Center for Artificial Intelligence Research
Request for Applications for Pilot Awards

PURPOSE

The Center for Artificial Intelligence Research (CAIR) is seeking proposals for projects for innovative and translational artificial intelligence solutions to medical and health-related problems. The goal of the pilot project is to allow investigators to pursue novel and innovative ideas that will improve the likelihood of obtaining extramural funding. The funding is also meant to allow investigators to perform critical experiments, access core facilities, or improve analyses that address specific critiques raised by reviewers for extramural funding. Proposals that include collaboration with CAIR faculty and/or integration of AI Analysts from CAIR's Artificial Intelligence Modeling & Services (AIMS) unit are **strongly encouraged** and will be viewed favorably during the review process.

Successful proposals may include:

- Methods to create, evaluate, or implement medical science and artificial intelligence tools and algorithms.
- A rationale for local relevance and potential for generalizability.
- Describe how the proposed project advances research in the above-mentioned areas.
- Explain translational roadblocks that the proposed project will address and the anticipated benefits of overcoming them with Artificial Intelligence.
- Define a reasonable project plan feasible to complete in the project period.
- Demonstrate collaboration with CAIR faculty and/or AIMS AI Analysts in the design, development, or implementation of AI methods or infrastructure.
- Leverage expertise from the AIMS unit in data modeling, algorithm development, or AI deployment.

Additionally, successful proposals will exemplify the following characteristics:

- Center-funded applications that leverage Center funding
- Junior faculty applications
- Utilization of the core facilities of the Center
- Applications with multiple-PIs, cross-departmental and new collaborations
- Propose a data science-focused research problem.
- Explain why the research is important, novel, and had the potential for impact.
- Explain why the team and the research are interdisciplinary and how that interdisciplinary adds to the research team's capability.
- Propose an actionable component related to health challenges.
- Explains the research aims clearly, compellingly, and understandable to a general scientific community.

ELIGIBILITY

These awards are open to investigators with faculty rank across Advocate Health. If you have questions about your eligibility for this award, please contact Katelyn Still (Katelyn.Still@Advocatehealth.org). All applicants must be members of CAIR. Applicants are strongly encouraged to engage CAIR faculty and AIMS AI analysts as co-investigators or collaborators. To connect with potential collaborators, please contact cair@wakehealth.edu.

KEY DATES

Date	Detail
04/17/26, 11:59 pm ET	Letter of Intent (LOI) Deadline
05/18/26	Investigators Invited for Full Application
06/26/26, 11:59 pm ET	Full Application Deadline
08/10/26	Selection of Awardees
10/01/26	Project Start Date
09/30/27	Project End Date

FUNDING

The Center for Artificial Intelligence Research will fund up to $40,000 in direct costs per project to be spent within a 12-month period. One project will be funded. See the section on Budget Guidelines for more details on allowable and non-allowable budget items. Letters of Intent (LOIs) are due April 17, 2026 (see below).

Funding will be awarded in two phases. In the first phase, one-half of the requested budget will be awarded ($20,000 max). Upon submission of an extramural grant proposal, the remainder of the budget will be awarded ($20,000 max). The second phase is intended to enable additional work to support the submitted proposal.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

LOIs and Full Applications that do not comply with these guidelines will not be considered for review.

Letter of Intent (LOI) Requirements
Deadline: 04/17/2026, 11:59pm ET

- 1 page max (references may be additional pages). Must be uploaded in PDF format.
  - A brief abstract, including specific aims.
  - A clear statement of how the project will provide innovative and translational artificial intelligence solutions to medical and health-related problems. Study methods and feasibility of projects should also be included.
  - A list of study team members for the proposed project. All team members should have agreed to participate in the project.
- LOI application should be submitted by the deadline at the link below.

Click here to access the ePilot Electronic Submission Form

Review Criteria and Process for Letters of Intent

1. Administrative review will assure that project is responsive to RFA and that LOI adheres to submission guidelines.
2. LOI review by CAIR steering committee will assess the study's potential impact and whether study's feasibility/methods are likely to achieve actionable results.
3. An invitation to apply for a full application, or notification if you are not selected, will be communicated via e-mail by 05/18/2026.

Full Application Requirements
Deadline: 06/26/2026, 11:59pm ET
Investigators invited to apply will receive an e-mail by 05/18/2026 with a link to submit a full application by 06/26/2026. **Applications received after 06/26/2026 will not be reviewed.** Application instructions are included in the ePilot system and summarized below.

Format Specifications

- Arial font and no smaller than 11 point
- Margins at least 0.5 inches (sides, top, and bottom)
- Single-spaced lines
- All uploaded documents must be in PDF format

Submission/Applicant Information

- Project Title
- Submitting Investigator, Co-Investigator(s), and other Key Personnel information

Abstract (250 words max)

Research Strategy (4 pages max, all items below are required components)

- Specific Aims (1 page max)
- Research Plan:
  - Significance – Explain how the project addresses an important problem, how it will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability and/or clinical practice.
  - Innovation – Explain how this project uses novel concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions.

    - Approach – Describe the overall strategy for this project, including potential problems, alternative strategies and benchmarks for success.
    - Study Team – Describe how each member of the team will contribute to the project. Include their expertise and experience that will be utilized on this project.
- Study milestones and anticipated outcomes - (examples can be found in Appendix I)
- Identify if application is under submission or submitted for other Center awards

References (no page limit)
Information Regarding Human Subjects
Address the following if the project **involves human subjects**.

- Provide a document addressing the Protection of Human Subjects, if applicable. (2 page max)
- IRB Approval Status (please note: IRB approval is not required for full application submission, however **a delay in IRB approval does not alter the project end date**)

Information Regarding Live Vertebrates

- IACUC Approval Status (please note: IACUC approval is not required for full application submission, however **a delay in IACUC approval does not alter the project end date**)

Budget and Justification (**budget template plus 1-page justification**)

- Complete the budget template form provided along with a brief justification for the funds requested for this RFA. Please include explanation of other resources that may be leveraged to support the project.
- Sub-awards to other institutions to carry out work on a project are not allowed.

NIH-style biographical sketch for all Key Personnel

- All key personnel listed on the proposal application must submit a NIH-style biosketch using the SciENcv common form.

Appendix information is limited to:

- A Summary Statement from the previous grant submission justifying the need for additional experiments.
- Reviewer Comments from the previous manuscript submission justifying the need for additional experiments to secure a high visibility publication.

BUDGET GUIDELINES

The budget period is for 12 months ending no later than 09/30/2027. Up to $40,000 in direct costs may be requested.
Grant funds may be budgeted for:

- Salary support for the PI or faculty collaborators (using NIH salary cap)
- Research support personnel (including undergraduate and graduate students)
- Travel necessary to perform the research
- Small equipment, research supplies and core lab costs, or
- Other purposes deemed necessary for the successful execution of the proposed project

Grant funds may **not** be budgeted for:

- Office supplies or communication costs, including printing
- Meals or travel, including to conferences, except as required to collect data
- Professional education or training
- Computers or audiovisual equipment, unless fully justified as a need for the research
- Manuscript preparation and submission, or
- Indirect costs

Awarded funds must be used to conduct the work proposed. All direct charges to this award must adhere to federal regulations and requirements regarding the use of CAIR funds. The Center for Artificial Intelligence Research reserves the right to revoke funding in the event it is determined that funds were not spent in accordance with the approved protocol. The general criteria for determining allowable direct costs on federally

sponsored projects is set forth in 2 CFR Part 200: Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (The Uniform Guidance).

MULTIPLE SUBMISSIONS

The PI must identify whether the application is submitted to CTSI or other Wake Forest School of Medicine Centers for consideration of funding.

REVIEW CRITERIA AND PROCESS

CAIR proposals are competitive and peer reviewed. Proposals will be evaluated by CAIR Pilot Fund Committee members based on NIH review criteria and scoring. Final award approval will be at the recommendation of CAIR Pilot Fund Committee.

Additional review consideration will be given to proposals that include:

- Collaboration with CAIR faculty and/or AIMS AI analysts.
- Clear articulation of how such collaboration strengthens the methodological rigor, translational potential, or scalability of the project.

Funding decisions will be made based on the reviews of an evaluation of the projects' connection with the goals of the Center for Artificial Intelligence Research. Any IACUC and/or IRB protocols must be approved prior to funding of the approved pilot.

Reviewers will score applications from 1 to 9 based on:

1. Significance of the problem to be addressed;
2. Innovation in the proposed solutions;
3. Strength and breadth of the investigative team;
4. Methodological rigor and feasibility with clear milestones;
5. Likelihood the innovation will be broadly applicable and have impact on translational research, and;
6. A reporting plan regardless of whether the study yields positive or negative results;
7. Other elements to be considered in the review include: the likelihood that the investment will lead to external funding or a licensable innovation, early-career faculty involvement, research team composition, inclusion of women and minorities as potential participants.

PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS

If any significant issues arise, the study team will be required to work with the Center for Artificial Intelligence Research to define an intervention strategy for the study to be successfully completed (or in rare cases, terminated).

Specific Deliverables Include:

- Disclosure of implementation/dissemination results and efforts to seek extramural funding beyond the pilot grant and subsequent notification of any funds obtained and/or related publications or significant collaborations from the project for a minimum of 4 years.

OTHER GUIDELINES

1. Prior to receiving funds, research involving human subjects must have appropriate approvals from the IRB. Either an IRB approval letter or an IRB response to a "Determination Whether Research or Similar Activities Require IRB Approval" must be submitted to the Center for Artificial Intelligence Research prior to funds being released. Human subjects must be reviewed in accordance with the institution's general assurances and HIPAA. All key personnel must have certification of training in the protection of human subjects prior to the start of the grant period.
2. Prior to receiving funds, research involving live vertebrates must have appropriate approvals from IACUC. Either an IACUC approval letter or documentation on why activity does not require IACUC approval must be submitted to the Center for Artificial Intelligence Research prior to funds being released.
3. CAIR staff will work closely with funded teams throughout the grant period to monitor progress and, when necessary, provide assistance. A final progress report will be required. We expect PIs to report over the lifetime of the work the outcomes achieved due to the pilot award, e.g., subsequent external funding, publications, presentations and patents.

4. All publications that are the direct result of this funding must reference: “Research reported in this publication was supported by the Center for Artificial Intelligence Research at Wake Forest University School of Medicine.” Publications must also be registered in PubMed Central.
5. Any awardee who leaves his or her position should contact the Center for Artificial Intelligence Research to discuss future plans for the project.

GRANT ADMINISTRATION

The Principal Investigator is responsible for the administration of grant funds. Projects will be for a 12-month period of time.

CONTACTS

Questions about your research project should be directed to CAIR (cair@wakehealth.edu).
Questions about the ePilot electronic submission system should be directed to Katelyn Still at Katelyn.Still@Advocatehealth.org.

APPENDIX I

Below are examples to show different methods to provide study milestones, outcomes, and timeline. However, these formats are not required.

Example 1:

- **Milestone 1 (0-1.5 months):** Milestone 1 Details **Outcome:** Outcome 1 Details
- **Milestone 2 (1.5- 4 months):** Milestone 2 Details **Outcome:** Outcome 2 Details
- **…**

Example 2:

Timeline and Milestones				
Quarters	1	2	3	4
Activity/Aim/Milestone 1	X	X	X	
Activity/Aim/Milestone 2	X	X		
Activity/Aim/Milestone 3		X	X	X