Request for Proposals

CFAR Scholar Grants for Faculty Development in HIV Research ***Issued: December 1, 2026***

I. Funding Opportunity Description

The Johns Hopkins Center for AIDS Research (CFAR) provides pilot grants to faculty in the Schools of Public Health, Medicine, and Nursing to enable and support HIV/AIDS research projects. Junior faculty in other JHU schools are eligible to apply if the proposal meets all other criteria. The primary purpose of these awards is to strengthen the individual's ability to secure independent NIH research funding with foci on R- and K-series awards. This document describes the details of these pilot awards. Please read it in its entirety.

II. RFP Schedule

Due Date for Letter of Intent (LOI)	**January 4, 2027 8:00am**
Applicant Feedback on LOI	**On or before January 11, 2027**
Due Date for Application	**February 8, 2027 8:00am**
Applicant Notification of Outcome	**March 22, 2027**
Award Start Date	**April 1, 2027**

III. Award Information

Funds Available

The budget for faculty grants is a maximum of $50,000 in direct costs. One grant may be awarded for $75,000. **If requesting $75,000, please include clear justification for what could be accomplished with the additional $25,000. (Your budget should be up to $50,000 with a subsequent statement of what could be accomplished with additional funding)**

The CFAR will calculate and add indirect costs at the time of funding. We plan to award up to four (4) 1-year grants, with a start date of April 1, 2027.

Projects already funded through one of the other school initiatives, e.g., Faculty Innovation Fund or Global Health Faculty Grant will not be awarded a CFAR Scholar Grant.

IV. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

- Associate Professors in the Schools of Public Health, Medicine, or Nursing
- Assistant Professors in the Schools of Public Health, Medicine, or Nursing;
- Assistant, Associate, and Senior Scientists in the School of Public Health;
- Assistant and Associate Research Professors in the School of Public Health;
- Research Associates, but those at BSPH must include a letter of permission from the department chair at the time of application.
- Instructor in the School of Medicine or Nursing
- Junior faculty at other JHU schools are eligible to apply.
- Postdoctoral fellows may only apply with a letter from their department chair confirming a pending faculty appointment. The award will not be granted until the faculty appointment is active. If a postdoc is on a T32, CFAR funds cannot pay for training and stipends that are already paid for by the T32.
- Those in other faculty titles/status are not eligible. Those in "visiting" or "adjunct" status or those pending appointment are not eligible.

- All faculty positions must be full time.
- Faculty must also meet the NIH definition of an Early-Staged Investigator/New to HIV;
- Funds are not transferable to outside institutions.
- Previous recipients of a CFAR Scholar award can apply for additional funding or funding for a new project if evidence of progress is demonstrated. Career trajectory should be evident. CFAR-funded awards are limited to 2 over a 5-year period (Scholar awards, supplements, etc.). Eligibility and assessment of need will occur during review of the Letter of Intent, so please explain the rationale for an additional award.
- **K awardees:** If you are a current recipient of an NIH K award, you are required to submit with your CFAR application NIH sponsor approval indicating that you are eligible to receive CFAR funding (an e-mail from your project officer will suffice).

  K awardees can receive compensation on CFAR pilot studies for effort not directly committed to the K award, as long as the specific aims differ from those on the K award. Please see the NIH guide notice for more details. K award policies vary by mechanism and may have specific levels of effort and salary restrictions.

B. Project Information

- Applications for collaborative projects, particularly those involving faculty in different disciplines and/or schools at Hopkins are strongly encouraged.

  If the proposal for the project is part of a larger grant, there should be an explanation of the larger idea, how this proposal fits into the parent grant and how the pilot funding will be used to help in the development of the larger grant proposal (e.g., to obtain preliminary data).
  Although the Center's process borrows heavily from NIH processes, future funding targets need not be limited to the NIH alone.
  The CFAR may not fund studies involving new drugs, treatments, or devices, or off-label use of a licensed drug (this includes healthy volunteer studies where drugs are administered).
  The CFAR may not fund clinical trials, such as studies that include prospective assignment to one or more intervention to evaluate the effects of those interventions on health-related biomedical or behavioral outcomes of the participants. Use this NIH TOOL to make a determination of a Clinical Trial.
  Studies involving human subjects may be subject to additional NIH review prior to initiating the study, which may cause delays.
- **While foreign research is allowed, foreign spending is not. Sub-contracts to foreign sites are not allowed. Any projects involving a foreign site must be approved by the NIH prior to funding being released. We cannot anticipate how long this process will take or what will be required. (Secondary analysis of de-identified data does not require additional review if no foreign investigator will be involved, including co-authoring a publication)**
- Funds must be used to support research projects in HIV/AIDS including, but not limited to, the areas of:
  1. Social, Prevention and Community-Based Research
  2. Clinical Research
  3. Immunology, Virology and Molecular Biology
  4. Epidemiology/Biostatistics
  5. Implementation Science

Please refer to the NIH HIV/AIDS Research Priorities and Guidelines for Determining AIDS Funding, as research in these areas will guide which projects the CFAR selects to fund.

C. Designation of Research Mentor

Both formal and informal mentoring processes are available to CFAR Scholar Grantees. Investigators interested in developing an application may choose a mentor or request one from the CFAR. Should this mentoring relationship be mutually welcome and successful, the mentor is expected to assist the candidate through the application process, and if awarded, mentorship should continue through the completion of the award. **If you would like the CFAR to assist in finding a mentor for your proposal, please reach out to CFAR@jhmi.edu as soon as possible.** A Mentor/Communication Plan is a requirement of the full proposal submission.

V. Indication of intent

Interested applicants are required to complete an online application and attach a letter of intent to apply. Applications and letters are evaluated for eligibility and those deemed likely to lead to future funding will be invited to submit a complete proposal. The letter of intent should be limited to one page and should contain:

A. Name of applicant
B. Title of proposal
C. Specific Aims
D. Abstract, including how your study will lead to future funding.
E. Discipline of study:
    1. Social, Prevention and Community-based research
    2. Clinical research
    3. Immunology, Virology and Molecular Biology
    4. Epidemiology/Biostatistics
    5. Implementation Science
F. Name of mentor. If you are naming a mentor, we will assume that you have asked and they have agreed. **If you are requesting that we assist with a mentor, please email us in advance of submitting your LOI.**

Please complete the application form on and upload your Letter of Intent into our online system, no later than **January 4, 2027, 08:00 AM ET.** We will notify you by **January 11, 2027** if your project has been selected to proceed to a full application.

Submit here

VI. Proposal and Submission Information

A. Content and Form of Proposal Submission

Proposals should be concise, with the narrative of the application being no longer than seven (7) pages, single-spaced. The required components of the application are provided on the CFAR website and are as follows:

Component	Format and Notes
Project Narrative • Introduction • Specific Aims	1 Page Use Word Doc
• Research Plan: ➢ Significance *[Must include how this work will lead to further grants]* ➢ Innovation ➢ Approach *[Note: this section should include the names and affiliations of all collaborators including those at other institutions and must clearly indicate the location of the proposed work]* ➢ Timeline for implementation of the project	5 Pages Use Word Doc

• Mentor/Communication Plan ➢ 1 – 2 paragraphs describing this project's (versus career) mentoring and communication plan. We will assume that this plan has been agreed upon by both the applicant and the mentor.	1 Page Use Word Doc
Proposed budget *[Note #1: if your proposal includes a sub-site/subcontract, a budget page should be included for each site]* *[Note #2: Please consider budgeting for equipment maintenance, if appropriate]* • Budget justification is not required unless you need to clarify something that is not evident in the narrative and on the budget form • If requesting the supplemental $25,000, describe in 1 – 2 paragraphs how the additional funds will augment your proposal.	Use NIH Budget Form or simple spreadsheet
Figures and references, including letters of collaboration, especially for non-Hopkins mentors/Co-Is *[This section should be used judiciously for the sake of reviewers.]*	
Biosketches with Support of Principal Investigator only. *You do not need to submit a biosketch for mentors or co-investigators.*	Use NIH template

Please follow NIH guidelines on font and margins.
The project narrative, budget, figures and references, and biosketch should be merged into one PDF file for submission.

B. Submission Dates and Times

Application Due Date: **February 8, 2027 8:00am**

Award Announcement Date: **No later than March 22, 2027**

C. Sending a Proposal

Please email the PDF of your full proposal to CFAR@jhmi.edu

A note regarding the ORA/JHURA/RASP: This funding mechanism uses internal funding and does not require review or approval by ORA/JHURA/RASP. Similarly, investigators should submit their application directly to the CFAR and not through ORA/JHURA/RASP.

D. Application Processing

Applications must be received no later than the date and time listed in the announcement. Applications received after that date will not be reviewed. Upon receipt, applications will be evaluated for completeness and responsiveness. Incomplete and non-responsive applications will not be reviewed.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of human subjects is not required prior to review of an application. However, initiation of IRB review, if necessary or applicable, will be required prior to the release of funds or the commencement of research.

E. Funding Use and Restrictions

Funds can be requested to support the research endeavors of the faculty member, i.e. technical support, lab supplies, assays, computer time, and limited research equipment. Salary to support the applicant may be requested. Additionally, although postdoctoral researchers may be involved in these pilot grants, it is not the purpose of these grants to provide substantial support for postdoctoral researchers. A letter of permission from the division chair is required for all postdocs or fellows. Application budgets will be reviewed, and the Center may elect, on a case-by case basis, to deny funding if the budget appears excessive for the proposed activities.

Indirect costs will be added to the funding at the time of the award by the CFAR financial administrator. You do not need to concern yourself with this at the time of application. Depending on

the nature of your proposal, the CFAR may choose to issue a partial award until project milestones have been met.

G. Resubmission

If you have applied in the past and wish to resubmit, please add a cover letter to your proposal indicating:

1. That the proposal is a resubmission
2. How the project has been modified
3. Your response to the reviewers' comments from your prior submission

VII. Application Review Information

A. Triage

Letters of intent will be triaged and reviewed for compliance with faculty status eligibility criteria, to determine if they propose eligible research projects and meet NIH HIV research priorities. Proposals not fitting eligibility criteria will not be advanced to full applications.

B. Primary Review Criteria

The primary criterion for evaluation of the application is scientific merit and the concomitant likelihood of future funding.

Please be innovative! This is an opportunity to explore new ideas and concepts. Innovation is a key review criterion.

C. Additional Review Considerations

Although scientific merit is the primary criterion, additional consideration is afforded to applications involving a collaboration of more than one Hopkins school or discipline. Specifically, this means that the proposal includes a co-investigator whose primary appointment is in a Johns Hopkins school or a discipline other than that of the applicant.

D. Review and Selection Process

Applications are evaluated by a study section (Social, Prevention and Community-based research; Clinical research; Immunology, Virology and Molecular Biology; Epidemiology/Biostatistics; or Implementation Science), similar to an NIH review. Critique information is compiled and distributed, but applicants should not expect the same extensive commentary as contained in an NIH-type review.

Review criteria:

- Does the introduction provide a clear background regarding the problem to be studied, what has been done so far, and what questions need to be answered?
- Are the aims clear, concise, and measurable? Are they feasible given the small award?
- Are the conceptual or clinical framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well-integrated, well-reasoned, and appropriate to the aims of the project?
- Does this study address an important HIV/AIDS problem?
- Does this investigator provide a sound and convincing plan for use of the data/outcomes from this study to seek additional research funding?
- If the aims of the application are achieved, what is the likelihood that the data will contribute to a high-quality application for subsequent funding?

E. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Announcement of awardees is anticipated by **March 22, 2027** with award notices to follow shortly thereafter.

VIII. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The Administrative Core of the Center for AIDS Research will issue award notices. The CFAR Research Service Analyst will contact you with the award IO, once the CFAR project administrator clears your study. Indirect costs are added to the award at this time.

B. Conditions of Award:

a. In the event that pending other support is funded which overlaps with or reduces your effort on this CFAR project, or you are awarded a K award, you must notify the CFAR Project Administrator. Your funding status will be reviewed, and, if it is determined that you are unable to meet the specific aims of your CFAR proposal or that you are ineligible for CFAR funding, you may be required to relinquish the CFAR award.

b. **Prior to funding**, if applicable, you must forward a copy of all Institutional Biohazard, Animal Care and IRB approvals to the CFAR Project Administrator. If NIH clearance for a clinical or international study is required, funds may be withheld until these approvals are also in place.

c. Faculty awarded funding will be required to provide annual reports of the progress of their study and a final report detailing the outcome of their project. Additionally, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the program following the completion of your study, faculty will also be required to file brief, non-narrative annual reports indicating:

   i. The number of subsequent grant applications
   ii. The funding outcome of these applications
   iii. Any publications or presentations that may have been based on the pilot grant

You are obliged to respond to CFAR requests for information for five years after your award project is completed.

d. Awards are for **one year**. A no-cost extension for an additional year may be requested. Any project that extends beyond 2 years may have the remaining funds revoked.

e. Publicity: Information about grants awarded under this program, subsequent awards, and publications will be posted on the Center for AIDS Research website. Applicants must agree to credit the Center for AIDS Research in any publication or applications that result from awards. Examples of the language required can be found on our website

IX. Core Consults

Applicants may, and are encouraged to, request consultation from any of the CFAR service cores or Scientific Working Groups to assist in the formation of proposals. These consultations are free. You may request consultations by completing an online form here

Clinical Core Core Director: Richard Moore Co-Directors: Leah Rubin, Jason Farley, Dave Thomas Contact: Laura Clark (lclark53@jhmi.edu)	• Provides assistance in the design and conduct of clinical research. • Offers support for Institutional Review Board submissions. • Links investigators to a range of experts in HIV clinical & translational research. • Provides venues for investigators to present research in progress with a team of experts. • Provides access to resources that support grant writing and project implementation. • Works with investigators to enhance recruitment in clinical trials.
Prevention Core Core Director: David Celentano Co-Directors: Carl Latkin, Erica Sibinga, Nancy Reynolds Contact: Erin Cooney (ecooney2@jhmi.edu)	• Supports junior and senior faculty in the processes of grant development and implementation. Manages the online CFAR Grant Development and Implementation Toolkit (toolkit.hopkinscfar.org). • Develops and plans targeted events to collaborate and engage in existing research programs. • Provides mentoring for junior faculty engaged in prevention science.

	• Supports training in existing & emerging methodologies and technologies.
Clinical Laboratory and Biomarkers Core Core Director: Mark Marzinke Co-Directors: Deborah Persaud, Homay Farzadegan, Joseph Margolick, Mark Marzinke, Yuka Manabe Contact: Mark Marzinke (mmarzin1@jhmi.edu)	• Facilitates access to research labs, clinical labs, and core labs across the Johns Hopkins Enterprise. • Provides discounted research pricing for the performance of laboratory assays. • Offers consultation, training, and technical support in laboratory practices. • Provides guidance in meeting regulatory requirements. • Offers biospecimen storage and potential access to samples banked by other researchers.
Biostatistics and Epidemiology Methodology Core Directors: Bryan Lau Co-Directors: David Dowdy, Mary Kate Grabowski, Eric Seaberg, Gayane Yenokyan, Noya Galai Program Manager: Eryka Wentz Contact: jhucfarbem@jhu.edu	• Provides leadership and collaborative support for educational and research initiatives. • Links investigators with BEM Core members who can contribute their expertise in HIV/AIDS • Epidemiology and methodology, including the construction of protocols and study design, constructing inclusion/exclusion criteria, constructing dynamic and stochastic models of HIV/AIDS, working with statistical programmers and data management staff, developing, and executing statistical analysis plans, writing research reports and manuscripts and contributing to scientific presentations. • Provides support for data management through the JHBC Data Informatics Services Core.
Implementation Science Core Co-directors: Sheree Schwartz, Stefan Baral, Laura Beres, Chris Hoffman, Kate Rucinski, Kathleen Page Contact: Lipin Lukose (llukose2@jh.edu)	• Supports implementation science training and skill acquisition • Facilitates the practical application of implementation science for JHU HIV researchers • Has a broad impact on conceptualization and innovation in implementation science training, methodologies, and scholarship at JHU and in the implementation science research and practice community more broadly.
Baltimore HIV Collaboratory Co-Directors: Andrea Wirtz, Joyce Jones, Anna Powell Contact: Eileen Martin (emarti77@jhmi.edu)	• Promotes community linkages between JHU researchers and HIV focused NGOs, the Baltimore City Health Department, and people affected with HIV/AIDS • Identifies, recruits and trains under-represented minority undergraduates, graduate students, and fellows in community-based HIV/AIDS research in Baltimore. • Facilitates an annual conference focused on HIV/AIDS in Baltimore City.
Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) SWG Co-Directors: Allison Agwu, Julie Denison and Kate Rucinski Contact: Eileen Martin (emarti77@jhmi.edu)	• Addresses critical scientific gaps for AYA who are living with, affected by, or at risk for HIV in domestic & international settings; • Builds interdisciplinary bridges across Johns Hopkins institutions to foster collaborative scholarship & mentorship to junior investigators at JHU; • Promotes translation of research-informed policies & practices impacting AYA populations by fostering partnerships with policy makers and practitioners.
Vaccine Response and Immunotherapy SWG Co-directors: Anna Durbin, Andrea Cox Contact: Eileen Martin (emarti77@jhmi.edu)	• Promotes multidisciplinary collaboration, education, and synergy for basic, clinical, and public health investigators in the vaccine sciences. • Mentors ESIs in developing research proposals and grant applications to study vaccine responses, vaccine utilization and uptake, and immunotherapeutics in PLWH. • Supports investigators wishing to conduct HIV or other vaccine clinical trials as potential candidates are developed.

X. Additional Information and Questions

Please direct requests for additional information and questions to:

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