



April 17, 2026

TO: NIH Intramural Investigators

FROM: Program Director, Office of Clinical Research Education and Collaboration Outreach (OCRECO), Office of Intramural Research

SUBJECT: 2026 Bench-to-Bedside Call for Proposals

Timeline:

Call for Proposals: April 17, 2026
Letter of Intent (LOI) due date: May 15, 2026
Notification of invitation to submit full proposal: June 5, 2026
Application due date: July 10, 2026
Applications reviewed: September 2026
Investigators notified of decisions: December 2026
Earliest start date: January/February 2027

We are pleased to announce a call for proposals for the NIH Bench-to-Bedside and Back Program (BtB). This is the 27th cycle of BtB funding for two-year awards designed to provide seed funding for new translational research projects. The program promotes meaningful collaborations between basic and clinical investigators, which can involve either intramural investigators from different laboratories, or intramural and extramural investigators.

Project Requirements:

This program supports innovative small/pilot research projects designed to translate basic scientific findings into therapeutic interventions for patients, and to increase understanding of important clinical observations of disease processes. BtB will not accept more than one proposal per applicant.

- Project must include collaborators: an intramural investigator and at least one intramural or extramural co-investigator (collaborator). **A single applicant will not be accepted.** The primary intramural investigator on the project is responsible for submitting the application; he/she is considered the lead PI. Please do not include collaborators who do not have a role in the project. Budget justification must relate to each collaborator's role whether or not funds are requested (see [Budget Justification section](#)).
- Project team must include at least one basic scientist and one clinical researcher.
- Project may exclusively include intramural investigators, but collaborations between intramural and extramural investigators are equally encouraged. **Exclusively intramural co-investigators on a project cannot be from the same branch of an NIH Institute or Center (IC); it is preferred to have co-investigators from different ICs.**

- Project may have single or multiple principal investigators (PIs). Extramural co-investigator(s) may lead a project, but the intramural co-investigator must submit the application.
- Extramural investigators may consult the following resources to identify intramural partners:
 - [NIH’s database of all current intramural research](#)
 - [Intramural Principal Investigator Directory](#)
 - [“Search the Studies” website](#) to identify investigators on relevant protocols
 - [BtB Program Office](#) for assistance in identifying intramural partners

Eligibility:

All NIH principal investigators (tenure, tenure track, senior clinicians, assistant clinical investigators, and senior scientists) are eligible to apply. Staff clinicians, staff scientists and postdoctoral fellows are also eligible, but must have approval of their lab/branch/section chief or supervisory principal investigator, as indicated on the signature page. All candidates must have at least three years of employment remaining with the NIH Intramural Research Program as award funding is non-transferable, should the recipient leave.

Eligible investigators may apply for multiple intramural award programs, such as Bench-to-Bedside and Back, Director’s Challenge Innovation Award, for the same proposal. However, applicants must notify programs of their application status when submitting the full proposal to any of the award programs. Successful applicants will not be able to accept multiple awards and funds from multiple programs for substantially similar scope of proposed work and aims. An investigator can serve as PI or co-PI on only one submitted application, unless that person is providing technical support only (e.g. director of a core facility).

Funding:

Each award will be a maximum of \$150,000/year in direct costs for two years. At least half of the funds received must be directed to the intramural investigator(s); the extramural co-investigator(s) cannot receive all or most of the project’s direct cost. Year 1 project funds will be distributed in FY 2027 and Year 2 project funds will be distributed in FY 2028.

Any application with high extramural funding requests (greater than 50% of the project’s direct cost) will not be funded.

- ***Intramural Funds:*** Intramural funds will be provided to intramural investigators via intra-agency agreements. At least one intramural investigator on the project must have responsibility for scientific and budgetary oversight (e.g., the investigator must have a budget/assigned CAN and resources). Applicants who do not have their own CAN, must work with their budget and administrative officers to designate a **CAN specifically for BtB funds, if awarded.**

- **Extramural Funds:** Extramural co-investigators are eligible to receive funding. Extramural funding application requirements remain pending policy directives from the Office of Policy for Extramural Research (OPERA). We are hoping to be able to distribute these funds as a supplement. The extramural co-investigator must have an active NIH grant with sufficient project period, to receive any supplemental funding support. Additionally, the extramural collaborator's role on the BtB proposal must be within scope of the parent grant, and (s)he must be listed as key personnel on the NIH grant (contracts or other mechanisms are unacceptable). This is the responsibility of the extramural collaborator, not the BtB program team. Updates will be taking effect in late spring 2026 and awardees will be notified at the time of the award. Any concerns or inquiries should be directed to the BtB administrator.

Budget Justification:

The budget sheet is an Excel file; fill in each of the fields. You will need the 2-year total for both intramural and extramural (if applicable and including indirect costs) for the budget box. You must provide a narrative Budget Justification for personnel, collaboration, and other requests to explain the requested budget including each collaborator's requested funds. The justification must include the following:

- Description of Responsibilities: Clearly state the tasks they will perform and why their expertise is essential to achieving the project aims.
- Alignment with Aims: Ensure every collaborator's role is directly linked to a specific research aim or objective.
- If no funding is requested, a Letter of Support is required to confirm that funds are not expected and to explain how the costs associated with their role will be covered.
- Funding Gaps: An additional justification must be included to explicitly prove why the work cannot be covered by your existing funds. **This portion will be essential for peer reviewers and program officials.**
- **Any projects without budget justification will not be considered for funding.**

Research Areas of Interest:

Awards will be available on topics relevant to the research interests and priorities of the funding NIH, ICs. If additional award categories are added prior to the LOI due date, these will be highlighted on the [BtB Program website](#).

All applications are automatically considered for “general category” funding through the Office of Clinical Research Education and Collaboration Outreach (OCRECO) BtB funds, in addition to any funding consideration by the donor offices listed below:

1. **AIDS (Support from Office of AIDS Research (OAR)):** Exemplary HIV/AIDS projects aligned with the overarching HIV/AIDS research priorities will be considered for funding (<https://www.oar.nih.gov/hivpolicy-and-research/research-priorities>).

2. **Behavioral and Social Sciences (Support from Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR)):** OBSSR will consider funding projects that have potential to broaden the impact of BSSR and improve health for all. OBSSR is most interested in co-funding intramural and extramural research that is led by early-stage investigators, expands the BSSR workforce, incorporates community-engaged approaches, and/or addresses health disparities and populations who are understudied, underserved, and underrepresented. Projects must incorporate basic or applied behavioral or social sciences theory, research, principles, or strategies. OBSSR has strong interests in health behavior change and maintenance; interpersonal relationships; whole person health and higher-order contextual factors that influence health and health behaviors; the role of health communication in health outcomes at individual and group levels; the nexus of BSSR, health, and AI; and organized sports as a pathway to lifelong health and well-being. More information can be found in the [OBSSR Strategic Plan](#) and on the [OBSSR co-funding portal](#).
3. **Dietary Supplements (Support from the Office of Dietary Supplements):** Awards in this funding category are designed to promote scientific study of the benefits of dietary supplements in maintaining health and preventing chronic disease and other health-related conditions but not in disease treatment. In the U.S., dietary supplement ingredients are usually defined as including vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and herbs or other botanicals, that are intended to be taken by mouth and are consumed in addition to the regular diet.
4. **Health Disparities & Minority Health (Support from the National Institute on Minority Health & Health Disparities):** NIMHD will fund projects that support the overall NIH effort to better understand and address the health problems that everyday Americans are experiencing, and to support rigorous and reproducible science that has strong potential to reduce disparities in health observed among specific populations. Research projects must focus on 1) advancing scientific understanding of previously unexplored or emerging disease risks, morbidity, and/or mortality factors *within* specific populations experiencing health disparities or that influence population differences; or 2) the development and testing of interventions to reduce preventable health disparities, such as premature mortality, poor outcomes, and reduced quality of life, while promoting daily functioning.
5. **Office of Research on Women's Health (Support from the Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH)):** Applications seeking funding from ORWH should focus on efforts to improve the health of women through biomedical and behavioral research. Broadly defined, women's health includes female-specific conditions (e.g., endometriosis, gynecologic cancers, menopause), conditions that disproportionately affect women (e.g., mental health conditions, migraine, sense organ disorders), and conditions that present and progress differently in women (e.g., cardiovascular disease, HIV, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), respiratory infections, digestive and kidney diseases). The influence of sex as a biological variable on health and disease is of particular interest.

The [Office of Autoimmune Disease Research](#) in the Office of Research on Women's Health (OADR- ORWH) is seeking applications to support bench-to-bedside research in

autoimmune disease. The portfolio of the Office of Autoimmune Disease research encompasses more than 140 diseases and conditions and encompasses basic and translational science and is seeking applications that align with the strategic goals and priorities outlined in the [NIH-Wide Strategic Plan for Autoimmune Disease Research](#).

Letter of Intent (LOI) (Due May 15, 2026):

The LOI process allows investigators to describe the project idea for pre-submission approval. The lead PI will receive a decision letting him/her know if the Scientific Director(s) consider(s) the concept appropriate for consideration as a full proposal. LOIs will be submitted online by the lead PI through [ProposalCentral](#). See [Tips for LOI submission](#) and review the requirements below:

- Project title and all applicable BtB categories
- If a resubmission, indicate when the proposal was previously submitted.
- Contact information and IC(s)/institution(s) of all intramural and extramural investigators.
- Estimated budget, showing annual total costs for each investigator receiving funds.
- Summary of Project to include overall summary, specific project's aims, approach, and a brief explanation of the contributions of each project collaborator.

The lead PI can enable colleagues to access the LOI online during development; however, the lead PI must submit the completed LOI, which will be reviewed by his/her Scientific Director(s) and Clinical Director(s). The lead PI will be notified about the approval of the LOI.

Full Application (Due July 10, 2025):

Once endorsement from the Scientific Director has been received, PIs can access [ProposalCentral](#) to develop and submit the full proposal. For first time applicants, it is strongly recommended to visit the following link for tips on a well-written, well-formatted application. The following information must be entered accurately and completely:

1. **Investigator(s) name(s), IC(s) or institution(s), contact information, and roles.**
2. **Abstract:** Amendable section automatically pre-populated by summary provided in LOI.
3. **Research Proposal:** No more than 9 pages of 11-point Arial text with 0.5-inch margins, including tables and figures, excluding references. The following format is suggested:
 - Significance and background
 - Specific aims
 - Research strategy: hypotheses, preliminary results, experimental plan, and milestones. If proposal involves a clinical trial, please include a separate protocol synopsis as a separate download; limit 2 pages. This is not part of the 9-page limit.
 - Budget justification
 - Resubmission status: if proposal is a resubmission, reviewer feedback from a prior cycle may be included, with an explanation of changes to the proposed project.
4. **Budget Form:** Also available in [ProposalCentral](#). If applicable, extramural partners must include existing extramural grant numbers to receive supplements and indirect costs ([more information](#)). Please see [Extramural Funds](#) above.

5. [NIH Biosketch](#): For all principal and associate investigators. Also available in [ProposalCentral](#).
6. [Checklist](#): Also available in [ProposalCentral](#). The lead PI must submit the full proposal via [ProposalCentral](#); see [full proposal instructions](#). Email [ProposalCentral Customer Support](#) or call 800-875-2562 for online assistance; Monday through Friday, 8:30am - 5:00pm ET.

Review of Applications:

A review team with subject matter expertise will review and rank the proposals. The team includes both intramural and extramural basic and clinical scientists representing multiple institutes and centers. **Applications with an extramural component will be subject to further review prior to funding to ensure scientific alignment with the parent grant.** Considerations for review will include:

- High quality of science (to be evaluated by the [NIH Enhanced Review Criteria for Research Grants and Cooperative Agreements](#)) with the potential to result in understanding an important disease process or lead to new therapeutic intervention*.
- Strong translational science, with the bedside and bench components clearly related; one should lead logically to the next, and both should be strongly developed*.
- The proposed translational work has the promise to evolve into an active clinical protocol with patient involvement in the future*. Applicants should emphasize how results from the proposed work will lead to clinical projects.
- Although projects can be exclusively among intramural investigators preferably from more than one IC, collaborations between intramural and extramural investigators **will not** receive preference or priority review.
- The work should be a truly new initiative, not a funding request for work in progress. Applications with work that would broaden approaches in ways not easily supported by his/her current funds would be encouraged, **however, applicants must elaborate on the need for BtB funding and explain why the current funds are not able to cover the proposed work/funding request.**

****Translational component:** Applicants must explain how the proposed project will involve clinical work with direct patient contact OR how the proposal results will lead to next steps involving clinical work (ultimately with direct patient contact). Involvement at the Clinical Center is a preference but not a requirement.*

Requirements for Funded Projects:

Principal Investigators for awarded projects will be required to submit annual progress reports. Please note that if you were previously the intramural lead on a BtB project and failed to provide a progress report we will not be able to release any additional funds for continuation of the award (i.e., year 2 funds) and will not be able to make any future awards until the reporting requirements are met. **Additionally, failure by a BtB awardee to submit a final progress report will prevent us considering any new application for review regardless of whether the applicant will be serving as PI or co-PI on an application.**

Contact:

Please feel free to contact Hana Smith (BenchtoBedside@mail.nih.gov) with program questions. Additional information may be found on the [Bench-to-Bedside program website](#):

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