CHERISH

Center for Health Economics of Treatment Interventions for Substance Use Disorder, HCV, and HIV

2027-2028 CHERISH Pilot Grant Funding Opportunity

About CHERISH

The Center for Health Economics of Treatment Interventions for Substance Use Disorders, HCV, and HIV (CHERISH) is a multi-institutional Center of Excellence funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). The Center's mission is to develop and disseminate health economics research on healthcare utilization, health outcomes, and health-related behaviors that informs substance use disorder treatment and HCV and HIV care of people who use substances. CHERISH includes a founding network of investigators from Weill Cornell Medicine, Boston Medical Center, Boston University School of Public Health, University of Pennsylvania, and University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, and new collaborators at New York University and University of Connecticut.

CHERISH Pilot Grants – Special Topics of Interest

CHERISH seeks to fund health economics research on healthcare utilization, health outcomes, and health-related behaviors consistent with our mission. For examples, please see pilot projects that were successfully funded through this mechanism.

In this cycle we particularly encourage health economic research proposals relating to 1) monitoring and responding to changes in the drug supply that are creating new harms or 2) using artificial intelligence/super intelligence to conduct substance use research or provide substance use care.

Eligibility

Applicants can be located at any U.S.-based institution; however, they must fulfill at least one of the following criteria:

- Postdoctoral fellow or trainee under the mentorship of a CHERISH investigator, CHERISH Research Affiliate, or CHERISH advisory board member
- An investigator nominated by a CHERISH investigator, CHERISH Research Affiliate, or CHERISH advisory board member
- A CHERISH investigator, CHERISH Research Affiliate, or CHERISH advisory board member

Priority consideration will be given to:

- New or Early Stage Investigators as defined by NIH
- Investigators new to the field of health economics or substance use disorders
- Individuals with lived/living experience, or perspectives reflective of populations impacted by substance use disorders

Prospective applicants who need assistance in connecting with a sponsor for nomination or a mentor can email pilot.grants@cherishresearch.org and are encouraged to do so by December 15.

Application Timeline & Overview

I. **Letter of Intent Submission:** January 8, 2027
II. **Proposal Submission:** February 19, 2027
III. **Proposal Review:** April 2027
IV. **Funds Awarded:** May 2027

I. Letter of Intent Submission

Fill out this form to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) no later than Friday, January 8, 2027, to allow time to evaluate the relevance of the topic to the CHERISH mission and to identify appropriate reviewers. The LOI asks for basic information about the applicant as well as an overview of the proposed pilot project and team. If you do not have a CHERISH sponsor or mentor, you are strongly encouraged to submit your LOI by Tuesday, December 15, 2026.

II. Proposal Submission – Required Format

Email the full pilot grant proposal to pilot.grants@cherishresearch.org by Friday, February 19, 2027. Include the following 14 sections detailed below:

Section	Description
1. Title Page (maximum 1 page)	As applicable, please provide the following information: • Proposed project title • Project PI(s), co-investigator(s), consultant(s) • Total amount requested Please include name, degree, and primary institutional affiliation for each person listed.
2. Research Plan (maximum 4 pages)	• Specific Aim(s) (maximum 1 page) • Significance • Innovation — (maximum 3 pages) • Approach References do not count toward page totals.
3. Timeline (maximum 1 page)	Provide a brief description of the timeline for the proposed project. Pilot projects are expected to be completed within one year of receiving funds.
4. Relevance to the CHERISH mission and NIH priorities for health economics research (maximum 100 words)	Provide a brief statement describing how the proposal fits with the CHERISH mission and NIH priorities for health economics research described in NOT-OD-16-025 released on November 25, 2015.
5. Relevance to special topics of interest (maximum 100 words)	If the proposed project involves one or more of the topics listed above, please indicate here. If the proposed project does not include research related to one or more of these topics, please note for this section, "Not Applicable."
6. Relevance to NIH priorities for health disparities research (maximum 100 words)	If the proposed research focuses on health disparities, please describe how the project proposes solution-oriented approaches, as described in Advancing NIH's Mission Through a Unified Strategy published on August 15, 2025 and updated on July 2, 2026. If the proposed project does not include research that focuses on health disparities, please note for this section, "Not Applicable."

7. Relevance to NIH priorities for HIV/AIDS research (maximum 100 words)	If the project includes HIV/AIDS populations, please indicate whether and how the project aligns with 2026-2030 NIH Strategic Plan for HIV and HIV-Related Research as led by the Office of AIDS Research. If the proposed project does not include HIV/AIDS populations, please note for this section, "Not Applicable."
8. Budget (no page limits)	The target range for each award will be $10,000 to $20,000 in total costs. We ask that indirect cost be waived by the applicant's institution given the limited availability of funds. Submit a breakdown of cost using the supplemental spreadsheet template. See Budget Pilot Grants. The start date should be on or after May 1, 2027, and end on or before April 30, 2028. All pilot project awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the NIH Grants Statement.
9. Budget Justification (no page limits)	Provide brief justification of each line item in the accompanying budget. Please describe any other funding, awarded or pending, available for the proposed project that will supplement the funds being requested. Effort levels here must match the budget; if a person is offering their time in-kind, list that individual on the budget at 0 calendar months (salary info may be left blank). See Budget Justification Template Pilot Grants.
10. Human Subjects (no page limits)	Follow the NIH guidelines to describe procedures for ensuring the protection of human subjects. Please state the expected level of review for your project (e.g., non-human subjects research, exempt category 2 human subjects research, expedited category 5 human subjects research, etc.). Note, if the project proposal is awarded and involves human subjects research, funding will not be disbursed until proof of human subjects oversight is provided.
11. Dissemination Plan (no page limits)	Include a preliminary plan for disseminating study results. All projects should result in at least one publication submission. Presentations at a scientific conference are encouraged. Pilot grant recipients will be expected to consult with the CHERISH Dissemination Science Core to further develop and execute the dissemination plan to enhance the policy impact of the research project.
12. Project Relevance to Career Plans and Future Funding (no page limits)	Describe how this project will fit into your long-term career plans. If the project results will be used to support future grants applications or other funding opportunities, please specify the prospective funding opportunity, funding agency, and timeline.
13. Biosketch (no page limits)	Submit a biosketch in NIH format using SciENcv of MyNCBI. Refer to the NIH page for instructions for "Biographical Sketch Common Form" approved through 04/30/2027. Biosketches from collaborators are optional but encouraged.

14. Letter(s) of Support (no page limits)	For eligible postdoctoral fellows and trainees, please include a letter from your mentor that details the support the mentor will provide during the project period. Letters of Support from other collaborators are optional but encouraged.

III. Proposal Review – Our Process

The CHERISH Pilot Grant, Training & Mentoring Core will select reviewers with expertise related to pilot project proposals. Reviewers will include CHERISH advisory board members, CHERISH leadership and investigators, CHERISH Research Affiliates, and/or relevant experts identified by these individuals.

Review criteria and the associated scoring system are similar to the simplified NIH framework. Pilot project applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Factor 1: Importance of Research (Significance and Innovation: Scored 1-9)
- Factor 2: Rigor and Feasibility (Approach: Scored 1-9)
- Factor 3: Expertise and Resources (Investigator and Environment: Evaluated as appropriate or additional information needed)

Applicants will receive written feedback from reviewers on the strengths and weaknesses of their proposal on each of the above-mentioned criteria, as well as Human Subjects and Budget sections. In addition, reviewers will provide feedback to applicants on strategies for external funding beyond the proposed pilot grant and ways to improve the research proposed to increase the likelihood of obtaining this external funding.

IV. Funds Awarded – Pilot Grant Activities

Although not part of the application, proof of human subjects determination and a data management and sharing plan must be provided prior to the release of funding.

Funded investigators will receive support and guidance from the Pilot Grant, Training & Mentoring Core and CHERISH leadership. Support includes access to training activities, consultation with the Dissemination Science Core, and opportunities to connect with additional mentors.

Pilot grant recipients are expected to present their preliminary results and future plans to CHERISH leadership in-person and/or virtually at least once during the grant period.

Principal Investigators of the pilot project grants are required to meet quarterly with the Pilot Grant, Training & Mentoring Core leadership and staff.

Connect with Us

We invite prospective applicants to join an informational webinar on **Tuesday, December 1, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. ET** (sign up here) to learn more about the eligibility requirements, application process, and program experience, and to hear from the Pilot Grant, Training & Mentoring Core Co-director and former pilot grant recipients.

For questions, please contact pilot.grants@cherishresearch.org.