

HIV SUCCESS
HIV & Substance Use Cohort Coordinating Center

Request for Applications (RFA)

2026–2027 HIV SUCCESS Pilot Funding Program

I. Background & Purpose

HIV SUCCESS (the HIV and Substance Use Cohort Coordinating Center for Emerging and High Impact Scientific Cross Cohort Studies) supports high-impact studies at the intersection of HIV and substance use. It fosters collaboration, analytics, training, and data harmonization across the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) HIV and Substance Use Cohorts to address unanswered questions about the intertwined substance use and HIV epidemics.

The NIDA cohorts have followed participants living with or at risk for HIV for 1 to 30+ years across diverse populations, geographies, and study designs — from long-running cohorts of people who inject drugs to newer studies of people who use stimulants, opioids, and unregulated drugs. While each cohort pursues its own questions, substantial overlap in data domains creates opportunity to address cross-cohort questions and expand sample size and diversity beyond any single cohort. For cohort details, see hivsuccess.uw.edu/cohorts.html.

This pilot funds innovative reuse of cross-cohort data and value-added cross-cohort activities that address knowledge gaps and support future, larger NIH-funded studies (e.g., R01 or R21). Awardees receive coordination, analytic, methodological, and training support from the Coordinating Center.

Project focus. All proposals must either (1) use data from two or more NIDA HIV and Substance Use Cohorts or (2) propose a cross-cohort project that enhances the work of the cohorts (for example, with cohort agreement, a qualitative study). All projects must focus on substance use and HIV-related topics and be feasible within 12 months using existing harmonized data or cross-cohort activities. Example topic areas include, but are not limited to:

- Substance use and HIV care continuum outcomes (linkage, retention, viral suppression)
- Implementation science
- Comorbidity and multimorbidity among people who use substances in relation to HIV risk or living with HIV
- STI co-infection and syndemic processes
- Methodological work advancing cross-cohort harmonization, measurement, or analysis

II. Funding, Eligibility & Timeline

Funding. For 2026–2027, HIV SUCCESS will fund 2 outstanding applications at up to $25,000 each, inclusive of indirect (F&A) costs, over a 12-month period to complete the analysis and write up findings for publication. Funds are issued as a subcontract from the University of Washington.

Funding can be used for salary support for the lead investigator or support staff; necessary project supplies; conference travel to present findings; and other justifiable costs directly related to the research.

Funding should not be used to support mentor salaries, professional memberships, administrative support, publication charges, IRB review costs, international components, support for collaborators at other institutions, or costs covered by university indirects.

Because the cap includes indirects, applicants are encouraged to request an F&A waiver or reduced rate; waived or reduced indirects, matched funds, and in-kind support are viewed favorably in review. K-award holders

should confirm eligibility with their program officer and institutional officials before applying. All costs must conform to the NIH Grants Policy Statement and applicable OMB cost principles.

Eligibility. This RFA is open to investigators at academic or not-for-profit research institutions who hold a PhD or other professional degree (e.g., MD, DrPH, JD, ScD) and a postdoctoral or more senior appointment at the time of submission, and who are eligible under institutional rules to serve as PI on external funding. Students are not eligible. Only one application per lead investigator.

Timeline

- **RFA release:** September 17th, 2026
- **Full proposals due:** December 18th, 2026
- **Review:** December 2026/January 2027
- **Notification:** January 2027

III. Application Instructions

Submission. Proposals must be submitted as a single PDF, assembled in the order below, via the HIV SUCCESS application form available at hivsuccess.uw.edu/funding. Applications are due by 5:00 pm Pacific Time on December 18, 2026; the form closes at that time. Incomplete applications, those submitted by other means, or those received after the deadline will not be reviewed. Applicants receive confirmation of receipt within one business day. Applications are reviewed on scientific merit and fit with program goals; contact the Coordinating Center to discuss ideas before submitting. Letters of support are not required — only mentor letters and letters documenting matched or in-kind funding will be reviewed.

Required documents (single PDF, in order)

1. **Face page** with institutional sign-off and eRA Commons ID.
2. **Budget and justification** — an itemized 12-month budget with a brief narrative; state the institutional F&A rate. Face page and budget pages are required for subcontracting; applications missing these cannot be funded and will not be reviewed.
3. **Research plan** — maximum 3 pages (excluding references): **Specific Aims** (research question and 2–3 aims); **Background and Significance** (the gap addressed and why a cross-cohort approach is necessary); **Approach** (cohorts and variables, analytic plan, sample size, and anticipated limitations; preliminary data optional).
4. **Impact statement** — one page on the value of the award to the field, to the investigator's research (immediate and long-term), and to future funding or research it will support.
5. **References** — all works cited in the proposal.

Review criteria. Each application is reviewed by at least two conflict-free reviewers with expertise in HIV, substance use, and cross-cohort methods, and receives an overall impact score on: Significance (addresses an important gap and would advance the field); Approach (aims, methods, variables, and analytic plan are appropriate and achievable in 12 months); Cross-cohort rationale (requires more than one cohort); Investigator and training impact (applicant is well positioned and the award would advance their career); and Future direction (a reasonable path to a subsequent NIH application). Institutional commitment — waived or reduced indirects, matched or in-kind support — is a secondary factor. HIV SUCCESS may work with strong applicants whose studies need methodological modifications. Decisions are final and communicated in writing.

IV. Award Requirements

None of the following are required at application.

Before funds are released, awardees must have IRB approval or determination covering the proposed analysis (plus any reliance or data use agreements with contributing cohorts) and the institutional and administrative documentation needed to execute the subcontract, including the final approved budget. Begin these promptly on notification; the Coordinating Center will assist with cohort-specific data access.

After award, awardees must submit a brief progress report at 6 months and a final report at 12 months; present findings at a HIV SUCCESS consortium meeting; acknowledge HIV SUCCESS and contributing cohorts in all publications and presentations (including after the funding period); and comply with contributing cohorts' publication and review policies, consulting the Coordinating Center early on manuscript review requirements.

Please contact Thomas Austin, PhD (austintr@uw.edu) or Lydia Drumright (lnd23@uw.edu) with questions.