



Pittsburgh Pepper Center Pilot Study Funding Announcement

Letter of Intent Due: February 16, 2024

Letter of Intent Decision: March 11, 2024

Full Proposals Due: April 26, 2024

Award Notification: June 10, 2024

Proposed Start Date: July 1, 2024

Purpose:

To develop novel multidisciplinary research related to aging, balance, mobility, and falls that has a high potential to lead to an R01 or equivalent progression. For this funding cycle, we are especially interested in proposals that **build new collaborations** between either 1) University of Pittsburgh investigators without prior Pepper affiliation or 2) Investigators already affiliated with the Pittsburgh Pepper Center and who have novel proposals spanning two different areas of special interest (such as collaboration of a basic science and clinical investigator) 3) **NEW!** Collaborations between investigators at Pitt with investigators at other Pepper Centers (<https://www.peppercenter.org/>).

- **We encourage proposals led by or including junior investigators who are participants in the Pepper Research Education Component (REC).**
- We encourage geroscience and translational aging research to build bridges between pre-clinical basic scientists and clinical researchers, or between clinical researchers and investigators working in the areas of practice and policy.
- Proposals that build on existing funded studies or involve existing data are encouraged, keeping in mind innovation and expansion remain essential in a study design that uses an existing dataset. We wish to promote research related to our areas of special interest that include: bioenergetics, body composition, biology of mobility, neural control of movement, medication-related issues, genetics, biomarkers and aging, inflammation, senescence, and special populations, particularly those in long-term care and other congregate settings.
- Proposals require the inclusion of a) a Pepper investigator (excluding Pilot/Exploratory Studies Core (PESC) leaders Daniel Forman and Aditi Gurkar) and b) biostatistical input from the DMAIC core (Subashan Perera PhD ksp9@pitt.edu or Charity Patterson PhD cgp22@pitt.edu) unless you are including your own biostatistician.

Eligibility:

- A. The primary investigator must have faculty status; however, post-docs may apply as co- PI with their faculty sponsor.
- There must be at least two investigators named in the proposal, preferably from different disciplines. At least one must be a **full-time faculty member** from any School within the University of Pittsburgh or Carnegie Mellon University.

B. Core participation:

- All proposals must involve the support of at least one Pepper Core. This could involve consultation with a core or use of core resources such as registry for recruitment, usage of SMART center to see participants, frailty assays in model organisms. (Find core details at: <https://www.pepper.pitt.edu/about/#coredescriptions>)
- Proposals must confirm an in-person meeting with the leader of the involved core.
- Please contact the Data Management, Analysis and Informatics core (DMAIC): Subashan Perera, PhD (ksp9@pitt.edu) or Charity Patterson, PhD (cgp22@pitt.edu) at least 3 weeks before submissions if Pepper Statistical Services will be needed.
- Please confirm the Pepper cores involved in the project and consultation with DMAIC (check box on the cover sheet).

- C. All awarded pilot investigators and research team members must have current certifications for CITI training (funding contingent on certification documentation).

This RFA does not provide support for:

- A developmental project, including proposals designed to support a project that will provide a new technique, tool, or application for a specific Pepper core.
- Investigators funded with a Pepper Pilot in the last two years.

Types of proposals:

Proposals may request up to \$40,000.00.

Application Process:

****Proposals are to be submitted electronically as one complete PDF file****

Letter of Intent: 1 page only (submit electronically by February 16, 2024)

We encourage Pitt investigators to work with other Pepper Center Investigators

(<https://www.peppercenter.org/>)

LOI requirements

- Descriptive title of proposed research
- Contact Investigator: name, institution, academic rank, e-mail address
- Co-Investigators: name, institutions, roles
- Pepper Core(s) involved in the pilot proposal
- Hypothesis, rationale, significance, and aims of the study
- Description of study/plans
- How the study reflects Pitt OAIC mission
- How the data generated will be utilized for future funding

Full Application: (submit electronically by April 26, 2024)

1. Cover letter: All proposals should include a cover letter from the PI(s) describing 1) how the proposal fits the mission of the Pepper Center (aging, balance, mobility, and falls), 2) how one or both PIs meet the requirement of having existing Pepper collaborations and an association with a Pepper Core, 3) if there is a co-PI, what interests and skills the co-PI brings to the investigation, 4) what Pepper thematic areas the proposal addresses, 5) what Pepper Core resources are involved, and 6) why the work will be able to yield preliminary findings by Summer 2025
2. Pilot Proposal Form and Checklist: Please provide a completed form/checklist following the cover letter in your proposal. The form is attached at the end of this document.
3. Structured Abstract: All pilot proposals must include a structured abstract, not to exceed ½ page (single-spaced), with the following information:
 - a. Specific aims
 - b. Brief background
 - c. Summary of methods
 - d. Future use of data
4. Proposal: The research proposal should include specific aims (1 page), a brief background, preliminary studies (if any), methods including statistical rationale, future use of data, and a timeline (3 pages). The proposal should be no longer than 4 pages, single-spaced. References can be included on a single page outside the 4-page limit.
5. Cores: The proposal MUST involve at least one of the Pepper Cores (excluding the PESC). This should be described in the cover letter and the methods section.
6. Budget: Include a budget request and brief budget justification (see Budget Considerations section below).
7. Biosketches: NIH biographical sketches are required for co-PIs and all faculty participants.
8. Human Subjects: Human studies must include a human subjects section (not in the page limit) AND a draft consent form. Vertebrate animal studies must include an appropriate animal studies protection plan.
9. Written confirmation from the relevant Departmental or Division Heads confirming that **no faculty salary can be assigned to this pilot** and that another source of funding exists to account for the effort of the proposed work.

Budget Considerations:

Proposed budgets must include estimates for any Pepper Core resources the investigator plans to use to implement the pilot project. Pepper Cores are supported by the Pepper Center grant to provide consultation for project development and cost estimates for Core use during project implementation. Thus, if the project proposes to use Pepper Cores for activities related to recruitment or data set access, clinical measures, engineering or radiological services, metabolic studies, or data management, the investigators should consult with Core leadership during the development of the pilot project, as described below.

Review Considerations:

1. Responsive to the request for applications
2. Standard NIH criteria: significance, approach, innovation, investigator's environment
3. Innovation and potential for growth
4. Specification of how future work would be informed by results of the proposed study
5. Potential for future independent funding

6. Feasibility within cost and time constraints
7. Quality of the multidisciplinary collaboration
8. Documented collaboration with at least one of the Pepper Cores

Review Process:

Final applications will be reviewed by at least two reviewers for evaluation and scoring. Applications will be ranked and the ranks tallied for funding priority before presentation to the Pepper Advisory Committee.

Submission:

Submit electronically as one complete file in PDF format to:

Bari Guzikowski

bmg96@pitt.edu

Additional Program Information:

PLEASE NOTE: No indirect costs will be provided.

Funding cannot be released until relevant IRB/IACUC research certifications are completed. Since the majority of funds must be spent by June 30th, 2024 to qualify for consideration of an extension, consider applying for the IRB/IACUC application while the proposal is under review.

Obligations of awardees:

- Upon notice of award, successful applicants will be asked to sign a short written agreement promising to comply with all applicable Pepper policies. All awardees will **provide progress reports every 6 months** during the period of award, and a Pepper staff member will contact awardees for progress reports. These biannual progress reports are similar in format to an NIH progress report, listing the specific aims and any deviations from them, recruitment progress as appropriate, results, publications, and any related or follow-up applications or awards for funding. Any requests for revision of aims or budget during the course of the project should be sent in writing to PESC leaders, Drs. Daniel Forman and Aditi Gurkar.
- Awardees are also expected to provide a final report and **present their completed work or work in progress at the Pepper Center Seminar Series and/or Retreat.** Awardees will provide updates about funding and publications annually for a minimum of 3 years after the period of award.
- The awardee or a member of their investigative team must attend 50% of the monthly Pepper-sponsored and affiliated lectures or 50% of the REC Seminars advertised on the Pepper Center website (www.pepper.pitt.edu) as elemental components of the awardee's training and anticipated development.
- **All awardees MUST cite the Pepper Award (P30 AG024827) in subsequent related publications and ensure that related publications are submitted to PubMed Central with the P30 attribution.**

For information and questions specific to the application process (such as clarification of due dates), contact:

Bari Guzikowski

bmg96@pitt.edu

For questions about the responsiveness of your planned submission, contact:

Daniel Forman, MD– Pepper Pilot Core Director
formand@pitt.edu

Aditi Gurkar, PhD – Pepper Pilot Core Director
agurkar1@pitt.edu

For further information about Pepper Cores see our website at www.pepper.pitt.edu.

Pepper Center Pilot Funding Program Form and Checklist

Title of Proposal _____

Co-Principal Investigators

Co-PI #1 Name _____
Academic Rank _____
Primary Department/School _____
Mailing Address _____
Phone _____
Email _____

Co-PI #2 Name _____
Academic Rank _____
Primary Department/School _____
Mailing Address _____
Phone _____
Email _____

Total cost _____ Human Subjects: Yes ___ No ___ Vertebrate Animals: Yes ___ No ___

Items to be included in the Full Application (**please complete this checklist**):

- _____ Cover letter (**1 page**)
- _____ This Form
- _____ Acknowledgement of Pepper Core(s) consulted/involved. Please mention core(s):
- _____ Abstract (**Structured: a.) Specific Aims, b.) Brief background, c.) Summary of Methods, d.) Future use of the data; Abstract should be no more than 1/2 page, single-spaced**)
- _____ Proposal (**Maximum of 4 pages; Font size at 11pt Arial; Margins at 1/2 inch**)
- _____ Budget and budget justification (**1 page**)
- _____ Biographical sketches
- _____ Human subjects/consent/ vertebrate animals

If an Award is made, the awardee will abide by all guidelines established by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or IACUC.

Signature of co-Principal Investigator *Date*

Signature of co-Principal Investigators *Date*

Submit electronically as one complete file to:

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