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Request for Applications (RFA) – 2026 Pilot Research Grants

The Foundation to Advance Vascular Cures is issuing a Request for Applications (RFA) for up to two pilot research projects. These projects were developed through collaborative discussions at the 2026 Vascular Health Innovation Summit, Vascular Disease Through the Metabolic Lens.

Each year, the Foundation focuses the Summit on areas where emerging science, implementation strategies, and patient-centered innovation have the potential to improve vascular health outcomes. The purpose of the Foundation's RFA is to support early-stage, innovative research that may be difficult to fund through traditional mechanisms because it is exploratory, multidisciplinary, translational, or implementation-focused in nature. Our goal is to support pilot projects that generate preliminary data, partnerships, methodologies, and strategic plans necessary to secure larger federal, foundation, or industry-supported funding opportunities.

The 2026 Summit examined the growing understanding of vascular disease as a metabolic disorder and explored opportunities to improve outcomes through targeted interventions, novel therapeutics, patient engagement strategies, and implementation science. Participants highlighted significant advances in understanding inflammation, insulin resistance, obesity, and metabolic dysfunction as contributors to vascular disease. Particular attention was given to emerging therapies, including GLP-1 receptor agonists and related metabolic interventions, as well as the challenges of translating scientific advances into meaningful improvements in patient outcomes.

The Summit also identified the critical importance of building trust in healthcare and science, improving disease awareness and health literacy, enhancing patient engagement in clinical care and research, and developing reliable biomarkers and data resources to support precision vascular medicine.

1. Scope and Relevance to Summit Priorities

All proposals submitted in response to this RFA must directly address the relationship between metabolic dysfunction and vascular disease, with a particular focus on peripheral artery disease (PAD) and/or chronic limb-threatening ischemia (CLTI).

All projects must demonstrate a clear connection to the metabolic-vascular relationship and explain how the proposed work will advance understanding, prevention, treatment, implementation, or patient-centered management of vascular disease influenced by metabolic dysfunction.

Responsive proposals may include studies focused on:

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- Metabolic pathways that contribute to vascular disease development, progression, or treatment response.
- Mechanisms through which GLP-1 receptor agonists and other metabolic therapies improve vascular outcomes.
- Biomarkers, phenotypes, or surrogate measures associated with metabolic dysfunction and vascular disease.
- The impact of metabolic interventions on wound healing, limb outcomes, and patient-centered outcomes.
- Trust, education, adherence, implementation, and community engagement strategies that support translation of metabolic and vascular science into improved patient outcomes.
- Data resources, clinical trial infrastructure, and implementation approaches that advance understanding of the metabolic-vascular relationship.

2. Funding Opportunities: Areas of Interest

The Foundation intends to fund up to two pilot projects, not to exceed **\$75,000** and a project duration of up to **15 months**. Awards may be made in categories 2(a) and/or 2(b).

2(a) Frederick M. Binkley Research Award

The Frederick M. Binkley Research Award honors the legacy of Dr. Frederick M. “Ted” Binkley, a pioneer in vascular surgery whose career was defined by excellence in science and patient care, and a commitment to collaboration.

The Award supports collaborative, patient-informed pilot research projects that address critical gaps in vascular health and have the potential to advance vascular science and improve patient outcomes. The goal is to fund projects at early stages of development and to encourage innovative approaches, readying these for larger scale clinical trials and/or other research studies.

Examples include:

- Mechanisms by which GLP-1 receptor agonists improve vascular outcomes.
- Biomarkers of wound healing.
- Microvascular function assessment.
- Inflammatory biomarkers as surrogate measures.
- Precision medicine approaches for PAD and CLTI.
- Clinical phenotyping, including calcific versus lipid-rich disease.
- Hormonal replacement therapy and vascular disease.
- Clinical decision support tools incorporating biomarker data.

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- Leveraging existing databases and clinical datasets to generate novel mechanistic insights.

2(b) Collaborative Patient-Centered Research Award

The Collaborative Patient-Centered Research Award supports innovative pilot projects designed to improve patient engagement, trust, education, implementation of evidence-based therapies, health literacy, adherence, community engagement, and participation in research.

Projects submitted under this award mechanism must demonstrate a clear connection to the metabolic-vascular relationship and address how enhanced patient engagement, education, or trust may improve outcomes among patients with PAD, CLTI, or other vascular conditions influenced by metabolic dysfunction.

Examples include:

- Measuring and building trust in healthcare and science.
- Educational interventions that improve disease awareness and health literacy.
- Best practices for educational programs supporting clinical care or research participation.
- Development of patient-facing educational tools and instructional videos.
- Leveraging nurse educators, pharmacists, patients, caregivers, and community health workers.
- Addressing misinformation and improving adherence to medical therapy.
- Community-based approaches that improve cultural competency and engagement.
- Strategies to improve participation in clinical trials and research programs.

Applicants should indicate which award mechanism for which they are applying.

3. Proposal Requirements

3(a) Overview

- **Budget.** Project budgets may not exceed \$75,000. Proposals must include the [Foundation Budget Worksheet](#) and identify budgets associated with each milestone. Capital equipment costs are not allowable. The budget may include up to 10% indirect costs; no additional indirect costs are allowable.
- **Duration.** Projects may not exceed 15 months.
- **Collaboration.** Collaboration between two or more investigators, each representing different disciplines or from different departments or institutions, is required.

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- **Sustainability.** Proposals should include a roadmap for future funding, dissemination, implementation, commercialization, or integration into clinical practice.
- **Milestones.** Projects must be milestone-based, with at least one milestone achievable within the first six months.
- **Impact.** Projects should seek to develop resources, methodologies, data assets, educational tools, implementation frameworks, or other products that may be shared broadly with the vascular community.
- **Patient Engagement.** Projects must include a commitment to engage at least two patient advisors (Vascular Cures is available to assist with patient engagement but applicants must explicitly indicate a commitment to engage patient advisors and integrate such commitment in the project timeline and description)

3(b) Proposal Guidelines

Proposals may not exceed five pages, single spaced, 11-point font, excluding supplemental appendices (maximum four pages).

Applications should include:

1. Key unmet need addressed by the proposal
2. Project goals and specific aims
3. Innovation
4. Milestones and deliverables
5. Research strategy and methods
6. Shared resources and how they will be used or developed
7. Impact of project results and future directions
8. Investigator Documentation:
 - NIH/AHRQ Biographical Sketch Common Form or NIH Biographical Sketch Supplement (Current and Pending (Other) Support Common Form)
 - Description of investigator roles and contributions
9. Budget and budget worksheet, including budgets by milestone and collaborator

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all investigator documentation conforms to NIH Common Forms requirements in effect at the time of submission.

4. Review Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on:

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- **Impact:** How could the proposed approach improve patient outcomes, healthcare delivery, research participation, or scientific understanding?
- **Innovation:** Does the proposal advance a novel concept, methodology, implementation strategy, biomarker, educational intervention, or therapeutic approach?
- **Research Strategy:** Are the scientific premise, methods, milestones, and deliverables well justified and achievable?
- **Investigators:** Do the investigators possess the expertise and collaborative relationships necessary to complete the project successfully?
- **Patient Engagement:** Is there a commitment to meaningfully integrate patient advisors into project governance, design, implementation, and/or dissemination?
- **Resources Available:** Does the team have access to the necessary infrastructure, collaborators, patient populations, and data resources?
- **Future Potential:** How likely is the project to generate future funding, larger studies, implementation opportunities, or improvements in clinical practice?

5. Eligibility

All researchers are invited to apply.

Proposals that do not include collaboration between two or more institutions will not be considered.

Priority will be given to proposals led or co-led by attendees of the 2026 Vascular Health Innovation Summit (held on May 18, 2026 in San Francisco) when applications receive similar review scores.

6. Key Dates

- June 30, 2026: RFA released
- August 31, 2026: Applications due
- October 31, 2026: Award notifications
- November 2026: Project start date
- February 2028: Final reports due

Please submit all application materials to grants@vascularcures.org