Wake Forest Alzheimer's Disease Research Center

Request for Applications for Development Projects and Pilot Grants

The Wake Forest Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (WF ADRC) is seeking proposals for projects to stimulate innovative research relevant to Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD). The primary goal of this funding is to develop ADRD research that will lead to publications and extramural research applications or produce resources useful to the ADRC community. Projects can encompass basic, translational, clinical, or implementation science research. **The scientific focus of the WF ADRC is the link between metabolic and vascular diseases and the transitions from normal aging to mild cognitive impairment (MCI), AD, and AD-related dementias (ADRD). Applications that align with the scientific focus of the WF ADRC and that propose using WF ADRC resources are strongly encouraged, but proposals on other topics will be considered.**

Examples of thematically related studies include the relationship of metabolic or vascular indices (e.g., fluid, imaging or neuropathological biomarkers, clinical variables, polygenic risk scores, health systems/electronic health records) to ADRD risk or progression.

WF ADRC resources can be requested at www.WakeShare.org. WF ADRC resources can be combined with those of other ADRCs, NACC, NCRAD, and other sources as described in the Use of ADRC Resources section of this RFA.

This Request for Applications (RFA) will cover two funding tracks: **Development Projects** and **Pilot Grants**. We anticipate funding up to 2 Development Projects and 1 Pilot Grant (July 2026 to June 2027).

Development Project Awards will provide up to $50,000 in funding for one year.

- Development Project awards are for one year of funding, so the activities and budget for the first year of the project must be clearly delineated.
- If applicants anticipate that the project will extend into a second year, they should describe those activities in the application. Approval of a second year of funding will be at the discretion of the ADRC Development Project/Pilot Grant Committee if the objectives and milestones are met in the first year and if the additional research proposed continues to align with the goals of the ADRC. Priority for additional funding will be given to projects yielding productive, high-impact research as measured by output of publications and grant applications.
- Principal Investigators are eligible only once for a Development Project award, unless the additional proposed Developmental Project constitutes a real departure from the investigator's ongoing research.

Pilot Grant Awards will provide up to $25,000 in funding for one year.

- Pilot Grant recipients may apply for Development Project awards in the future and the use of Pilot Grant results for Development Project applications is encouraged.

Applicants are required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the ADRC by November 7, 2025 (see Key Dates). Submission of a LOI will allow the Development Project/Pilot Grant Committee to assess whether the project aligns with the RFA and to provide feedback to the applicant prior to initiation of grant writing.

Key Dates

Date	Detail
November 7, 2025	Letter of Intent Deadline
November 14, 2025	Invitations to Submit Application
January 23, 2026, 11:59 pm	Application Deadline
March 31, 2026	Selection of Awardees
April 15, 2026	Development Project Response to Reviewers Deadline
May 29, 2026	Pilot Grant Response to Reviewers Deadline
July 1, 2026	Anticipated Project Start Date (Development Project funding dependent on NIA approval and receipt of ADRC P30 Notice of Award)
June 30, 2027	Anticipated Project Year 1 End Date

Criteria

Successful proposals will clearly describe:

- Specific focus on Alzheimer's disease or related dementias
- Relevance to the WF ADRC scientific focus and/or themes for this RFA
- Potential for generalizability to ADRD (*i.e.*, how the results will improve knowledge of ADRD)
- Statistical plan and statistician collaborator
- How the project differentiates from other funded projects
- Project plan that will be completed within the project period
- **Due to National Institute of Aging (NIA) guidelines, applicants may not propose new clinical trials for Development Projects;** analysis of existing clinical trial data or addition of measures to an ongoing trial is permitted; clinical observational studies are also permitted. NIH provides a decision tool to determine whether your study meets the NIH criteria for a clinical trial: https://grants.nih.gov/ct-decision/index.htm

Use of ADRC Resources

- Production of resources or methodologies useful for the ADRC is encouraged
- Use of existing resources from the WF ADRC and additional ADRC sources are strongly encouraged:
    - WF ADRC resources (*e.g.*, cognitive data, demographic data, fluid or imaging biomarker data, brain tissue, blood, cerebrospinal fluid, or other tissues). Requests for ADRC resources can be submitted here: www.wakeshare.org. Input into availability of WF ADRC resources should be sought prior to submitting a Letter of Intent.
    - The National Alzheimer Coordinating Center (NACC) contains longitudinal data from clinical evaluations, positron emission tomography (PET) imaging, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), cerebrospinal fluid biomarkers, as well as neuropathology and APOE genotyping from the 42 present and past Alzheimer's Disease Research Centers supported by NIA; SCAN and CLARiTI imaging resources can also be requested through NACC: https://naccdata.org
    - The National Centralized Repository for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (NCRAD) is a national resource for clinical information and biological samples, such as DNA, plasma, serum, RNA, cerebrospinal fluid, cell lines, brain tissue, and blood-based biomarker data from multiple Alzheimer's Disease Research Centers and ADRD-related clinical studies: https://ncrad.iu.edu
    - The National Institute on Aging Genetics of Alzheimer's Disease Data Storage Site (NIAGADS) houses genomic array and sequence data (GWAS, WES/WGS) from ADRCs: https://www.niagads.org/resources
    - Diverse Vascular Contributions to Cognitive Impairment and Dementia (DVCID) can be requested through UC Davis: https://diversevcid.ucdavis.edu/for-researchers
    - Resources from other ADRCs can be requested directly from their websites: https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/clinical-trials-and-studies/alzheimers-disease-research-centers

Eligibility

Applications are welcome from any department at Wake Forest, Atrium Health, Advocate Health, or invited institutions. Applications from early-stage investigators are encouraged, provided they will be at their institution for the duration of the funding period. Mid-level and senior faculty are also encouraged to apply if they do not have substantial prior experience in ADRD research or if they have a novel approach to ADRD research. Postdoctoral fellows are eligible for Pilot Grants, but not Development Projects.

Collaboration

Applicants are required to include at least one investigator from the WF ADRC as a collaborator. Written verification must be provided from WF ADRC collaborators stating that they have reviewed the proposal prior to submission and that they agree to participate in the project (email verification will suffice, a formal letter of support is not required). **Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek input from WF ADRC collaborators as early in the process as possible.** Input into study design and availability of ADRC resources should be sought prior to submitting a Letter of Intent. Last-minute requests for application review by collaborators (within two weeks of the grant deadline) will receive limited feedback due to time constraints. Collaborations with other ADRCs, WF Pepper OAIC, or RCCN Centers are encouraged.

Application Procedure

Letter of Intent (LOI) Deadline: November 7, 2025

One-page LOIs should be emailed to the WF ADRC Development Project/Pilot Grant Committee Leader, Sharon Letchworth, PhD (Sharon.Letchworth@advocatehealth.org) using the following format:

- Funding track (Development Project or Pilot Grant)
- Project Title
- Study team members/collaborators
- Rationale (1-3 sentences)
- Hypothesis (1-2 sentences)
- Description of source data and/or biological samples (1-2 sentences)
- Methods (4-5 sentences)

Application Deadline: January 23, 2026, 11:59 pm

Application instructions are summarized below. A link to the submission form will be sent to researchers that are invited to submit a full application.

Formatting Specifications

- Arial font no smaller than 11 point
- Margins at least 0.5 inches (sides, top and bottom)
- Single-spaced lines
- Consecutively numbered pages

Submission/Applicant Information

- Project Title
- Submitting Investigator, Co-Investigator(s), and other Key Personnel information
- Three suggested ADRD reviewers outside of WF with subject matter expertise relevant to the application and published expertise in ADRD; reviewers cannot be a current or previous mentor, co-author on a publication, or collaborator on a grant within the last 2 years
    - While the Committee invites as many of the suggested reviewers as possible, several factors determine who is invited to review: expertise of the reviewer on the research topic in the context of ADRD as evidenced by a strong publication record, whether the reviewer has been contacted by the ADRC in the past two years for other applications, whether there is a familiar connection to the applicant or collaborators on the project, and the availability of the reviewer. Alternate reviewers will be sought as needed.

Specific Aims (1 page maximum)

Research Plan (6 pages maximum) Funding approval will be for one year, so the activities and budget for the first year of the project must be clearly delineated.

- Background and significance – Explain how the project addresses an important problem, how it will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice; discuss translational importance and innovation of the project
- Investigator(s) – Describe how each member of the team will contribute to the project, including expertise and experience that will be used on this project
- Approach – Describe the overall strategy for this project, including potential problems, alternative strategies and benchmarks for success
- Experimental design and methods
- Use of WF ADRC resources as applicable
- Analysis plan: Statistical approach and power analysis for sample size
- Quarterly milestones and anticipated outcomes with timeline (see Appendix I)
- Dissemination and implementation of the results
- Plans for grant applications or manuscripts resulting from the project

References (no page limit)

Information Regarding Human Subjects

Address if the project **involves human subjects**. *If the project proposes to use previously collected biospecimens or data from ADRC participants and does not involve live human subjects, then the following information is not needed.*

- Provide a one-page document addressing the Protection of Human Subjects, if applicable
  - Clearly describe risk, protections, benefits and importance of the knowledge to be gained by the revised or new activities as discussed in Part II of NIH competing application instructions
- Clinical Trial Classification (new clinical trials are not allowed for Development Projects)
- Inclusion Plans for Women, Minorities, and Children, if applicable
- Targeted Enrollment Table, if applicable (blank table will be provided within the link for the application)
- IRB approval is not required for full application submission, but must be in place prior to funding
  - If an award is made:
    - 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 ADRC prior to funds being released
    - Human subjects safeguard procedures must be detailed in accordance with the institution's general assurances and HIPAA
    - All key personnel must have current certification of training in the protection of human subjects prior to the start of the grant period
  - **A delay in IRB approval does not alter the project end date**

Information Regarding Live Vertebrates

Address if the project **involves live vertebrate animals.** *If the study involves previously collected tissues, data, or images and does not involve live animals, then the following information is not needed.*

- **IACUC Approval Status** (not submitted, pending, approved)
  - IACUC approval is not required for full application submission
  - If an award is made, the grantee must provide verification of IACUC approval or documentation on why the activity does not require IACUC approval prior to the funds being released
  - **A delay in IACUC approval does not alter the project end date**
- **Detailed information on the criteria below:**

  1. Description of Procedures: Provide a concise description of the proposed procedures that involve live vertebrate animals in the work outlined in the Research Plan. Identify the species, strains, ages, sex, and total numbers of animals by species, to be used in the proposed work. If dogs or cats are proposed, provide the source of the animals. Identify all project/ performance or collaborating site(s) and describe activities of proposed research with vertebrate animals in those sites.

  2. Justifications: Provide justification that the species are appropriate for the proposed research. Explain why the research goals cannot be accomplished using an alternative model (e.g. computational, human, invertebrate, *in vitro*).

  3. Minimization of Pain and Distress: Describe the interventions including analgesia, anesthesia, sedation, palliative care and humane endpoints to minimize discomfort, distress, pain, and injury.

  4. Euthanasia: State whether the method of euthanasia is consistent with the recommendations of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals. If not, describe the method and provide a scientific justification.

NIH-style biographical sketch for all Key Personnel (new style)

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

- Complete the budget template form (blank form will be provided within the link for the application), along with a brief justification for the funds requested for this RFA. Please include an explanation of other resources that may be leveraged to support the project. If the proposed research is to be carried out on more than one campus/institution, please include details in the justification
- Sub-awards to other institutions to carry out work on a project are permissible provided that the sub-award institution is willing to waive indirect costs.

Budget Guidelines

The budget period is for 12 months beginning 7/1/2026 and ending no later than 6/30/2027. Up to $50,000 in direct costs may be requested for Development Projects and up to $25,000 in direct costs may be requested for Pilot Grants. Development Project funding is dependent on NIA approval and receipt of ADRC P30 Notice of Award.

Grant funds may be budgeted for:

- Limited faculty or other investigator effort (up to 10% direct costs for PIs and 5% for each Co-I); exceptions may be considered depending on the nature of the project
- Research support personnel
- Travel necessary to perform the research
- Small equipment (no more than 10% of the total amount), research supplies and core lab costs
- Other items 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 (desktop or laptop) or audiovisual equipment
- Manuscript preparation and submission
- 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 WF ADRC funds. The Center 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).

Review Criteria and Process

ADRC proposals are competitive and peer reviewed. Proposals will be evaluated by internal and external scientists based on NIH review criteria and scoring. Funding decisions will be made based on scientific merit and the project's relevance to WF ADRC goals. NIA will have final approval of Development Project awards.

Reviewers will score applications based on the NIH Simplified Peer Review Framework:
https://grants.nih.gov/policy-and-compliance/policy-topics/peer-review/simplifying-review/framework

The Development Project/Pilot Grant Committee will consider additional elements, such as the feasibility of conducting the work within the proposed budget and milestones, and the likelihood that the award will lead to publications, external funding, and/or resources for the WF ADRC

Program Expectations

The PI should submit a copy of the IRB or IACUC approval letters to the Committee for their records. The WF ADRC will work with awardees to 1) assist with study initiation; 2) convene an initial discussion with the project PI, ADRC administrative personnel, and ADRC leadership to discuss the project and how ADRC resources can be optimized for the study; and 3) provide project oversight throughout the life of the study. If any significant issues arise, the study team will be required to work with the WF ADRC to define an intervention strategy for the study to be successfully completed (or in rare cases, terminated).

Specific Deliverables Include:

- Participation in the study initiation discussion
- Updates on progress (see Other Guidelines, below)
- Presentation of progress and results to the ADRC Executive Committee and other ADRC events
- Upon completion of the project:
    - Final report with plans for implementing and disseminating results
    - Potential presentation of findings at WF ADRC seminar and/or Full Investigator Meeting
    - Potential presentation or poster at the ADRC annual External Advisory Committee Meeting
    - Description of how extramural funding will be sought

- Notification of any funds obtained and/or related publications or significant collaborations resulting from the project for a minimum of 5 years
- Participation in review process for future Development Project/ Pilot Grant cycles

Other Guidelines

1. The ADRC will work closely with funded teams throughout the grant period to monitor progress and provide assistance. Interim progress reports are required (typically 2-3 per year), as well as a final progress report. We expect PIs to report the outcomes achieved due to the award, e.g., subsequent external funding, publications, presentations and patents
2. All publications that are the direct result of this funding must reference the ADRC using the following citation or similar wording: "Research reported in this publication was supported by the Wake Forest Alzheimer's Disease Research Center with funding from the National Institute on Aging under award number P30AG072947." Other sources of support (e.g. CHAAP, Kulynuch, Eagle, and Dickerson funds) must also be cited if appropriate.
3. Publications must be registered and compliant in PubMed Central
4. Any awardee who leaves their position should contact the ADRC to discuss plans for the project

Grant Administration

The Principal Investigator is responsible for the administration of grant funds.

Appendix I

Below are examples to show different methods to provide study milestones, outcomes, and timeline. Other formats may be acceptable.

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
- **Milestone 3 (4-6 months):** Milestone 3 Details **Outcome**: Outcome 3 Details
- **Milestone 4 (6-12 months):** Milestone 4 Details **Outcome:** Outcome 4 Details

Example 2:

Timeline and Milestones												
Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Activity/Aim/Milestone 1	X	X	X	X								
Activity/Aim/Milestone 2	X	X										
Activity/Aim/Milestone 3		X	X	X								
Activity/Aim/Milestone 4					X	X	X	X	X	X		
Activity/Aim/Milestone 5					X							
Activity/Aim/Milestone 6						X	X					
Activity/Aim/Milestone 7								X		X		
Activity/Aim/Milestone 8											X	X

Example 3:

Aim	**Milestone**	**Month 1-3**	**Month 4-6**	**Month 7-9**	**Month 10-12**
1	Milestone 1	X	X		
	Milestone 2		X		

Aim 1 Anticipated Outcomes: Detail

Aim	**Milestone**	**Month 1-3**	**Month 4-6**	**Month 7-9**	**Month 10-12**
2	Milestone 1		X	X	
	Milestone 2		X		
	Milestone 3			X	

Aim 2 Anticipated Outcomes: Detail