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

Funding Opportunity

For Early Stage and New Investigators

2026-2027

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
Deadline
November 7, 2025***

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: Partnerships for Progress**

**THE RCMAR PILOT RESEARCH STUDIES PROGRAM
CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: 2026-2027 Funding Cycle
DEADLINE for LETTERS of INTENT: TUESDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2025**

Program Information and Letter of Intent Guidance

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

The RGV AD-RCMAR supports pilot studies addressing topics related to AD/ADRD risk in the communities of the [Rio Grande Valley](#) and [South Texas](#), a region where its prevalence is among the highest in the country.

The RGV AD-RCMAR is supported by the Division of Behavioral and Social Research (BSR) of the National Institute on Aging (NIA), one of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). BSR supports social and behavioral research on AD/ADRD health disparities in eight broad categories or "portfolios" (<https://www.nia.nih.gov/research/dbsr/ad-adrd>). The RGV AD-RCMAR prioritizes pilot studies with topics like the following from two portfolios: Cognitive & Dementia Epidemiology and Health Disparities.

- Links between environmental exposures, behavioral and social processes or variables, biological (including genetic) risk, and later life cognitive impairment.
- Association of dementia with common comorbidities (e.g., diabetes, cardiovascular disease).
- Studies that relate psychological and functional changes and to their neurobiological, genetic, and physiological underpinnings.
- Links between biomarkers and cognitive and dementia measures in existing NIH-supported and BSR-supported longitudinal cohort studies.

Preference will be given to proposals to use currently available resources to achieve their specific aims. Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to take advantage of a unique wealth of biological and exposure data, biomaterials, and other resources in their pilot studies. The specific kinds and availability of data and biomaterials and their potential fit to pilot research studies under consideration should be discussed with the Leader of the RGV AD-RCMAR's Analytical Core and/or the Principal Investigator responsible for the studies that collected and maintain them prior to submitting a Letter of Intent or Complete Proposal.

Proposals to use secondary data from other sources relevant to the RCMAR mission (e.g., the National Alzheimer's Coordinating Center database) are also allowed. However, the applicant should demonstrate clear relevance to AD/ADRD in the RGV and south Texas.

Clinical trials and intervention studies will not be considered by the RGV AD-RCMAR.

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Eligibility. The recipient of a pilot 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 doctoral level research degree [i.e., PhD, MD, late postdoctoral program, medical residency, or equivalent(s)].

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), career development awards (K awards), loan repayment contracts (L awards), training grants (T & D awards), instrumentation, construction, education, and meeting awards.

One Scholar/PI per study. Each Scholar may be the PI on only one pilot research study, and a pilot research study can have only one PI (i.e., multiple PIs are not permitted).

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 total costs (TC) associated with the studies: indirect costs (IC) plus direct costs (DC). DC includes the costs of expendable supplies, reagents, laboratory services, animal research costs and travel necessary to successfully complete study's specific aims. With prior approval (by the Pilot Research Studies Program Coordinator) pilot research study funds may also be used to cover a portion of the salary of the Scholar or research support staff needed to successfully complete the project (note: IC and Fringe Benefits, when applicable, are calculated by the Director of Finance & Operations and staff in the Department of Human Genetics who, along with the Pilot Research Studies Program Coordinator, are the designated approvers of all budgets and expenditures).

Per NIH guidance, RGV AD-RCMAR pilot research study 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.

Final budgets, expenditures, or reallocations must receive prior approval. A Scholar will not be reimbursed for unapproved expenditures.

Pilot studies are expected to be completed within 12 months. The funding period for a pilot study ends on 30 June 2027. All expenditures for RGV AD-RCMAR pilot studies must be submitted and approved prior to 15 June 2027.

Questions regarding RGV AD-RCMAR pilot studies? The NIA/NIH-funded RGV AD-RCMAR solicits, reviews, and approves pilot research study proposals, and supports approved pilot research studies. Applicants, 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.

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

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 (Department, Division)
- Applicant's Affiliation (e.g., UTRGV, UTRGV School of Medicine, or other institution)
- Brief statement indicating that the proposed study is new, not a specific aim of another study, does not extend another study, and is not completely funded by another source.

Letter of Intent (body)

- 500 words (maximum).
- Objective of the intended study
- Significance (i.e., gap in knowledge study is meant to fill)
- Specific Aims (limit: two. Aims, not hypotheses or long descriptions of methods)
- [Very] Brief, general description of the research plan
- Relationship to mission of the AD/ADRD and mission of the RCMAR

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

Commitment/Support (Does not count toward 500-word maximum).

You must submit a very brief, **letter of commitment/support**, signed by your department chair/division chief confirming you will have a junior-level faculty appointment between 07/01/2026 and 06/30/2027 and adequate "protected time" during that time to conduct your proposed pilot project.

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

Timeline on Following Page



Rio Grande Valley Alzheimer's Disease Resource Center for Minority Aging Research: Partnerships for Progress

Timeline/Important Dates

Letter of Intent due	Tuesday	7	November	2025	5 pm
Invitations to submit full proposals*	Tuesday	14	November	2025	5 pm
Complete Application due	Monday	26	January	2026	5 pm
Application Review	Monday	9	February	2026	5 pm
Applicant informed of decision	Monday	16	February	2026	5 pm
Pilot Research Study Approval Form preparation (NIA RCMAR Program) begins**	Monday	17	February	2026	
Pilot Research Study Approval Form preparation (NIA RCMAR Program complete)**	Monday	7	April	2026	
Project start (earliest possible date)	Friday	1	July	2026	
Project end (latest possible date)	Tuesday	30	June	2027	

*Forms and instructions for completing the proposals will be made available at the RGV AD-RCMAR website.

*Guidance on the completion of this form will be provided by the Pilot Studies Program Coordinator (in collaboration with the Scholar's Primary Mentor).

Note: Webinars to review the instructions in the Guide for Applications and address any questions regarding the RGV AD-RCMAR pilot research studies program will be held prior to the submission deadline. All individuals who have been invited to submit a complete application will be notified of the date(s) and time(s) for the webinars.

RGV AD-RCMAR Contact Information.

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

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

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

Dr. Gladys Maestre, gladys.maestre@utrgv.edu, or Ms. Neyra Garcia, neyra.garcia01@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 supported by the National Institute on Aging Award 1P30AG059305, Principal Investigator Dr. Gladys E. Maestre.

The Resource Centers for Minority Aging Research (RCMARs)

Rio Grande Valley Alzheimer's Disease Resource Center for Minority Aging Research: Partnerships for Progress

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 (AD/ADRD), primarily in the Rio Grande Valley and south Texas; 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 RCMAR strives to prepare early-stage investigators from a broad range of different academic disciplines to bring their unique expertise to the research workforce focusing on AD/ADRD and other diseases of aging, as well as develop infrastructures and data collections to support these talented junior faculty and other researchers in the field.

The mission of the RGV AD-RCMAR and the strengths of its Core faculty, who are available to facilitate the research development of all its Scholars, fall within the current national research priorities: "...to strengthen and safeguard the health and quality of life of individuals, families, and communities. ...to prevent and treat America's most pressing health challenges, including chronic diseases, obesity, metabolic disorders, Alzheimer's and other neurodegenerative diseases." [from: Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies. Vought RT, Kratsios. MJ. 2025 (September 23)].