# GUIDELINES FOR INTERNAL UAB CFAR FAST TRACK TO FACULTY - PILOT FUNDING FOR SENIOR POSTDOCS FUNDING APPLICATIONS

The mission of CFAR is to catalyze new and nurture ongoing HIV research across numerous scientific domains – and to do this in partnership with the communities we serve. We support HIV research across all domains–from basic and clinical work to implementation and community science. Ensuring services to these pillars of scientific research unifies our purpose and aligns our goals with those of the National AIDS Strategy and the HIV scientific community.

The UAB CFAR has allocated funds to support research conducted by promising senior-level postdoctoral fellows that can be used to jump-start their academic research goals and increase their competitiveness for faculty positions. We aim to cultivate a highly integrative HIV research environment and successful research teams, essential components of continued research success in the current funding landscape. Per NIH guidance, clinical trials are <u>not</u> supported through this mechanism.

Proposals describing any type of science are welcome, especially those from investigators in the basic, clinical, and implementation sciences.

- We anticipate funding 1-2 applications up to $50,000 for one year of work.
- Matching funds from the candidate's Department/Division are strongly encouraged
- Up to $25k per year may be allocated for PI effort

## Eligibility Criteria:

1. Must have an MD, PhD, or equivalent terminal degree

2. Any type of HIV research is applicable; basic science methodologies preferred

3. Have not had an NIH career development award or equivalent grant; T32 grantees are encouraged to apply.

4. Have an appointment as a postdoctoral fellow in a UAB Department or Division and be in an advanced stage of the postdoctoral fellowship, with a vision for attaining a faculty position on the horizon. This will differ for each candidate depending on their discipline. Examples of people who are in an advanced stage of a postdoc may include a holder of a PhD in microbiology that is beginning their 3rd or 4th year in a lab or a holder of a PhD in a public health discipline that is beginning their 2nd year and planning to write an NIH K grant.

Principal investigators are encouraged to engage investigators at different levels, community stakeholders, public health representatives and those with lived experience and varying backgrounds in support of their study. A strong mentorship plan is also encouraged.

Multiple Principal Investigators (MPIs) are not permitted.

**Please note:** *Clinical trials cannot be funded through this mechanism. Link to this tool to determine if your study meets the definition of a clinical trial. Study leaders and team members representing different academic levels, backgrounds and life experiences are encouraged.

## Timeline:

- RFA Release: December 1, 2025
- Deadline to submit full application:  February 2, 2026
- Notification of Award: April 1, 2025

Full Proposals should be submitted to Emily Knighton-Akins eknighton@uabmc.edu and Mary Thielen mthielen@uabmc.edu in one Adobe PDF file. Please copy all mentors on the submission email. The full proposal will be submitted using the **PHS 398 forms** (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398_rev06-2009/phs398.html), following a modified NIH investigator initiated grant application (R01) format. Complete instructions are found below.

Complete the forms as outlined below with the specified modifications.

- Applications of all types should consider engaging with community stakeholders, health departments, or those with lived experiences in the design and/or conduct of the study. Include a description of the anticipated impact of the results on affected communities and a plan for disseminating the findings to these communities.

    o Contact Harriett Reed Pickens (hrpickens@uabmc.edu), CFAR Community Engagement Coordinator) for consultations regarding engaging with the community in research.

- Applicants are encouraged to consult with CFAR Cores for assistance and support, including budgets, research services, methods and materials, equipment, and training, as appropriate.

    o Contact the CFAR Financial Administrator, Megan Pickering (meganpickering@uabmc.edu), for assistance with budgets.

    o Consultation with the CFAR Clinical Core Biostatistics and Analysis team for help with data collection and analyses plans is advised. Contact John Bassler (jbassle1@uab.edu) CFAR Biostatistics Team Manager or Sarah Dougherty Sheff (sarahdougherty@uabmc.edu) Clinical Core Coordinator for consultations. Submit the Clinical Core Common Form here to request services.

    o Contact Alyssa Carodine (acarodine@uabmc.edu) Implementation and Community Sciences Core Coordinator for consultation regarding implementation science. Submit the ICS Core service request form here to request services.

    o Contact Emily Knighton-Akins (eknighton@uabmc.edu) Developmental Core Coordinator for assistance with core services.

- Studies proposed in the 1917 Clinic should include a letter of support. Visit the website to learn more and submit a request here.  Similarly, studies to be conducted within CNICS, should provide a letter of support from the cohort. Request a letter here.

- Do not submit Targeted/Planned Enrollment Tables or Appendices.

- Note the PI's plans and timeline for seeking a faculty position.


The Full Proposal should include  the following, in this order, in a single Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) file.

1. Detailed budget and justification

    a. Prepare PHS 398 detailed budget form page 4 for the first year of funding and form page 5 for the second year (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398_rev06-2009/phs398.html).

    b. Include a full justification of all costs. No form page necessary.

    c. Maximum direct costs is $50,000 per year for one year in length; please note, these are funded through institutional (i.e. GL) funds, thus F&A costs should not be included.

    d. Faculty salary support is limited to a maximum of $25,000 for the PI, unless special permission is granted. Salary support for mentors is not permitted.

e. Requested support for equipment and technology, including computers, must be fully justified in the budget justification with a clear connection to the scientific aspects of the project and not for general office use.

f. Budgeting for travel to conferences/meetings to present project research results is allowable.

g. Costs associated with Institutional Review Board (IRB) review of human research protocols, or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) review of animal research protocols, are allowable as direct charges.

2. Biosketches

a. Include separate biosketches for the study PI and Primary Mentor(s)

b. Use NIH criteria guidelines and forms for non-fellowship biosketches (link)

c. Biosketch does not count toward the page limit

d. Personal statements should be adapted to describe defined roles within the project in each biosketch.

3. Career plans (1-2 pages)

4. Research plans (Maximum 3 pages for a-d below). No form page necessary.

a. Specific Aims (suggested length ½ page)

b. Merit / Significance (suggested length 1 page)

c. Approach (suggested length 2 pages)

i. Include how your mentorship plan will influence your project and career in addition to a statement of the ways that the proposed work will lead to additional applications for funding.

d. Innovation (suggested length ½ page)

5. Bibliography and References cited (as needed) No form page necessary.

a. Bibliography and References cited sections do not count toward the page limit.

6. Protection of Human Subjects (if applicable; maximum 1 page, No form page necessary).

a. You will be asked for additional Human Subjects forms should you be selected for funding.

7. Vertebrate Animals (if applicable; maximum 1 page, No form page necessary)

8. Letters of Support

a. Letters from collaborators essential to the proposed project must accompany the application.


**Criteria for Clinical Studies, Clinical Trials:**

**Clinical trials cannot be funded through CFARs**

1. NIH definition of a **Clinical Trial** ([NOT-OD-15-015](#))- A research study in which one or more human subjects are prospectively assigned to one or more interventions (which may include placebo or other control) to evaluate the effects of those interventions on health-related biomedical or behavioral outcomes. [Link](#) to this tool to determine if your study meets the criteria for a clinical trial.

This includes:

  ▪ Any clinical trial as defined above

  ▪ Studies involving new drugs, treatments, or devices

2. Studies that can be funded via CFAR **but require** additional NIH Clinical review

o Studies involving **new ways of using known drugs, treatments, or devices** (allowed on a case-by-case basis)

- o Studies that are deemed **above minimal risk** by the Institutional IRB
- o Studies involving **vulnerable populations** (children, pregnant women, transgender, sex workers, prisoners, refugees, individuals who are unable to provide informed consent, etc.)
- o Studies involving **behavioral interventions** (above minimal risk)
  - For studies in this category, please send the clinical research protocol and informed consent documents. Consultation with the Clinical Core is encouraged to ensure completeness of documents prior to submitting to NIH. No human subject work may be initiated until clinical review and approval is completed.

3. Studies that **do not require** additional NIH Clinical review

- o Research activities that do not include vulnerable populations (see above studies that require additional NIH Review) and present **no more than minimal risk** to human subjects as described in the [OHRP Expedited Review Categories](). Examples include but are not limited to the following:
  - routine blood draws
  - non-invasive procedures routinely employed in clinical practice (e.g. ultrasound, MRI)
  - surveys, focus groups
  - For studies in this category, please include IRB approval dates in the annual progress report.

**Criteria for International Studies or Components (Including foreign sites or any transfer of funding to a foreign entity):**

Given recent NIH foreign subaward policy updates (NOT-OD-25-104), please note that for this cycle we can **only accept applications without foreign subawards and only from US-based investigators** – acceptable options to this include international data analyses or specimen use.

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## Review Criteria

A Scientific Selection Committee consisting of members from the CFAR Executive Committee and peers with relevant expertise will review the applications. Criteria for selection are primarily based upon the scientific merit, investigative team, significance, approach, innovation, and pathway to independence using the following criteria. Written reviews will be provided to the investigator.

- Scientific Merit of the proposal and its likelihood to provide information that can significantly advance the understanding of HIV and/or provide preliminary data that is likely to lead to independent research grant funding. The project will be evaluated for its significance to the U.S. National HIV/AIDS Strategy, and the NIH's HIV research high or medium priority areas.

- Significance – What will be the potential effect of these studies on the concepts or methods that drive the field of HIV research? Does the study address an important problem consistent with the objective to advance our understanding of HIV? If the aims are achieved, how will scientific knowledge be advanced? Is the impact on communities adequately described? Were appropriate, are community stakeholders, public health departments, or those with lived experiences engaged in the study?

- Investigator – Are the PI, mentor(s), collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project? Does this person have appropriate experience and training? If the project is collaborative, do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise? Are representatives from affected communities advising the team or participating in the study?

- Approach – Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and statistical analysis plan adequately developed, well integrated and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternatives? Does the study design account appropriately for differences by sex or gender?

- Innovation – Does the project employ novel concepts, approaches, or methods? Are the aims original and innovative? Does the project challenge existing paradigms or develop new methodologies or technologies?

- Career and Pathway to Independence - Applications should describe how the results of this award will prepare the applicant to secure a faculty position and obtain independent NIH funding (K- or R-level) noting the potential NIH funding sources to be targeted.

- The use of CFAR Core Services is strongly recommended.

- Inclusion of LOS is encouraged.

## Award Details

Pre-Award Approvals

Funding will be awarded by the UAB CFAR Finance Office. A detailed notice of award will be provided by email. All questions regarding the award of funding should be directed to the contact listed in the notice of award. Prior to the award of funding, the following information must be provided, where applicable:

Institutional Review Board and Animal Care approvals, if applicable, must be obtained prior to receipt of an award, but are not required to submit an application.

- Prior to receipt of an award involving human subjects, IRB approval from all participating sites and human subjects training certification for all key personnel will be required. For more information about human subjects approval, see: http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/ .

- Prior to funding, a copy of all Institutional Biohazard, Animal Care and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approvals must be forwarded to the post-award administrator. For more information on animal care approvals, see: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/olaw.htm .

- If IRB review is not applicable to your study, please confirm by email to the CFAR Administrative Core.

Post-Award Requirements

- Development of a mentorship committee that will meet every 6 months to ensure the awardee is meeting goals.

- Awardees are expected to maintain regular and frequent interactions with their mentor(s).

- Yearly progress reports will be requested. Awardees will be contacted to request updates on additional productivity after the award ends (i.e., abstracts, publications, grants).

- Applicants chosen for funding may be asked to present the details of their study to the CFAR Research Community during the course of the project or at the conclusion of the study.

- For applications involving human subjects, CFAR Administration will contact the awardee to collect the required documentation.

- Support from this funding mechanism must be acknowledged in all publications and presentations. Visit the CFAR website for language describing the appropriate acknowledgement of this funding source.

- If the awardee is unable to fulfill the requirements or adhere to the policies of the award, the funding mechanism leadership reserves the right to revoke or adjust the funding.

For questions, contact Emily Knighton-Akins eknighton@uabmc.edu or Mary Thielen at mthielen@uabmc.edu, UAB CFAR Program Directors

or

Dr. Donna Porter Crawford donnaporter@uabmc.edu CFAR Associate Director