

2026 Pilot Projects Leaders (PPLs) Request for Applications

The **Center for Rural Health Care Delivery Science** is seeking applications for Pilot Projects Leaders. The Center aims to improve understanding of and identify solutions to challenges associated with provision of health care in rural areas; utilize a community-engaged approach to research; and mentor and support early-career investigators as they transition into independent researchers.

The Center is comprised of an Administrative and Mentoring Core, Community Engagement and Outreach (CEO) Core, and Statistics, Informatics, and Qualitative Methods (SIQM) Core to support this mission.

OPPORTUNITY

Pilot Project Leader (PPL) applicants are asked to propose a rural health care delivery research pilot project. Research pilot project must be for 1-year timeline. The funding available per pilot project is \$100K, including salary support. We will accept up to 2 applicants from each clinical Department/Center; an internal selection process may be needed in certain departments or centers. At the completion of a successful one-year Pilot Project, Investigators will be invited to apply for additional funding as Research Project Leader.

PPLs will have access to the Center's monthly Research-in-Progress meetings, seminar series on topics relevant to health care delivery science, and experts consultations from each Core.

ELIGIBILITY

Faculty investigators of all ranks are eligible,

but [Early Stage and New Investigators](#) will be given priority. PPL applicants must meet the following criteria in order to be eligible:

- The PPL must be able to devote at least 1 person-month (8.3%) of effort to the Pilot Project with commitment from their Department Chair/Center Director.
- The PPL is required to have a terminal research degree such as an M.D. or Ph.D. This includes professional, clinical, and research doctorates.
- The proposed research pilot project must have a rural health care delivery focus and utilize the Center's Scientific Cores in the design and conduct of the project. See FAQs for more information on working with the Scientific Cores.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Applications must be [submitted online](#). The following materials should be combined into a **single PDF** and uploaded in the submission form.

- A letter of support from your Department Chair or Center Director
- ScienCV Biosketch for PPL
- Research project proposal
 - **Proposals will be six pages maximum, excluding Project Abstract, Specific Aims, and References.** Please see [Research Proposal Components](#) for details.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL COMPONENTS

The research pilot project proposal is comprised of the following:

- 1. Project Title**
- 2. Project Abstract:** Succinctly describe the research proposal in 500 words max.
- 3. Specific Aims:** Outline the key steps to complete the research project (1 page).
- 4. Significance:** Describe the clinical impact of the research project and the gaps in knowledge specific to rural health care that completion will fill.
- 5. Innovation:** Describe the unique and novel nature of the research project as it relates to rural health care delivery.
- 6. Approach:** Further detail the Specific Aims and steps that will be taken to accomplish the research project. Describe how the research proposal will utilize services available from the CEO and SIQM Cores.
- 7. Timeline and Milestones:** Provide a table and key milestones over a 1-year period.
- 8. References:** Select and list publications cited in the research proposal.

SUBMISSION TIMELINE

PPL submissions are due Monday, July 13, 2026. PPL finalists will be notified by September 30, 2026.

SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

Two (2) PPLs will be selected by review of the Center's Internal Advisory Committee (IAC). All

eligible submissions will be reviewed and scored on each of the following criteria:

- Qualifications of the candidate
- Impact on rural health care delivery
- Feasibility of advancing to a Research Project Leader role (50% protected time for up to 3 years) or to independent funding as an investigator

Upon selection, PPLs will work with Center Cores to refine their proposed research plan in preparation for submission to an External Advisory Committee for final approval.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SELECTED PPLs

If selected, PPLs are required to work with Center Core leaders to refine the proposed research plan and submit to the External Advisory Committee for final approval.



CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is funding limited to DHMC Faculty?

- Yes. Individuals from outside the DH system are not eligible at this time.

What is the scope/definition of rural health care delivery?

- The research needs to involve rural communities or populations, and address a gap in knowledge related to rural health care delivery. Our scope is broad and not specific to any one discipline.

Do we need to have sites identified that we would be doing research with?

- If you already have sites identified, that's great. If not, we can leverage our CEO Core (and other resources) to help identify partners.

Do the project priorities need to be aligned with the priorities of NIGMS?

- NIGMS is the NIH institute that the COBRE P20 grant was funded by. The current topic priorities of NIGMS does not drive what your project is, as long as the project is around rural health care delivery science.

How will the Scientific Cores support Pilot Projects?

- Project Leaders are expected to engage with the Cores throughout the design and execution of their project. Core experts may advise investigators on project design, analytic plans, recruitment materials, data collection tools, community engagement approaches and more to ensure projects are scientifically rigorous and well suited to advance rural health care delivery science.

Is working with the Community Engagement and Outreach Core essential for Pilot Projects?

- Yes. As a Rural Health COBRE, we are required to have a Community and Engagement and Outreach (CEO) Core. Research projects should utilize community engaged scholarship principles, although community engaged research methodology is not a specific requirement. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the CEO prior to finalizing their application and describe how they will leverage the CEO Core in their project.

Is working with the Statistics, Informatics and Qualitative Methods Core essential for Pilot Projects?

- Yes. Each investigator will engage in some way with each of the SIQM Core. Examples of SIQM Core utilization may include but are not limited to: partnering with them to apply innovative statistical methods, utilizing novel data sources, piloting new data in the rural health data warehouse, or contributing to the rural health data warehouse. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the SIQM Core prior to finalizing their application and describe how they will leverage the SIQM Core in their application.

How many Research and Pilot Project Leader slots are available?

- The Center has funding for 4 Research Project Leader positions (3 years each) and 2 Pilot Project Leader positions per year. Thus, there can be 4 RPLs and 2 PPLs at any given time. Each COBRE award is a 5-year phase, with the possibility of 3 total phases (15 years). The current Phase 1 Award goes through January 2028.