



2026 Pilot Grant Program Request for Proposals

Introduction:

The Center on Aging sponsors an annual pilot grant program to promote the development of aging research at the University of Utah. The goal of this program is to encourage new investigator career development, attract established investigators to aging research, and stimulate interdisciplinary research collaborations – ultimately leading to new externally funded research. Additional information describing the program, including its previous recipients, is available at <http://aging.utah.edu/grants/pilot/index.php>.

Applications will be limited to investigators who have submitted a letter of intent and have been notified that they are eligible to submit.

For this year's CoA program, funding priority will be given to applications that incorporate an Age-Friendly Care focus applying one or more of the geriatric 5Ms (What Matters, Medication, Mentation, Mobility and Multicomplexity). See <https://aging.utah.edu/agefriendly/index.php> for information. Applications focused on other topics may be submitted. Additional review criteria are: aging focus and significance, new interdisciplinary collaboration, new investigators (junior faculty), or those new to aging research, scientific merit and innovative nature of the research, and likelihood the proposed study will lead to peer-reviewed extramural funding.

Applicants:

Submissions from a wide range of disciplines from basic biology, clinical sciences, and social and behavioral aspects of aging are encouraged. There is priority given to applications from individuals who are new to aging research and from two or more investigators who are establishing a new interdisciplinary research collaboration in an aging-related interest area. Prior Center on Aging awardees may re-apply and should seek to investigate a novel aging-related interest area. We encourage all applicants and prior awardees to speak to Center on Aging Steering Committee members (see list below) prior to applying.

Principal investigators must have a Career or Tenure line University of Utah faculty appointment. While Center on Aging membership is not required, applicants are strongly encouraged to apply for membership concurrently with their application. Membership information is available at

<http://aging.utah.edu/membership/join.php>

Budget:

The following items may **not** be supported with pilot project funds:

- Faculty salary, with the exception of partial summer salary for faculty with a 9-month appointment if there is explicit justification. Faculty effort devoted to the pilot grant needs to be provided in the form of protected or release time from clinical or teaching responsibilities. A letter from the principal investigator's department head or dean must be submitted with the application documenting the time or percent effort that the faculty member will have available to dedicate to the pilot grant project.
- Major equipment (cost greater than \$5,000)
- Travel not directly needed for the research project (e.g. to attend conferences)

Review Process:

Proposals will be reviewed by members from the Center on Aging Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will make final funding decisions. All applications will be evaluated based on the review criteria (below) and subjected to standards of research quality appropriate for the track in which the proposal is submitted.

Review Criteria:

- Alignment with an Age-Friendly Care focus applying one or more of the geriatric 5Ms (What Matters, Medication, Mentation, Mobility and Multicomplexity).
- Aging focus and significance
- New interdisciplinary collaboration, new investigators (junior faculty), or those new to aging research
- Scientific merit and innovative nature of the research
- Likelihood the proposed study will lead to peer-reviewed extramural funding

Application Process:

Proposals should be electronically submitted as single PDF file with **all** components listed below in the following order. [Note: incomplete submissions may disqualify an application]

1. Cover letter that addresses the following aspects of the proposal:

- How this research specifically relates to aging as well as age-friendly care and what is its potential significance or relevance to the field. In addition, if the PI is new to aging research, also indicate

intentions for future aging-related studies.

- Suggestions of up to three objective potential reviewers at the University of Utah.
- Relationship that PI or co-investigators have, if any, with the Center on Aging.
- If this is a resubmission, comment on the major changes made in the revised application.

2. A letter of support from the department head/dean confirming that the principal investigator will receive protected time required to devote to the proposed project.
3. A brief proposal (3-page limit, plus references on additional pages as needed). Please address Significance, Innovation (include proposed role/contributions for each team member and investigator synergy), and Approach.
4. A plan for extramural funding (1 page limit). This plan must address specific plans including a targeted funding mechanism and/or RFP.
5. NIH Biographical sketch for each co-investigator with SciENcv formatting
6. Proposed project budget (one year duration and not to exceed up to \$25,000), following the guidelines cited above.

Expectations of Award Recipients:

Recipients of this award are expected to formally apply for membership in the Center on Aging, actively participate in its programs, and provide the Center on Aging with:

- A final progress report at the conclusion of the funding period. Final payment of the award will be made upon receipt of this report.
- A financial accounting of how project funds were spent. Financial support from the Center on Aging must be acknowledged in all publications.
- Information pertaining to any publications and grant support resulting from the pilot grant project.
- A research presentation and/or poster at the 2026 Center on Aging Research Retreat.

Timeline:

The submission deadline for completed proposals is on or before:

Monday April 20, 2026, 11:59 PM Mountain Standard Time

- We anticipate making funding decisions by mid-June 2027.
- Projects may begin as early as July 1, 2026; the starting date may be negotiated.

Submission and Questions:

The proposal should be submitted **electronically to Heather Podolan**, Center on Aging Academic Program Manager at heather.podolan@hsc.utah.edu (office phone: 801-213-4156) by the deadline **Monday April 20, 2026, 11:59 PM** Mountain Standard Time

Questions?

Applicants for the CoA program are encouraged to contact CoA Steering Committee members listed in the table below to discuss ideas for possible submissions or to provide assistance with your submission.

| Name | College/ | E-mail address |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Kara Dassel, PhD | College of Nursing | kara.dassel@nurs.utah.edu |
| Tony Donato, PhD | School of Medicine | tony.donato@hsc.utah.edu |
| Micah Drummond, PhD | Physical Therapy | micah.drummond@hsc.utah.edu |
| Lee Ellington, PhD | College of Nursing | lee.ellington@nurs.utah.edu |
| Timothy Farrell, MD | Division of Geriatrics | timothy.farrell@hsc.utah.edu |
| Katarina Friberg-Felsted, PhD | College of Nursing | katarina.felsted@nurs.utah.edu |
| Alayne Markland, DO | Division of Geriatrics | alayne.markland@hsc.utah.edu |
| Rand Rupper, MD | Division of Geriatrics | randall.rupper@hsc.utah.edu |
| Caroline Stephens, PhD | College of Nursing | caroline.stephens@nurs.utah.edu |
| Enrique Varela, DDS | School of Dentistry | ae.varela@hsc.utah.edu |
| Dan Witt, PharmD | College of Pharmacy | dan.witt@pharm.utah.edu |

Other questions may be directed to:

- Heather Podolan, Academic Program Manager, heather.podolan@hsc.utah.edu
- Dr. Alayne Markland, Executive Director, alayne.markland@hsc.utah.edu