

Virginia Commonwealth University Parkinson's and Movement Disorders Center Pilot Grants Program

2026-2027 REQUEST FOR VCU PMDC PILOT GRANT APPLICATIONS

I. Overview of the PMDC Pilot Grants Program

The VCU Parkinson's and Movement Disorders Center (PMDC) was established in 2011 with a mission to make scientific advances that will result in lasting benefits for patients, their families, and our community. As part of meeting this mission, the PMDC offers a Pilot Grants Program that aims to fund innovative scientific investigations and help fuel more independent and interdisciplinary research in Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders. Projects may be clinical, translational, or basic science. The program is open to investigators at any stage of training including undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral students and fellows, as well as faculty members. Each pilot project will be funded for **one year** and awards can be for up to **\$75,000**. The number of pilot grants awarded will be dependent upon competitiveness of applications and available funding. The Pilot Grants Program is administered by the VCU PMDC, which receives grant funding support from philanthropic sources including The Joan & Morgan Massey Foundation, The Johnson Family Fund for Essential Tremor Research, and community donors.

II. Key Dates

PMDC Pilot Grant Awards 2026-2027	
Funding Announcement	Friday, May 1, 2026
Proposals Due	Tuesday, June 30, 2026, 5:00 PM ET
Review of Proposals	July – August 2026
Funding Announcement & Project Start Date	Tuesday, September 1, 2026
Midterm Progress Report Due	Friday, February 26, 2027
Project Presentation at PMDC Research Symposium	June 2027
Project Completion	Tuesday, August 31, 2027

III. Purpose

- To provide seed funding for innovative scientific investigations that help fuel more independent and collaborative research in Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders (e.g., Essential Tremor, Dystonia, Lewy Body Dementia, Huntington's Disease, Ataxia, Restless Legs Syndrome), as well as overlapping neurodegenerative disorders (e.g., Multiple Systems Atrophy, Progressive Supranuclear Palsy, Corticobasal Degeneration, and Alzheimer's Disease) and enable the collection of preliminary data that are essential for larger grant applications to be successful.

IV. General guidelines

- Projects must be related to the field of movement disorders and may be clinical, translational or basic science.
- The program application must be completed by an investigator affiliated with VCU, but collaborations with investigators outside of VCU is encouraged.
- Undergraduate, medical, graduate and post-doctoral students as well as clinical fellows may apply so long as there is an identified research mentor.
- Projects will be funded for one year and awards will be up to \$75,000. The total number of awards provided will depend on funds available and quality of the applications.
- Interdisciplinary, multi-PI submissions are strongly encouraged.
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to involve one or more faculty members from the PMDC, especially if the proposed project will involve patients with movement disorders.
- Funded applicants are expected to provide a mid-term progress report at 6 months.
- Grant recipients are expected to present findings from their research funding at the [PMDC Annual Research Symposium](#) (date TBD, June 2027) and cite *The VCU Parkinson's and Movement Disorders Center* in any resulting abstracts, publications, or grants.

V. Eligibility

- Must be affiliated member of the VCU PMDC (only involves providing email to pdcenter@vcuhealth.org in order to be added to membership directory/email listserv).
- Students and fellows must have a mentor who is an affiliated member of the VCU PMDC and provide a letter of support from the mentor with the application.
- Early career investigators are encouraged but not required to have a scientific mentor included in their application.
- Applications may include collaborations with persons and institutions outside of the PMDC (primary investigator must be at VCU).

VI. Budget guidelines

- Pilot funding is provided for 1-year projects and can only be used for Direct Costs.
- Submissions may request up to \$75,000.
- Multiple submissions from the same PI will be considered if the research project aims are different and independent.

VII. Submission Guidelines

- Complete application forms (see below) must be received as a single PDF document to pdcenter@vcuhealth.org by the proposal submission deadline.
- NIH-formatted biosketches should be provided for all investigators.
- Letters from research mentor(s) should outline a scientific career development plan (required for undergraduate, graduate and post-doctoral applicants).
- Letters of research mentor support and strongly encouraged for early-career investigators.
- Allowable expenditures include:
 - Salary support for investigator
 - Technician/laboratory personnel support
 - Necessary equipment
 - Research supplies and animal maintenance
 - Publication costs
 - Special fees (pathology, photography, etc.)
- Non-allowable expenditures include:
 - Secretarial/administrative personnel
 - Honoraria and travel expenses for visiting lecturers
 - Per diem charges for hospital beds
 - Non-medical services to patients
 - Construction or building maintenance
 - Major alterations
 - Purchasing and binding of periodicals and books
 - Office and laboratory furniture
 - Office equipment and supplies
 - Rental of office or laboratory space
 - Recruiting and relocation expenses
 - Dues and membership fees in scientific societies

VIII. Review Process

- Grants will be reviewed and scored using an NIH-based scoring system (1-9 for Exceptional to Poor) based on the proposal's Significance, Innovation, Approach, Investigators, Environment and Impact.
- Mentorship and Career Development Plan will be reviewed and scored when applicable.
- Scoring considerations:
 - Significance: How important is the problem that is being addressed? Does this proposal address important gaps related to this problem?
 - Innovation: Is the proposed application creative and original? If successful, will the work produce dramatic paradigm shifts in research and clinical practice by using novel concepts, methodologies, and/or interventions?
 - Approach: Are the general strategies and translational approaches sufficiently rigorous to ensure generation of important data? Is the proposed research movement disorders specific?
 - Investigators: Does the proposed PI and/or mentor have a strong track record of leadership of innovative science?
 - Environment: Are resources available at institution to support this proposal?

- **Impact:** How likely is the proposed research to lead to future funding? What is the likelihood that the proposed research will have a transformative impact on science with a goal toward an impact on clinical care pertaining to PMDC?
- **Mentoring plan:** Will the proposed mentoring plan enhance the applicant's potential for a productive, independent scientific research career in movement disorders related research?
- Additional considerations during grant review include how well the proposal forwards the mission of the PMDC and for students / trainees and early career investigators, as well as how likely the applicant is to continue to pursue movement disorders related research.

IX. 2026-2027 Special Consideration

- Some philanthropic funds used for the PMDC Pilot Grant Program have been allocated specifically for research in **Essential Tremor** and **Parkinson's disease**.

X. Prior PMDC Pilot Grant Recipients

- Information on past awardees can be found [here](#).

XI. Contact

CONTACT INFORMATION

Chandler Moore
Research Program Manager, Parkinson's & Movement
Disorders Center at VCU
pdcenter@vcuhealth.org

VCU PMDC PILOT GRANT APPLICATION

Submit as single pdf to: pdcenter@vcuhealth.org

PROJECT TITLE:

General Information

PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR:

Name/Title:

Affiliation:

Email:

Phone:

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S)

Name/Title:

Affiliation:

Email:

Phone:

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S)

Name/Title:

Affiliation:

Email:

Phone:

DATE OF APPLICATION:

AMOUNT REQUESTED:

MENTORED SUBMISSION

Mentor Name:

Affiliation:

Email:

Phone:

Project Details

PROJECT OVERVIEW (2000-word limit; include Background / Rationale, Specific Aims, Research Strategy, and Significance and Innovation):

MENTORING / CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN (500-word limit):

STUDY TIMELINE AND MILESTONES (250-word limit):

HOW WILL THIS PROJECT FORWARD THE MISSION OF THE VCU PMDC (250-word limit)?

FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THIS RESEARCH (250-word limit):

REFERENCES CITED:

BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION:

REVIEWERS: Identify two reviewers with content-area expertise who will provide a review of this proposal.

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