



Maggie E. Neumann Health Sciences Research Fund 2026 Request for Pilot Research Grant Proposals

Purpose

The purpose of this request for pilot research grant proposals is to seek interdisciplinary applications for the endowed Maggie E. Neumann Health Sciences Research Fund. This announcement invites applications for pilot research grants designed to provide proof-of-concept for novel and potentially scalable treatments or interventions to improve the health and well-being of those with chronic disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a person with a disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Categories of chronic disabilities include those related to vision, mobility, speech-language, auditory, neurological, cognitive, medical, and psychological impairments. We expect to fund 2-3 pilot grants in the range of \$25,000 to \$70,000 each.

A [Letter of Intent](#) is required and must be submitted by 5pm on Monday, March 2, 2026. Only applicants invited to submit a full proposal following LOI review will be eligible to apply.

Background

Healthy People 2030, the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Initiative (PCORI) and the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Disability and Rehabilitation Engineering (DARE) program identify improving the health and well-being of people with disabilities as a national priority. Consistent with these national priorities, the goals of the ***Maggie E. Neumann Health Sciences Research Fund*** are to bring together interdisciplinary teams of scientists, community and/or commercial partners to address the most pressing barriers to optimal health and well-being in children and adults with chronic disabilities. In 2023, approximately 13.1% of Delaware's population (nearly 130,000 individuals) lived with a disability. Many of these are chronic conditions including cognitive disabilities (affecting approximately 5.4% of the population), ambulatory disabilities (6.3%), and independent living disabilities (4.8%). Adults with chronic disabilities have substantially higher rates of obesity, diabetes, depression, cardiovascular disease, and stroke. Among people with cognitive disabilities, poverty rates reach 27.5% compared to 10.6% for those without cognitive disabilities, and employment rates remain significantly lower. People with chronic disabilities face ongoing barriers to accessing healthcare, recreational opportunities, and employment that persist throughout their lives. These barriers are especially pronounced for those who also belong to racial and ethnic minority groups or reside in rural settings, creating compounded disadvantages that further limit opportunities for optimal health, wellness, and independent living.

Topics of general interest to this request for proposals to improve the health and/or quality of life for children and/or adults with chronic disabilities include but are not limited to:

- Testing novel interventions, tools, devices, technologies, or strategies to prevent or manage age-related secondary conditions and functional decline in mid-life or older adults with chronic disabilities.

- Testing innovative assistive technologies, AI-enabled tools, adaptive equipment, or accessibility tools to support daily functioning and community participation for people with chronic disabilities.
- Piloting healthcare delivery strategies to improve early detection, care coordination, and treatment of comorbidities, including interventions that address ableism, bias, and discrimination in healthcare settings.
- Evaluating environmental and system-level interventions to enhance accessibility and health-promoting features of community settings for individuals with chronic disabilities.
- Testing strategies or delivery models to overcome geographic, resource, or infrastructure barriers to care and services for people with chronic disabilities in rural, underserved, or resource-limited settings.
- Testing peer support, self-management, or empowerment-based interventions to promote health literacy, advocacy skills, and quality of life for people with chronic disabilities.

High priority pilot research projects will be those that:

- (1) Present empirically supported and innovative research aims to test a novel intervention, tool, device, technology, AI-enabled application, or strategy to address a demonstrated health and well-being problem of children and/or adults with chronic disabilities.
- (2) Clearly demonstrate how the pilot study will provide proof-of-concept data on the feasibility, acceptability, and preliminary efficacy or effectiveness of the proposed intervention, tool, or approach.
- (3) Include a detailed plan for how pilot findings will inform the development of a competitive application for external funding (e.g., NIH R01, NIDILRR Field Initiated Projects, PCORI, NSF DARE, NSF Smart Health and AI, SBIR/STTR, large foundation grants) or significantly advance progress toward commercialization in partnership with community, clinical or commercial collaborators, with specific funding mechanisms and timelines identified.
- (4) Employ rigorous study designs appropriate to proof-of-concept testing (e.g., single-arm trials, pre-post designs with control comparison, small, randomized pilot trials, AB designs) that are feasible and can be completed within the 12-month funding period. Observational studies or projects focused solely on instrument development, needs assessment, or descriptive research will not be considered responsive to this funding opportunity.
- (5) Describe a comprehensive dissemination plan that includes how research results will be shared with community partners, stakeholders, and the targeted population to advance translation into practice or inform future research.
- (6) Are led by interdisciplinary teams that bring complementary expertise necessary to test the proposed intervention or approach and foster collaborative research that bridges disciplines and supports translation.

As appropriate for the research questions posed, meaningful engagement of adults or children with chronic disabilities (i.e., the targeted population) and key community or commercial partners in the conceptualization, planning, implementation, and interpretation of the research is required. Such engagement generates better informed research questions, enhances the relevance and acceptability of interventions, and increases the likelihood of successful translation into broader practice or commercialization.

Who is Eligible to Apply?

Any faculty member or post-doctoral associate/fellow (with a named faculty mentor) from UD is eligible to apply. At least one member of the investigative team (i.e., Key Personnel) must be a current faculty member at the College of Health Sciences (CHS) at the University of Delaware.

The investigative team must be interdisciplinary. Strong preference will be given to proposals

that demonstrate meaningful collaboration across disciplines, including faculty from multiple UD colleges, professionals from community organizations, clinical partners, industry partners, or researchers from other institutions who bring complementary expertise necessary to address the proposed research aims. Applications that include key community, clinical or commercial partners capable of supporting translation, implementation, or scalability of the proposed solution are strongly encouraged and will be prioritized during review. No more than one proposal may be submitted by any one team and/or PI.

Key Dates and Administrative Requirements

- Funding announcement release: February 2, 2026.
- Letter of Intent deadline: 5pm Monday March 2, 2026.
- Notification of invitation to submit full proposal: Monday March 9, 2026.
- Full Application deadline: 5pm Friday May 16, 2026.
- Awards will be announced by Friday June 15, 2026. IRB approval for the project will be required before funds are released.
- The funding period will be from August 3, 2026 – August 2, 2027.
- Final reports for each funded project will be due on Tuesday, August 31, 2027.
- All funds must be spent by August 2, 2027 unless an extension is granted.
- Manuscripts and presentations from research supported through this award should acknowledge the Maggie E. Neumann Health Sciences Research Fund, College of Health Sciences, University of Delaware.
- All grantees are required to present study results (can include in-progress findings) at the College of Health Sciences Research and Innovation Day 2027, and to the Maggie E. Neumann Fund donors.

Letter of Intent

A brief Letter of Intent (LOI) is required to confirm eligibility and allow the review committee to assess alignment with funding priorities before applicants invest time in a full proposal. Please submit responses to the following questions [here](#) by 5pm on Monday, March 2, 2026.

Required Information:

1. Principal Investigator Name
2. Principal Investigator Department/College
3. Principal Investigator Email
4. Interdisciplinary Academic Collaborator 1 Name
5. Interdisciplinary Academic Collaborator 1 Department/College/Institution
6. Project Title
7. Chronic disability to be addressed
8. Description of the tool/intervention/device/technology/approach being tested (40 words maximum):
9. Anticipated external funding mechanism(s) these pilot data will be used to apply for (e.g., NIH R01, NIDILRR Field Initiated Projects, PCORI, NSF DARE, NSF Smart Health and AI, SBIR/STTR, large foundation grants)

LOIs will be reviewed for eligibility and alignment with funding priorities. Applicants selected to submit a full proposal will be notified by Monday March 9, 2026.

Full Proposals

Proposals should be no more than five pages in length (Arial or Times New Roman, 11pt font, 1.0-inch margins). The five pages include the following sections:

- Specific Aims
- Significance
- Innovation
- Approach

Items that do not count towards the five-page limit:

- References/Literature Cited
- Itemized project budget (in tabular form) and justification (not to exceed one page); no specific format required. Please include expected in-kind support/contributions and support for student team members. By submitting this information, it is assumed that all necessary approvals for in-kind support have been obtained (i.e., department chair).
- Principal Investigator(s) and Co-Investigator(s) biosketches (NIH or NSF format)
- Letters of support from collaborating community, clinical and/or commercial partners are strongly encouraged. Limit of three letters per proposal application (one page each).

Please submit the five-page research proposal and references, project budget + justification, biosketches and letters of support in a single PDF. The Maggie E. Neumann Health Sciences Research Fund proposal does not require administrative review from the CHS grants office prior to submission, nor do they need to be notified of your submission. As a condition of funding, all proposals must receive IRB approval before data collection begins.

Use of Grant Funds

Funds may be used to pay for project staff salary and benefits, consultant fees, supplies and other direct expenses related to program activities (e.g., local travel, incentives for participants). Funds may not be used to support the salary or benefits of faculty. The purchase of equipment will only be supported if it is demonstrated that there is no other way for the research team to access necessary equipment other than direct purchase.

Contact

Freddie Patterson (on behalf of CHS Research Committee); fredap@udel.edu