

Clinical Translational Science Pilot Project Award Request for Applications

Required Pilot Pre-Proposal Submission Deadline: October 9, 2026

Invited Full Application Submission Deadline: January 8, 2027

Introduction

The Southwest Center for Advancing Clinical and Translational Innovation (SW CACTI) is welcoming applications to fund pilot projects focused on Clinical Translational Science (CTS) that are designed to develop, demonstrate and/or disseminate innovations to improve health outcomes, reduce variations in health outcomes across the Southwest region.

The purpose of this RFA is to support Pilot projects that utilize the SW CACTI infrastructure to **produce preliminary data for competitive NIH grant proposals** in CTS. Translational Science goals must be highly methodological and demonstrate feasible and generalizable solutions to CTS problems. All awards are dependent upon the availability of SW CACTI funds. UNM HSC/UA faculty members interested in applying for pilot funding are asked to submit Pilot Pre-Proposals by **October 9, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.** Pilot pre-proposals are limited to two (2) pages and should include the following:

- The pre-proposal should include a title, description of objectives/aims, the most innovative and novel aspects of your proposed translational science project, description of how the project can be completed in 12 months and must directly address how the project meets the definition of Translational Science.

Additional documents (not included in the 2-page limit):

- Must use [SciENcy](#) to generate a mandatory new "Common Form" Biosketch for the PI. Additionally, you will need a letter of support from your Department Chair/Dean noting your qualifications, availability of protected time, and the potential impact of your work.

Investigators with highly qualified pre-proposals will be invited to submit a full research proposal on **October 28, 2026**. Instructions on how to prepare a full research proposal (elements listed below) will be provided by email with the invitation to participate. Full proposals will be due by **1:00 p.m.** on **January 8, 2027**.

Pilot applications for this announcement will exemplify the SW CACTI's mission of developing CTS to promote and support the goal of the National Institutes of Health. To support this initiative, we will award up to **three** grants with a maximum of **\$25,000 in total direct costs** to be spent between July 1, 2027, through June 30, 2028. There is no option to carry over these funds past the end date. Allowable costs include the potential for 5% FTE allocation only for **clinical faculty** salary with written departmental approval for release time. Applicants are expected to "right size" their budgets and scope of projects.

As part of our SW CACTI award, the NIH initiative seeks to accelerate the movement of clinical science into healthcare practice. Specifically, this effort focuses on advancing CTS by promoting the development, demonstration, and dissemination of innovative practices that improve the translation of research into medical practice. Additionally in this setting, it highlights southwestern populations, fostering partnerships and collaborations to address variation in health outcomes, and ensuring that the benefits of translational science are available to all communities.

Framework for All SW CACTI Pilot Awards

With this pilot funding cycle, the SW CACTI will sharpen its focus towards funding Translational Science projects. CTS projects generally address the science or operational principles of the translational process that transform validated research observations from biomedical, clinical, and behavioral studies into interventions. CTS projects may include those designed to: 1) accelerate change in clinical practice, 2) improve the health of communities, and 3) improve the overall health of our communities. **As such, pilot projects with the sole emphasis on Translational Research will not be funded.** **Please note: No clinical trials are allowed.**

Basic Experimental Studies with Humans (BESH) Will No Longer Be Considered Clinical Trials by the NIH, per notice [NOT-OD-26-067](#)

Evaluation Criteria

Successful projects will exemplify the SW CACTI mission of developing CTS. Applications should be well-written, precise, and succinct. Applications will be subject to both scientific and programmatic review and will receive scientific review by the SW CACTI Review Committee. The following [3-Factor Criteria](#) (provided by NIH) and additional review considerations will be used in evaluating these proposals:

- **Factor 1: Importance of the Research**
 - Significance, Innovation (Scored 1-9)
- **Factor 2: Rigor and Feasibility**
 - Approach (Scored 1-9)
- **Factor 3: Expertise and Resources**
 - Investigators, Environment
 - Evaluated as appropriate or gaps identified; gaps require explanation
 - Considered in overall impact; no individual score

Additional review considerations include:

1. Aim(s) with Translational Science objectives (Translational Research does not meet the criteria of this award)
 - <https://hsc.unm.edu/ctsc/training/translational-science-vs-research.html>
2. Probability that this project will lead to extramural funding
3. Integration of context-relevant participant groups of the Southwest
4. Feasibility of Milestone Achievement (Milestones submitted by the investigator)
5. Budgetary Considerations and successful completion of required consultations
6. Regulatory Approvals
7. Letters of Support and Commitment

Scoring: To emphasize the importance of extramural grant submission and attainment deriving from these Pilot awards, Factors 1, 2, and Additional Review Considerations 1, 2, and 3 will be scored on a 1-9 scale (where 1 is best). Composite scores will then be weighted accordingly:

- Factor 1: 30%
- Factor 2: 10%
- Factor 3: 20%
- Aim(s) with strong Translational Science objectives: 20%
- Plan for and probability of extramural funding: 20%

Please Note: If a Pilot is deemed successful, investigators may be invited to participate in a short highlight feature for dissemination and implementation of their research, showcasing its real-world relevance and potential for broader application.

Translational Science

NCATS defines Translational Science as “*the field of investigation focused on understanding the scientific and operational principles underlying each step of the translational process.*” *The goal of Translational Science is to develop generalizable principles to accelerate translational research thereby turning “science into health.”* **Please use this link for a comparison chart: [TS vs TR](#)**

Projects are intended to: (1) explore innovative new leads or new directions; (2) stimulate team approaches that incorporate less traditional researchers; and (3) provide initial support to establish proof of concept. Projects must be feasible within the proposed timeframe, have high methodological and scientific quality, and answer important scientific questions.

NCATS Definitions:

- **Translation:** The process of turning observations in the laboratory, clinic and community into interventions that improve the health of individuals and communities – from diagnostics, preventions, and treatments to medical procedures and behavioral changes.
- **Translational Research:** The endeavor to traverse a particular step of the translational process for a particular target or disease.
- **Translational Science:** The field of investigation focused on advancing the scientific and operational principles underlying each step of the translational process.

Learn more about Translational Science: please go to the following [SW CACTI resource page](#).

Application Deadline, Notice of Awards and Funding Cycle

Application Release Date: August 3, 2026

Pilot Pre-proposal due to SW CACTI: October 9, 2026, by 12:00 p.m. (NM Time)

SW CACTI invitation to submit full application: October 28, 2026

Full Application Deadline: January 8, 2027, by 12:00 p.m.

IRB Submission Deadline: January 8, 2027

IRB Approval Deadline for NIH Review: April 2, 2027

Notice of Intent to Fund/Decline: April 16, 2027

Notice of Award: June 11, 2027

Funding Cycle: July 1, 2027, through June 30, 2028

Eligibility and Project Requirements

- [No clinical trials are allowed.](#)
- Investigators must submit a Pilot Pre-Proposal Letter of Intent (LOI). Only **investigators with an approved LOI** are allowed to submit full proposals for Pilot funding.
 - Submit the Pilot Pre-Proposal via REDCap here: [Pilot Pre-Proposal](#)
- An investigative team can only submit a single collaborative OR single individual pre-proposal.
- Principal Investigators for these Pilot awards *must* have a primary appointment as UNM HSC/UA faculty (junior or senior investigators). Any other investigators who are not eligible to apply for extramural funding through UNM HSC/UA are not eligible to receive this award.
- If invited for full application, all investigators **MUST** have a consultation with the SW CACTI Navigator to discuss services, budget, and feasibility within the one-year timeline.
 - Note: the consultation with the SW CACTI Navigator may lead to individual consultations within the SW CACTI network to ensure budget estimates are correct.
 - All consultations **must be completed prior to full application submission.**

If selected for funding, all investigators:

- **And** their team members will need to complete the SW CACTI **Good Clinical Practice**

- (GCP) Training Course prior to receiving the award.
 - CITI training can meet this requirement with Pilot Leadership approval.
- **And** their team members will need to complete the **TeamMAPPS** Training Course prior to receiving the award.
- Are expected to meet with SW CACTI Pilot Leadership at least once every quarter (often monthly), for an initial orientation, and a final close-out meeting.
- Will be expected to submit monthly progress reports on submitted milestones to ensure continued funding.
- With human subjects will be expected to submit a monthly recruitment/enrollment report.
- Will be expected to submit a Final Progress Report at the end of the funded project.
- Who successfully complete the Pilot cycle will be expected to answer an annual survey regarding publications and grant applications (pending or funded) relating to the Pilot project for up to 5 years post-funding period.
- Should investigators receive NIH funding during the Pilot period of performance, the investigator must ensure there is no budgetary overlap.
- Funds may not be used to provide interim support for active projects or to extend previously conducted work.

Please note: All funds not spent by the end date of the Pilot Project Award (June 30, 2028) will be returned to NIH. **No extensions will be granted. No Carryover is allowed per NCATS.** Applicants are eligible for no more than a total of two previously awarded SW CACTI Pilot awards, after which they need to demonstrate that they have received a score for an extramural grant submission before they will be considered for another SW CACTI Pilot award.

Presentations and Publications

- Awardees are expected to publish their findings in scholarly peer-reviewed journals and present their research at professional meetings.
- All publications, grants, and presentations resulting from research funded by the SW CACTI or using SW CACTI resources **MUST** link and cite the SW CACTI in the publication and in MyNCBI as a contributing source of support and indicate the SW CACTI's citation as follows: "This project was supported by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences for the National Institutes of Health through Grant Number (UM1TR005466), The Southwest Center for Advancing Clinical and Translational Innovations."
- Investigators are responsible for linking and citing any journal articles resulting from research funded by this award to the grant in MyNCBI (UM1TR005466), Nancy Pandhi/Sally Radovick, for submitting the publication for a PMCID number within the NIH 30-day requirement, and to comply with NIH's Open Access policy (different than an automatically assigned PMID) <https://publicaccess.nih.gov/>

Guidance for Studies Enrolling Human Participants

If your project requires recruitment of human participants, please include the following information as part of the "Approach" section of the application. The review committee will be specifically looking for these details.

- What is the available population for recruitment?
- Is your target enrollment number feasible in the one-year time limit of the Pilot award?
- Is that number based on a power analysis?
- Do you have sufficient protected time for this study separate from other duties?
- Do you have prior experience from other studies recruiting this population?
- Date of first participant enrollment?
- What percentage of your population is likely to meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria?
- [SW CACTI Services Available](#)

Note: The Pilot Leadership will review every Pilot with human participants **at one-month intervals** to assess enrollment progress. Concerns will be directly communicated to PI's by phone and/or email. Corrective actions may be suggested or taken including assistance and training. Warnings may be issued that Pilot funding may be pulled and the study discontinued, unless the PI provides a good rationale that lagging enrollment will catch up with projections.

Budget Guidelines

Utilization of SW CACTI Core services is strongly encouraged. It is **required** that you schedule a meeting with the SW CACTI Translational Science Navigator at UNM, Donna Sedillo (swcacti_unm_navigator@salud.unm.edu), or UA, Maria Gordon (swcacti_ua_navigator@arizona.edu), after being invited for a full application. This consultation step is **required** for planning purposes and to ensure effective use of SW CACTI Core service utilization for your research proposal. Please note: additional consultation with individual SW CACTI Cores is **required** to accurately estimate budget amounts for services. This is the responsibility of the applying researcher to complete before full application submission.

Responsible budgeting is critical for the 12-month project, and it is common to overestimate what you can accomplish in that limited time frame. Your proposed budget will be reviewed and potentially revised based on Peer Review and Core management feedback. If successfully funded, reallocation of the budget is strongly discouraged. However, consideration will be made for the reallocation of funds within SW CACTI Cores if justified. Prior approval is necessary from Pilot Leadership. SW CACTI resources included in the budget will be covered using a non-refundable voucher program. These funds may not be reallocated to other expenses after the grant has been awarded.

Note: ***Rationale for not using SW CACTI Core services needs to be specifically justified.***

Details of services offered by each Core can be found at each of the following links:

- **Health Informatics:** Offers clinical data warehouse mining, "honest broker" services for access to data from multiple sources, and web-based electronic data capture and survey tools via REDCap.
- **Biostatistics:** The SW CACTI Biostatistics, Epidemiology and Research Design Support (BERD) Core is designed to provide UNM HSC/UA investigators with expert early consultation and service on all aspects of study design, biostatistics, and basic data management for effective clinical and translational studies. Please note that this service does not include data collection, data entry, or similar services that are the responsibility of your team.
- **Clinical and Community Research Unit:** The Clinical Unit offers facilities, resources, and staff to conduct clinical and translational research. Conducts adult and pediatric research in outpatient and inpatient settings. Services include: protocol implementation support, study recruitment, study visit coordination, nurse coordination, pharmacokinetic sampling, and medication administration. The Community Unit supports research with New Mexico communities. Services include design consultations, community outreach, qualitative data collection (interviews and focus groups), qualitative analysis and dissemination
- **Molecular & Cellular Research Core:** Offers state-of-the-art equipment, technical assistance, consultation on protocol and assay development.

Costs not covered under these awards:

- Faculty salaries - unless clinical FTE buyout (written pre-approval needed)
- Postdoctoral salaries
- Non-UNM HSC/UA staff salaries
- Graduate student support (stipends, tuition, etc.)
- Administrative or office supply costs (office supplies, paper, ink, telephone, etc.)

- Equipment > \$5,000 (items < \$5,000 are at the discretion of the committee and can be removed from the budget)
- International travel
- Computers, laptops, tablets
- Monetary incentives to clinics or providers (e.g., recruitment bonus)
- Other items typically supported by indirect costs (publication costs, printing/duplication costs)

IRB Guidelines

SW CACTI is required to obtain prior approval of all Pilot projects from NIH prior to funding. Because of this, all Pilot submissions will be required to submit one of the below IRB letters with their full application. **Applications without IRB submission by January 8, 2027**, will be administratively disqualified. This deadline provides HRPO/IRB with sufficient time to review all submissions prior to submission to NIH. **Projects will need IRB approval by April 2, 2027.**

- IRB Letter with Determination of Non-Human Subjects Research
- IRB Letter with Approval of Exemption #1-9 Human Subjects Research
- IRB Letter with Approval of No More Than Minimal Risk Human Subjects Research
- IRB Letter with Approval of Greater than Minimal Risk Human Subjects Research

The following applies to each project:

- The lead institution will be responsible for IRB submission.
- Each Pilot submission must have its own standalone IRB protocol.
- Amendments or a sub-study/ancillary study to an existing IRB-approved parent protocol are **not allowed**.
- Pilot application title must match IRB protocol title and be reflected on the approval letter.
- Principal Investigator of the Pilot application must match the Principal Investigator on the IRB protocol and be reflected on the approval letter.
- IRB modifications to the approved Pilot protocol are **not permitted** after NIH approval. Every effort should be made to execute the protocol as approved by the IRB, Pilot Review Committee, and NIH.

How to Apply

Investigators interested in applying to this RFA **must first submit a Pilot Pre-Proposal** through a REDCap survey due by **October 9, 2026, by 1:00 p.m.** The SAGE Committee will review Pilot Pre-Proposals for project feasibility and responsiveness to Translational Science. Following the review, SW CACTI will invite investigators to submit a full proposal for funding. All full applications are due **by 1:00 p.m. on the due date (January 8, 2027)**. Applications that are late or do not adhere to the above instructions may be administratively denied and not reviewed for funding. Please email Daron Vigil-Scott, Dvigilscott@salud.unm.edu, or Deanna Clary, dclary@arizona.edu, with any questions about this RFA or the application process.