ITM

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

RUSH

Advocate Aurora Health

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Endeavor Health

INSTITUTE FOR TRANSLATIONAL MEDICINE

Institute for Translational Medicine

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Pilot Translational and Clinical Studies Development Program

The Institute for Translational Medicine (ITM), a partnership between the University of Chicago and Rush, in collaboration with Chicagoland health and research organizations, is requesting Letters of Intent for its Pilot Translational and Clinical Studies Development Program. Based on the review of the LOIs, the ITM will invite highly ranked applicants to engage in a collaborative application process designed to strengthen promising research projects and advance the field of translational science.

TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE

Translational science is the field that generates innovations to overcome longstanding challenges along the translational research pipeline. These may include scientific, operational, financial, or administrative innovations that transform the way research is conducted, making it faster, more efficient, and more impactful. The National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) defines translational science projects as those that exhibit one or more of the Translational Science Principles.

Click this link for more details https://ncats.nih.gov/about/about-translational-science/principles

The ITM Pilot Program seeks to advance translational science while supporting high-quality translational research. Applicants should consider how their proposed project aligns with one or more Translational

Science Principles and how the knowledge, approaches, or innovations generated through the project could help overcome barriers and improve the effectiveness, speed, or efficiency of translational research.

FOUNDATIONAL SCIENCE

Foundational science illuminates basic principles underlying biological, physical, behavioral, or social phenomena relevant to health. This knowledge provides an essential basis for discovery, but translational research is necessary to leverage that knowledge to improve human health. Much foundational knowledge is never translated into impact, is translated too slowly, or costs more than necessary to translate.

The ITM encourages applicants to thoughtfully incorporate relevant foundational science concepts into their translational research. Projects may build upon or generate foundational knowledge that strengthens the scientific basis of the proposed research, addresses barriers to translation, informs intervention development or dissemination, or otherwise enhances the potential for discoveries to be translated more effectively, efficiently, and rapidly into improvements in health.

ABOUT THE ITM PILOT AWARDS

The ITM will help the applicant:

- Identify opportunities to integrate translational and foundational science concepts that strengthen the project and increase its potential to advance health.
- Strengthen the scientific rigor of the project by providing access to resources and expertise that can enhance study design, rationale, aims, methods, and statistical approaches.
- Optimize research teams by connecting applicant researchers with academic and community collaborators who bring complementary expertise.
- Strengthen stakeholder engagement by helping applicants connect with community, patient, industry, and other partners who may contribute to or benefit from the research.

This collaborative process will lead to competitive applications for **one-year awards of $60,000 each**. These pilot awards, scheduled to start **September 1, 2027**, are intended to:

- Advance translational science by supporting projects that address barriers or challenges in the translational research process and have the potential to make research more effective, efficient, or impactful.
- Support the thoughtful application or generation of foundational scientific knowledge that strengthens translational research and increases its potential to improve human health.
- Enable researchers to generate preliminary data, methods, tools, or other evidence that can support subsequent research and funding opportunities.
- Increase investigators' use of clinical and translational research expertise, resources, services, and infrastructure.
- Strengthen research projects through multidisciplinary collaboration and, when appropriate, engagement with community, patient, industry, or other relevant stakeholders.
- Schedule workshops for the applicant team with scientific experts, biostatisticians, study operations/feasibility experts, recruitment experts, ethicists or research subject advocates to advise the applicant on ways to best improve the application.
- Set up meetings, when appropriate, with potential stakeholders identified by the Executive Committee to discuss the project and receive feedback or input.
- Provide training in science communications to help with crafting a pitch, and assistance with creating the application video.

Note that these and other development resources are available to invited applicants but are to be used on a **voluntary basis**. Applicants may choose to use any or all of these resources but are not required to do so.

Applicants must contact the Pilot Process Coordinator early in the LOI/application process (see contacts, below) to request this assistance, or it will be assumed that it is not needed

Proposed projects may fall into one or more of the following categories. Regardless of category, projects should demonstrate a clear connection to translational science and explain how the proposed work will contribute to overcoming a barrier, strengthening the translational research process, or improving the potential for research discoveries to ultimately advance human health.

- **Clinical and Translational Human Subjects Studies:** Studies that directly involve human participants, human-derived materials, or human health information and generate knowledge relevant to human health or disease. Projects may incorporate foundational scientific concepts or investigate underlying biological, behavioral, physical, or social mechanisms when that knowledge is clearly connected to a translational objective. Studies focused exclusively on basic or normal physiology without a defined connection to a translational question or barrier are not eligible. The use of purchased or widely available cell lines alone does not qualify as human subjects research.
- **Community Collaborative Research Studies:** Studies that meaningfully involve community residents, organizations, practitioners, patients, or other relevant stakeholders in addressing questions important to health and translational research. Projects may include, but are not limited to, community-engaged research, participatory research, practice-based research, bidirectional knowledge exchange, implementation-focused research, and research capacity building.
- **Preclinical Pilot Translational Studies:** Laboratory-based or other preclinical studies that generate or apply foundational scientific knowledge in support of a defined translational objective. Projects may include studies designed to clarify mechanisms of disease; identify or validate measures, biomarkers, or markers of disease presence, severity, or response; or advance the development of drugs, devices, diagnostics, interventions, or other approaches intended to improve human health. Applicants should explain how the proposed work addresses a translational barrier or strengthens the pathway toward future application.
- **Technology Advancement and Commercial Development Studies:** Studies that advance promising discoveries, technologies, or innovations toward practical application and potential public benefit. Projects may support validation of the translational or commercial potential of early discoveries; development or testing of prototypes; assessment of the applicability of research findings to disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment, or health improvement; or advancement of intellectual property and other technologies toward subsequent development, dissemination, or commercialization.

KEY DATES*

Letters of Intent (LOI) Due	Wednesday, September 30, 2026, 5:00 PM
Review of LOIs	October 2026
Applicants Invitations Issued	November 2, 2026
Full Applications Due	Wednesday, March 31, 2027, 5:00 PM
Applications Reviewed	April – May 2027
Pre-Award Notices	June 1, 2027
Start Date	September 1, 2027

ELIGIBILITY

Individuals at any ITM institution (University of Chicago, Rush University, Loyola University Medical Center, Endeavor Health, Illinois Institute of Technology) who are eligible to be a principal investigator on a study with their local IRB are eligible to apply. Physician investigators who are not eligible to be principal investigators, post-doctoral fellows, trainees, residents, and graduate students may collaborate with an eligible applicant as part of the study team but may not apply individually as a principal investigator.

The ITM strongly encourages multidisciplinary study teams and from multiple ITM institutions that represent the broadest stakeholder involvement and that promote training of more junior scientists.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Letter of Intent – DUE WEDNESDAY, September 30, 2026, 5:00 PM

Eligible individuals wishing to apply for the ITM Pilot Translational and Clinical Studies Development Program must complete a short online letter of intent (LOI) form, providing a brief description of the project and explaining its potential translational science impact, how it is novel, innovative, and/or multidisciplinary, and, when applicable, how foundational science concepts support the proposed translational objective. Submissions must also include a list of all team members, mentors, and advisors involved in the project. Please include the team members terminal degree, area of training, and their contribution to the specific project. Submissions must be uploaded using the LOI Submission Portal (https://redcap.uchicago.edu/surveys/?s=AA7RP74KNT) before the deadline to be eligible for review.

LOI Reviews – October 2026

Eligible LOIs will be reviewed by the ITM Executive Committee, composed of ITM Principal Investigators/Directors, and Leaders. For a complete listing of ITM Leadership, please see the ITM website (https://chicagoitm.org/).

LOIs will be considered for alignment with translational science, scientific merit, novelty or innovation, multidisciplinary nature, and potential impact on the improvement of human health. Only a select number of LOIs will be invited to submit a full application. Notice of the LOI review outcome, and selected LOIs for invitation to apply, will be e-mailed to applicants.

For projects that are invited to apply, the ITM Executive Committee will provide recommendations to the applicants regarding potential areas of improvement that should be considered in preparing the application. Examples include:

- Can the applicant more clearly define the translational science component(s) of the project?
- Does the study team have the right members to effectively execute the project?
- Would an expert consultation enhance the scientific rigor of the project?
- When appropriate, are there external stakeholders (community, patient, industry, or others) who could benefit from the outcomes of this project, contribute to the project, or provide useful input during project development?

No feedback will be provided to LOI submissions that are not invited to submit full applications. For more information about the full application, please click here.

RESUBMISSIONS/REAPPLICATIONS

LOIs that are not invited to apply may be resubmitted annually, provided substantive changes to the LOI were made (e.g., clarification about the translational science component).

CONTACT

For questions, contact:

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