



## 2026 Lauren F. Collins, Emerging Research Pilot (ERP) Award Announcement Early Notice

**About Lauren F. Collins:** Lauren was a dear colleague and Associate Professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases at the Emory School of Medicine and the Grady Health System's Ponce de Leon Center. She will be remembered for her extraordinary kindness, fierce devotion to her patients, advocacy for programs that served them, and her remarkable ability to bring people together. She was an early career leader within STAR and guided peers, students, residents, and fellows as they navigated their own early career years. The ERP Award is dedicated to Lauren's memory and her commitment to mentoring the next generation of investigators.

### Key Details:

|                             |                                                       |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Award</b>                | <b>STAR Emerging Research Pilot (ERP) Award</b>       |
| <b>Maximum Budget</b>       | <b>Up to \$50,000 direct costs</b>                    |
| <b>Eligibility</b>          | <b>Early-stage investigators at STAR institutions</b> |
| <b>Applications Open</b>    | <b>September 1, 2026</b>                              |
| <b>Intent to Apply</b>      | <b>September 15, 2026</b>                             |
| <b>Full Application Due</b> | <b>October 15, 2026</b>                               |
| <b>Notification</b>         | <b>November 15, 2026</b>                              |
| <b>Project Start</b>        | <b>January 1, 2027</b>                                |
| <b>Project Completion</b>   | <b>August 31, 2027</b>                                |

### ERP Program Objective:

The STAR ERP Award funds mentorship and engagement for early-stage investigators. It focuses on HIV prevention, treatment, and related health conditions for reproductive-age women.

### Eligibility:

- Applicants must have a primary appointment with a STAR study site (University of Miami, Emory University, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, George Washington University, University of Alabama and Birmingham, University of Mississippi Medical Center, and Johns Hopkins University) and have at least one current STAR investigator serving as a mentor.
- Applicants must hold a current master's degree, doctoral degree, or MD (or equivalent) and should not be more than 10 years beyond graduation of their terminal degree or fellowship/training. Examples include a doctoral student or postdoctoral fellow, research associate/scientist, instructor/lecturer, assistant professor, or equivalent at their institution.
- Individuals who currently serve or have previously served as Principal Investigator on an R01-equivalent research grant or comparable independent research award are not eligible.
- Because the award period is limited, applicants are strongly encouraged to propose projects that utilize existing datasets, biospecimens, or established infrastructure and can realistically be completed within the project period ending August 31, 2027. Feasibility will be a major review criterion.

### Budget:

Budget requests may not exceed \$50K in direct costs. Funds may be used to cover salary support for the Early Career Investigator and/or other project expenses (e.g. specimen testing, equipment, supplies, etc.). Awardees are expected to present their findings at a STAR scientific meeting. Budget should include travel and meeting participation, if applicable. Other uses will be considered. All requests must be well justified.

### Application Process:

- Identify a mentor within the STAR investigator team. A list of potential mentors available upon request.

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- To confirm your intent to apply, email Deja Er ([deja.l.er@emory.edu](mailto:deja.l.er@emory.edu)) with the PI name(s), Institutional affiliation, Proposal Title, and Lead mentor name (*must also include a STAR mentor name if lead is not a STAR investigator*). Applicants are encouraged to consult their institution's STAR site directors in developing their concept proposal. *Please email Deja Er for guidance.*
- Completed application packages may be submitted after September 1, 2026. The submission link will be shared closer to the application release date. Proposals must be submitted by October 15, 2026.

### **Application Components:**

The application should utilize NIH proposal formats of margins no less than 0.5 inches and Arial 11-point font. Applications must have the following sections:

- **Section A. Title Page**
  - Proposal Title
  - Applicant, Lead and STAR Mentor(s) information, including names, affiliations, contact information
  - Statement on how research aligns with ERP objective, STAR, and NIH priorities.
- **Section B. Project Summary/Abstract**
  - Summary of the proposed activity suitable for dissemination to the public (30 lines of text max)
- **Section C. Research Proposal (maximum 4 pages)**
  - Specific Aims (1 page maximum)
  - Significance and Background
  - Study Design
  - Analysis Plan & Feasibility Considerations
- **Section D. Mentorship Plan and Project Timeline (1 page total)**
  - Future Career Development Plans
  - Describe how findings from the proposed research will help ground future research related to the effects of HIV infection or HIV-related medical conditions on women of reproductive age.
  - Outline the feasibility of project completion within the review-prioritized 9-month project period. Must factor in Human Subjects oversight approval at your institution. *The content of this section will carry considerable weight on review.*
- **Section E. Appendices**
  - Appendix 1: Bibliography and References Cited
  - Appendix 2: Applicant's and Mentor's NIH Biosketches in SciENCv common format
  - Appendix 3: Letter of Support from the applicant's Lead mentor (and STAR mentor if Lead is not a STAR investigator) which describes how the mentor will support the applicant to ensure project completion.
  - Appendix 4: Budget and Justification

**Release of Funds:** Proof of all necessary institutional and STAR-specific approvals (e.g. IRB/HIC, IACUC, STAR concept sheet) must be provided prior to release of funds. Additional stipulations may also be included in the Notice of Award. Information about STAR Concept Sheet submission can be found at [STAR Website – The Study of Treatment and Reproductive Outcomes](#)

### **Review Criteria:**

- **Administrative Review:** Completeness of the application package; Adherence to application instructions and requirements
- **Scientific Review:** Applications will undergo peer review using the NIH scoring framework. Reviewers will evaluate significance and potential impact of the proposed research, scientific rigor and methodological quality, relevance to STAR scientific priorities, feasibility of project completion during the award period, quality of the mentorship plan, and potential to contribute to the health and well-being of women of reproductive age affected by HIV. Applications demonstrating strong scientific merit, feasibility, and career development potential will be prioritized for funding.