OAIC National Coordinating Center
Claude D Pepper Older Americans Independence Centers

Claude D Pepper Older Americans Independence Centers (OAIC) Coordinating Center Program

Exploratory, Small Pilot Fund Request for Applications (RFA)

Overview

The Pepper OAIC Coordinating Center seeks proposals to accelerate progress and build collaboration between Pepper Centers for clinical and translational research**.** These projects intend to be relatively short-term awards that efficiently and quickly generate preliminary data for submission of collaborative extramural grant applications and/or high impact publications. We particularly encourage novel uses of existing data, specimens (blood or tissue), or images from OAIC and aging-related research repositories. Examples include the new NIA Aging Research Biobank, the OAIC CC's PSR (Pepper Studies Repository), specimens available at other OAICs or NIA-supported centers, and specimens available from trials relevant to aging, including LIFE, HEALTH-ABC, and others, as well as population-based studies such as CHS, ARIC, MESA, and others. Website links for some of these are below. Example projects include, but are not limited to, analyses of existing data or biospecimens, ancillary studies adding a new dimension to ongoing or past studies, novel assays, technology, data collection or analyses. Applicants should be faculty with a rank of instructor or higher from Pepper-affiliated institutions. An essential aspect of this RFA is involvement of two or more Pepper Centers (or one Pepper Center and another NIA program center). For example, the samples, images, or other data could reside at one Pepper Center and be analyzed at another Pepper Center, or samples from a national studies could be divided for analysis of unique variables at the two different OAICs.

Resources to help find collaborators at other institutions for your project:

- OAIC Collaborator's database (accessible at OAIC National website with a log in. Link: https://www.peppercenter.org/secure/dspCollaborators.cfm)
- Annual Directory Query engine (accessible at OAIC National website at the link - https://www.peppercenter.org/public/ar/
- Research COMPASS (accessible at direct link - https://rccn.wakehealth.edu/)
- Ask your OAIC Director
- Ask your OAIC REC leader
- Contact the OAIC CC – we're here to help.

Letter of Intent

- No more than 250 words
- A Letter of Intent (LOI) is strongly encouraged in order to alert the OAIC Coordinating Center to your plans and allow the CC to provide helpful feedback. LOIs can be submitted up until 3 weeks prior to the deadline, though the earlier the better. The LOI is informal and will not be included in the review materials.
- We encourage you to consult with Pepper Center leaders at your institution and / or at the CC during preparation of your LOI and application.
- The OAIC Coordinating Center leaders encourage applicants to contact us as needed for guidance on applications and assistance with match-making and identifying potential collaborators from other Pepper Centers via access to the OAIC Collaborators Database via the National Pepper Center website (www.peppercenter.org)

Application Process involves the following

- Project Summary (250 word max)

- What research question(s) are you trying to answer and what is your planned approach? (1000 word max)
- What will you do with the answer when you have it? (250 word max)
- Applications should address: 1) A clinical or translational research focus and Pepper theme; and 2) Plans to use this funding to develop a larger clinical or translational multidisciplinary project or a high impact publication
- Details about how these funds will be spent and a justification of the expenses (250 word max)
- Projected timeline for use of the funds - all funds must be spent < 12 months; shorter preferred (250 word max).
- A budget with the full details of awarded funds of $7,500 (assay kits, materials, and invoices will be paid directly by Coordinating Center)
- Reference page (if necessary) to include up to 15 references on a separate page
- Endorsement/commitment letter from Director of submitting OAIC (half page)
- A copy of IRB/IACUC approval letter will be required at the time of award (if applicable)

Review Criteria

- Relevance to the overall OAIC theme, research feasibility, innovation, and quality of the science.
- Involvement of 2 or more NIA-supported centers is strongly encouraged, preferably OAICs, but can include other NIA-supported center as long as the lead is an OAIC.
- Likelihood that project completion will result in proof of principle or pilot data that will result in the submission of a larger extramural grant application, and / or lead to key publications.
- Demonstrated need.
- 'Leverage'- other resources that are will support the overall initiative.
- Leadership or meaningful Involvement of early career investigators is strongly encouraged.

Links of Interest

- NIA Aging Research Biobank
- OAIC CC Pepper Studies Registry
- Boston Mobilize Study
- Other links of interest located at the OAIC National website: https://peppercenter.org/public/started_data.cfm and under the "Researchers in Aging" Tab

Award information

- A budget with the full details of awarded funds of $7,500 (assay kits, materials, and invoices will be paid directly by Coordinating Center)
- Please note that with NIA endorsement the indirect costs rate to be used for this award is 8% which is the same as early career awards throughout the OAIC program.

Submission Deadlines

All materials should be sent directly to the Pepper Coordinating Center peppercenter@wakehealth.edu before or on the deadlines listed below.

Application Process Timeline

RFA release date	Monday, June 15, 2026
Letter of Intent Receipt Date	Monday, August 24, 2026 as early as possible but no later than 3 weeks before deadline
Full Application deadline	Monay, September 14, 2026 by 11:59 pm EST
Announcement of Awards	Monday, November 2, 2026

Contact

Questions regarding the application process should be directed to Abby Archer (abby.archer@advocatehealth.org) and/or Dalane Kitzman (Dalane.Kitzman@advocatehealth.org).