



**Alcohol Center of Research-Nebraska (ACORN)
Pilot Projects Program
Request for Proposals**

Maximum \$25,000 per project
Release date: April 1, 2023
Letter of intent due date: May 1, 2023
Proposal due date: June 1, 2023

Mission

The Alcohol Center of Research-Nebraska (ACORN) is a NIAAA-funded Alcohol Center, conducting translationally relevant research to human disease in alcohol use/misuse and its impact on public health. The Center’s mission is to conduct research to discover the mechanisms of injury and illness, develop effective prevention strategies, and implement innovative, evidence-based solutions that address the health problems related to alcohol misuse. The over-arching theme of ACORN is “The Alcohol Exposome” or the impact of alcohol on all environmental causes of injury and disease including age, nutrition, lifestyle/behavior, occupation, climate, and pathogens.

Pilot Program

Pilot projects are fundamental to sustaining the quality, breadth, and dynamics of the Center program. These projects can lead to the development of new and creative research, prevention, intervention, outreach, education, evaluation, or translation findings and outcomes. They can explore new activities or directions or take advantage of special opportunities.

Pilot project duration is limited to 12 months and funding is limited to \$25K per project. Pilot projects are primarily intended to assist investigators to obtain pilot data that can be used in pursuing support through other funding mechanisms. Examples of pilot project activities include:

- Initial support for developing novel, innovative, cutting-edge research, translation, prevention, or intervention approaches.
- Adapting and evaluating proven research tools or techniques for new applications or delivery systems.
- Obtaining preliminary data, mining existing state or national datasets, or pursuing critical data gaps.
- Supporting investigators from other fields of study to apply their expertise to alcohol use/misuse challenges.
- Developing new mechanisms for external or multicenter collaborative partnerships to address emerging alcohol use/misuse concerns; and

- Exploring new directions that represent significant departures from established approaches yet have the potential to yield great impacts.

We will give preference to projects submitted by junior investigators, those newly entering alcohol clinical and translational research, and alcohol clinical/translational investigators collaborating across departments and institutions. ACORN will encourage applications from underrepresented minority scientists as well as scientists with disabilities.

Eligibility

Faculty, staff, students, and individuals with an interest in alcohol use/misuse research and the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed project will be invited to develop an application. Eligible institutions will include for-profit, nonprofit, public, or private institutions; units of local or state government and eligible Federal agencies such as the VA. Postdoctoral trainees will be encouraged to apply for the purposes of enhancing their career transition to independence, together with more senior faculty members. Junior researchers at early career stages will be especially encouraged to apply. Those newly entering alcohol clinical and translational research as well as alcohol clinical/translational investigators collaborating across departments and institutions will be encouraged to apply. Women investigators will be encouraged to apply. Individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, as well as individuals with disabilities, will especially be encouraged to apply. All awardees will be required to have eligibility to apply for extramural federal grants (US Citizen or Permanent Resident).

Application Procedures

Letter of intent, due May 1, 2023 should include the names of the principal investigator and co-investigators, title of the proposal, brief project description, and institution(s) involved. This is required for the purpose of identifying expert reviewers.

Applications, due June 1, 2023 are to follow the general NIH guidelines for research proposals and should be organized as follows:

Proposal Sections	Page Limit
Cover page and abstract/summary (150 word max.)	1
Research plan	3
Specific aims	
Significance and innovation	
Preliminary studies (if any)	
Approach	
Utilization of ACORN facilities (if any)	1
Potential for future funding	1
Budget and justification (NO indirect costs allowed)	1
Timeline	1



Bio sketch (PHS 398)

Reporting and dissemination of results plan

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If you have previously received funding from ACORN, briefly describe the project outcomes.

Application and Award Dates

Proposals are due on or before the due date: June 1, 2023.

Please send all materials in one pdf file by e-mail to:

Todd Wyatt, PhD, Co-Director

Alcohol Center of Research-Nebraska

twyatt@unmc.edu

402-559-3817

Evaluations will be completed, and notification of funding status will be communicated to each investigator within 30 days after the proposal due date.

Investigators are strongly encouraged to consult with their institution's Institutional Review Board to find out whether a project is considered human subjects research (including surveys, interviews, screenings, etc.). For studies that need IRB approval, investigators are encouraged to complete an IRB application and submit it at the time that they submit their pilot project application, or to have a completed IRB form ready for submission, so that IRB approval can be obtained as soon as possible after the funding decision. A similar process should be followed for animal research. All investigators involved in human subject or animal research must have completed IRB training. Please contact your IRB provider for details.

Peer Review Process

Project applications will be evaluated by a review panel selected by the Administrative Core leadership, based on the members' areas of scientific expertise. The review process will follow procedures like those used by federal study sections, with assigned primary and secondary reviewers. All pilot applications will be scored on a scale of 1-9. We will use the standard NIH criteria for review of grant proposals (significance, innovation, investigator, approach, environment). Evaluation and selection criteria will address originality, scientific relevance, and importance to the Center goals, validity and reliability of methods, qualifications of investigators, interdisciplinary nature of the project, potential for future funding, and appropriateness of the budget.

Appeal Process

Investigators who think an unfair or inaccurate peer evaluation process has occurred will be allowed to submit a written appeal letter to the Center Director outlining specific concerns about the process. At the discretion of the Center Director, the appeal may be referred to outside consultants for additional review. Depending on the outcome of the appeal, a revised priority score for the application may be determined for special consideration of the proposal during the next round of applications.

Funding Available

A total of up to \$100,000 funding will be available for new pilot projects each year. It is anticipated that the Center can fund a minimum of four pilot projects each year. Each award will be for a maximum duration of 12 months. Awards can range up to \$25,000 in total funding.

Funding is available for costs, such as salary and fringe benefits for research assistants and graduate students (Not Faculty), laboratory supplies, equipment, data analysis costs, and travel associated with the research project (Not Conferences). Reminder no indirect costs are allowed on this grant funding.

Reporting Requirements

The principal investigator of each funded pilot project will be invited to participate in the monthly ACORN member meeting. Investigators are required to submit a brief progress report at 6 months from the start of the project. A final report is due 60 days from the end of the project (month 14). The progress and final reports shall be submitted according to instructions provided by the Center and shall include reporting of work and activities relating to the current project awarded by the Center to the investigator/eligible institution. Results and outcomes should include publications, presentations, independent grant applications, guidance documents, web sites, etc.

Additional Information

For scientific questions, interested applicants are encouraged to contact Dr. Carol Casey, Center Director ccasey@unmc.edu or Dr. Todd Wyatt, Center Co-Director and Core Leader of Pilot Projects twyatt@unmc.edu

