

University of Minnesota Life Course Center on the Demography and Economics of Aging

Call for Pilot Project Proposals 2023/2024

The Life Course Center, an NIA-funded Center on the Demography and Economics of Aging, invites investigators to submit proposals for pilot funding to support research projects for the period from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. We seek innovative pilot proposals addressing aging contexts, trends, dynamics, and disparities in health that align with [LCC research themes](#). We strongly encourage proposals from new and early stage investigators, scholars from underrepresented backgrounds, and from new interdisciplinary teams, and priority will be given to applicants from these groups. While not required, preference will be given to proposals that involve current [LCC members](#) or [NDIRA members](#). Pilot funds are intended to support research that will lead to proposals for external funding.

Key Dates

- Informational presentation and Q&A session: **November 16, 2022 at 10:00am CST**
- Submission of a required letter of intent (LOI). Deadline: **December 5, 2022**
- Proposal due date: **February 5, 2023**
- Funding decision by mid-March

Funding Priorities

The Life Course Center (LCC) at the University of Minnesota emphasizes life course processes and contexts in the demography and economics of aging shaping health and well-being in an aging society. We focus especially on the contexts of population processes, the ways life course pathways accentuate disparities in later adulthood, and the importance of social participation in (paid and unpaid) work and other activities for later life health. The LCC recruits and fosters connections among researchers across disciplines and develops leading-edge collaborative pilot studies.

1. Proposals must clearly address one of the LCC's research themes:
 - **Later Life-Course Population Trends in Context:** Determinants within and across space, time, and social location of population trends at older ages in physical and cognitive functioning (including AD/ADRD), disability, morbidity, mortality, health and well-being.
 - **Life-Course Dynamics as Disparity Mechanisms:** Life-course pathways through which social, behavioral, environmental, institutional, and structural risks lead to disparities in healthy aging, including the unequal distribution of protective factors (e.g., income adequacy, positive early determinants, and health behaviors).
 - **Interrelationships of Work, Family, Community Participation, and Health:** The role of work and other forms of social engagement (e.g., caregiving, volunteering) for later adult health outcomes.
2. Proposals must fit the National Institute on Aging emphasis on life course processes to improve the health and well-being of older adults. The proposed research should focus primarily on health outcomes, health-related behaviors, and other health and demographic determinants. We will also support competitive proposals on COVID-19 impacts on these outcomes and competitive proposals that speak to [NIA's approved concepts](#).
3. We will prioritize pilot proposals that
 - Represent new collaborations,
 - Involve the mentorship of early career scholars, and/or
 - Involve researchers from historically underrepresented backgrounds
 - Involve current [LCC members](#) or [NDIRA members](#)

Pilot projects should be designed to support the development of a larger research project that will be submitted under an NIA grant mechanism (R03, R01, R21). Accordingly, pilot project proposals should justify the need for pilot funds in order to successfully facilitate transition to larger research projects. Note that pilot projects are not intended to support work to complete an existing study. Addendums to existing projects are allowable only if they represent a new line of research consistent with LCC themes and have the promise to lead to a new proposal for NIA funding. NIA considers the success rate of grants submitted from the pilot projects when making decisions about funding future LCC pilot projects.

LCC pilot project investigators will become an integral part of the Center. They will participate in other LCC activities, creating a wider network of aging scholars at the University of Minnesota and nation-wide. We will leverage data, methods, and experience across all LCC members to enhance the science. We will achieve this through mentoring, informal gatherings, seminars, and grant writing workshops.

Eligibility

All postdocs, research scientists, and faculty members who are eligible for PI status at their home institution may apply. We will not consider proposals from graduate students.

Budget

We aim to fund four or five one-year pilot projects per year with budgets between \$15,000 to \$45,000 in direct costs per project. Our average budget for pilot projects to date has been ~\$26,000. If you have a more ambitious project you would like to discuss, please contact lifecourse@umn.edu.

Pilot project funds must be used to cover expenses related to the proposed study (e.g., for a graduate RA, to collect preliminary data that will inform a larger future study, to purchase relevant data for preliminary analyses, etc.) within guidelines for federally allowable expenses. Pilot funds for faculty salaries are limited to \$10,000/year, including fringe, per investigator and are subject to the NIH salary cap. Funds may be used to pay collaborators outside the University of Minnesota as consultants on the proposed project, limited to \$10,000. Funds may not be used for conference or other dissemination-related travel.

Proposals for research led by a non-University of Minnesota PI are limited to \$25,000/year, including indirect costs.

Please email lifecourse@umn.edu if you have any questions about developing a competitive budget.

Letter of Intent Requirements

- Title
- Investigators (lead and collaborating investigators)
 - Names, departments/units, email addresses
 - Discuss your team's diversity in terms of interdisciplinarity, career stages, and backgrounds (we strongly encourage applications from individuals or teams with members from historically underrepresented groups) (~¼ page)
- Additional items (1 page maximum, single-spaced with half inch margins, size 11 font)
 - Short abstract and anticipated outcome(s) (e.g., an NIH grant proposal) (~¼ page)
 - Clear description of relevance of project to [LCC themes](#) (~¼ page)
 - Rough budget request (~ ½ page)

Submit a letter of intent to lifecourse@umn.edu, Subject: Pilot Project Letter of Intent, by no later than midnight on December 5, 2022.

Pilot Project Proposal Requirements

- PHS 398 [Face Page](#)
- Specific Aims (1 page)
 - Single-spaced with half inch margins, size 11 font
 - The Specific Aims should describe concisely the goals of the proposed research and summarizes the expected outcome(s), including the impact that the results of the proposed research will exert on the research field(s) involved. Aims also should include the specific objectives of the research proposed (e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop new technology).
- Research Strategy (2 pages)
 - Single-spaced with half inch margins, size 11 font
 - The Research Strategy should
 - Highlight the significance of the project and clearly tie the proposed research to LCC and NIA research priorities;
 - Provide a brief overview of relevant literature;
 - Indicate two to three innovative aspects of the proposed research;
 - Provide a summary of the data and analytical approach to be used for the pilot work.
- Timeline (Up to half a page)
 - Tasks and goals for the project broken down by quarters
 - Plan for submitting a larger grant to NIA, specifying the mechanism and expected date for submission
- Budget
 - Detailed budget using [PHS 398 Form 4](#)
 - Detailed budget justification--please make it clear how the requested funds, in the budget categories in the PHS form, will support the proposed pilot work
- [NIH Biosketch](#) for each key member of the research team (biosketches for graduate students are not required but are permitted if the graduate RA is a key intellectual contributor to the proposed project)
- Human subjects
 - Please indicate if your research involves human subjects. If you already have human subjects approval, please attach the approval letter (or exemption letter if applicable).

Submit proposals to lifecourse@umn.edu, Subject: Pilot Project Proposal, by no later than midnight on February 5, 2023.

Projects selected for funding will also be required to provide an NIH section on human subjects

- NIH protection of human subjects information including enrollment table
- IRB approval will be necessary by July 1, 2023.

Awarded Project Requirements and Outcomes

Funded projects will be expected to provide 1) two quarterly progress reports, 2) an end of year report in the format required by NIA in April of the project year, 3) a final report due at the end of the one-year period; 4) updates regarding grant submissions resulting from the pilot project by April 1 in the following three years.

All presentations and publications resulting from the pilot project must acknowledge grant P30AG066613 from the National Institute on Aging (NIA), and all publications must be submitted to PubMed Central. LCC staff are available to answer questions regarding NIH's public access policy and to administratively support the submission of research products to PubMed Central.

Review Criteria

- Topic area: Alignment with [LCC themes](#) and [NIA Population and Social Processes Branch priorities](#)

- Potential impact: Extending prior science via conceptual innovation and cutting-edge methodology
- Scientific design: Including conceptual framework, methodology, and measurement
- Feasibility: Timeline and budget appropriate for project goals and design
- End product goals: Does the proposed pilot work hold promise to result in a competitive proposal for external funding (ideally through NIA)?
- Investigators:
 - Early stage investigators:
 - Track record of publication
 - Strong interest in grant proposal process and intention to submit a proposal
 - Consultants and mentors appropriate for the project
 - Mid-career and senior investigators
 - History of high impact research
 - Funding record
 - Building a new team or moving in a new research direction -- special consideration will be given to scholars who have not previously done aging research but who show promise and interest in moving into aging research
 - Investigative team has high potential for funding from NIA

Timeline

Based on NIA expectations, pilot project investigators must meet several deadlines pre and post award. The deadlines for submission and review, execution of the study, and post award deliverables are provided below.

Submission and Review Process:

October 25, 2022	Request for Proposals for 2023-2024 LCC Pilot Grants released
November 16, 2022	Proposal process presentation and Q&A
December 5, 2022	Required Letter of Intent (LOI) due, with brief description
December 22, 2022	LOI feedback to investigators
February 5, 2023	Proposals due
Early March, 2023	LCC Advisory Board Review
Mid-March, 2023	Funding decisions
March 30, 2023	Revisions due on proposals that will be sent to NIA for approval
March 30, 2023	IRB and enrollment tables due for selected projects
May to June 2023	NIA approval process

Award deadlines

July 1, 2023	Study start date; IRB approval needed, if required
September 30, 2023	1st quarterly report
January 15, 2024	2nd quarterly report
March 30, 2024	RPPR formatted report due
June 30, 2024	Final report due
Summer 2024	Support for grant proposal submission provided

Post Award Requirements

Fall 2024	Publications and grants submitted
March 30, 2025	Updated report on pilot project outcomes
March 30, 2026	Updated report on pilot project outcomes

For more information, contact:

lifecourse@umn.edu with subject line, LCC Pilot Program