

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

Call for Pilot Project Proposals 2024/2025

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, 2024 through June 30, 2025. We seek innovative pilot proposals addressing aging contexts, trends, dynamics, and disparities in health that align with [LCC research themes](#). Preference will be given to

- proposals from new and early stage investigators,
- scholars from underrepresented backgrounds,
- new interdisciplinary teams,
- proposals that involve current [LCC members](#) or [NDIRA members](#),
- projects that use [IPUMS](#) or [EdSHARe](#) data.

Pilot funds are intended to support research that will lead to proposals for external funding.

You can check out our currently and previously funded pilot projects [here](#).

Key Dates

- Informational presentation and Q&A session: **November 15, 2023 at 10:00am CST**
- Submission of a required letter of intent (LOI). Deadline: **December 1, 2023 at 5:00pm CST**
- Proposal due date: **January 19, 2024 at 5:00pm CST**
- 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 that shape 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's 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

- are from new and early stage investigators, scholars from underrepresented backgrounds, and/or new interdisciplinary teams,
- involve current [LCC members](#) or [NDIRA members](#),
- use [IPUMS](#) or [EdSHARe](#) data.

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 investigator 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. These funds must be used in one project year (7/1/24-6/30/25), which is generally too short of a time to generate AND publish/disseminate results.

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 5pm CST on December 1, 2023.

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 summarize 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 include a human subjects determination letter from your institution's IRB (e.g., [UMN form](#)). If your project is deemed not human subjects, please describe why it is not human subjects research (a few sentences could be sufficient)

Submit proposals to lifecourse@umn.edu, Subject: Pilot Project Proposal, by no later than 5pm CST on January 19, 2024.

Projects selected for funding that qualify as human subjects research will be required to provide NIH protection of human subjects information, including a planned enrollment table. IRB approval will be necessary by July 1, 2024.

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 (including updated human subjects enrollment, if required), 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 6, 2023	Request for Proposals for 2023-2024 LCC Pilot Grants released
November 16, 2023	Proposal process presentation and Q&A
December 1, 2023	Required Letter of Intent (LOI) due, with brief description
December 8, 2023	LOI feedback to investigators
January 19, 2024	Proposals due
Early March, 2024	LCC Advisory Board Review
Mid-March, 2024	Funding decisions
March 29, 2024	Revisions due on proposals that will be sent to NIA for approval
March 29, 2024	(if human subjects) IRB must be pending
March 29, 2024	(if human subjects) NIH Human Subjects Materials must be submitted
May to June 2024	NIA approval process

Award deadlines

July 1, 2024	Study start date; IRB approval needed, if required
September 30, 2024	1st quarterly report
January 15, 2025	2nd quarterly report
March 28, 2025	RPPR formatted report due, (if required) updated human subjects enrollment
June 30, 2025	Final report due

Summer 2025

Support for grant proposal submission provided

Post Award Requirements

Fall 2025

Publications and grants submitted

March 30, 2026

Updated report on pilot project outcomes

March 30, 2027

Updated report on pilot project outcomes and final human subjects enrollment

For more information, contact:

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