development of safe and effective vaccines, microbicides, and pre-exposure prophylaxis.
- [Develop Next-Generation HIV Therapies](#) with improved safety and ease of use.
- Conduct [Research Toward HIV Cure](#).
- [Address HIV-Associated Comorbidities, Coinfections, and Complications](#) through research designed to decrease and/or manage these conditions.
- Advance [Cross-Cutting Areas](#) of research in the basic sciences, behavioral and social sciences, epidemiology, implementation science, information dissemination, and research training.

Specific topics of current interest to the CFAR also include applications in the following research areas and these applications may be prioritized. Please request a consultation if your proposal falls into these categories.

- Artificial Intelligence
- HIV & Aging
- Rural Health
- Projects that make use of Duke CFAR specimen repositories and/or EHR data

RFP Schedule

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|--|-------------------|
| • Webinar/CFAR Developmental Core Office Hours | April 2, 2026 |
| • Due Date for LOI | April 15, 2026 |
| • Due Date for full application | May 18, 2026 |
| • Application Review | June 2026 |
| • Period of Award | 12 months or less |

Eligibility – must be employed by Duke

Duke Faculty

- No prior R01-level funding in the HIV/AIDS field
- Applicants with prior R01 funding *in fields other than HIV/AIDS* are encouraged to apply

Duke Post-doctoral and Clinical fellows

- Applicants with a current K award must have NIH pre-approval
- T32 awardees cannot use the CFAR award for training or stipends
- A separate letter of support from a faculty mentor is required; see *Application* information below
- Duke PI status is not required to submit, but is required at the time of award (request assistance when submitting your LOI)

Previous awardees are eligible if they meet the eligibility criteria above and **both** of the following:

- 1) The applicant has demonstrated productivity for the previous CFAR grant (publication accepted or grant application funded)
- 2) The topic of the proposed CFAR grant application is different from the prior CFAR grant award.

Any application considering a foreign component requires an advance consultation with the Developmental Core to determine eligibility.

Questions on eligibility or other topics should be directed to the [CFAR Developmental Core](#) which will provide a consultation with the appropriate Duke CFAR Core(s) staff.

Letter of Intent

A one-page LOI is **required** for all CFAR Pilot Grant submissions (no exceptions) but should only include the general scope of the project and is expected to evolve prior to full submission.

❖ Assistance with preparing the LOI is available. To schedule, contact the [Developmental Core](#)

The LOI should and will include the following information:

1. Name, department, position, and email of the Principal Investigator(s)
2. Names of other key personnel
3. Descriptive title of proposed research
4. Abstract
5. This is an appropriate time to request pre-submission services. See CFAR pre-award Core Services below.

Letter of Intent must be submitted [THROUGH THIS FORM](#) on or before 5PM Eastern Time on Wednesday, April 15, 2026.

Center for AIDS Research Project Guidelines

Additional National Institutes of Health approval may also be needed before initiation of a project and before CFAR funds are disbursed. The CFAR Administrator will provide guidance to awardees during this process.

Projects with a Clinical Component: CFARs are unable to fund clinical trials; however, projects involving clinical research (e.g., observational studies or sub-studies using existing data from an ongoing clinical trial) may be funded by the CFARs. The [NIH definition of a clinical trial](#) is very broad. **Some investigators conducting human subjects research may not be aware that NIH considers their study to be a clinical trial.** For guidance, [click here](#) for CFAR-funded clinical research.

- Start dates for funded awards involving clinical research entailing greater than minimal risk to the subjects will be dependent on IRB approvals and the date that the NIH issues clearance for the project. The Duke CFAR Finance Administrator will provide guidance to Awardees on the NIH clearance process.
- Research effort is allowed on the grant (no admin or clerical). *Faculty effort must comply with the primary department policy.*
- Subawards for external collaborations are allowable and **will incur F&A**. Consultation with the departmental grant manager pre-application is recommended to comply with [Duke Sub-award policies](#).
- Travel is restricted and must be in support of project completion or presenting results from the CFAR Developmental Project Award.

Community Engagement

Mission Towards the Community: The Duke CFAR is committed to fostering collaborative, community-centered research by facilitating connections and communication between CFAR researchers and community members. We aim to ensure that research at Duke is informed by community needs and perspectives, while also enhancing the reach and impact of our studies by supporting the effective dissemination and application of findings within community settings.

A 'Public Health Statement' must be submitted as part of the Checklist. The statement should:

- Communicate the public health relevance of the project to the public in 2-3 sentences, using plain language understandable by a general audience.
- Describe how, in the short or long term, the research would contribute to the well-being of Persons Living with HIV and/or prevent future infections

Pre-Submission Consultation and Review

Applicants are highly encouraged to utilize CFAR Cores' pre-submission services at no cost, and this support can be requested with the [LOI submission form](#). In addition, Letters of Intent will be shared with all CFAR Cores, so all appropriate pre-submission services will be offered. The Developmental Core will be offering 'Office Hours' for applicants in March/April to discuss CFAR support. Grant preparation support includes, but is not limited to:

- Statistical/Bioinformatics Review
- Specific Aims Review
- Experimental Design

- Quality Assurance
- Study Design, Implementation, and Analysis
- Database and Biorepository Access
- Scientific Consultations
- Research Question Review
- Specimen ID/Procurement
- Letters of Support
- Literature Reviews
- Community Engagement Support

Application and Submission of Pilot Grant

Applications must contain the following components *in order* and be submitted as one complete PDF document. (No SPS Record required)

1. The completed CFAR Pilot Grant Cover Sheet *with signatures*, 2026CFAR.CoverSheet
2. The CFAR Pilot Grant Checklist. 2026CFAR.Checklist
3. Document addressing the “Authentication of Key Biological and/or Chemical Resources” as discussed in [NIH notice NOT-OD-17-068](#)
4. Research Proposal - 3-page maximum. Suggested format: Specific Aims 1/2 page, Research Strategy 2 1/2 pages

Note: Previously unfunded Bridge or Microgrant applicants can resubmit with an extra page for revisions.

The Research Strategy should include sections to address Significance, Innovation, and Approach. In the Significance section, applicants should address “...the strengths and weaknesses in the rigor of the prior research (both published and unpublished) that serves as the key support for the proposed project.” In the Approach section, applicants should “describe plans to address weaknesses in the rigor of the prior research that serves as the key support for the proposed project.”

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-18-228.html>

5. A current NIH Biosketch of PIs ([NIH format page](#))
6. For a multi-PI application, include a Project Leadership Plan, [per NIH guidelines](#).
7. Budget and Budget Justification on [NIH 398](#) form page.
8. Post-doctoral and Clinical Fellows must also include a faculty letter of support.

Applications should be prepared as a single PDF file, using the proper naming convention (e.g. first initial.lastname.cfar.may2026), and uploaded directly to: Pilot_M.dx05inj4skmvlqm3@u.box.com

Simply email your completed Application to the above address. You will receive a confirmation email stating that your upload was successful. If you do not receive confirmation within a few minutes of submission, your application was not submitted, and you should try again.

Questions concerning the application or submission should be directed to the [CFAR Developmental Core](#).

Review Process

Applications will be reviewed by the CFAR Study Section, comprised of Leaders from the CFAR Cores. If necessary, outside expertise may be used to evaluate the scientific merit of a proposal. All applications are subject to NIH approval, and all applicants will receive a written review of their proposals, regardless of funding.

The Committee will review the application based on the following criteria:

- [NIH Next Generation Researchers Policy](#)
- [NIH HIV/AIDS Priority Areas](#) and [Office of AIDS Research HIV/AIDS Research Priorities](#)
- Overall scientific merit, level of innovation, and relevance of the proposal to AIDS research
- CFAR QS Core statistical/bioinformatics review
- Utilization of [Duke CFAR Core Services](#)
- Potential for generating independent funding
- Potential for drawing investigators from other fields into AIDS research
- Potential for developing new interactions between or among CFAR investigators.

Duke Center for AIDS Research Mission

The *mission* of the CFAR program is to support multidisciplinary research aimed at reducing the burden of HIV both in the United States and around the globe. The continuing spread of HIV in the US and globally underscores the need for ongoing, nationally coordinated collaborative conduct of basic, clinical, epidemiologic, behavioral, and translational research to improve the prevention, detection, treatment and cure/remission of HIV infection and the associated complications / comorbidities.

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