REQUEST FOR PILOT PROJECT APPLICATIONS
OPEN TO ALL DISCIPLINES AND DEPARTMENTS
(SPRING 2026)

The Rural Drug Addiction Research (RDAR) Center is pleased to announce an opportunity for funding that is **open to all disciplines**. Applicants must be full-time faculty in the University of Nebraska system who are eligible for NIH funding. Expertise in substance use research is not a requirement. The RDAR leadership team supports applications applying an individual's or team's expertise in areas relevant to substance use and misuse. **Institutional and/or cross-department collaboration is encouraged.** Successful applicants must link their proposal idea to the Center's mission and/or the focus areas described below.

Center Mission and Research Focus Areas

RDAR's *mission* is to advance research across the basic and health sciences to understand the etiology, prevention, and treatment of substance use and misuse. The Center's scientific and creative activities operate from synapse to society. Interdisciplinary by design, the Center links preclinical studies to behavioral, neural, social, clinical, and translational research and dissemination. Towards its mission, the RDAR Center has several notable *focus areas* including:

1. Supporting basic inquiry on behavioral, social, and/or biological factors contributing to or protecting against drug use, misuse, and addiction. Research in this focus area should consider the unique factors that impact individuals in Nebraska, the Great Plains, and/or our rural communities. This work can include extending current expertise in an aligned discipline to questions related to substance use.

2. Humanistic and artistic approaches that seek to expand our understanding of drug use, misuse, and addiction. This may include but is not limited to exploring contemporary and historical narratives of community and cultural experiences, or creative representation of voices and experiences. Inquiry in this focus area should consider the factors impacting Nebraska, the Great Plains, and/or our rural communities.

3. Efforts aimed at improving prevention, treatment, and/or recovery services. Scholarship Research and creative activities in this area should consider the unique factors that impact service access, use, and barriers for impacting Nebraska, the Great Plains, and/or our rural communities.
   o Engaging in prevention, intervention, or programming for individuals seeking substance use treatment or recovery services.

4. Using recruitment resources or software from RDAR's research core, the Longitudinal Networks Core (LNC).
   o Utilizing the RHC Participant Pool as a recruitment resource for new data collection opportunities. See https://rdar.unl.edu/longitudinal-networks-core/regional-health-cohort/ for more details.
   o Utilizing LNC software for innovative data collection or creatively applying or extending these technologies for a new purpose. See https://rdar.unl.edu/longitudinal-networks-core/lnc-software/ for more details.
   o Utilizing LNC sampling expertise for hard-to-reach and special populations.

The goal of the RDAR Pilot Program is to provide support to emerging scholars to conduct promising research and creative activities that advance the Center's mission. Successful applicants may receive up to $50,000 in direct costs for two-year projects. Budget requests are limited to $25,000 in direct costs per year. One-year pilot projects of $25,000 are allowed. Pilot Project Investigators will also receive access to resources of the Center for professional development and project support. For questions on whether your proposal idea fits the mission or focus areas of the RDAR Center, please contact Devan Crawford at dcrawford3@unl.edu.

Application Submission Process

Application documents should use standard NIH formatting requirements (½ inch margins, Arial size 11-point font), with a July 1, 2026 start date. The full application should be submitted as a single PDF file through the RDAR Pilot Project NURamp module. Please flatten all PDFs prior to uploading to ensure information entered in the fillable PHS398 forms is visible. **Applications must be received by 5:00pm CDT on January 30, 2026.** Late applications will not be accepted. The PDF application must include the following sections (in this order):
   1. An abbreviated NIH Biosketch for the Principal Investigator (PI) of the application (2 pages)
      Essential sections include a personal statement that describes the PI's vision for RDAR Center involvement, experience in the proposed area of scientific inquiry, and past/current funding (see https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm)

2. A mini-R03 style proposal including:
   a) *NIH Face Page (available at https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html)*
   b) *Project Summary (limited to 30 lines of text or less)*
   c) *Specific Aims (1 page)*
   d) *Research or Creative Activities Plan (3 pages with the below headings and descriptions)*
       i. *Importance of the Research or Activity*
       ii. *Approach*
       iii. *Rigor & Feasibility*
       iv. *Expertise and Resources*
           a. *Additional Note: If the project will use a senior mentor's lab or resources but those individuals are not contributing as key personnel in the research plan, describe these individual(s) as an Other Significant Contributor in the application.*
   e) *References (not included in the page limit)*
3. A detailed budget and budget justification
   Use budget template below. Provide a budget and justification for each year's request separately.
4. Protection of Human Subjects (if applicable)
5. Inclusion of Women & Minorities and Inclusion Across the Lifespan (if applicable)
6. Vertebrate Animals (if applicable)

Application Review: Two to three reviewers will be assigned to each application. Reviewers will use the review criteria adopted by NIH in 2025 (*Importance of Research (Activities), Rigor and Feasibility, Expertise and Resources, Fit with Center Priorities),* modified as appropriate for this request for applications. Information on the NIH review criteria is available here: https://grants.nih.gov/policy/peer/simplifying-review/framework.htm. The *Overall Impact* score will also include consideration of relevance to the RDAR mission and focus areas, inclusion of other IDeA institutions and COBRE facilities, the potential for understanding substance use and misuse, and broader impacts. Based on these reviews, the Leadership Team will make recommendations for funding by April 1st. Applicants will be notified by email at this time. These recommendations will be forwarded to RDAR's Advisory Committee (AC) for review after all regulatory approvals are obtained.

Special Considerations, Institutional Approvals, and Reporting

Regulatory Approvals: If your project includes human subjects or vertebrate animals, your institutional IRB or IACUC approval is required before funds can be released. Protocols must be submitted to IRB for approval within 30 days of notification of funding and final approval sent to the RDAR Center within 60 days.

Clinical Trials: If your project meets the NIH definition of a clinical trial, check "Yes" when answering the clinical trial question on the NIH face page. See https://grants.nih.gov/policy/clinical-trials.htm for more information.

Budget Restrictions: Faculty effort can be supported for up to 0.5 person months. If requested, there must be a strong rationale provided for why this work cannot be done within the existing faculty apportionment for research, scholarship, or creative activities. Student/post-doctoral stipend is not allowed but student/doctoral salary/wages are permissible. Wages for technical personnel are permissible. Equipment (>$5,000 per item) is not allowed. Renovation and/or honorariums are not allowed. Travel is limited to proposal-related tasks only (e.g., no conference travel). Travel to locations outside of the US, Puerto Rico, and Canada is not allowed. **Provided all regulatory approvals have been obtained, funding will likely be made available on July 1, 2026.**

Indirect Costs (F&A): Current pilot funds are being contributed by partner institutions and units, rather than NIH, and these institutionally designated awards do not include indirect costs.

Additional Requirements: Pilot Project Investigators must participate in Center Enhancement and Programmatic Activities. Second year funding is contingent upon favorable review by the RDAR Leadership Team concerning project progress; participation in Center activities; scientific integrity; rigor of project; potential for Center synergy; and potential for successful external funding. Pilot Investigators will be required to provide project updates, twice annually, during monthly Center Business Meetings. Pilot Investigators must submit written annual progress reports [standard NIH - RPPR Sec 6 A-H, https://grants.nih.gov/sites/default/files/rppr_instruction_guide.pdf].

Eligibility and Eligible Institutions: Current full-time faculty at an eligible institution are encouraged to apply. Participating institutions include the University of Nebraska at Kearney, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Nebraska Medical Center, and University of Nebraska at Omaha. Individuals must be eligible to receive NIH funds. Individuals not currently funded by another RDAR mechanism are eligible. Current Project Leaders (either through RDAR or another IDeA-mechanism) and members of RDAR's Mentoring, Engagement, and Outreach Workgroup (MEOW) cannot receive pilot funds.

RDAR PILOT PROJECT APPLICATION BUDGET TEMPLATE (INCLUDE DIRECT COSTS ONLY)	FROM	THROUGH

PERSONNEL

Use Calendar, Academic, or Summer to Enter Months Devoted to Project

Enter Dollar Amounts Requested for Salary Requested and Fringe Benefits *(omit cents)*

NAME	ROLE ON PROJECT	Cal Mo	Acad Mo	Sum Mo	INST. BASE	SALARY REQUEST	FRINGE BENEFITS	PERSON. TOTAL
SALARY & FRINGE SUBTOTALS →								

OTHER DIRECT COSTS

CONSULTANT COSTS *(Itemize by expense)*	
SUPPLIES *(Itemize by category)*	
TRAVEL *(Include only what is necessary to perform research; no conference travel)*	
OTHER EXPENSES *(Itemize by category)*	
CONSORTIUM/SUBAWARD COSTS	

OTHER DIRECT COSTS SUBTOTAL	$

TOTAL DIRECT COSTS FOR PROJECT YEAR	$