



Request for Proposals (RFP) for Pilot Awards

For Projects Using Year 1 NDWS Data

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Highlights

- Funding Amount:** Up to \$160,000 total costs per award (direct costs not to exceed \$100,000)
- Number of Awards:** Up to 5, depending on applications received
- Deadline:** 11:59 p.m. EST Friday, Nov. 1, 2024
- Expected Award Date:** April 1, 2025
- Award Period:** 12 months (or 18 months if using linked data)

Program Overview and Purpose

The National Dementia Workforce Study (NDWS), sponsored by the NIH National Institute on Aging, is conducting the first large, annual surveys of the dementia care workforce in the United States. Survey data and other linked data sources will create an unprecedented resource for researchers to answer critical questions about the workforce and its impact on care and outcomes for persons living with dementia.

Surveys will be conducted annually in four key practice settings – **community clinicians, nursing home staff, assisted living staff, and home care staff** – and are designed to help researchers understand the composition and training of this large and diverse workforce. Survey questionnaires will be completed by a wide range of health care professionals, including

physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, nursing assistants, personal care aides, home health aides, and administrators. Surveys will ask questions across a variety of domains, including demographics; education, training, and experience; employment status; dementia care knowledge attitudes and practices; and worker outcomes.

A major goal of NDWS is to build and support a community of researchers who will take advantage of this new data infrastructure to understand the dementia care workforce and its impact on care and outcomes for persons living with dementia. In keeping with this goal, this RFP seeks to develop and expand the community of researchers focused on the dementia care workforce and encourage use of the NDWS data infrastructure to advance the [NIA's AD+ADRD Research Implementation Milestones](#).

We invite researchers to submit proposals to analyze NDWS data that will become available in early 2025. Up to five proposals will be awarded, with at least one from each of the four survey settings: community clinicians, nursing homes, assisted living communities, and home care agencies. In addition to receiving direct funds, each project will have access to additional support (e.g., biostatistical consultation) from NDWS to promote successful completion and dissemination.

NDWS Background

In September 2023, the University of Michigan (U-M) and the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), were awarded funding from the National Institute on Aging to launch the NDWS. The research team is collaborating with outside data collection partners to deploy and administer surveys across the four care settings annually for five years.

NDWS brings together more than 40 national experts in dementia clinical care, survey research methodology, the health care workforce, qualitative and mixed-methods inquiry, bioethics, and implementation science. They represent multiple university and non-profit partners. The project's activities are led by Principal Investigators Donovan Maust, MD, MS, Professor of Psychiatry from the U-M Medical School, and Joanne Spetz, PhD, Director of the Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies at UCSF. Work is carried out by five Core Teams: Administrative, Survey Design, Data Linkage, Data Collection, and Pilot Grants. The leads of the Pilot Studies core are Laura M. Wagner, PhD, RN (UCSF) and Sue Anne Bell, PhD, FNP-BC (U-M), who oversee pilot core activities and provide management and oversight of the RFP submission, evaluation, and award process.

Available NDWS Datasets

Publicly available versions of NDWS survey datasets will be available through the NIA-funded National Archive of Computerized Data on Aging (NACDA). Full details about the survey questionnaires and the data sources that will be available for linkage via the NIA Data LINKAGE Program are located [here](#). A brief description of each of the survey questionnaires is below:

The **Community Clinician Survey** is a web-based survey of physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners who care for people living with dementia. The sample frame was designed using a combination of Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and publicly available clinician data. The sample frame includes primary care physicians, geriatricians, psychiatrists, neurologists, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants who care for patients diagnosed with dementia. In Year 1, the sample will include approximately 10,000 respondents.

The **Nursing Home Staff Survey** is a web-based survey of nursing home staff with questionnaires available in English and Spanish. The sample frame was designed using a combination of CMS and publicly available facility data. Administrators of nursing homes that agreed to participate in the study completed a **Nursing Home Administrator Survey** about their organization and provided a roster of their nursing staff; a sample of staff was then selected to receive a web-based survey. Eligible staff consisted of registered nurses, licensed practical/vocational nurses, certified nursing assistants, and other direct care staff. The Year 1 sample will include 100 facilities and approximately 1,100 staff respondents.

The **Assisted Living Staff Survey** is a web-based survey of assisted living community staff with questionnaires available in English and Spanish. The sample frame was designed using state licensing data. Administrators of assisted living communities that agreed to participate in the study completed an **Assisted Living Administrator Survey** about their organization and provided a roster of their staff; a sample of staff was then selected to receive a web-based survey. Eligible staff consisted of registered nurses, licensed practical/vocational nurses, nursing assistants, personal care aides, and other direct care staff. The Year 1 sample will include 100 facilities and approximately 900 respondents.

The **Home Care Staff Survey** is a web-based survey of home care staff employed by home care agencies with questionnaires available in English and Spanish. The sample frame was designed using state licensing data. Administrators of home care agencies that agreed to participate in the study completed a **Home Care Administrator Survey** about their organization and provided a roster of their staff; a sample of staff was then selected to receive a web-based survey. Eligible staff consisted of registered nurses, licensed practical/vocational nurses, home care aides, home health aides, personal care aides, and other direct care staff. The Year 1 sample will include 100 agencies and approximately 800 respondents.

Data Linkages

While the standalone surveys may be appropriate for some research questions, NDWS survey data will also be available for linkage to additional data sources via the [NIA Data LINKAGE platform](#). The NIA LINKAGE data infrastructure allows for linkage of NDWS survey data to other data sources.

Data that are available for linkage to the NDWS survey data are summarized [here](#). The goal of these files is to facilitate and accelerate researchers' ability to examine the relationships between workforce characteristics and the health care delivered to persons living with dementia. Researchers will access linked data through a multi-step process. First, the researcher will submit an application to the NDWS to use NDWS survey data, in which they will specify which NDWS survey(s) and which other dataset(s) they wish to access via LINKAGE. The NDWS team will review the application and, if approved, will support the researcher in completing necessary data use agreements with NDWS and LINKAGE.

Among the data sources available for use within LINKAGE are claims-based annual summary measures of clinical characteristics and outcomes for persons living with dementia who are cared for by NDWS survey respondents. These measures are created by the NDWS team from Medicare claims and the nursing home Minimum Data Set at the clinician- and facility-levels and will include demographic characteristics, payer information, clinical characteristics, and health care use. For the Year 1 NDWS surveys, these claims-based summary files will be available for the Community Clinician and Nursing Home Staff surveys. In subsequent years, these files will be updated and expanded across all NDWS surveys.

For more information on accessing the data, visit the [How to Access Data](#) section of the NDWS website, and the [Access or Share LINKAGE Data](#) page on the LINKAGE website. More information will be available there in the coming months (and before pilot proposals are due).

Project Scope and Duration

The first round of pilot awards will support research studies that use Year 1 NDWS data. Applicants may propose using multiple surveys in their analysis, but this is not required. The Year 1 pilot awards are designed to contribute new research findings, generate pilot data to support larger studies, and inform the development of future surveys.

Applications should assume a 12-month project period beginning April 1, 2025, during which all proposed activities can be completed. If your proposed project involves use of linked data within the LINKAGE platform, you may instead propose an 18-month project period (to allow for time needed to gain approval to access the LINKAGE platform). Requests for no-cost extensions will be considered, particularly if project delays are introduced applying for and obtaining access to linked data within LINKAGE.

Milestones and Project Examples

Applications are expected to advance at least one NIA AD+ADRD Research Implementation Milestone: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/research/milestones>.

Examples of types of Year 1 projects include, but are not limited to:

1. Exploring the extent to which dementia knowledge and attitudes are associated with training, practice setting, and staff characteristics.
2. Using survey results along with Nursing Home Compare data and Payroll-Based Journal data to assess relationships between staff dementia training and attitudes, staffing and retention, and facility-level outcomes such as antipsychotic medication use.
3. Determining which cognitive assessments are used most commonly in clinical practice by Community Clinicians and whether this varies by clinician and practice characteristics.
4. Exploring the use of specific treatments or types of care, and how this varies by clinician and practice characteristics.
5. Using the clinician surveys along with claims-based summary files to examine concordance between clinician-reported vs. claims-based estimates of the proportion of clinicians' patient panels that include patients with ADRD.
6. Assessing whether confidence in diagnosing mild cognitive impairment and dementia vary by clinician and practice characteristics.
7. Using claims-based summary files to examine clinician and practice characteristics associated with prescribed medication classes of interest (e.g., cholinesterase inhibitors, antipsychotics, benzodiazepines).
8. Using the surveys to explore whether dementia care knowledge, attitudes, and practices vary across long term care settings.

9. For nursing home, assisted living, and home health / home care staff, examining to what extent formal or informal (i.e., on the job) dementia training is associated with their attitudes related to care for persons living with dementia.
10. Determining what training and qualifications do care workers in long term care settings most frequently report. Does the educational background of LTC workers vary by race/ethnicity?
11. Determining what percentage of LTC personnel are immigrants and what are the most frequent countries of origin.
12. Examining what LTC personnel report with regard to the relationship that they have with families and how that relationship influences care.
13. What percentage of home health/care aides report having access to paid sick leave?

Project Deliverables

Principal Investigators will be expected to attend and present study results at the 2026 NDWS Annual Research Meeting (date and location to be determined). They also may be asked to present results in other formats, such as a webinar. Awardees will be expected to publish at least one peer-reviewed article from their study; articles may be considered for publication in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* as part of an NDWS Special Collection. Awardees will be asked for study progress updates when NDWS NIA annual reports are due. There may be additional progress reporting requirements from NIA. Upon completion of their study, all awardees will submit a final financial report, in accordance with NIH funding guidelines.

Eligibility

Individuals from any organization eligible for NIH funding may apply. Prior to making an award, successful applicant organizations must be registered with System for Award Management (SAM) (www.sam.gov/SAM) and have a Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering Systems (DUNS) number.

Principal Investigators (PI) may be any individual(s) with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research. Individuals of all disciplines and career stages are welcome to apply, and applicants are not required to be U.S. citizens or permanent residents. We encourage applications from post-doctoral fellows and early-career faculty who are developing or expanding a portfolio of research focused on the workforce that provides care to people living with dementia. We also encourage applicants from [populations under-represented in the U.S. biomedical, clinical, behavioral, and social sciences research enterprise](#).

Evaluation Criteria

Review of the final submissions will be completed by a panel selected by the Pilot Studies Core team. The review committee will use an approach similar to that conducted in the review of NIH proposals. The review committee will use the current [NIH framework for peer review](#).

- **Factor 1: Importance of the Research** (Significance, Innovation), scored 1-9
- **Factor 2: Rigor and Feasibility** (Approach), scored 1-9
- **Factor 3: Expertise and Resources** (Investigator, Environment)
 - Appropriate (no written explanation needed)

- Identify need for additional expertise and/or resources (requires reviewer to briefly address specific gaps in expertise or resources needed to carry out the project)
- **Additional factors we will consider:**
 - Addresses an AD+ADRD Research Implementation Milestone
 - Makes use of available linked data
 - Likelihood to lead to subsequent funding

Questions About the RFP

For general information on the National Dementia Workforce Survey, please visit www.ndws.org.

We are happy to answer questions about the RFP submitted via email at info@ndws.org. To ensure fairness in the competition we will *not* respond privately to questions. We will compile questions and answer them in a document that will be posted on our website. Questions will be answered on a rolling (weekly) basis with responses posted up until one week before the deadline. The responses will not identify individuals who submit questions.

Application Process

Research project proposals will be submitted electronically through the University of Michigan-hosted *Competition Space* website.

- Applications must follow the application format (document included in this competition).
- Applications are submitted as a single PDF of all pages/sections.
- Applications are submitted through [Competition Space](#) only.
- Contact for questions: info@ndws.org (Please use subject line “*Pilot RFP*” to facilitate a prompt response.)
- Application Timeline:
 - Applications are due at 11:59 p.m. EST on Friday, Nov. 1, 2024.
 - Award notifications are expected by Feb. 1, 2025.

Required Submission Materials

To apply, please submit the following application elements in a single PDF (see below for details):

1. Cover page
2. Research proposal (4-page limit, not counting references)
3. Budget and budget justification
4. NIH-style biosketches for the PI and co-investigators
5. *Letters of support (optional)*

Cover Page (not included in page limit):

- Project title
- Indicate which Year 1 survey(s) you would analyze (Community Clinician; Nursing Home Staff; Assisted Living Staff; Home Care Staff), including whether you will be using any of the administrator surveys.
- Principal Investigator’s name, title, email address, and telephone number
- Submitting organization name, address, city, state

- Names, titles, and institutions of additional project personnel (e.g., co-investigators and consultants)
- Total costs (direct + indirect)

Research Proposal (4-page limit, not counting references)

- **Specific aims:** Describe the aims and objectives that will determine the scope, depth, and overall direction of the study.
- **Significance:** Describe the importance of the problem to be addressed and its relevance to the workforce that serves people living with dementia, as well as how the study connects to the NIA milestones.
- **Innovation:** Explain how the application addresses important gaps in knowledge or challenges and/or advances current shortcomings in research on the workforce that serves people living with dementia. This can include novel concepts, approaches, or methodologies.
- **Research team:** Describe the Principal Investigator's and team members' backgrounds and how their training, prior research, and/or interests have prepared them to successfully complete the proposed research.
- **Approach:** Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and planned analyses. If appropriate, include feasibility, preliminary studies, potential problems, and alternative strategies.
- **Dissemination plan and contribution to future work:** Describe how this work will lead to publications, future research proposals, and impact on the field of research. The applicant should describe how the results of the pilot will lead to an application to the National Institute on Aging or other large-scale funding opportunity and the timeline for that application.

** Please note – References are not included in the four-page limit for this section**

Budget and Budget Justification (not included in page limit)

- Budgets should be prepared using the [PHS 398 form, page 4](#).
- Please use April 1, 2025 as the proposed start date. The actual start date may differ, depending on the length of time required to establish a subaward with your institution.
- Awards are for 12 months in length. (If you are proposing to use linked data within the LINKAGE platform, you may instead propose an 18-month timeline.)
- The requested funding amount should be commensurate with the scope of the research plan (e.g., an analysis of surveys linked with beneficiary-level claims data might justify a larger budget than an analysis of survey data alone.)
 - Direct costs may not exceed \$100,000.
 - Total costs may not exceed \$160,000.
- Funds can be used for personnel, research-related supplies/software and equipment, publication fees, and travel.
- Budget must include travel for the PI to attend and present results at the NDWS Annual Research Meeting in Bethesda, MD. Allowable travel costs include airfare, lodging, meals, and ground transportation.
- A budget justification must be included, which explains the roles of individuals who will be supported and justifies all other expenses.

Additional Documents (not included in page limit):

- [NIH-style biosketches](#) for the PI and co-investigators who would be paid by the Award. Please ensure that each biosketch includes position/title, education/training, personal statement, positions/honors, and contributions to science.

NOTE: Protection of Human Subjects Documentation – documentation of IRB approval will be required before funds are dispersed for any activity involving human subjects. **This funding opportunity will have a single IRB of record, The University of Michigan. For these awards, the study must be overseen by University of Michigan IRB.** Awarded investigators and their home institution must cede oversight to the University of Michigan. More information will be provided to awardees upon acceptance of the award.