

PFC 2026 Small Research and Planning Grants

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

[Link](#) to informational session 1.

[Link](#) to informational session 2.

Q: Is this grant program open to researchers from Harvard schools outside of HMS?

A: Eligibility for the 2026 cycle is limited to faculty members at UGHE, HMS, or HMS-affiliated hospitals, including those with a secondary or affiliated appointment at HMS. Researchers based primarily at other Harvard schools are not eligible to serve as lead applicants in this cycle unless they hold a qualifying HMS-affiliated appointment.

Q: Can affiliate faculty (not directly employed by UGHE or HMS) serve as the applicant?

A: Yes. Affiliate faculty are eligible as long as they can show their faculty affiliation with UGHE or HMS and demonstrate that they qualify as a PI at their primary institution. It's recommended that the team also include a UGHE-based co-PI, since that person will handle administrative needs like budget codes and procurement if the grant is funded. The application must list both HMS and UGHE PIs and co-PIs, but either side can be the one to submit.

Q: How do indirect costs work?

A: Indirect costs cover institutional overhead for running research grants, things like IRB maintenance and financial reporting. Planning grants don't allow indirect costs at all, and small research grants don't allow them for HMS or UGHE either, per the collaborative agreement. The exception is co-PIs based at HMS-affiliated hospitals, who can include indirect costs up to 20% of total direct costs as a single line item.

Q: Why do effort/FTE expectations differ so much between UGHE and Harvard?

A: This comes down to different compensation models. Harvard faculty are expected to fund a substantial portion of their own salary through research grants, so their time needs to be budgeted. At UGHE, research time is already built into base salary, so it isn't budgeted separately. It's an institutional policy difference rather than something set by the grant mechanism itself.

Q: Can team members come from institutions outside UGHE and HMS?

A: Yes, but they can't be paid. The collaborative can't issue subawards to any institution beyond UGHE, Harvard, and Harvard-affiliated hospitals, so outside collaborators can participate only if their involvement doesn't require compensation.

Q: Are past grant recipients eligible to apply again?

A: Yes, but new applicants will generally be given priority in review. The goal is for PFC funding to be catalytic, helping teams build toward external funding, rather than serving as a recurring source for the same recipients.

Q: How can I find a potential research partner at the other institution?

A: Harvard Catalyst Profiles is a searchable database of HMS-affiliated faculty and a good starting point. PubMed searches filtered by institution can also help. If you've identified someone but need help making contact, the PFC team can assist with introductions.

Q: If a staff member is interested but isn't a faculty member, is there a way to find a collaborator outside HMS to make it work?

A: Eligibility for co-PI/PI comes down to whether you're otherwise eligible to apply for external funding at your institution, typically faculty or research scientist status. If your staff position doesn't qualify, you can still join a project by partnering with a faculty member from UGHE and another from Harvard.

Q: Is it possible to get a list of bios for HMS researchers who are interested in this collaboration?

A: There isn't a curated list, but the [Harvard Catalyst Connector](#) lets you search the full Harvard-affiliated community (over 10,000 people) by keyword to find potential collaborators. PubMed searches filtered by institutions are another option. Reaching out directly with your interests and focus area is also welcome, and the team can help facilitate introductions once you've identified people or if your search hasn't turned up a match.

Q: The QR codes and forms are built on Google, but our institutional email isn't linked to Google Workspace, so we can't access them. Is there another way to get the request forms?

A: This is a known issue. In the short term, using a personal Gmail account to view and download the forms works, since nothing is actually being submitted through that step. As a backup, the forms can also be requested directly by email. The team is also looking into hosting a fillable version of the form somewhere more broadly accessible.

Q: If a proposal was submitted in the first cycle and asked to be revised, but the main obstacle was finding a Harvard collaborator, can that same proposal be resubmitted now that a collaborator has been found?

A: Yes, as long as the research question is still important and the proposal meets the other eligibility and responsiveness criteria, it can be resubmitted.

Q: For applicants from affiliated institutions, how do you prove eligibility to serve as a PI at that institution, is documentation or a signature from the institution required?

A: A letter establishing eligibility, for example from the department head, would be a good way to remove any doubt about eligibility.

Q: Is the Harvard Catalyst Connector a complete list of all Harvard-affiliated PIs, or are some people missing?

A: It's considered fairly comprehensive, though a small number of people may be missing. If someone is found through PubMed publications but doesn't appear in Catalyst, the team can help make contact or facilitate an introduction directly.

[Link to RFA.](#)

General

Q: What is the Paul Farmer Collaborative (PFC) Research Grants program?

A: The PFC is a ten-year, bidirectional partnership between Harvard Medical School (HMS) and the University of Global Health Equity (UGHE) in Butaro, Rwanda. The PFC Research Grants

support Rwanda-relevant, collaborative research that is co-developed and co-led by UGHE and HMS investigators, embedded within Rwanda's health system, and designed to build lasting research capacity and catalyze future externally funded collaborations.

Q: What types of grants are being offered?

A: Two types:

- **Research Planning Grants:** up to \$10,000, over a 6-month period of performance. Intended to support initial UGHE-HMS conversations and preparation for a future small grants submission or external funding application.
- **Small Research Grants:** up to \$75,000, over an 18-month period of performance, for direct research costs.

Q: What are the focus areas?

A: Proposals should address one or more of the following:

- Health Systems Strengthening
- Mental Health
- Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Chronic Care
- Infectious Diseases of importance in the African region (e.g., TB, HIV, viral hemorrhagic fevers, antimicrobial resistance)
- Surgical, Emergency, and Perioperative Care

Q: Are there cross-cutting themes I need to address?

A: Yes. All proposals must meaningfully integrate at least one of the following:

- Social and structural determinants of health/equity in care delivery
- Gender equity and inclusion
- Climate change and environmental sustainability
- Health system service integration, efficiency, and sustainability

Eligibility

Q: Who can serve as a lead applicant (PI)?

A: Lead applicants must be faculty at UGHE or HMS/HMS-affiliated hospitals:

- **UGHE:** senior and junior faculty and research scientists with demonstrated experience leading research. Affiliate faculty are eligible if at least one full-time UGHE faculty member is also named as PI, and the affiliate qualifies to be named PI at their primary institution.
- **HMS:** tenure-line faculty, instructors, and research scientists at HMS. Individuals with secondary faculty appointments at HMS and primary appointments at an HMS-affiliated hospital, lab, or related institution are also eligible provided that they qualify to be named PI at their primary institution.

Q: Can students or trainees be involved?

A: Yes, their inclusion as active research team members is strongly encouraged, though they cannot serve as lead applicants or PI/Co-PI. Projects may also be used to fulfill degree requirements (e.g., HMS MMSc-GHD) if the student's mentor serves as PI/Co-PI.

Q: Can I apply for more than one grant?

A: Faculty and staff may participate in multiple submissions, but an individual may serve as PI on no more than one small research grant application and one planning grant application per funding cycle. Priority is given to PIs who do not already serve as (Co-)PI on a current small research grant.

Q: Is collaboration between UGHE and HMS required?

A: Yes. Proposals must be co-developed and co-led by UGHE investigators in partnership with HMS collaborators. Proposals that frame collaboration primarily as data access or that propose parallel workstreams, without intentional co-learning and co-research, will be considered non-responsive to the RFA.

Timeline

Q: When does the application portal open?

A: 1 July 2026.

Q: Are there informational sessions?

A: Yes, two sessions are scheduled:

- [10 July 2026, 8:00 EDT / 14:00 CAT](#)
- [12 August 2026, 16:00 EDT / 22:00 CAT](#)

Q: Is a Letter of Intent (LoI) required?

A: Submission of a non-binding LoI is strongly encouraged but not required. The LoI deadline is 1 August 2026 at 23:59 ET (2 August 2026 5:59 CAT). The LoI should include the project title, PI names from both UGHE and HMS/HMS-affiliates, the primary focus area(s), and the cross-cutting theme(s) addressed. The LoI helps the PFC Secretariat anticipate volume and identify appropriate reviewers; omitting it could result in a weaker reviewer match. Find the LOI template [here](#) and the submission portal [here](#).

Q: When is the full application due?

A: 15 October 2026 at 23:59 ET (16 October 2026 5:59 CAT). Submit your full application [here](#).

Budget

Q: What can grant funds be used for?

A: Allowable direct costs include person-time/level of effort, data collection and other direct research costs, and travel (flights, accommodation, per diem). All air travel must be economy fare on regularly scheduled commercial flights.

Q: Are there restrictions on who can be funded?

A: Funding can only cover direct expenses incurred by UGHE, Harvard Medical School, or Harvard-affiliated institutions. No subcontracts to other institutions are permitted. Proposals with an HMS budget component must include at least one HMS-based investigator at $\geq 1\%$ FTE. FTE for existing UGHE faculty cannot be included in the budget.

Q: Are indirect costs allowed?

A: Not for planning grants. Not for Harvard University or UGHE on small research grants. For small research grants where the PI is at a Harvard-affiliated hospital, indirect costs of up to 20% of total direct costs may be included.

Application Process

Q: How do I apply?

A: Through the [application portal](#), opening 1 July 2026.

Q: Do I need institutional sign-off on my cover letter?

A: Yes. Cover letters from HMS PIs based in the HMS Quadrangle must be signed by the Department Chair. Cover letters for Harvard PIs at Harvard-affiliated hospitals require institutional signature.

Q: How are applications evaluated?

A: Proposals are scored on:

- Originality, scientific merit, and impact (50%)
- Collaboration strength and gender equity/inclusiveness (20%)
- Integration of cross-cutting areas (10%)
- Investment in research infrastructure and capacity strengthening (10%)
- Budget justification and feasibility (10%)

If Funded

Q: What is expected of grantees after funding?

A: All grantees must:

- Provide basic grant information for PFC monitoring and evaluation
- Submit a final report within 60 days of funding completion
- Attend monthly virtual PFC research learning exchange meetings (planning grantees present once; small research grantees present 1-2 times)

Small research grantees only, additionally:

- Conduct local dissemination (e.g., Ministry of Health or community stakeholder meetings) and international dissemination (conference presentations, peer-reviewed publications); mentorship available
- Participate in triannual check-ins with the PFC research working group
- Share data for future research and research training at UGHE, as developed with the PFC research working group

Support

Q: Who do I contact with questions about the RFA?

A: pfc-research@ughe.org