



Department of Pediatrics
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

WASIE FOUNDATION: RARE DISEASE RESEARCH GRANT, Round 2 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The University of Minnesota Rare Disease Center of Excellence (RDCOE) is pleased to invite applications for research proposals to support investigations of rare diseases and/or their treatments. This internal funding mechanism is made possible by the generous support of the Wasie Foundation, to improve access and to bolster rare disease research activities. In addition, one of the RDCOE's goals is to facilitate engagement in scholarly rare disease opportunities for individuals who are early in their funding pursuits and show promise to contribute to the understanding of rare disease.

Eligible applicants range from students holding a post-baccalaureate degree to faculty members. Applications are welcome from any campus or school within the University of Minnesota. While faculty at every career stage are welcome—especially those seeking support for vital pilot work to build preliminary data for future federal grants—we particularly encourage applications from early-career faculty within their first five years, given our focus on advancing rare disease discovery.

Levels of Support are available at the following Tiers:

Tier I: up to a total of \$30,000 for one year

Tier II: up to a total of \$15,000 for one year

Key Dates:

Letter of Intent (LOI) Due Date: Friday, October 30, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. Central Time

LOI Notification Date: Friday, November 20, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. Central Time

Full Proposal Due Date: Tuesday, January 19, 2027 at 4:00 p.m. Central Time

Award Notification Date: Monday, February 22, 2027

Earliest Funding Date: Expected date Monday, March 1, 2027 - pending IRB/IACUC/IBC approvals.

TOPIC AREAS

Please note these are only examples, and there are intentionally only a few of them, as this mechanism is meant to encourage broad thinking to support a diverse array of possibilities. Please contact Dr. Julie Eisengart at eisen139@umn.edu with questions about the fit of a proposal topic for Tier level.

Tier I:

- Conducting a new study with collection of new data
- Develop a biomarker or assay
- Focused animal work
- Novel angle or theme to an existing research program

Tier II:

- Research that is limited in scope and duration
- Analysis of an existing dataset
- Chart review study
- Effort for developing a scholarly product that advances care, understanding or treatment of rare disease (e.g., manuscript development)

Application Criteria

- Faculty (any rank or track) with a UMN-paid appointment from any school or UMN campus can apply.
- Learners with a faculty mentor are also eligible to apply.
- Current awardees are ineligible. Prior applicants can reapply and are expected to address prior application feedback.
- Applications to build “unaffected” control data for future rare disease comparison are not within the scope of this funding opportunity. To be eligible for consideration, at least half of the work needs to be on affected versus unaffected (humans, animals, cells).
- A rare disease is a disease or condition that affects less than 200,000 people in the United States. Projects focusing on genetic abnormalities that do not meet this criterion will not be considered eligible for this mechanism.

Award Budget Information

- Maximum of \$1500 for travel support for the PI or delegate is allowed.
- Equipment ≥ \$2,000 may not be included. Computers required to perform the research may be included in the budget with justification.
- This award will not support Indirect cost recovery charges, tuition, and subawards to other institutions
- This award will not support the salary for a mentor, if a mentor is involved.

Application Process

Letter of Intent

Complete the [LETTER OF INTENT \(LOI\) form](#), due no later than **4:00 p.m. Central Time, Friday, October 30, 2026**.

You will be asked to upload the LOI as a PDF. The PDF must be a total of 1 page, to include:

- PI information including name, position title, specialty (if any)
- For faculty applicants only: date of hire for first position as faculty (regardless of institution)
- For learner applicants only: name of mentor and their affiliation
- Title of application
- Tier I or II
- Rare disease(s) of focus with prevalence and citation for prevalence source
- A brief overview and/or graphical summary of the project. Required: If unaffected controls will be part of the funded work, please estimate percent of the total N/samples/etc that will be unaffected.
- Specific aims of the project should be included.

LOIs will be reviewed and applicants will be notified by **Friday, November 20, 2026** if selected for full proposal submission. Full proposal details, reporting requirements, budget template, and additional information will be provided to those individuals selected to move forward with the full proposal application process.