



GUIDELINES FOR INTERNAL UAB-UMMC MWCCS PILOT FUNDING APPLICATIONS

The Multicenter AIDS Cohort (MACS)/Women's Interagency HIV Study (WIHS) Combined Cohort Study (MWCCS) is a collaborative research effort that aims to explore and understand the impact that chronic health conditions have on individuals living with HIV and those who are at risk of acquiring HIV. The objective of this pilot funding announcement is to fund HIV-related research projects that will incorporate the utilization of MWCCS resources (i.e. database and/or biological samples). Priority will be given to those projects that have the potential of obtaining future extramural funding. We anticipate funding two applications up to \$30,000 each. Statistical and data management support will be provided by the UAB/UMMC MWCCS site if needed. For information about MWCCS, go to: <https://statepi.jhsph.edu/mwccs/>

Eligibility Criteria

Faculty, fellows, and post-docs at the University of Alabama at Birmingham or the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC; including joint UMMC/VA appointments) or affiliated with UAB or UMMC are eligible to apply. Junior investigators developing a new and novel idea in an HIV-related field not related to current R- or U-funding that they are PI of are given preference during the review process. Established investigators who are new to HIV research (i.e., no prior HIV/AIDS funding of any type) and are looking to explore HIV/AIDS-related research topics are encouraged and eligible to apply. **Per NIH guidance, clinical trials are not allowed. To determine the difference between clinical studies and clinical trials, please refer to <https://grants.nih.gov/policy/clinical-trials/definition.htm>.**

Submission of Applications

Timeline

- RFA Released: **November 29, 2023**
- Deadline for 2-page Concept: **December 20, 2023**
- Full Application Applicants Announced: **January 3, 2024**
- Deadline for Full Applications: **February 28, 2024**
- Awards Announced: **Week of March 18, 2024**
- Funding Start: **April 1, 2024**
- Funding End: **March 31, 2025** (MWCCS pilot grants are awarded for one year)

Concept Proposals: Due December 20, 2023

An electronic copy of the proposal should be submitted via the RED-ASSIST platform (<https://redcap.dom.uab.edu/surveys/?s=XKRYLHKE34>) as a single file in **PDF format by 5:00 pm CST on the deadline date listed above**. Please name the file as "2024 MWCCS Pilot Concept Proposal-[Name]." Proposal cover letters should be addressed to Dr. Zenoria Causey Pruitt (UAB MWCCS PD) if the applicant is at UAB or Ms. Venetra McKinney (UMMC MWCCS PD) if the applicant is at UMMC and be signed by the principal investigator(s). The project description should be no more than a 2-page single Adobe PDF file and include the following:

Project Description

Outline the hypotheses, specific aims, brief preliminary data (if any), and brief research design. As the criteria for funding are primarily based upon scientific merit, investigator, significance, approach, and innovation,

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concepts should address these topic areas. Describe how MWCCS resources will be utilized in your research hypotheses and specific aims.

Combined Significance and Innovation Section

Briefly explain the importance/significance of the proposed project in the context of biomedical research that is promoted by the NHLBI or other NIH institutes engaged in HIV research. Describe the innovative nature of the proposal and how the proposed research will advance the field of HIV or one of the MWCCS's [United Scientific Agenda aims](#). Note the specific NIH funding sources to be targeted with the results from this study.

Eligibility/Team Building Component (no more than one-half page)

The integration of experienced UAB/UMMC MWCCS investigators at various levels is recommended to advance all pilot projects within the context of a team-building approach.

Investigators should clearly state how their proposed research will impact the UAB or UMMC research environment, improve the site's research infrastructure (e.g. provision of assays, facilitating access to methods, improved knowledge, enhanced ability to apply for common funding), utilize MWCCS resources and thereby facilitate future HIV research by other UAB or UMMC investigators.

Biosketches (Include one for each investigator)

All applicants and collaborators should submit NIH biosketches with personal statements adapted to describe defined roles on the project. Use the NIH form. <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>

Researchers whose proposals are selected for full proposal submission will be notified by email.

Please note the following administrative requirements: Page limitations indicated throughout the application will be strictly enforced. Applications should reflect NIH font sizes only, minimum size of 11.0 Arial, Helvetica, Palatino, or Georgia. Biosketches are required from all investigators. Applications that do not adhere to these guidelines will not be considered.

Researchers whose proposals are selected for the full proposal competition phase will be notified by email on or around January 3, 2024, and will have ~8 weeks to prepare and submit a full proposal.

Full Applications: Due February 14, 2024

Those invited to submit a full proposal will receive a unique RED-ASSIST link to submit their proposal as a single file **in PDF format**. Please name the file as "2024 MWCCS Pilot Full Proposal-[Name]." Proposal cover letters should be addressed to Dr. Zenoria Causey Pruitt (UAB MWCCS PD) if the applicant is at UAB or Ms. Venetra McKinney (UMMC MWCCS PD) if the applicant is at UMMC and be signed by the principal investigator(s). The full proposal will be on the forms used commonly for NIH grant applications ([PHS 398 forms](#)) and should follow a modified NIH investigator-initiated grant application (R01) format.

For detailed instructions on how to fill out the forms see: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.pdf> with the following modifications. The Research Plan (Specific Aims through Approach) is limited to 5-6 pages (Bibliography and References Cited sections do not count toward the page limit). No appendices. Or Targeted/Planned Enrollment Tables are allowed. Applications must be in English. ***Please note that applications that do not adhere to the instructions will not be considered.***

The Full Proposal should include (in this order in a single Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) file):

1. Complete budget and justification: (Download: [MS Word](#) or [PDF](#))
2. Research Plan (Maximum 5-6 pages for **a-e** below). Use PHS 398 Continuation Format pages (Download: [MS Word](#) or [PDF](#)).
 - a. Specific Aims (suggested length ½-1 page)
 - b. Background (suggested length 1 page)
 - c. Significance (suggested length 1 page)
 - d. Innovation (suggested length ½ page)
 - e. Approach (suggested length 2 pages)

3. Description of the Research Environment (suggested length ½ page). Use PHS 398 Continuation Format pages (Download: [MS Word](#) or [PDF](#)).
4. Bibliography and References cited (as needed) Use PHS 398 Continuation Format pages (Download: [MS Word](#) or [PDF](#)). Bibliography and References Cited sections do not count toward the page limit.
5. Protection of Human Subjects (if applicable; maximum 1 page). Use PHS 398 Continuation Format pages (Download: [MS Word](#) or [PDF](#)).
6. Vertebrate Animals (if applicable; maximum 1 page). Use PHS 398 Continuation Format pages (Download: [MS Word](#) or [PDF](#)).
7. Letters of Support (letters of support from collaborators essential to the proposed project must accompany the application).

Budget Development Guidelines and Restrictions (NIH budget form (Form page 5) with justification)

- Maximum direct costs will be specified at the time of the announcement. Awards are one year in length. One no-cost extension may be requested at the end of the first-year budget period only.
- Salary support is limited to 10% for the PI, unless special permission is received. Effort for senior co-investigators and mentors is not allowed.
- Budgeting for travel to other conferences to present project research results is allowable and encouraged (travel budget limited to no more than \$2000). Travel must be approved by a MWCCS site PI.
- Awardees who have support from K awards should discuss eligibility issues with their program officers and with institutional officials as eligibility may vary by NIH sponsor for the K award and institutional policies. The staff of this mechanism is not able to determine eligibility for K awardees.
- All costs must conform to the NIH Grants Policy Statement (GPS) and applicable U.S. Office of Management and Budget OMB circulars for necessity and reasonability, allocability, conformance and consistency, as well as allowability. Please follow the link below to section 7.2 cost principles section of the [NIH Grants Policy Statement](#).
- No international components will be allowed through this mechanism.

Review Criteria

A Scientific Selection Committee (SSC) consisting of members from the UAB/UMMC investigators and/or members of the MWCCS External Advisory Board will review the applications. Each application will have a primary, secondary, and biostatistical reviewer (where appropriate). The reviewers will be asked to summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. Criteria for selection are primarily based upon the following:

- Significance – What will be the potential effect of these studies on the concepts or methods that drive the field of research? Does the study address an important problem consistent with the objective to advance our understanding of comorbidities associated with aging with HIV? If the aims are achieved, how will scientific knowledge be advanced?
- Investigator – Are the PI, mentor(s), collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project? Do the PI and other investigators have appropriate experience and training? If the project is collaborative, do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise, and are there MWCCS researchers involved?
- 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, if applicable?
- 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?

- Environment – Do the proposed methods take advantage of the unique environment and unique populations where appropriate? Are useful collaborative arrangements between resources in the institution(s) utilized, where appropriate, and described adequately?

Specifically, the project will be evaluated for its significance and its alignment with the strategic interests of the NHLBI MWCCS cohort specific aims. Applications must clearly describe a vision and the feasibility of the approach. Applications based on a high degree of innovation are preferred. The use of the MWCCS database and/or biospecimens is required. Each project is scored according to the NIH scoring system using scientific merit as the metric for success. Those applicants who are selected for funding will be notified immediately.

Award Details

Pre-Award Approvals

Funding will be awarded via the UAB or/and UMMC MWCCS Finance Office. 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, if applicable:

- Animal Care and Institutional Review Board approvals, if applicable, must be obtained prior to receipt of an award, but are not required to submit an application. 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. 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.
- A concept sheet must be approved by the MWCCS Executive Committee prior to award.
- For more information about human subjects approval, see: <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/> and <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/human-subjects>.
- For more information on animal care approvals, see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/olaw.htm> and <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/research/grants-animals-research>.

Post-Award Requirements

- Applicants chosen for funding will be expected to present the details of their study to the UAB/UMMC monthly MWCCS Research Roundtable Meeting for review of the study objectives. This will provide an opportunity to identify additional synergies within the MWCCS, explore other means of support and recommendations to enhance the study. Other presentations, including a 'research in progress talk' (midway) and at the end of the funding period may be requested.
- Awardees may be required to attend mentoring activities, complete an initial Mentoring Agreement, and create a mentoring plan with their mentors. Activities may also include workshops, trainings, or meetings with advisors to facilitate faculty development. If an applicant is unable to select a mentor, the UAB/UMMC MWCCS leadership will work with awardees to identify mentors during the application process.
- Applications may be partially funded across two MWCCS budget periods in partial amounts. The remainder of the funding will be awarded upon satisfactory progress towards the proposed aims and evidence of appropriate spending. Awarded funds should be expended within a 12-month period beginning with the date of the award. Funds can be extended for a 6-month period with justification through a no-cost extension.
- Awardees will be required to submit a 6-month and yearly progress report**. Awardees will be tracked after the award ends to monitor productivity (abstracts, publications, grants).
- Support from this mechanism must be [acknowledged](#) in all publications and presentations. Visit the MWCCS website for language describing the appropriate acknowledgment of this funding source.
- If for any reason the awardee is unable to fulfill the requirements or adhere to the policies of the award, at the discretion of the funding mechanism leadership, the award may be revoked immediately.

****All recipients of MWCCS funding are obliged to provide information, not limited to, progress reports or final performance reports, as requested by the MWCCS Administrative Core. Failure to provide such information in a prompt and timely manner may result in the immediate termination of the grant and will preclude the grantee from applying for future MWCCS funding opportunities.**

For more information on the MWCCS study, visit <https://statepi.jhsph.edu/mwccs/>

For information on the UAB-UMMC MWCCS research site, visit <https://sites.uab.edu/mwccs/>

For questions at UAB, please contact Dr. Mirjam-Colette Kempf at mkempf@uab.edu, Dr. Jodie Dionne at jdionne@uabmc.edu or Dr. Zenoria Causey Pruitt at zcausey@uabmc.edu.

For questions at UMMC, please contact Dr. Deborah Konkle-Parker at dkparker@umc.edu, James B. Brock at jbbrock@umc.edu or Ms. Venetra McKinney at vmckinney@umc.edu.