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*Alzheimer's Disease Resource Center
for Minority Aging Research*

Funding Opportunity

For Early Stage and New Investigators

2025-2026

3 Awards of up to \$40,000 for a 1-year pilot study aimed at reducing the impact of Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias in the Hispanic population of the Rio Grande Valley and South Texas

***Letter of Intent
Extended Deadline
November 11, 2024***

Application by invitation only
after review of letter of intent.

Contact: michael.mahaney@utrgv.edu or claudia.alaniz01@utrgv.edu

**Rio Grande Valley Alzheimer's Disease Resource Center for Minority Aging
Research (AD-RCMAR): Partnerships for Progress**

Letter of Intent DEADLINE EXTENDED: 5:00 pm CDT, Monday 11 November

Program Information and Letter of Intent Guidance
The RGV AD-RCMAR Pilot Studies Program

Purpose and Scope. The purpose of the Pilot Studies Program is to provide junior faculty who are new or early career investigators with opportunities, necessary support, and guidance to successfully conduct pilot studies that will generate results which will contribute to the field as publications and provide preliminary data in applications for extramural grants to support ADRD-related research.

Eligibility. The recipient of pilot a study award will be recognized as a RCMAR Scholar. A Scholar must be a doctoral level investigator who holds a full-time faculty or research faculty position at an organization that is eligible to receive NIH grants in aid of research. The junior faculty member must be a new and/or early-stage investigator, i.e., one within 10 years of completing a terminal research degree (PhD, medical residency, or equivalent).

A Scholar must not have previously received a RCMAR pilot study award or an NIH independent investigator-initiated research award. Prior NIH awards that do not disqualify applicants include fellowships (F awards), individual career awards (K awards), loan repayment contracts (L awards), training grants (T & D awards), instrumentation, construction, education, and meeting awards. Scholars should contact the PSP Coordinator or Project Coordinator if clarification is needed.

Focus. The AD-RCMAR supports pilot studies that address topics related to ADRD in the medically underserved and understudied Hispanic minority population of the Rio Grande Valley and South Texas.

In accordance with the mandate of the National Institute on Aging's RCMAR program, AD-RCMAR-supported pilot studies are expected to prominently incorporate Social Determinants of Health (e.g., behavioral, psychological, social, and/or economic factors) related to ADRD in their specific aims.

Pilot studies are expected to be completed within 12 months. Therefore, preference will be given to proposals using currently available resources to achieve their specific aims. AD-RCMAR Core and affiliated faculty are highly multi-disciplinary, with expertise in cognitive neuroscience, genetic epidemiology, genetics, statistical genetics, multi-omics, biostatistics, community health, family medicine, medical anthropology. All are or have been Principal Investigators or Co-Investigators in studies of large families in Hispanic communities in the RGV and South Texas. Potential applicants are encouraged to explore opportunities to take advantage of a unique wealth of data and other resources in their pilot studies. These can be discussed with the Leader of the AD-RCMAR's Analytical Core.

Also encouraged are proposals to use secondary data from other sources relevant to the AD-RCMAR mission. However, in nearly all cases, proposals to recruit participants and/or conduct clinical trials will not be considered by the AD-RCMAR this year.

One Scholar/PI per study. Each Scholar can be the PI on only one pilot study and each pilot study can have only one PI – i.e., multiple PIs are not permitted. However, two Scholars may “collaborate” *if*

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the research questions and the specific aims of their two studies do not overlap and are not interdependent.

Pilot Study Mentors. All applicants must identify and enter into an agreement with at least one AD-RCMAR Core Leader who will be the Scholar's Primary Mentor. A Secondary Mentor also should be identified. Additional mentors may be chosen if necessary to ensure that at least one mentor is familiar with the Scholar's primary academic discipline.

Supported Activities. The maximum amount of each pilot study award is \$40,000*. This amount covers the direct costs of items necessary to successfully complete the pilot study's specific aims. These include expendable supplies, reagents, laboratory services, and animal research costs, including per diems and procedures, and travel necessary to successfully complete the approved specific aims of the pilot study. With prior approval, in situations consistent with NIH, NIA RCMAR, UTRGV, and UTS policies and procedures, pilot study funds may also cover a portion of the salary of the Scholar or research support staff member(s) needed to successfully complete the project.

(*Note: Applicants are discouraged from "backing in" to the \$40,000 maximum)

Funds may not be used for tuition, fees, or stipends. Funds may not be used for interim or extended support of other projects funded by other sources. RGV AD-RCMAR funds may not be used to compensate Mentors.

All final budgets and all expenditures made in support of an RGV AD-RCMAR pilot study must receive prior approval by the RGV AD-RCMAR. A RCMAR Scholar will not be reimbursed if unapproved expenditures are made.

The funding period for a pilot study ends on 30 June 2026. All expenditures for RGV AD-RCMAR pilot studies must be submitted and approved prior to the end of May 2026.

Questions regarding RGV AD-RCMAR pilot studies. The RGV AD-RCMAR is supported by a grant from the NIA/NIH (1P30AG059305, PI: Dr. Gladys Maestre) and the RGV AD-RCMAR supports approved pilot studies. Scholars and/or others should direct any questions regarding pilot studies to the RGV AD-RCMAR Pilot Study Coordinator, rather than to the NIA/NIH.

Letter of Intent (LOI) Format and Required Content on Following Page



**Rio Grande Valley Alzheimer's Disease Resource Center for Minority Aging
Research (AD-RCMAR): Partnerships for Progress**

**Letter of Intent (LOI)
Format and Required Content**

Format.

- Single-spaced, Arial 11-point [black] font
- 1-inch margins,

Cover Page (does not count toward the 500-word maximum for LOI, below).

- Working title for the project
- Applicant's name, Degree, Rank, and academic unit
- Applicant's Affiliation (e.g., UTRGV, other institution)
- Brief statement indicating that the proposed study is new, does not address a specific aim of another study currently being conducted, does not extend another study, and is not funded by another source.

Letter of Intent (body)

- 500 words (maximum).
- Objective of the intended study
- Significance
- Specific Aims
- [Very] Brief, general description of the research plan
- Relationship to mission of the AD-RCMAR

NIH Biosketch or current CV (Does not count toward 500 word maximum).

Institutional Letter of Support (Does not count toward the 500-word maximum for the LOI, below).

You must submit a brief, signed institutional letter of support from either your department chair or division chief confirming that you will have a junior-level faculty appointment between 07/01/2025 and 06/30/2026 and adequate "protected time" during that period to conduct your proposed pilot project. Specific dollar amounts should not be provided at this time.

Submitting the Letter of Intent. LOIs (PDF files only) should be uploaded to the Pilot Studies Program via the web-accessible REDCap interface at the following link.

<https://redcap.utrgv.edu/surveys/?s=HYR8W8RHA9>

IMPORTANT: Submitting the LOI does not guarantee an invitation to submit a Pilot Study Proposal. After review and discussion of the LOI, the AD-RCMAR Executive Committee determine will whether to extend an invitation to submit a complete application. In some cases, the Pilot Studies Program Coordinator will request revision and resubmission of the LOI. We expect to notify applicants of the decision by e-mail within three weeks after the LOI submission deadline.

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Timeline/Important Dates [EXTENDED dates in bold font].

Letter of Intent due	Monday	11	November	2024	5 pm
Invitations to submit full proposals*	Friday	22	November	2024	5 pm
Complete Application due	Monday	27	January	2025	5 pm
Applicant informed of decision	Monday	10	February	2025	5 pm
Pilot Research Study Approval Form preparation (NIA RCMAR Program) begins**	Monday	17	February	2025	
Pilot Research Study Approval Form preparation (NIA RCMAR Program complete)**	Monday	14	April	2025	
Project start (earliest possible date)	Friday	1	July	2025	
Project end (latest possible date)	Tuesday	30	June	2026	

*Forms and instructions for completing the proposals will be made available with invitation.

**Mentorship/Guidance on the completion of the forms for final submission to the NIA RCMAR Program Officers will be provided by the Research Education Core Leader/Pilot Studies Coordinator and the Scholar's Primary Mentor.

RGV AD-RCMAR Contact Information.

Dr. Gladys Maestre (PI, RGV AD-RCMAR), gladys.maestre@utrgv.edu, for questions about the RGV AD-RCMAR.

Ms. Claudia Alaniz, claudia.alaniz01@utrgv.edu or Dr. Michael C. Mahaney, michael.mahaney@utrgv.edu, for questions about the Research Education Core or the Pilot Studies Program.

Dr. John Blangero, john.blangero@utrgv.edu for questions about the Analysis Core and Data.

Dr. Eron Manusov, eron.manusov@utrgv.edu, for questions about the Community Liaison and Recruitment Core

Dr. Andrew Tsin, andrew.tsin@utrgv.edu, for questions about the Mentoring Program.

The Rio Grande Valley Alzheimer's Disease Resource Center for Minority Aging Research: Partnerships for Progress is sponsored by the National Institute on Aging Award 1P30AG059305, Principal Investigator Dr. Gladys E. Maestre.

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The Resource Centers for Minority Aging Research (RCMARs)

All RCMARs are funded by the National Institute on Aging (NIA). The primary objectives of the NIA's RCMAR program are:

1. *Supporting Career Development*: The program aims to support the career development of early-career scientists conducting social, behavioral, psychological, and economic research related to aging, health disparities in older adults, and/or Alzheimer's Disease and Alzheimer's Disease-related dementias (AD/ADRD).
- and*
2. *Advancing Scientific Discoveries*: The second objective is to advance scientific discoveries related to aging. This includes efforts to eliminate health disparities and inequities and to improve the health and well-being of older adults, particularly, members of NIA's Priority Populations, as outlined in the [NIA Health Disparities Research Framework](#).

[from <https://www.nia.nih.gov/research/dbsr/resource-centers-minority-aging-research-rcmar>]

The NIA AD/ADRD RCMARs are focused on behavioral and social science research in a priority research area related to AD/ADRD.

The RGV Alzheimer's Disease-RCMAR (RGV AD-RCMAR) seeks to foster research aimed at reducing the impact of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) in Hispanics, in part through mentorship in the design, conduct, interpretation, and dissemination of the results of pilot research projects and in part through mentorship in the theory, method, and practice of culturally sensitive community engagement. By achieving these goals, the RGV AD-RCMAR hopes to enhance the diversity of the research workforce, focusing on minority aging by developing infrastructures and data collections to support researchers at early scientific career stages, and in multiple disciplines.