

CFAR-AUCC Collaborative Award for Research Exchange (CFAR-AUCC)
Clinical Trials Not Allowed

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

expires 12/31/2026

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CFAR-AUCC Collaborative Award for Research Exchange (CFAR-AUCC) Clinical Trials Not Allowed

- [NIH revised definition of Clinical Trials](#)
- [NIH Clinical Trials definition FAQ](#)
- [Determine if your proposed study is a Clinical Trial](#)

The Center for AIDS Research (CFAR) at Emory University is committed to supporting faculty toward independent investigator status in HIV/AIDS research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The purpose of this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is to describe a [CFAR-Series](#) funding mechanism that promotes collaborative HIV research and scientific partnerships between investigators at Emory University and [Atlanta University Center Consortium \(AUCC\)](#) institutions. The mechanism, CFAR-AUCC Collaborative Award for Research Exchange (CFAR-AUCC), provides funding for a collaborative HIV research project led by a Principal Investigator (PI) from an eligible Atlanta-area institution in partnership with a collaborating investigator from Emory University. The mechanism is designed to help the PI generate preliminary data that will strengthen the competitiveness of subsequent NIH applications in areas that align with [NIH/OAR high-priority areas of HIV research](#).

It is expected that projects be designed to take one year or less to complete.

The budget limit for this mechanism is \$50K (direct costs).

NOTES

- Submission of a CFAR-AUCC application does not preclude concurrent submission of an NIH application containing substantially the same research proposal. Should a related NIH proposal be funded, the CFAR-AUCC award may be terminated, and unspent funds recovered.
- CFAR-AUCC awards may not be used to supplement research currently funded by NIH or to provide interim support of projects under NIH review.
- CFAR-AUCC awards may not be used to supplement or extend research previously funded by a CFAR-Series pilot award. The applicant must demonstrate that the proposed project meets this requirement.
- Examples of the types of projects that might be funded under this NOFO include:
 - Pilot or feasibility studies for emerging research opportunities in HIV;
 - Secondary analysis of existing data;
 - Small, self-contained research projects;
 - Development of research methodology or research technology.

ELIGIBILITY

INCLUSION CRITERIA:

- Research or Tenure Track full-time faculty with an appointment at an [AUCC institution](#).
- The PI must meet the definition of an NIH "[New Investigator](#)" in HIV/AIDS. Specifically, an applicant is *ineligible* to serve as PI *only* if he/she/they received prior funding as an NIH independent investigator in HIV/AIDS research.
 - Exception: Investigators with prior independent NIH funding in HIV research are eligible if they have not been the PI on *any* NIH HIV research grant within the last five years.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA:

- Serving as PI or MPI on an active CFAR-Series award (i.e., CFAR-03, CFAR-AUCC, CFAR-K).

FUNDS AVAILABLE AND ANTICIPATED NUMBER OF AWARDS

The CFAR intends to fund up to two awards per year.

Each CFAR-AUCC project budget may not exceed \$50,000 (direct costs).

SCOPE

1. The CFAR-AUCC mechanism is designed to foster inter-institutional research synergy by facilitating funded collaborations between faculty at AUCC institutions and Emory University.
 - Projects are led by an AUCC faculty PI with a Collaborating Research Partner (CRP) at Emory.
 - The CRP is a faculty member from Emory University. The CRP's official role should be designated based on the scientific requirements for the project (e.g., Co-I, Co-PI, MPI). The CRP should be selected to enhance the proposed study with particular scientific expertise or to fill a PI-identified research gap. It is expected that the CRP will facilitate access to Emory CFAR resources for the project. The PI and CRP are expected to work together to foster cross-institutional collaborations to ensure project success. If needed, please contact the Emory CFAR for assistance identifying a CRP.
 - Funded project activities may take place at either of the participating institutions or in a community-based domestic setting.
2. CFAR-AUCC awards are designed to enable the collection of pilot data to support an NIH K (K01, K23) or R (R21, R34, R01) level application in an NIH-designated high priority area of HIV research.
 - CFAR-AUCC funds may not be used to supplement research currently funded by NIH.
 - Proposed projects should be responsive to one or more of the high priority areas of HIV research identified by the [NIH Office of AIDS Research](#) (OAR).
 - CFAR-AUCC funded activities should be designed to take one year to complete.
 - Submission of a CFAR-AUCC application does not preclude prior or concurrent submission of an NIH application containing substantially the same research proposal. Should the NIH application be funded, the CFAR may request that the CFAR-AUCC award be returned.
 - Applicants are required to consult with the Data Science Core (currently listed on the CFAR website as [Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Core](#)) regarding the data collection and analysis plan. There is no cost for the consultation.
 - Please visit bit.ly/CFARCoreServiceRequest to request the consultation. After the meeting, the Data Science Core will provide a required letter of verification for inclusion in the application packet.
 - Awardees will have priority access to research support services available through the four CFAR science cores: Implementation & Community Science Core (currently listed on the CFAR website as [Prevention & Implementation Sciences](#)), Clinical Science Core (currently listed on the CFAR website as [Clinical Research](#)), [Data Science](#), and Advanced Technology & Laboratory Science (currently listed on the CFAR website as [Systems Immunology](#) and [Virology and Molecular Biomarkers](#)).
 - CFAR Cores may provide limited access to Core services at no charge to CFAR-AUCC awardees. After the limit is reached, services are available on a fee for service basis. Applicants should consult with the relevant CFAR Core Director regarding study requirements to determine appropriate services and any associated costs. The cost of Core services in excess of subsidized services can be requested in the project budget.
 - A Letter of Verification (LOV) from each CFAR Core providing services to the project should be included in the application packet. The LOS should outline the proposed services and any associated costs to be included in the project budget.
 - Early career investigators with limited research experience (e.g., limited prior funding), must identify at least one mentor and include a mentoring plan with the application. If appropriate, the CRP may also serve as a project mentor.
 - The mentoring plan should include 1) the type of mentoring provided, 2) a proposed schedule for mentor/mentee engagement, and the mentor's name, rank, and institutional affiliation.
 - See Appendix A for examples of mentor categories that may be beneficial to the applicant.
 - Applicants have access to CFAR resources to assist with the development of NIH grant applications.
 - Applicants have the opportunity to present their specific aims and proposed research approach to HIV research experts from AUCC institutions and Emory University for feedback during a Pre-submission Presentation Session. Applicants must submit an RPP to be eligible to attend. The Pre-submission Presentation Session will take place via Zoom during the first week of September.

APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Required for All Applicants:

1. Submit a Research Pre-Proposal (RPP) by the deadline

See directions below, noting that RPPs are submitted electronically: bit.ly/EmoryCFAR-Series-RPP

2. Consult with the Data Science Core (currently listed on CFAR website as Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Core) to review your data collection and analysis plan

Please visit bit.ly/CFARServiceRequest to request the consultation. After the meeting, the Data Science Core will provide the required verification letter for inclusion in the application packet.

Required for Applicants without Prior NIH R01-Equivalent Funding:

1. Identify a Collaborating Research Partner (CRP) at Emory University

This step can still be in process when an applicant submits their Research Pre-Proposal. If you need assistance to identify a CRP, contact Jenny Anderson (jenny.anderson@emory.edu).

2. Get pre-review comments on the application draft from your HIV research mentor(s)

Optional but Encouraged for All Applicants:

1. Contact the Developmental Core

Before preparing an application, applicants are encouraged to discuss whether their proposed project aligns with the objectives of the CFAR-03 mechanism.

- **Basic and preclinical science applications:** Dr. Rama Amara (ramara@emory.edu)
- **Social/behavioral applications:** Dr. Drenna Waldrop (drenna.waldrop@emory.edu) or Dr. Kimbi Hagen (kbs.hagen@emory.edu)
- **Clinical science applications:** Dr. Andrés Camacho-González (acamac2@emory.edu)

2. Present your specific aims & approach to CFAR Core Leadership & AUCC-Emory Working Group members

This optional pre-submission webinar will take place via Zoom; presentation slots are limited. Contact Deaunna Thomas (deaunna.thomas@emory.edu) if you are interested in this opportunity.

3. Meet with other CFAR Science Cores to get Letter(s) of Verification (LOV) documenting Core services provided for your project

Support may include consultation, services, materials, training, and/or shared research space/equipment. As appropriate to the support proposed, CFAR Cores can also provide you with information addressing rigor and reproducibility to include in your Significance/Approach section. Learn about the Cores [here](#). Please visit bit.ly/CFARServiceRequest to request services or consultation.

SCHEDULE / DEADLINES

Fall 2026 (CYCLE Y28A):

	DATE	SUBMISSION LINK
Research Pre-Proposal due (required but non-binding)	September 1, 2026	bit.ly/EmoryCFAR-Series-RPP
Application due	October 1, 2026	bit.ly/EmoryCFAR-Series-APP
CFAR-Series Study Section held	First week in November 2026	
Funding decisions announced	End of November 2026	

RESEARCH PRE-PROPOSAL (RPP) INSTRUCTIONS

An electronic RPP, including a one-page research pre-proposal attachment, is **required but non-binding**. See deadline and online submission link above.

The pre-proposal (**submitted in PDF format**) must include:

- A 1-3 sentence summary of the research problem
- Proposed research question(s) or hypotheses
- Proposed specific aims
- A brief description of the proposed approach
- References (not included in the 1-page limit)

Contact CFAR Developmental Core coordinator, Deaunna Thomas (deaunna.thomas@emory.edu) with questions

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The Emory CFAR Developmental Core can provide support to applicants to develop and assemble applications should their institution not provide pre-award grant development/submission support. Applications must be approved by and submitted through the school's Office of Sponsored Programs (or equivalent) and submitted as a single PDF packet, using the submission link on pg. 3.

Applicants without prior experience writing NIH-style applications may find reading the NIH "[How to Apply – Application Guide](#)" a useful first step.

COVER LETTER

The PI, PI's Chair/Division Director, and, when applicable, the PI's Research Mentor should both sign a cover letter. Restrict information provided in the letter to the following:

- ☐ PI name(s), department(s), and contact information
- ☐ Application title
- ☐ Application type (New or Resubmission)
- ☐ Direct Costs requested
- ☐ Post Award research administrator name and contact information
- ☐ A statement, if applicable, confirming that the PI's Research Mentor provided pre-review comments on a final draft of the new or resubmission application

FORM PAGES

- ☐ Applications should be prepared using NIH **FORMS-I** forms and NIH NOFO [PA-25-302](#), the current Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for investigator-initiated applications using the NIH Small Research Grant Program (R03) mechanism upon which the CFAR-AUCC is based.
- ☐ Except when CFAR-specific instructions are provided below, applicants should follow NIH instructions for completing an SF424 form set.

PHS 398 RESEARCH PLAN

- ☐ Format all documents per NIH rules.
 - [See NIH Forms I Application Guide](#)
- ☐ Rigor and Reproducibility: The research plan should fully address rigor and reproducibility.
 - See [NIH FAQs](#) for [NOT-16-011](#)
- ☐ Inclusion Across the Lifespan: For projects including human subjects, the research plan **must** fully address inclusion across the lifespan.
 - Read NIH [NOT-OD-18-116](#)
- ☐ Sex as a Biological Variable: All research projects conducted with: a) human subjects, b) vertebrate animals, and/or c) materials from human or vertebrate animal subjects (e.g. blood, tissue, cell lines) must fully address sex as a biological variable in the research plan
 - Read [NOT-OD-15-102-Guidance](#)
 - Read (<https://orwh.od.nih.gov/sex-gender/nih-policy-sex-biological-variable>)
- ☐ The Approach section should include a project activities timeline.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT (LOS)/ LETTERS OF VERIFICATION (LOV)

- ☐ CFAR Data Science/BIOS Core LOV, verifying that Core faculty reviewed and approved the proposed data collection and analysis plans.
- ☐ As applicable, LOV signed by the Director of each CFAR Science Core and/or AUCC Resource providing support and/or services for the proposed project. Provide a separate LOV from each Resource to be used.
Limited subsidized support may be available through CFAR Cores. The LOV should describe agreed on services and the limits on those services. The estimated cost of Core provided services should be described in the LOV on a fee-for-service basis. Any additional cost for Core provided services beyond the agreed-on subsidy must be included in the project budget.
- ☐ As applicable, LOS from named research collaborators and consultants. For paid consultants, letters should include rate/charge for consulting services.
- ☐ *For early career applicants with limited research experience:* A LOS signed by the applicant's mentor, confirming participation in the application development and support to the applicant for the development of any future NIH K or R-level funding.
- ☐ If applicable, LOV from the PI's Department Chair or Division Director stating that the PI will have protected time to complete the research project.
- ☐ A LOV from an institutional signing official in the PI's Office of Sponsored Programs (or equivalent) waiving Indirect Cost Recovery (IRC) funds for the award.

CFAR REQUIRED INFORMATION.

Application packets that do not include the following two required documents will be returned without review. Please note that each of these documents should be saved as a separate PDF file and individually uploaded through the electronic application portal.

- ☐ **Applicability to NIH/OAR Research Priorities:** (Limit = 1 paragraph)
See [NOT-OD-20-018](#). This document should identify *which* High Priority topic the proposed project addresses and describe *how* the proposed project will address that topic.
- ☐ **Future Plans for NIH Applications:** (Limit = 1 page)
This document should describe how the findings from the proposed research will be useful for future NIH applications. Outline the remaining experiments, if any, that need to take place prior to an eventual NIH application based on this work.

Almost half (40%) of an application's overall impact score will be based on the proposed project's potential to contribute to a future NIH application, Therefore, the ABOVE two documents are key.

- ☐ **Community Impact Section:** (Limit = 1 page)
This section should describe, in lay terms, the project and its potential impact on community (e.g., persons with HIV or persons placed at-risk for HIV) and should answer the following questions:
 - What is the potential benefit of your study to persons with HIV or persons placed at risk for HIV?
 - How did you generate this research idea and how was community input gathered?
 - How will you share results with the research participants?
 - Why should persons with HIV, or persons placed at risk for HIV, care about this project?

APPENDIX

Follow the guidelines contained in NIH [NOT-OD-17-098](#) (released 8/02/17). This CFAR-AUCC NOFO contains one NOFO-specific appendix:

- ☐ **CFAR-AUCC mentoring plan (if applicable):** (Limit = 1 page). As described above, early career applicants with limited research experience are required to identify at least one mentor.
 - If applicable, the mentoring plan should include:
 - Brief description of each member of the mentoring team
 - Goals of the mentoring plan

- Brief description of each mentoring activity included in the plan
- How, and how often, the mentoring team will meet

BUDGET (Use the R&R, NOT modular budget)

Stipulations:

- It is not required that the PI(s) request salary. If PI salary costs are requested, they may not exceed 20% of the budget or \$10,000 (including fringe benefits) without prior permission from the CFAR Developmental Core.
- If requested, salary support for the Collaborating Research Partner should be included in the budget.
- Funds may be requested for travel and activities associated with writing an NIH research grant proposal based on project findings and/or attending meetings to establish collaborations or to present project-related data. Supported travel must be completed within the award's project period.
- The cost of research support in excess of what a CFAR Core is able to subsidize may be requested in the project budget. Applicants may include funds in their project budget for research support provided by AUCC labs or other resource, other non-CFAR cores and entities and, as described above, for research support in excess of what a CFAR Core has agreed in advance to subsidize.
- [NIH rules regarding spending allowability must be followed.](#)
- The following are unallowable on a CFAR budget request:
 - Salary or travel support for senior faculty.
 - Tuition and fees for trainees.
 - Funds to support an international subaward.
 - Equipment purchases of > \$5,000
 - **NOTE:** items like computers or tablets fall under the "supplies" category, unless they are a part of a larger equipment system.
 - Indirect Costs (although these may be awarded later, depending on the source(s) of funding used to support the award).
- As noted above, limited subsidized (low or no cost) services may be available through CFAR Cores and the terms/limits of the Core's support should be clearly outlined in an LOV. Any additional cost for Core provided services beyond the agreed-on subsidy must be included in the project budget. The estimated cost of Core provided services should be described in the LOV. Applicants may also request funds for services provided by non-CFAR cores and entities. All requests for funds to cover CFAR and non-CFAR Core provided services should be well described in the Budget Justification.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

The application must be routed through the applicant institution's Office of Sponsored Programs (or equivalent) and be submitted by the appropriate institutional official.

The application packet should be submitted directly to the CFAR as a single PDF file via an electronic portal, which can be accessed on pg.4.

APPLICATION REVIEW

- Proposals will be reviewed in an NIH study section format, with two ad hoc scientific reviewers and one ad hoc community-based reviewer assigned to each proposal. Study sections comprise faculty from AUCC institutions, Emory CFAR, and other experts as needed from institutions both local and national.
- In assigning an NIH-style impact score (1-9), CFAR-AUCC application reviews will not be limited to the five NIH review criteria (approach, significance, innovation, investigators, environment). See Review Criteria Table (Appendix B) for additional details.
- A written critique will be prepared for each proposal. These critiques, formally known as a "Summary Statement" and informally known as "pink sheets," will be forwarded to the applicant approximately three weeks following completion of the study section.

RELEASE OF FUNDS

A response to the summary statements and proof of all necessary institutional approvals (e.g., IRB/HIC, IACUC), must be provided to the CFAR prior to release of funds. Additional stipulations may also be included in the Notice of Award. Funding will be distributed via subaward agreement with the PI's home institution. Additional documentation may be required at the time of the award.

CONTACTS

Application, Budget, and/or Administrative Questions

Deaunna Thomas, MSW
Program Coordinator
Emory CFAR
E-mail: deaunna.thomas@emory.edu

Scientific/Proposal Development Questions:

Drenna Waldrop, PhD
Professor
Emory University School of Nursing
E-mail: drenna.waldrop@emory.edu

APPENDIX A: MENTORING PLAN (IF APPLICABLE)

Early career investigators with limited research experience (e.g., limited prior funding), must identify at least one mentor and include a mentoring plan with the application. The CRP may also serve as a mentor if appropriate to the project.

Examples of mentor categories that may be beneficial to the applicant are listed below. Mentors may come from inside or outside the PI's home institution.

Grantsmanship Mentor – An individual with experience writing successful NIH grant applications.

Grantsmanship mentors may help to develop and hone the NIH-style grant-writing skills by giving feedback on drafts of an application produced in response to this NOFO and drafts of any follow-on applications to the NIH.

Peer Mentor – Person at the same academic or skill level as the applicant. Peer mentors provide assistance in networking within a new (to the applicant) scientific field and/or offer consultations in areas outside the applicant's area of expertise.

Research Mentor – Person with scientific knowledge or skills that would specifically benefit the proposed project. Research mentors provide consultation and assistance in the design and implementation of research and/or the communication of research findings.

Career Mentor – Career mentors provide assistance in selecting the activities – including the choice and timing of grant applications – that help advance the PI's professional career goals. Early career faculty may benefit from working with a Career mentor.

APPENDIX B: CFAR-AUCC REVIEW CRITERIA

Weight	Item	Section of application scored
30%	Future: Does the proposed project have a high potential of contributing to a future NIH application?	- Entire narrative “Future Plans for NIH Applications” statement “Applicability to NIH/OAR Research Priorities” statement
10%	Writing: Does the quality of writing in the application (including grammar and spelling) meet the standard found in successful NIH applications?	Entire narrative

25%	<i>Factor 1. Importance of the Research</i> Significance - Evaluate the importance of the proposed research in the context of current scientific challenges and opportunities, either for advancing knowledge within the field, or more broadly. Assess whether the application addresses an important gap in knowledge in the field, would solve a critical problem, or create a valuable conceptual or technical advance. - Evaluate the rationale for undertaking the study, the rigor of the scientific background for the work (e.g., prior literature and/or preliminary data) and whether the scientific background justifies the proposed study. Innovation - Evaluate the extent to which innovation influences the importance of undertaking the proposed research. Note that while technical or conceptual innovation can influence the importance of the proposed research, a project that is not applying novel concepts or approaches may be of critical importance for the field. - Evaluate whether the proposed work applies novel concepts, methods or technologies or uses existing concepts, methods, technologies in novel ways, to enhance the overall impact of the project.	- Research Strategy: (a) “Significance” - Applicability to NIH/OAR Research Priorities” statement - Research Strategy: (b) “Innovation”
25%	<i>Factor 2. Rigor and Feasibility</i> Approach - Evaluate the scientific quality of the proposed work. Evaluate the likelihood that compelling, reproducible findings will result (rigor) and assess whether the proposed studies can be done well and within the timeframes proposed (feasibility). Rigor: - Evaluate the potential to produce unbiased, reproducible, robust data. - Evaluate the rigor of experimental design and whether appropriate controls are in place. - Evaluate whether the sample size is sufficient and well-justified. - Assess the quality of the plans for analysis, interpretation, and reporting of results.	- Specific Aims - Research Strategy: (c) “Approach” - CFAR scientific core statement - Letters of support - Inclusion of Individuals Across the Lifespan - Inclusion of Women and Minorities - Vertebrate Animals

	- Evaluate whether the investigators presented adequate plans to address relevant biological variables, such as sex or age, in the design, analysis, and reporting. - For applications involving human subjects or vertebrate animals, also evaluate: - the rigor of the intervention or study manipulation (if applicable to the study design). - whether outcome variables are justified. - whether the results will be generalizable or, in the case of a rare disease/special group, relevant to the particular subgroup. - whether the sample is appropriate and has sufficient variation to appropriately address the proposed research question(s). - For applications involving human subjects, including clinical trials, assess whether the participation plans are adequate for the scientific goals of the research. Considerations of appropriateness may include disease/condition/behavior incidence, prevalence, or population burden, population representation, and/or current state of the science. Feasibility: - Evaluate whether the proposed approach is sound and achievable, including plans to address problems or new challenges that emerge in the work. For proposed studies in which feasibility may be less certain, evaluate whether the uncertainty is balanced by the potential for major advances. - For applications involving human subjects, evaluate the adequacy and feasibility of the plan to recruit and retain a population of participants appropriate to the scientific objectives. Additionally, evaluate the likelihood of successfully achieving the proposed enrollment based on specified demographic categories. - Evaluate whether the study timeline and milestones are feasible.	
10%	<i>Factor 3. Expertise and Resources</i> Investigator(s) Evaluate whether the investigator(s) have demonstrated background, training, and expertise, as appropriate for their career stage, to conduct the proposed work. For Multiple Principal Investigator (MPI) applications, assess the quality of the leadership plan to facilitate coordination and collaboration. Environment Evaluate whether the institutional resources are appropriate to ensure the successful execution of the proposed work.	- Biosketches - Dual PI Leadership Plan - Mentoring Plan - Resources page - Letters of support - CFAR scientific core statement