



Seed Funding: Call for Proposals

Title: R3CR Seed Funding

Number: R3CR-002

Background

Cannabis and various constituents, including multiple cannabinoids and terpenes, exhibit a wide array of pharmacologic effects that have propagated interest from both health care providers and the public about the medicinal effects of cannabis products. Despite widespread availability and established therapeutic potential, rigorous biomedical research remains limited due to substantial regulatory and logistical barriers. Consequently, data on the basic mechanisms, safety, abuse potential, and efficacy for many cannabinoids and other constituents in cannabis are insufficient. In response, the NIH established the Resource Center for Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research (R3CR) to help investigators overcome the many barriers to conducting their research projects. The R3CR aims to facilitate research advances through synergistic interactions among experts in relevant commercial, basic science, clinical research, and regulatory domains. The legal landscape of medical and recreational cannabis use is rapidly evolving with wide variation in state policies. These policy changes in turn create many unknowns about the most up to date regulatory requirements, thereby impacting progress on cannabis research.

Purpose and Goals

The purpose of this seed funding opportunity is to help investigators overcome barriers to initiating and conducting cannabis research. Funds are to be used only for non-research activities, not hypothesis-driven research. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Security infrastructure and procedural revisions to meet regulatory and institutional compliance (e.g., acquisition, secure storage, monitoring, disposal of the cannabis material, and institutional capacity building).
- Costs of relevant research-grade materials, products, and services to enable rigorous research (e.g., obtaining materials for analytical characterization (certificates of analysis), contaminants testing), building secure storage and compliance infrastructure, establishing chain-of-custody processes, developing DEA/IND/IRB applications, developing SOPs/blinding plans without distributing products to participants or initiating any data collection
- Tool and/or outcome measure development and validation (e.g., standardized common data elements or surveys, training materials, SoP templates, operational quality controls, instrumentation) for technical readiness.
- Support personnel to assist in administrative proposal development and any of the above activities.

Funding Priorities

The R3CR will award seed funding to provide regulatory and logistical support to investigators to facilitate the advancement of cannabis research. Funds are intended to help investigators overcome barriers to conducting projects that align with the research priorities of our NIH funding partners, specifically NCCIH, NCI, NIA, and NIDA. Descriptions of these priorities can

be found here: <https://r3cr.org/funding-opportunity/>.

Eligibility

- To be considered responsive for seed funding, applicants must propose activities that align with the examples listed above under Purpose and Goals. The activities must be completed within the proposed timeline described in the application.
- Eligible individuals from higher education institutions, nonprofits other than institutions of higher education, small businesses, local governments, and eligible agencies of the federal government are welcome to apply, particularly those who can demonstrate regulatory and logistical barriers to conducting their research. Applicants with potential research support and/or intend to apply for competitive NIH funding are more likely to receive priority.
- Individuals from foreign organizations are prohibited from applying due to regulatory challenges.
- Applicants serving as reviewers in the same round are prohibited.
- Eligible organizations, including higher education institutions, local and federal governments, and non- and for-profit organizations, are detailed here: <https://r3cr.org/funding-opportunity/>.
- An eligible organization may submit multiple distinct applications if each is scientifically and administratively independent.
- Funding will support non-research, non-hypothesis driven activities that are essential for the conduct of a cannabis research project (see examples above under Purpose and Goals).
- Awards for this seed funding opportunity are anticipated to be made in March 2027.

Budget and Timeline

- Seed funding requests may not exceed \$50,000 total costs, and the project must be completed within the proposed timeline, which may not exceed one year. Funds must be spent by the end of the proposed timeline.
- Up to eight awards will be funded per year.
- See examples above under Purpose and Goals for allowable budgetary costs.
- All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed. Details are provided here: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants-process/write-application/how-to-apply-application-guide>.
- Seed funds will be awarded in the form of a subcontract. See Appendix A. Additional details are provided here: <https://r3cr.org/funding-opportunity/>.

Application Process

- Step 1: submit a Letter of Intent to info@R3CR.org due September 14, 2026, by 5:00 pm local time. Letters must include the following:
 - Full name and title of applicant
 - Institution or company
 - Description of intended use of funds (≤300 words)
- Step 2: submit a full application, due November 2, 2026, by 5:00 pm local time. Please see next section for additional details about application requirements.

Application Submission Format

Applications must include the following:

- Standard PHS 398 Face Page (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/fp1.pdf>)

- Detailed budget and budget justification
- NIH biographical sketches for key personnel proposed in the application.
 - An eRA Commons is required (<https://www.era.nih.gov/register-accounts/create-and-edit-an-account.htm>) to create this form (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants-process/write-application/forms-directory/biographical-sketch-common-form>).
 - Every applicant must obtain an [ORCID iD](#) and link it directly to their eRA Commons account.
 - All biosketches must be built within the [SciENcv portal](#) to output a digitally certified PDF.
- Summary of the intended use of funds, examples of which are included above under Purpose and Goals (not to exceed 20 lines; separate page, which does not count towards the 3-page proposal limit)
- Seed funding proposal (not to exceed 3 pages, not including references, if any, and the summary) that includes objectives, intended use and justification of the funds, timeline, and milestones that articulate measurable downstream outcomes (e.g., new registrations, resolved regulatory barriers, improved protocol readiness, submitted grant applications, or expanded institutional capacity). Do not include appendices or URLs. Please follow the NIH font and format specifications (i.e., font size of 11 points or larger; single-spaced; no more than 15 characters per inch; no more than 6 lines per inch, and at least one-half inch margins for all pages) and include a page number and the applicant's name on each page).

Application Deadline

Applications for this seed funding opportunity are due November 2, 2026, by 5:00 pm local time. Please submit the full application as a pdf file to info@R3CR.org. Future funding opportunities will be announced on the R3CR website.

Review Criteria

Only the review criteria described below will be considered during the review process. Applications submitted to the R3CR aligned to its mission are evaluated for merit through peer review and in accordance with terms of an NIH Cooperative Agreement. Applications will be reviewed according to the following criteria:

Overall Impact

Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for successful completion of the proposed non-research activities.

Scored Review Criteria

1. **Responsiveness:** Does the application clearly address regulatory or logistical barriers to cannabis research? Are the proposed activities non-research enablement (not hypothesis-driven research)?
2. **Significance:** Will completion of the proposed activities position the team for future grant applications, including competitive NIH funding?
3. **Investigators and Environment:** Are the PI and other personnel well suited to fulfill their roles? Do they have appropriate experience and training? Are resources and institutional support available to the investigator(s) to complete the proposed activities?
4. **Approach:** Are the overall strategy and operational plan well-reasoned and appropriate for completing the proposed activities? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and

benchmarks for success presented? Are measurable downstream outcomes provided (e.g., new registrations, resolved regulatory barriers, improved protocol readiness, submitted grant applications, or expanded institutional capacity)?

5. **Feasibility:** Are the proposed activities achievable within one year, with a budget not to exceed \$50,000 total costs within the proposed time frame? Are the proposed activities clearly linked to regulatory and logistical readiness? Is the budget fully justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed activities? Is the proposed timeline appropriate?

Deliverables and Reporting

Progress and outcomes will be submitted as two reports, one halfway through the timeline and one upon completion of the proposed activities. Each report is not to exceed 2 pages. As part of these reports, information must be included about what has been accomplished (progress on timeline tasks, including measurable downstream outcomes as detailed above under Scored Review Criteria – Approach). Relevant challenges and barriers to implementation should also be noted. Awardees are expected to report outcomes to the R3CR at the annual investigators' meetings.

Terms and Conditions of Award

Awardees agree to comply with the following:

- Use of award funds only as approved.
- Timely submission of a semi-annual report on progress and accomplishments and a final report.
- Because resources are limited, funds may be withdrawn for approved activities if satisfactory progress within a timely fashion has not been demonstrated.
- Potentially present an update on the proposed activities to the R3CR at the annual investigators' meetings or another appropriate scientific forum.
- Acknowledge the R3CR in any presentation or publication of data resulting from the funded activities with the citation "supported with seed funding from Resource Center for Cannabis and Cannabinoids Research, grant U24 AT013161".

Pre-Submission Informational Webinar

An informational webinar will be held on Tuesday, September 1, 2026, 2:00 pm Eastern Time (US and Canada). The registration link can be found here: <https://r3cr.org/funding-opportunity/>.

Contact: info@R3CR.org

Appendix A – Seed Funding Awards Based on Fixed Amounts

With NIH prior approval, the Resource Center for Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research (R3CR) is providing seed funding based on fixed amounts (as defined in 2 CFR Part 200.201 and 45 CFR Part 75.201), to which the following conditions apply:

1. The fixed amount seed funding award is negotiated using the cost principles (or other pricing information) as a guide. The R3CR may use fixed amount seed funding if the project scope has specific measurable goals and objectives and if adequate cost, historical, or unit pricing data is available to establish a fixed amount subaward based on a reasonable estimate of actual cost. Payments are based on meeting specific requirements of the subaward. Accountability is based on performance and results. Except in the case of termination before completion of the seed funding award, there is no NIH governmental review of

the actual costs incurred by the non-Federal entity in performance of the seed funding award. Some of the ways in which the fixed amount seed funding award may be paid include, but are not limited to:

- a. In several partial payments, the amount of each agreed upon in advance, and the “milestone” or event triggering the payment also agreed upon in advance, and set forth in the seed funding award;
 - b. On a unit price basis, for a defined unit or units, at a defined price or prices, agreed to in advance of performance of the subaward and set forth in the seed funding award; or,
 - c. In one payment at seed funding award completion.
2. A fixed amount seed funding award cannot be used in programs which require mandatory cost sharing or match.
3. The non-federal entity must certify in writing to the R3CR at the end of the seed funding award that the project or activity was completed or the level of effort was expended. If the required level of activity or effort was not carried out, the amount of the seed funding award must be adjusted.
4. Periodic reports may be established for each fixed amount seed funding award.
5. Changes in principal investigator, project leader, project partner, or scope of effort must receive the prior written approval of the R3CR.

When considering the use of a fixed amount seed funding award, note the distinction between a fixed-amount seed funding award and a fixed-rate agreement. In a fixed amount seed funding award, the total value of the award is negotiated up front. This requires the R3CR to know both the unit price and the total number of units that will be provided. In a fixed rate agreement, while there is a negotiated cost per unit, e.g. per patient cost in a clinical trial (or participant in a non-Clinical Trial Human Subjects Study), the total amount of the award may be unknown when the agreement is created. Because this type of agreement is based on a “fixed rate” as opposed to a “fixed amount” as defined by 2 CFR Part 200.201 and 45 CFR Part 75.201, prior approval is not required to enter into this type of agreement provided there are no other factors that would require NIH prior approval consistent with Transfer of the Performance of Substantive Programmatic Work to a Third Party by Means of a Consortium Agreement.