

The Rutgers Health
Center for Biomedical Informatics & Health Artificial Intelligence (BMIHAI), and
Center for Data Science (CDS)
present

2026 Request for Proposals

Pilot Program in Generative and Agentic AI

Pilot Project Opportunity Purpose:

This RFA invites proposals from interdisciplinary teams across Rutgers Health to advance innovative AI-driven research collaborations that enhance research discovery and improve clinical care. An important barrier to conducting AI-related research is the lack of access to the technical skills and computing resources for development of the initial versions of AI-driven systems. The program will support and provide analysis for a select number of pilot projects demonstrating near-term impact, such as publications, grant submissions, or intellectual property through the implementation of artificial intelligence (e.g., large language models, generative AI, agentic systems). Priority will be given to teams with analysis-ready datasets, tractable but high-impact AI applications, and a willingness to collaborate with the emerging Rutgers Health Data Science Hub, which provides technical expertise, infrastructure, and data stewardship support. This program aims to establish a foundation for a sustainable platform that will foster future AI innovations and collaborations across Rutgers Health.

Release Date: December 22, 2025

Information Webinar: January 9, 2025 from 11:00am-12:00pm
(host: Evan Johnson, CDS Director; BMIHAI Associate Director) Webinar
recording will be available upon request. Register here:
https://rutgers.zoom.us/meeting/register/BA_iBA5HRt2xkMmg3UVWJA

Letter of Intent Deadline: January 23, 2026
submit here: <https://shprutgers.jotform.com/253525984032156>

Pre-selection Notification: Feb 2, 2026

Application Deadline: **March 23, 2026**

Award Notification: **April 20, 2026**

Earliest Start Date: **June 1, 2026 (dependent on regulatory approvals)**

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I. Overview of the Program

The Rutgers Health (RH) Center for Data Science (CDS) was established in 2022 to formally foster a data-centric research ecosystem within the institution, facilitating the acquisition, management, analysis, and democratization of biomedical research data. CDS focuses on three primary pillars to engage faculty and students, including analytical collaboration and research support, community building, and data science education. In addition, the RH Center for Biomedical Informatics & Health Artificial Intelligence (BIMHAI) <https://ifh.rutgers.edu/center-for-biomedical-informatics-and-health-artificial-intelligence/> was established in 2024 to serve as the catalyst for a transformative effort that establishes Rutgers as a national and international leader in computational medicine and health AI. The overarching goal of this initiative was to bring together substantial existing, but currently siloed, strengths in the broad area of biomedical informatics, including bioinformatics, clinical informatics, clinical research informatics, public health informatics, translational bioinformatics, etc., and substantially expanding them, especially in the area of health AI, making them collectively much more than the sum of their parts.

This Pilot Program in AI is supported by Rutgers Roadmaps for Collective Academic Excellence Initiative <https://academicaffairs.rutgers.edu/roadmaps-collective-academic-excellence>. Up to three (3) Pilot Grants supporting multi-disciplinary and inter-Chancellor Led Units (CLUs) research teams will be awarded. The objective of this mechanism is to support interdisciplinary projects and teams that lack the in-house expertise and resources to implement artificial intelligence applications in their research or clinical workflows. Collaborative teams are expected to justify a key research or clinical need, provide access to a unique, analysis-ready data resource, and have a clear vision of how AI-driven functionalities or features can be applied to address that need. Teams should propose an innovative project with AI-ready data, whether public or not public, that will facilitate the initial development of an impactful AI system. An AI-ready data resource is defined as a dataset that is cleaned, structured, well-documented, and appropriately licensed for direct integration with minimal additional preprocessing.

Applicants should also articulate how the proposed work will position them for future external funding opportunities, including alignment with upcoming RFAs and future grant applications. Teams are expected to work closely with the Rutgers AI and Data Science Hub and meet regularly with Hub-provided AI engineers to co-develop, test, and deploy their proposed solutions. The Pilot program aims to foster new Rutgers-wide collaborations, promote publications, seed extramural grant applications, and intellectual property generation. It will also serve as a basis to establish a platform to facilitate future applications in AI for research and clinical teams throughout RH.

II. Requirements for 2026 RFA

Letter of Intent (LOI) Proposal

- LOI should list PI and co-PIs.
- LOI should be structured similarly to the NIH Specific Aims page and include Significance, Rationale, Hypothesis, Specific Aims, Innovation/Impact etc.
- LOI should include a paragraph describing sustainability after the pilot, including existing resources and plans for future extramural funding, including agency, institute, study section, etc.
- LOI should include NIH Biosketches for PI and co-PIs
To submit, click here: [2026 AI Pilot - Letter of Intent](#)
- LOI will be utilized to pre-screen projects. Selected applicants will be notified of invitation to submit a full proposal by **February 23rd, 2026**.
- Submit full proposals by **March 23rd, 2026, if selected**.
(link will be provided for selected proposals).

Information Webinar

- The information webinar will be held on January 9, 2025, 11:00am-12:00 pm (convenor: Evan Johnson, NJMS CDS Director and IFH BMIHAI Associate Director) to explain proposal requirements, review, and selection process. Webinar recording be available upon request.
To register please click here: [Information Webinar Registration](#). Link to Information Webinar will be sent after registration.

Application

- Primary Investigator (PI) for this Pilot Grant must be a full time Rutgers Health faculty member. Other Co-PIs or co-Is can be faculty from any Rutgers University School, Institute, or Chancellor Led Unit (CLU).
- Collaborators or co-Is outside Rutgers are also allowed.
- Multi-disciplinary and inter-CLU collaborations are encouraged.

Type of Support and Duration

- Support in the form of percent effort of a collaborative Hub-based AI engineer is the only type of support offered through this program.
- The program does not provide percent effort for other faculty, staff, or students. The program also does not provide funding for supplies, data acquisition, processing or storage.
- The project period is one year. One short extension may be permitted, assuming sufficient progress has been made and a reasonable justification is provided.
- Up to three (3) Pilot Grants will be awarded this year.

III. Application Process

Eligibility:

- Primary Investigator (PI) must hold a Rutgers Health full-time faculty appointment.
- Co-PIs or co-Is can be faculty from any Rutgers University School, Institute, or CLU.
- Multi-disciplinary and inter-CLU collaborations are encouraged.
- Research teams must have access to an AI-ready data resource (defined above) and be willing to work with the AI engineer throughout the duration of the project.
- Faculty members at all ranks are eligible. Junior faculty members are especially encouraged to apply.
- PIs are limited to one proposal per cycle, but co-PIs/co-Is may participate in several proposals.

Letter of Intent:

All applicants are required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) Proposal by **January 23, 2026**, via online portal here: [2026 AI Pilot - Letter of Intent](#). The LOI should be structured similarly to an NIH Specific Aims page and include Significance, Rationale, Hypothesis, Specific Aims, Innovation/Impact etc. (up to 1 page). The PI or first MPI will serve as the contact PI. LOIs do not require institutional review before submission.

LOIs will be utilized to pre-screen proposals and only selected proposals will be invited to submit a full proposal. Awardees will be notified of invitation to submit a full proposal by **February 23rd, 2026**.

Proposal Submission:

Final **proposal** must be submitted by **March 23rd, 2026**, via online application system. Links to the full **proposal** will be forwarded to awardees upon notification of invitation to submit full **proposal** by **February 23rd 2026**.

Institutional Review Requirements:

This is an internal application and **does not** require review by Rutgers Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP).

The proposal may require approval of the Dean/Chair of the PI/Co-PIs based on school/departmental policy or if the project involves in-kind support.

Proposal Requirements:

A full proposal must contain the following elements:

	Page Limits
AI Pilot in Health AI online form	online form
Aims	1 page
Research Strategy (NIH style formatting), excluding references	1-3 pages
References	unlimited
Plan for sustainability, including existing resources and plans for future extramural funding seeded by this Pilot Grant mechanism	up 1 page
NIH Style Biosketch for PIs, co-PIs, and other key personnel (as one document)	up to 5 pages for each Biosketch
Support letter from the Unit/Department chair	as needed
Justification of overlap with existing funded projects, if any	unlimited

- Aims page should follow NIH format and include Significance, Rationale, Hypothesis, Specific Aims, Innovation/Impact etc.
- Research Proposal should adopt NIH style and should include Background and Significance, Innovation and Impact, Research Approach, and Timeline sections. The proposal should also include sample data.
- Existing resources (if any) including clinical, research, or other sources of support to sustain the project beyond the pilot period.
- Plan for extramural funding must include details on prospective independent extramural grant applications (including agencies, institutes, potential study sections etc.) that the team will pursue to support continuation of the proposed project, beyond this Pilot Grant period.
- If PI or co-PIs have a funded project with similar aims/objectives, justification for Pilot Grant funds must be provided (as “Justification of overlap with existing funded projects” submission field). This could include Other Support documents if needed.
- Font and Margin Requirements: 0.5” margins and Arial 11 Font, single spaced.

Project Support Guidelines:

- Project period is one-year, with a short extension possible (assuming sufficient progress and reasonable justification).
- No direct funding will be provided; instead, dedicated effort from an AI engineer from the Rutgers Health Data Science Hub will be allocated to support the project's defined Scope of Work.
- Salary may **NOT** be requested for faculty or PIs, support staff, graduate students or assistants, postdoctoral researchers or consultants.
- No funds are available to generate collaborations.
- F&A (indirect) cost is not allowed.

Regulatory Approvals:

- If needed, awardees must obtain all regulatory approvals (e.g. IRB, IACUC, or Radiation Safety) and meet all compliance requirements prior to project start and maintain approvals during the entire length of the award, as necessary.
- When the team applies for IRB approval or exemption, the application should indicate that their research is supported by the Rutgers Health Pilot Grant in Biomedical Informatics and Health AI.
- The team must keep their IRB approval/exemption current and active for the duration of the award period. Copies of approval letters should be sent to the Pilot Grant administrator at BMIHAI_GenAI@ifh.rutgers.edu.

Proposal Review Process:

The review process includes:

- Administrative review for completeness of the proposal
- Evaluation for meeting eligibility requirements
- Solicitation of expert reviews
- Final review by the Review Committee

IV. Post-Award management

Reporting Requirements:

- PIs/Co-PIs will be expected to complete an annual report that summarizes progress on the project, as well as all abstracts, presentations, publications, and proposals/funded awards that resulted from the Pilot Grant. This is required for reporting and evaluation purposes.
- PIs/Co-PIs with incomplete final reports may not be allowed to compete for any other program in Rutgers Health Roadmap Initiative.

Additional Requirements:

Research teams will be expected to present results of their Pilot Project as an oral/poster presentation at the Annual Rutgers Health Symposium for Biomedical Informatics and Health AI.

Award Recognition:

Any publication or patent that results from this funding should include the following language, receive a PMCID number, and be linked in My Bibliography:

“Research reported in this publication was supported by Rutgers University through the Rutgers Health Pilot Grant in AI. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the institution.”

Other Notices:

- Abstracts and names of PI/Co-PIs for the selected projects may be posted on an institutional website.
- Awards are not transferable or renewable.

Questions/Inquiries:

For Inquiries, please email BMIHAI_GenAI@ifh.rutgers.edu

