Request for Proposals (RFP) for Pilot Awards
Cycle 3 | Summer 2026
For Projects Using NDWS Data

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Highlights

Funding Amount: Two categories of awards will be made available in Cycle 3.
- Small – up to $80,000 total costs per award (direct costs not to exceed $50,000)
- Large – up to $160,000 total costs per award (direct costs not to exceed $100,000)

Deadline: 11:59 p.m. EST Monday, April 27, 2026
Expected Award Date: October 1, 2026
Award Period: 12 months (or 18 months if using linked data)

Program Overview and Purpose

The National Dementia Workforce Study (NDWS), sponsored by the NIH National Institute on Aging, is conducting the first large, annual surveys of the dementia care workforce in the United States. Survey data and other linked data sources will create an unprecedented resource for researchers to answer critical questions about the workforce and its impact on care and outcomes for persons living with dementia.

A major goal of NDWS is to build and support a community of researchers who will take advantage of this new data infrastructure to understand the dementia care workforce and its impact on care and outcomes for persons living with dementia. In keeping with this goal, this RFP seeks to develop and expand the community of researchers focused on the dementia care workforce and encourage use of the NDWS data infrastructure to advance the NIA's AD+ADRD Research Implementation Milestones.

We invite researchers to submit proposals to analyze available NDWS data. In addition to receiving direct funds, each project will have access to additional support (e.g., up to 10 hours of biostatistical consultation) from NDWS to promote successful completion and dissemination.

Data Availability

Public-use versions of NDWS survey datasets – except for the administrator surveys – are available through the NIA-funded National Archive of Computerized Data on Aging (NACDA).

While the public use survey data may be appropriate for some research questions, NDWS is utilizing the NIA Data LINKAGE platform for (1) sharing of the administrator survey data and (2) facilitating linkage of NDWS survey data to other data sources. Data that are available for linkage to the NDWS survey data are summarized here. For more information on accessing the data, visit the How to Access Data page of the NDWS website and the Access or Share LINKAGE Data page on the LINKAGE website. More information will be available in the coming months in preparation for Wave 2 data by early Summer 2026.

Please note: data from the Home Care Staff survey will be included in the Wave 2 data release. There will be one data file of n=215 respondents, which includes respondents from Wave 1 (n=35) and Wave 2, the latter of which included both agency-based recruiting (n=49) as well as a direct-to-respondent sample selected from a single state-based registry (n=131). **This file will not be weighted to be nationally representative,** but, depending on the research question, may be appropriate for some research questions. Because of the small number of participating agencies, an administrator survey file will not be released.

Project Scope and Duration

The Cycle 3 pilot awards will support research studies that use NDWS data. Applicants may propose using multiple surveys in their analysis, but this is not required. The Cycle 3 pilot awards are designed to contribute new research findings, generate pilot data to support larger studies, and inform the development of future NDWS surveys.

For this cycle, applicants **may choose to apply for either a Small or Large pilot award**.
- Small Awards ($50,000 direct costs / $80,000 total costs) are best for projects that only use NDWS survey data, and/or are primarily descriptive. **Projects proposing use of Home Care data may only apply for a Small Award.**
- Large Awards ($100,000 direct costs / $160,000 total costs) are best for more complicated projects, particularly those involving linked data and/or CMS data.

Applicants may only apply for a Small or Large Award. The number of each that will be awarded will be determined based on the quality of applications, but the total amount of funding available for pilot awards is similar to previous cycles.

Applications should assume a 12-month project period beginning October 1, 2026, during which all proposed activities can be completed. If your proposed project involves use of linked data within the LINKAGE platform, you may propose an 18-month project period (to allow for time needed to gain approval to access the LINKAGE platform). Small Awards may only propose a 12-month project period. Requests for no-cost extensions will be considered, particularly if there are project delays associated with applying for and obtaining access to linked data within LINKAGE; however, you should design your project to be completed within the applicable timeframe.

Project Examples and NIA Research Implementation Milestones

Applications are expected to advance at least one NIA AD+ADRD Research Implementation Milestone. Regardless of the specific proposal topic, applicants are encouraged to include research questions related to labor or health economics.

Examples of potential project topics include, but are not limited to:

1. Exploring the extent to which dementia knowledge and attitudes are associated with training, practice setting, and staff characteristics.

2. Using survey results along with administrative data to assess relationships between staff dementia training and attitudes, staffing and retention, and facility-level outcomes such as antipsychotic medication use.

3. Determining which cognitive assessments are used most commonly in clinical practice by Community Clinicians and whether this varies by clinician and practice characteristics.

4. Exploring the use of specific treatments or types of care, and how this varies by clinician and practice characteristics.

5. Assessing whether confidence in diagnosing mild cognitive impairment and dementia vary by clinician and practice characteristics.

6. Examining what LTC personnel report with regard to the relationship that they have with families and how that relationship influences care.

7. Psychometric research methods that create scales or compare results to other published research.

We advise potential applicants to review the previously funded projects as they develop their own proposals.

Applicants should review and follow NIH guidance on the appropriate use of artificial intelligence in the development of their proposals.

Project Deliverables

Principal Investigators will be expected to attend and present study results at the NDWS Annual Research Meeting the year after the pilot award (held each Spring in Bethesda, Maryland). Awardees will be expected to publish at least one peer-reviewed article from their study; articles may be considered for publication in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* as part of an NDWS Special Collection. Awardees will be asked for study progress updates when NDWS annual reports to the NIA are due. There may be additional progress reporting requirements from NIA. Upon completion of their study, all awardees will submit a final financial report, in accordance with NIH funding guidelines. Awardees may also be invited to serve as reviewers in future rounds of NDWS pilot applications.

Eligibility

Individuals from any organization eligible for NIH funding may apply. Prior to making an award, successful applicant organizations must be registered with [System for Award Management (SAM)](#) and have a Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering Systems (DUNS) number.

- Principal Investigators (PI) may be any individual(s) with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research. Individuals of all disciplines and career stages are welcome to apply, including pre-doctoral students and those without a terminal degree. We encourage applications from post-doctoral fellows and early-career faculty who are developing or expanding a portfolio of research focused on the workforce that provides care to people living with dementia.
- Applicants are not required to be U.S. citizens or permanent residents.
- An individual can be part of more than one proposal but can only be a PI or Co-PI on one proposal.
- NDWS Investigators and Consultants cannot also be PIs, Co-Investigators, or Consultants on any proposal.

Evaluation Criteria

Review of the final submissions will be completed by a panel selected by the Pilot Studies Core team. The review committee will use an approach similar to that conducted in the review of NIH proposals. The review committee will use the current [NIH framework for peer review.](#)

- **Factor 1: Importance of the Research** (Significance, Innovation), scored 1-9
- **Factor 2: Rigor and Feasibility** (Approach), scored 1-9
- **Factor 3: Expertise and Resources** (Investigator, Environment)
  - Appropriate (no written explanation needed)
  - Identify need for additional expertise and/or resources (requires reviewer to briefly address specific gaps in expertise or resources needed to carry out the project)
- **Additional factors we will consider:**
  - Addresses an AD+ADRD Research Implementation Milestone
  - Makes use of available linked data
  - Likelihood to lead to subsequent funding

Questions About the RFP

For general information, please visit the [National Dementia Workforce Study website](#) and our [Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).](#)

We are happy to answer questions about the RFP submitted via email at [NDWSpilots@ucsf.edu](#). To ensure fairness in the competition we will *not* respond privately to questions. We will compile questions and answer them in a document that is posted on our website. Questions will be answered on a rolling (weekly) basis with responses until two weeks before the deadline. The responses will not identify individuals who submit questions. Applicants are encouraged to review the [Pilot Q&A document](#) as well as the general [NDWS FAQs](#) prior to posing a question; any questions already answered in the existing Q&As will not receive a response.

Application Process

- Applications must follow the application formatting instructions.
- Applications are submitted as a single PDF of all required pages/sections.
- Applications are accepted through the University of Michigan-hosted [Competition Space](#) website only. A separate Letter of Intent (LOI) is neither required nor accepted.
- Application Timeline:

    - Applications are due at 11:59 p.m. EST on Monday, April 27, 2026.
    - Award notifications are expected by July 31, 2026.

Required Submission Materials

To apply, please submit the following application elements in a single PDF (see details below):

1. Cover page
2. Abstract (150 word limit)
3. Research proposal (4-page limit, not counting references, 0.5" margins)
4. Budget and budget justification
5. NIH-style biosketches for the PI/Co-PIs and Co-investigators
6. *Letters of support (optional)*

NOTE: All necessary information should be included within the main sections of the application listed above. Do not include appendices.

1. Cover Page (not included in page limit):

- Project title
- Indicate which survey(s) you will analyze (Community Clinician; Nursing Home Staff; Assisted Living Staff; Home Care), including whether you will be using any of the administrator surveys.
- Indicate whether you are applying for a Small Award or Large Award
- Principal Investigator's/Co-Principal Investigators' name(s), title(s), email address(es), and telephone number(s)
- Submitting organization name, address, city, state

- Names, titles, and institutions of additional project personnel (e.g., co-investigators and consultants)
- Total costs (direct + indirect)

2. Abstract (150 word limit) which includes a description of the project, covering significance, objectives, hypothesis, and methods. It should be written in lay language, highlighting the research's impact

3. Research Proposal (4-page limit excluding references, 0.5" margins)

- **Specific aims:** Describe the aims and objectives that will determine the scope, depth, and overall direction of the study.
- **Significance:** Describe the importance of the problem to be addressed and its relevance to the workforce that serves people living with dementia, as well as how the study connects to the NIA milestones.
- **Innovation:** Explain how the application addresses important gaps in knowledge or challenges and/or advances current shortcomings in research on the workforce that serves people living with dementia. This can include novel concepts, approaches, or methodologies.
- **Research team:** Describe the Principal Investigator's and team members' backgrounds and how their training, prior research, and/or interests have prepared them to successfully complete the proposed research.
- **Approach:** Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and planned analyses. If appropriate, include feasibility, preliminary studies, potential problems, and alternative strategies. **Please note that the software packages available on LINKAGE are SAS, Stata, R, and Python; other programs (e.g., Mplus) cannot be used**.
- **Dissemination plan and contribution to future work:** Describe how this work will lead to publications, future research proposals, and impact on the field of research. The applicant should describe both how the results of the pilot will lead to an application to the National Institute on Aging or other large-scale funding opportunity and the timeline for that application.

**Please note – References are not included in the four-page limit for this section. Please use NIH format for citations.

4. Budget and Budget Justification (not included in page limit)

- Budgets should be prepared using the budget form available for download from the sidebar within the Competition Space platform.
- Please use October 1, 2026 as the project start date. The actual start date may differ, depending on the length of time required to establish a subaward with your institution. **Note that the *Regents of the University of Michigan* will be the entity issuing the subaward.
- Awards are for 12 months in length. If you are proposing to use linked data within the LINKAGE platform, you may instead propose an 18-month timeline.
  - While no-cost extensions can be considered, we will prioritize studies that can be completed in the time frames provided in the RFA. You should design your study to be completed within the applicable timeframe.

- The requested funding amount should be commensurate with the scope of the research plan (e.g., an analysis of surveys linked with beneficiary-level claims data might justify a larger budget than an analysis of survey data alone).
    - Direct costs may not exceed $100,000.
    - Total costs may not exceed $160,000.
- Funds can be used for personnel, student fee remissions, subawards, IRB oversight fees, research-related supplies/software and equipment, publication fees, and travel (including to scientific conference(s) if the travel will provide direct benefit to the project).
    - Please use the current NIH salary cap for any individuals over the cap.
    - Multi-site projects must adhere to the NIH Single IRB policy and may include Single IRB (IRB of record) oversight fees in the project budget if applicable.
- Budget must include travel for the PI to attend and present results at the NDWS Annual Research Meeting in Bethesda, MD. Allowable travel costs include airfare, lodging, meals, and ground transportation.
- A budget justification must be included, which explains the roles of individuals who will be supported and justifies all other expenses.
- Data Management and Sharing Costs are not allowable and must not be included in the budget or budget justification. NDWS is the only entity permitted to share NDWS data. Awardees will not be permitted to make the data they procure from NDWS available to others.

5. NIH-style biosketches for the PI/Co-PIs and Co-investigators (not included in page limit):

- NIH-style biosketches for the PI/Co-PIs and co-investigators who would be paid by the Award. Please ensure that each biosketch includes position/title, education/training, personal statement, positions/honors, and contributions to science.

6. Letters of support (optional; not included in page limit)

NOTE: Protection of Human Subjects Documentation

Documentation of IRB approval will be required before funds are dispersed for any activity involving human subjects. If your proposed project involves more than one institution engaged in the conduct of non-exempt human subjects research, you must adhere to the NIH's Single IRB policy. If your chosen IRB of record charges fees for oversight of multi-site research, you may include these costs in your project budget.