Rutgers Health Office of Research
Pilot Award and Research Focus Group Support Program—December 2025

A. PILOT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND ELIGIBILITY:

We are pleased to announce a new pilot funding and research focus group building opportunity for Rutgers Health faculty investigators with current or recent R01 or R01-equivalent awards (see **Appendix A**). This **Pilot Award and Research Focus Group Support Program**, including Tracks 1-4 below, is made available by the Rutgers Health Office of Research (O2R). The intent is to: (1) foster interdisciplinary collaborations between investigators from **two different** Schools, major Centers, or Institutes; (2) encourage team science and large externally supported research programs; (3) advance basic, clinical, and translational research efforts by expanding the research portfolio of Rutgers Health investigators; and (4) encourage the nucleation of research focus groups that can then apply for Tracks 1-3 or other internal and external collaborative research projects. The proposed efforts requesting support are expected to be impactful, with a likelihood of leading to extramural funding as the expected milestone.

Applications must be reviewed and approved by the Deans or Directors (or their designees, such as the Senior/Associate Research Deans) of the two primary collaborating units prior to submission. MPIs who are part of the same Center/Institute in terms of their grant administration do not qualify. This Program will extend as an annual opportunity for two consecutive years with applications due in January of each year (**01/30/2026** –and– **01/29/2027**). Applicants will be notified of the funding decision during the second half of February of the applicable year. The success of the program will be assessed after two years.

We invite applications for support to the four tracks described below. Please direct any questions to: svcaar@rbhs.rutgers.edu

Track 1 (T1): **Cross-Unit Collaboration Pilot** – encourages a new, interdisciplinary research collaboration between two units that is expected to lead to an R01-equivalent MPI grant application led by two investigators (Co-PIs) from two different Rutgers Health Schools, major Centers, or Institutes. Center and Institute faculty will be considered based on the School of their primary faculty appointment. Since a similar program partially supported by O2R currently exists between the two medical schools, no more than one of the two applicant Co-PIs may be from one of the two medical schools.

Each MPI should have current or recent (within past two years) R01-equivalent funding, with at least one of the two Co-PIs holding an R01-equivalent that extends two or more years from the date of the pilot application. One of the two Co-PIs needs to be the designated contact applicant for this T1 mechanism.

Each pilot will be supported by up to $50,000 for one year of funding with carryover of up to 6 months. We anticipate funding up to five pilot awards for Track 1.

Track 2 (T2): **Major Grant Stimulus Pilot** – provides seed funding towards research program building via a major federal funding opportunity, such as an NIH P, U, or equivalent opportunities. The expectation is that the major grant would be $750,000 or more annual direct costs for four or more years; Equipment or Facilities major grants, Training Grants, and R01s above $500,000 direct costs, are not included in this pilot mechanism.

Each proposed PI/Co-PI (no more than two Co-PIs will be considered) should have current funding of one or more R01 equivalents that extends at least three years beyond the date of the pilot application. If an MPI mechanism is being considered, one of the two Co-PIs needs to be the designated contact applicant for this T2 mechanism.

Each pilot will be supported by up to $75,000 in year 1, with additional potential for $50,000 in year 2 if well-justified based on criteria that will be provided to awardees. Carryover will be considered on a case-by-case basis. We anticipate funding up to three pilot awards per year for Track 2.

Track 3 (T3): **Multiple R01 Pilot** – encourages investigators with one or more **current** NIH R01 (or R01-equivalent) research award(s) to pursue an additional (i.e., 2nd, 3rd) R01 or equivalent federal award, if they have held an additional R01 that has ended within the last three years of the pilot application and, ideally, have continued to publish in the area of the intended new R01. Aiming to secure MPI grants is permitted for this track provided no more than two Co-PIs are proposed for the additional R01-equivalent, with each Co-PI holding an active R01 that extends three or more years beyond the end of the funding year of the proposed pilot. The (M)PIs must be Rutgers Health faculty. If MPIs are involved, one of the two Co-PIs needs to be the designated contact applicant for this T3 mechanism.

Each pilot will be supported by up to $50,000 for one year of funding, with carryover permitted for up to 6 months if justified. We anticipate funding up to six pilot awards for Track 3.

All investigators receiving a pilot award for any of the three tracks above are expected to:

i. Apply for extramural funding within six months of the end of the 1-year pilot project period (Tracks 1 and 3), and within one year of the end of 2nd year of the pilot (Track 2);
ii. Provide a brief progress report to Rutgers Health O2R on the outcomes of the pilot award, including any extramural funding application(s), within three months of the end of the 1-year pilot project period; and,
iii. Inform the Rutgers Health O2R of the outcome of the extramural funding application(s).

Track 4 (T4): Research Focus Group – promotes establishment of research focus groups within one or more Schools/Centers/Institutes that includes 1-4 Co-Lead investigators (with one of the four serving as the designated contact applicant for this T4 mechanism and other group members at the discretion of the Co-Leads). The intent is to provide initial seed funding of $5,000 per year for up to two years to hold joint group meetings and specific discussions that promote joint publications and working towards preparing for a P, U, or equivalent grant or more than one MPI R01/R01-equivalent grants. A report from each supported group is expected after year 1 of support to document any meetings, joint publications planned or in progress, and any relevant work towards grant application. We anticipate supporting up to 8 research focus groups per year for Track 4.

B. ANTICIPATED O2R INVESTMENT:

T1: up to 5 awards/year x $50,000/award = $250,000/year for two years [$500,000 total]
T2: up to 3 awards/year x up to $125,000/award x 2 years = up to $375,000/year for two years [$750,000 total]
T3: up to 6 awards/year x $50,000/award = $300,000/year for two years [$600,000 total]
T4: up to 8 groups/year x $5,000/group x 2 years = $80,000/year for two years [$160,000 total]
Total Anticipated Investment Over 2 Years:
$500,000 (T1) + $750,000 (T2) + $600,000 (T3) + $160,000 (T4) = **$2.01M**

Projected Return on Investment (ROI) after three years from the beginning of the program (assumes 33-50% success of funded pilots for T1-T3 and two R01s for T4; dollars represent total direct and indirect costs):
T1: two R01s secured from the five funded pilots per year of support ($2.5M/R01 x 2 R01s x 2 years)
T2: one P/U secured grant per year ($6M/P-U x 1 P-U x 2 years)
T3: three R01s per year from the six funded pilots per year ($2.5M/R01 x 3 R01s x 2 years)
T4: one R01 per year ($2.5M/R01 x 1 R01 x 2 years)
Total Projected ROI: $42M [represents a 20-fold return on investment if the above projections are correct]

C. APPLICATION PROCESS:

Application Deadlines: 01/30/2026 –and– **01/29/2027**

Please note that incomplete and late applications will not be considered.

A designated contact applicant (Contact PI) is required to complete the application on the Rutgers Health *InfoReady* microsite using the competition entitled "**Rutgers Health Pilot Funding Program**."

The Contact PI will need to log in to *InfoReady* using their netid and first check that their User Profile is associated with "Rutgers Biomedical Health Sciences (RBHS)" microsite. After logging in, click on your name after "Hello, [Name]" in the upper right corner which will pull up your User Profile. Confirm that your "primary affiliation" is listed as "RBHS" or "Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey." If there is no primary affiliation, please add "RBHS" as your primary affiliation.

The required online application is accessed at:
https://rutgers.infoready4.com/#freeformCompetitionDetail/2002778

Instructions:

- Select the **one track** that aligns with the application type

  Track Selection (Select Only One):
  - Track 1: Cross-Unit Collaboration Pilot
  - Track 2: Major Grant Stimulus Pilot
  - Track 3: Multiple R01 Pilot
  - Track 4: Research Focus Group
- Complete **all required documents** of the application described below, and upload (as one pdf file)
- Upload the **required letter** from Dean(s)/Director(s)/or Research Dean(s) (as one pdf file)

Required Documents (uploaded as one pdf in the order listed below):

1. **Cover Page**, including the following information:
   a) **Proposal Title** (up to 200 characters with spaces)
   b) **Co-PI 1** (Designated Contact PI for the Pilot)
      First and Last Names (include degrees)
      Primary home unit (school, center or institute)
      Primary faculty appointment (school)
      Email address
   c) **Co-PI 2 (if applicable)**
      First and Last Names (include degrees)
      Primary home unit (school, center or institute)
      Primary faculty appointment (school)
      Email address
   d) **Additional Co-Leads for Track 4 only** (up to 2 additional, if applicable)
      First and Last Names (include degrees)
      Primary home unit (school, center or institute)
      Primary faculty appointment (school)
      Email address

2. **Proposal Summary/Abstract** (up to 300 words maximum, single space, Arial 11 font)

   Provide a summary of your proposed project (for T1-T3) or research focus group (T4) including objectives, significance, and expected outcomes.

3. **Proposal Narrative** (up to 5 pages single space for T1-T3, up to 2 pages for T4; Arial 11 font, 0.5-inch margins, including any Figures and Tables) addressing the following required sections (a-g below) and the track-specific review criteria (as applicable):
   a) Specific Aims and Objectives (T1-T4)
   b) Background/ Significance/ Innovation (including preliminary results, if applicable)
   c) Approach (T1-T3: study design, experiments proposed; T4: plans for the research focus group)
   d) Anticipated outcomes and results (T1-T4)
   e) <u>For T3 only</u>: Paragraph summarizing your history of holding a second, third (etc.) R01 within the last three years that you would like to regain and how this pilot support benefits this goal
   f) Multi-PI leadership plan (if applicable)
   g) Plans for extramural funding application(s)

4. **References** (up to 2 pages, not included in Proposal Narrative page limits). Please include all author names and do not truncate citations.

5. **Budget and Budget Justification** for T1-T3 the funding support request including:

   Personnel (salary support for research staff, postdocs, or students may be included; (M)PI/Co-I salary support is not permitted); *Equipment* (<$5,000); *Materials and Supplies*; *Consultant Services*; *Computer or Data Services*; and any *Other* cost categories must be justified. Note that Equipment >$5,000, Travel, Trainee/Tuition Costs, and Indirect Costs are <u>not permitted</u>. It is expected that the funds will stay at Rutgers and there are no external subcontract/consortium agreements.

   Only a brief budget justification is required for the T4 research focus groups.

6. **PI Documents**: For each Co-PI [T1-T3] and Co-Leads (T4), please include the following:
   a) **NIH Biosketch** (include personal statement and publications relevant to application)
   b) **NIH Other Support** page (include both internal and external support; active and pending during past three years)
   c) List of publications in the last three years for each of the Co-PI/Lead investigators (please separate original research from commentaries, editorials, letters, and reviews)

<u>D. REVIEW CRITERIA</u>:

<u>For T1-T3, proposals will be evaluated based on</u>:

- Significance and Innovation
- Experimental design and scientific merit of the approach
- Preliminary results (optional)
- Impact on biomedical and health care advances
- Strength and potential success of the research to lead to extramural funding

<u>For T4 only, proposals will be evaluated based on</u>:

- Significance of the research focus area
- Track record of the team
- Synergy of the investigators

<u>Additional Track-Specific Review Criteria</u>:

Track 1: Cross-Unit Collaboration Pilot

1. How does this project foster interdisciplinary collaboration between faculty from different schools?
2. How will the pilot data support future extramural funding applications?
3. What are the distinct contributions of each participating school/unit?

Track 2: Major Grant Stimulus Pilot

1. For which large NIH Research Program Project (P) grant, Research Project cooperative agreement (U), or equivalent funding opportunity are you preparing to submit?
2. How will this pilot funding enhance team science?
3. How will this pilot funding strengthen your proposal for the large grant application including any preliminary data or feasibility testing that will be generated?

Track 3: Multiple R01 Pilot

1. What is your current NIH R01 (or equivalent) funding status (active R01-type awards)?
2. What is the focus of your new R01 application in preparation?
3. How will this pilot project support the development of your new R01 submission?
4. What is the likelihood of the applicant's success?

Track 4: Research Focus Group

1. How will nucleating this research focus group lead to T1-T3 type applications?

APPENDIX A: RBHS definition of R01 Equivalents (August 4, 2021)
Available at: https://facultyaffairs.rbhs.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/rbhs-definition-of-r01-equivalents.pdf

Below are definitions from NIH that set the stage for the RBHS working definition of "R01 equivalents":

a. "The Research Project (R01) grant is an award made to support a discrete, specified, circumscribed project to be performed by the named investigator(s) in an area representing the investigator's specific interest and competencies" (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/r01.htm)
b. The NIH definition of R01 equivalent grants includes 'NIH expanded the R01 equivalent grant definition to include the DP1, DP2, DP5, R01, R37, R56, RF1, RL1, U01 and selected R35 activity codes.' (https://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2019/03/13/nih-annual-snapshot-fy-2018-by-the-numbers/)

a) Historically, the average length of an NIH R01 is 4.3 years (https://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2013/11/07/how-long-is-an-r01/), so as below, we will use 3 years to accommodate many research foundation competitive investigator-initiated research grants. The NIH also indicates that R01s are typically awarded for 3-5 years (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/funding_program.htm)

At RBHS, other grants can also qualify as R01 equivalents if they are research grants, investigator-initiated, and awarded after a rigorous peer review process similar to that for an R01. In addition, they need to:

1) Have 3 years minimum funding and are rigorously peer-reviewed. All of the grant types that NIH considers as R01 equivalent (listed above) qualify, with one exception being the R56, which is typically a bridging grant for 1-2 years. In addition, an NIH R00, given these criteria, also counts as an R01 equivalent given that it is a rigorous peer-reviewed and investigator-initiated funding mechanism. PIs of a project within a federal peer reviewed mechanism that contains multiple independent projects (e.g., P01 or U01) also can qualify as an R01 equivalent. Other NIH mechanisms that also qualify as R01 equivalent include '2+2 years' (four years total) mechanisms such as an R21-to-R33 transition.
2) Grants from other Federal Funding agencies shall also qualify as R01 equivalents if they meet the criteria above and are for $100,000/year or more as direct costs. Such grants include, but are not limited to, some mechanisms from the CDC, NSF, AHRQ, NASA, DARPA, Department of Energy, PCORI, Veterans Administration Merit Awards, and Dept. of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs.
3) Grants from non-federal funding agencies shall also qualify as R01 equivalents if they meet the criteria above. Many foundations (e.g., AHA, ACS, ADA, CCF, RWJF) award such research grants, some of which are highly competitive and peer-reviewed, so these grants can count as R01 equivalents if they meet these criteria. These same foundations award many types of grants; however, many of them may not meet the above criteria to be considered as R01 equivalents.
4) R01 equivalent grants need to be non-career-development type. Therefore, K-type grants, albeit very important to have from the career development perspective, are not considered R01-equivalent nor are foundation career development awards. Likewise, R21 grants, which are developmental/exploratory grants that can be useful for establishing new lines of research and lead to longer funding mechanisms, are not R01 equivalent. However, two R21 grants may be used to replace an R01 equivalent but the two R01 equivalents cannot be represented by four R21s.
5) 5) The two R01 equivalents can be held simultaneously or in succession; renewal of an R01 also is considered to be two R01 equivalents. At least one of the two R01 equivalents should extend 12 months beyond the date tenure takes effect.
6) Multiple-PI R01 grants (MPI) are considered as R01 equivalents. If the R01 equivalency is proposed to be met by two MPI R01s, it is preferable that the faculty member who wants to be considered for tenure serve as contact PI for at least one of the two MPI R01 grants.

Again, this list of R01 equivalents is not intended to be restrictive, but permissive, serving as a set of guidelines.