

Dartmouth CTSI (SYNERGY) Translational Pilot Award Program Request for Applications (RFA)

Program Timeline	Date
RFA Release Date	Tuesday, June 30, 2026
*Informational Meeting/Webinar	Thursday, July 23, 2026
Mandatory Letter of Intent (LOI) Due	Friday, September 4, 2026 (by 11:59PM EST)
Anticipated Award Start Date	Thursday, July 1, 2027

The Dartmouth Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI) SYNERGY Translational Pilot Award Program funds innovative, multidisciplinary research proposals that have clear potential for translation into patient-oriented care and improved population health for rural communities. The Pilot Award Program is supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), which defines translation as “the process of turning observations in the laboratory, clinic and community into interventions that improve the health of individuals and the public — from diagnostics and therapeutics to medical procedures and behavioral changes.” ([NCATS Translational Science](#)) The program’s goal is to facilitate collaborative translational science studies with rural health relevance across Dartmouth Health (DH) institutions and affiliated health centers.

Pilot Award applications will be given priority if the proposed work is at an early stage and need support to create preliminary data and/or to develop research concepts that will advance translational science in four focus areas described below. NCATS defines translational science as “...the field that generates innovations that overcome longstanding challenges along the translational research pipeline. These include scientific, operational, financial, and administrative innovations that transform the way that research is done, making it faster, more efficient, and more impactful.” Successful proposals must have a high chance of leading to extramurally funded research and/or discoveries with the potential for commercialization. Studies must also address translational science gaps. The total number of awards granted will depend on the quality of applications, independent of focus area.

* [SYNERGY Pilot Award Program Informational meeting](#) will be held on **July 23, 2026 via Zoom**.

GUIDELINES

Eligibility

- ▶ Investigators with an academic appointment at Dartmouth (including Geisel, Thayer, Tuck, A&S, Dartmouth Health, the VA, and affiliated sites) who meet the requirements below are eligible to apply. (Contact PI and MPI must both have Dartmouth academic appointments)
- ▶ To foster multidisciplinary and multi-center research, the application must list a Contact Principal Investigator (PI) and a multiple Principal Investigator (MPI), each from a different discipline, department, or school.
- ▶ The contact PI must have a Dartmouth faculty appointment at the rank of instructor, research scientist, assistant professor, or associate professor.
- ▶ Should the contact PI and MPI be at a junior faculty member rank of instructor, research scientist, or assistant professor, the applicants must identify a Dartmouth-affiliated research mentor(s) in the Letter of Intent (LOI).
- ▶ Investigators are limited to a single application as the contact PI in a given application cycle.

Pilot Project Focus Areas

Pilot Award Applications should focus on one of the four areas below. For more details about these areas, please refer to [NCATS Translational Science Spectrum](#).

Preclinical Research: Preclinical research studies focus on the connections between the basic science of disease and human medicine. At this stage of the translational science spectrum, investigators may develop model interventions to advance our understanding of the basis of a disease or disorder and approaches to treatment. Preclinical research may be conducted using cell or animal models, human or animal tissue, or may involve computer simulation. Preclinical research may also support the development of new methods, processes, or workflows to inform subsequent translational research, including the development of technologies, methods, data, analytics, and resources that change the way translational scientists approach their work. Examples include the development of biostatistical and epidemiological methods that enhance the validity and accuracy, scope, or speed of translational research; discoveries that will impact human health and may lead to human studies.

Clinical Research: Clinical research studies seek to improve our understanding of diseases in humans. Clinical research approaches may include, but are not limited to, relating knowledge of human disease to preclinical studies; refining new technologies in people; and testing novel clinical interventions. Study designs may include, but are not limited to, open pilot studies, small-scale randomized controlled trials, comparative effectiveness studies, and analyses of patient-reported measures. Examples include innovative use of imaging and/or biomarkers to assess treatment prognosis; genomics research methodology; innovative experimental design and development of statistical methodologies for clinical research applications; technologies for clinical decision support; and development of novel methods for clinical study design.

Clinical Implementation: Clinical implementation research involves the uptake of interventions into routine clinical care. Such interventions should be evidence-based or recommended for the target population. This stage includes implementation science studies, such as those that develop or test ways to integrate evidence-based practices and policies into routine health settings. Examples include evaluations of current clinical programs, interventions or policies; clinical quality improvement studies; and studies of methods to engage clinicians, patients and families in clinical operations.

Public Health: Public health studies include those that study health outcomes at the population level. Research foci may include disease prevention, diagnosis, or treatment, or studies of the effects of diseases at a population level. Examples include but are not limited to: analysis of administrative claims data that elucidate associations between exposures and health outcomes; analysis of registry-based data; community-based surveys; and methodologies to improve partner engagement in public health research.

Within each of these areas, applications that address the following will be given priority:

- How the work is relevant to rural health (an overview of NCATS' rural health initiatives is available at: [CTSA Program Rural Health Initiatives](#))
- How the work will advance our knowledge of translational science (please refer to [NIH Translational Science Principles](#)).

All letters of intent must be written for a general scientific audience, as they will be reviewed by a multidisciplinary panel with multifaceted areas of research expertise.

Budget: Applicants should prepare a budget appropriate for the resources necessary to carry out the proposed research beginning on July 1, 2027, and ending June 30, 2028. The pilot project must be completed within 12 months with a direct cost budget of \$20,000 to \$50,000. Award amounts will vary depending on the scope of the proposed work, its scientific merit, feasibility, and relevance to

SYNERGY's mission. Salary support for investigators is permissible and is limited to the NIH salary cap plus fringe. Details regarding allowable and unallowable costs for NIH-funded grants are available at: [NIH Grants Policy Statement](#). Please do not include any indirect costs in proposal submissions.

Human Subjects: Investigators submitting proposals involving human subjects must obtain approval from the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) at Dartmouth College or the Institutional Review Board at Dartmouth Health (DH IRB). Release of funds will be contingent upon CPHS/DH IRB approval. Given the time required to complete this review, investigators whose applications have been prioritized for funding are required to submit their study protocol to CPHS or the DH IRB by the time of full proposal submission. If investigators are relying on an existing CPHS or DH IRB approval, they must delineate what is novel about the proposed work.

Animal Use: Investigators with projects involving animals must obtain approval from the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Release of funds will be contingent upon approval. Given the time required to complete this review, investigators whose applications have been prioritized for funding are required to submit their study protocol to the IACUC by the time of full application submission.

Study Design: All applicants are encouraged to use SYNERGY-supported research consultation cores and services. To arrange for consultations, please visit: [Dartmouth CTSI Request Service](#).

Successful applicants may also budget to use the SYNERGY Clinical Research Unit (CRU) at DHMC for study visit support. Requests for CRU services may be made through [Dartmouth CTSI Research Resources](#).

Submission Procedures:

1. **Letter of Intent (LOI):** An application cover sheet signed by the PI and Department/Division chair, 2-page structured LOI, and NIH SciENCv Biosketch(es) for the Contact PI, MPI, and, if applicable, mentor, must be combined into one PDF and LOIs must be submitted via **SYNERGY LOI Submission Portal – [\[Link\]](#)** no later than **11:59 PM ET on September 4, 2026**. Applicants must follow the SYNERGY Pilot Instructions and Template for Letter of Intent available at [Dartmouth CTSI \(SYNERGY\) Pilot Program webpage](#). Applications that do not follow the required format and page length requirements will not be considered for funding.
2. **Review of LOI:** SYNERGY staff will acknowledge LOI receipt. The SYNERGY Pilot LOI Review Committee will review LOIs, and SYNERGY staff will notify all PIs regarding whether or not they are invited to submit a Full Proposal. Review criteria include innovation, interdisciplinary engagement, approach, significance (including significance to rural health), community impact and engagement, relevance to translational science, investigator qualifications, and—for junior faculty at the rank of instructor or assistant professor—strength of mentoring environment.
3. **Invited Pilot Project Full Proposals:** Invited applicants must use the SYNERGY Pilot Project Instructions and Template for Full Proposal, which will be emailed to them. The final submission deadline for invited Pilot Project applicants will be in **December, 2026**.
4. **Timeline for Review of Full Proposals:** The SYNERGY team will inform applicants in mid-January if their application has been prioritized for funding. Official awards will not be made until all necessary regulatory approvals have been received. Awards are projected to begin on **July 1, 2027**.

For further information, we recommend checking our webpage [SYNERGY Pilot Program webpage](#)

Post-Award Conditions. To activate a SYNERGY Pilot Project Award, MPIs and their Mentors (if applicable) must sign a SYNERGY Award Contract, indicating their agreement to all Award requirements and expectations, including the following:

- ▶ Project award management – SYNERGY Pilot Awardees must work with administrators in their home departments and SYNERGY administrators to ensure successful Pilot funds management.
- ▶ Progress reports, presentations, publications, and grant applications – SYNERGY Pilot Awardees are required to submit a written progress report during and following the award period detailing progress towards research project aims. Awardees are expected to present their research, submit papers to peer-reviewed journal(s) for publication, and seek follow-on grants – all of these being key indicators of research success. PIs must list these activities in their progress reports.
- ▶ Pilot Awardees are expected to participate in SYNERGY functions convened for Pilot Awardees and to provide additional written updates beyond the Pilot Award period when requested.
- ▶ Pilot Awardees are expected to serve on future SYNERGY Pilot Application Review panels and to provide feedback on the SYNERGY Pilot Program.

For questions on the SYNERGY Pilot Program or the application process, please contact [SYNERGY Pilot Award Team](#).