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Center for Aging in  
Diverse Communities



## 2026 Request for Applications for Pilot Study Grant Center for Aging in Diverse Communities Scientist Program

**Background:** The UCSF Center for Aging in Diverse Communities (CADC) was established in 1997 with funding from the National Institute on Aging (NIA) as part of the Resource Centers for Minority Aging Research (RCMAR). CADC's research theme focuses on understanding multilevel social and behavioral mechanisms of health disparities impacting older adults and developing interventions to achieve optimal health. Our most important mission is to provide mentoring and pilot funding for early-stage investigators who will enhance the aging-research workforce. Information about CADC including prior CADC Scientists is available on our website (<https://cadc.ucsf.edu>).

A primary goal of the CADC is to mentor early-stage investigators to become successful scientists focused on understanding and reducing health disparities and promoting optimal health in aging populations. CADC provides pilot study funding, mentoring, and comprehensive training in aging and health disparities research. **CADC is now requesting applications for CADC Scientists** who will conduct one-year pilot studies to investigate research questions within the scope of CADC's research theme among older populations experiencing greater disparities and higher burden of disease. CADC will fund at least three Scientists **with an anticipated start date of July 1, 2026** (pending IRB approval of the Scientist's pilot study).

**General Provisions:** CADC Scientists will receive training on issues pertaining to health disparities and aging research and feedback on manuscripts, grant proposals, and other academic products through monthly 2.5 hour works-in-progress sessions with CADC faculty and fellow CADC Scientists. Attendance at these monthly sessions is required (2 in-person and the remaining hybrid in-person/Zoom). CADC Scientists will have the opportunity to interact with CADC faculty and enhance their skills and knowledge related to aging and disparities research via monthly one-on-one mentoring meetings and attendance at our in-person Annual Retreat. They will be encouraged to participate in other training and mentorship opportunities. The main indicator of success will be the individual's research career development as measured by publication of pilot study results, other publications related to aging and health disparities, and other grant applications and funding.

**Eligibility:** The applicant must be at the level of a postdoctoral fellow or an assistant professor at UCSF or UC Merced, whose research aligns with the CADC theme (understanding multilevel social and behavioral mechanisms of health disparities impacting older adults and developing community and practice-based interventions to achieve optimal health), and has a strong commitment to reducing health disparities in older populations. If funded, the CADC Scientist will receive pilot funds and will be Principal Investigator (PI) of the pilot. Applicants must not have received a previous independent research award of the R01 type from the NIH or similar funding agencies. Investigators who have received previous/current funding from faculty development awards (e.g., K awards) are eligible. We will consider applications from previously funded CADC Scientists or Scientists previously funded by other RCMAR centers, but will give preference to new applicants. Scientists may not concurrently hold two RCMAR pilot awards.

All eligible candidates are welcome to apply. UCSF does not use race, gender, sex, or other protected categories or proxies for protected categories in the selection process.

Proposed pilot studies must be focused on health disparities in aging populations with a [behavioral and social research](#) approach. Pilots may be secondary analyses of data sets or primary data collection that is feasible within one-year. [Pilot feasibility and acceptability studies](#) will be considered, but [clinical trials](#) will not be funded. Here are examples of potential research areas and topics that we will fund:

- 1) Health promotion and healthy aging topics including life course events or circumstances that impact aging;
- 2) Research projects with older adults that engage community-based organizations;
- 3) Cognitive function among older adults;
- 4) Studies of aging and the arts (e.g., music, dance, art);
- 5) Proposals using secondary data that focus on aging;
- 6) Studies on the health and well-being of informal caregivers;
- 7) Studies on the determinants, outcomes, and palliation of disability in older adults;
- 8) Studies to improve the quality of health care delivery for older patients.

**Application:** Each application (single-spaced, 0.5 margins, and in Arial 11 font) must include the following:

- 1) **Cover Page:** Include name, current position, institution, main research mentor name, and study title.
- 2) **Research Plan:** Using the following required format and page limits (7 pages maximum excluding references):
  - a) **Specific Aims** (1 page) Include a brief background, significance, overview of the study, long-term objectives, and specific aims.
  - b) **Lay summary** (200-words or less) Include a paragraph summary of your proposed project for a lay audience (avoid acronyms and jargon).
  - c) **Personal Statement and Career Goals** (1 page) Include a summary of your background, preparation for research, and career objectives. Also address: 1) how you and your pilot project are a good fit for this program that aims to enhance the aging research workforce; 2) how your personal background and experience will contribute to CADC's research goals of understanding and reducing health disparities in aging populations; 3) how the proposed pilot study is in alignment with your research career objectives; and 4) how your pilot study findings will contribute to the submission of a future NIA research grant application (e.g., K award, R21, R01).
  - d) **Significance for Health Disparities and Aging Research** (1 page) Include 1) how your pilot study will contribute to the reduction of health disparities, and improve the health and well-being of older adults; and 2) how your pilot study is relevant to social, behavioral, psychological, and/or economic research on aging and aging-relevant health disparities.
  - e) **Research Methods** (3 pages) Include an overview of research design and methods, and detailed discussion of: setting, participants and sources of participants, recruitment methods, measures/variables to be used, sample size calculation as appropriate for your research design, and analytic plan. Include at least one paragraph on expected findings and implications of your study. You may include preliminary studies/data, if applicable.
- 3) [NIH biosketch](#)
- 4) [One-year budget](#) not to exceed \$50,000 and a [budget justification](#) using NIH forms. These budgets will need to be approved by NIA if selected for funding. Expenses may include salary and fringe benefits for the PI and research staff (but not for mentors), research supplies, and participant payments.

*UCSF applicants:* Do not include indirect costs to Division/Department in your budget.

*UCM applicants:* Please include any travel costs to attend in-person meetings at UCSF in your direct costs. Ok to include indirect costs to UCM following NIH rules.

- 5) **Letter of Support** from your main research mentor (1-page).
- 6) [Inclusion Enrollment Report/Planned Enrollment Table](#)
- 7) [CITI Human Subjects Protection Training](#) certificate

Applicants, we strongly encourage an **email indicating an intent to apply** with your name, position, and draft title to [anita.ponce@ucsf.edu](mailto:anita.ponce@ucsf.edu) by **Friday, January 23, 2026**.

The application deadline is **5 PM on Monday, February 23, 2026**. Apply online at <https://cadc.ucsf.edu/apply>

**Review Criteria:** Pilot study proposals will receive priority scores based on the written reviews and a discussion by the CADC Pilot Review Panel. Selection of awards will be on the basis of the following criteria:

- 1) Significance of question and relevance to CADC's research theme
- 2) Feasibility of conducting the study in time with funds allocated
- 3) Scientific strength of the design, methods, and analytic plans
- 4) Potential of applicant to develop an independent research proposal after completing the study;
- 5) Other considerations (e.g., representation of a variety of aging research disciplines, research topics, or candidates' background and experience as they pertain to health disparities and aging research).

Finally, the scope of each pilot study should be such that it provides preliminary data for a subsequent NIA grant submission (e.g., K, R21, or R01 or equivalent).

**Funding:** Funding decisions will be made by **Wednesday, March 31, 2026**.

**Virtual Office Hours:** Interested applicants are encouraged to connect with CADC leaders via Zoom to address any questions. If scheduling conflicts preclude attendance, email inquiries are welcome.

- Tuesday, January 13, 2026, 12-1pm – [Zoom link available here](#)
- Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 12-1pm – [Zoom link available here](#)

**Inquiries:** Applicants may email Dr. Leah Karliner with programmatic or eligibility questions at [leah.karliner@ucsf.edu](mailto:leah.karliner@ucsf.edu). For general information or questions regarding the application process or this RFA, contact: Anita Ponce at [anita.ponce@ucsf.edu](mailto:anita.ponce@ucsf.edu).