

Call for Pilot Grant Applications

Overview

ENGAGED: The Center for Disability Community-Engaged Research, supported by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development of the National Institutes of Health, invites applications for pilot research grants to advance community-engaged research in medical rehabilitation with, for, and by people with disabilities, including those from medically vulnerable communities.

This program is designed to support innovative, collaborative projects that meaningfully involve people with disabilities, care partners, and community stakeholders in the research process to improve rehabilitation access and outcomes, reduce disparities, and address social determinants of health that impact participation, well-being, and health.

Community-Engaged Research Definition

Community-engaged research is defined as a collaborative approach that equitably involves disability community stakeholders in all phases of the research process, from identifying priorities to disseminating findings and taking actions.

Purpose

The pilot funding mechanism aims to:

- Foster **equitable partnerships** between rehabilitation researchers and community stakeholders, including people with disabilities
- Support **early-stage, high-impact projects** that can lead to larger NIH grant submissions
- Promote **translation of rehabilitation research into real-world settings and disability communities**
- Enhance **health equity** in rehabilitation outcomes

Funding Details

Award Amount: Up to **\$30,000**

Project Period: Up to **12 months**

Number of Awards: Estimated 5–8 awards (dependent on available funds and quality of applications)

Funding Source: Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development of the National Institutes of Health through ENGAGED: The Center for Disability Community-Engaged Research.

Allowable Costs

- Personnel (including effort for investigators and staff, including disabled people as co-researchers)
- Compensation for community partners and participants and their full participation, including, but not limited to, reasonable accommodations to participate, such as transportation, real-time captioning, and ASL.
- Supplies and data collection activities
- Dissemination and community engagement activities

Facilities & Administrative (F&A) costs are not allowed unless otherwise specified by institutional policy.

Eligibility

- Investigators must be affiliated with an eligible academic, clinical, or research institution
- Applicants should be involved in medical rehabilitation research fields (e.g., physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology, psychiatry, rehabilitation psychology, case management, peer support services). ~~activities~~)
- Each application must include at least one engaged community partner
- Early-stage investigators and interdisciplinary teams are strongly encouraged

Priority Areas

Applications are encouraged in (but not limited to):

- Reducing disparities in rehabilitation access, quality, or outcomes
- Identifying and addressing social determinants of health that influence access to rehabilitation and participation in everyday life of disabled people, including community-driven and/or culturally tailored rehabilitation interventions designed and delivered in collaboration with disabled people and community partners.
- Rehabilitation for medically vulnerable populations
- Technology-enabled rehabilitation developed with end-user engagement throughout design, delivery, and evaluation
- Caregiver and family engagement in rehabilitation

Application Requirements

Applications must include:

1. Lay Plain Language Abstract (1/2 page)

2. Project Summary (1 page)

- Overview, objectives, and expected impact

3. Research Plan (4 pages max)

- Background and significance
- Specific aims
- Community-engaged approach
- Methods and analysis
- Timeline

4. Community Partnership Plan (1–2 pages)

- Description of partner(s)
- Defined roles and responsibilities
- Strategies for shared engagement, leadership and decision-making

5. Budget and Justification (1-2 pages)

6. Biosketches

NIH format (SCienCV) for key personnel

7. Data Management and Data Sharing Plan

8. Letter(s) of Support

From community partner(s), demonstrating active collaboration

Review Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on NIH Simplified Review Framework, with a supplemental focus on community engagement strategies.

Factor 1: Importance of Research

Factor 2: Rigor and Feasibility

Factor 3: Expertise and Resources

Factor 4: Strength and authenticity of community engagement strategy

- Additional Reviews: Human Subjects, Budget, Overall Impact, Potential for Future Funding

Expectations of Awardees

Funded investigators will:

- Maintain **active, equitable engagement with community partners**
- Participate in ENGAGED MR3 Center activities (e.g., workshops, seminars)
- Present findings at a **center symposium or community forum**
- Submit **at least one conference presentation or manuscript**
- **Disseminate** findings to community partners
- **Complete six-month and twelve-month reviews**, including recruitment, milestones, expenditures, dissemination, community engagement activities, and future grant planning.
- Participate in **annual progress report and tracking reports for at least 5 years** post-award

Accelerated Timeline for Year 1 (2026)

- **Notice of Funding Opportunity:** Friday, June 26nd, 2026
- **Letter of Intent:** July 6
- **Full Application Due:** July 27 by 11:59 PST
- **Review Period:** July 28 – August 15
- **Award Notification:** August 20
- **Project Start Date:** August 30 (Dependent on NIH approval)



Submission Instructions

Submit a single PDF containing all application materials to: Tanvi Bhatt (tbhatt6@uic.edu) with cc to ENGAGED@uic.edu

Contact

For questions, please contact:

ENGAGED@uic.edu

Include ENGAGED Pilot Grants in the subject line