



Thomas Caputo Research Award 2026 Request for Applications

The Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology is now accepting applications from faculty and trainee investigators for the Thomas Caputo Research Award, for funding of pilot projects. Faculty may participate as PI, co-PI, or mentor on only one submission. Faculty may participate in multiple submissions as co-investigator. Trainees may participate in one submission as PI, and in multiple submissions as co-investigators. Trainee proposals must include a clear identification of a primary mentor and any co-mentors.

Thomas Caputo Research Awardees must commit to completing the specific aims of the project within the allowed time period of up to one year. Funds must be spent between July 1, 2026, and June 30, 2027, for awards made in June 2026.

Translational and clinical research that moves new discoveries along the translational continuum to humans and the community is strongly encouraged. Clinical and community-based research, practice-based research, and health services research proposals are strongly encouraged. Up to 3 projects per year – up to \$20,000 each for two faculty and up to \$10,000 for one trainee – will be awarded each year. The Committee reserves the right not to award in any given year if there are not enough quality applications.

Important Dates

RFA Release Date: February 2, 2026

Deadline for application submission: April 1, 2026, at 5 pm

Notification of Award: June 1, 2026

Award Start Date: July 1, 2026

Goals

An overall goal of the Department in providing support for pilot studies is to actively support team science. Goals for specific categories are as follows:

1. Faculty Category – The primary goal of support provided in the Faculty category is to provide the groundwork for faculty to obtain subsequent funding. In addition, awardees are expected to make every effort possible to publish findings related to the pilot award.
2. Trainee Category – The primary goal of support provided in the Trainee category is for the trainee to learn research skills that can support a future career as an independent investigator to become an independent investigator. The latter is a longer-term goal that strengthens and complements the strategic goals of the Department and the Medical College.

Eligibility

Full-time faculty members with a primary appointment in the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology are eligible to serve as principal investigators for Faculty awards. Faculty can be at any rank, but those who are prior recipients of R-level funding from the NIH or its equivalent will not be eligible. Residents, fellows, and postdocs are eligible for trainee awards. Faculty members are not eligible to serve as principal investigators for

trainee awards. Co-investigators for either award may be faculty or trainees and may include members of other departments at Weill Cornell Medicine or from any department at Cornell University.

Allowable Costs

The program will support costs normally allowable for NIH-funded research projects, except that funding cannot be used to support faculty salary. Examples of allowable costs include costs associated with data collection or generation, preliminary analysis, or collaborative activities with partnering colleagues.

Resubmissions

Only one resubmission of a previously submitted proposal is allowed. New proposals need to be changed substantively to address prior review concerns.

Proposal Review

Review Priorities

Priorities for awarding pilot funding are listed below.

1. Faculty Category – Proposals with the best potential for output (e.g., peer-reviewed publication, extramural grant submission) by the end of the funding period.
2. Trainee Category – Proposals that are the most likely to be competitive for output subsequent to funding including training grant submission (e.g., NIH's Fellowship or K mechanism) will receive the highest priority for funding.

Review Process

The review process will occur in two stages (separately for faculty and trainee awards):

1. Administrative Review: Applications will be reviewed for submission of all application materials. Incomplete applications will not be forwarded for scientific review. Please ensure you meet the eligibility requirements and have submitted all requested application materials before finalizing your application.
2. Scientific Review: Applications that pass administrative review will undergo a scientific review process by the departmental review committee and other selected ad hoc experts, who subject the proposals to rigorous scientific review. Summary statements with review feedback will be provided. The review criteria are as follows:
 - *Significance:* The study addresses an important problem.
 - *Approach:* The study is adequately developed, well integrated, well reasoned, and appropriate to the aims of the project.
 - *Innovation:* The project is original and innovative.
 - *Investigator:* The investigator is well suited to carry out this work.
 - *Environment:* The scientific environment in which the work will be done and the mentor with whom the work will be done contribute to the probability of success.
 - *Feasibility:* The project is doable in the allotted time.
 - *Mentorship:* At least one of the mentor(s) selected have the appropriate research experience and the time available to provide guidance and oversight of the project.
 - *Career Development:* Given the candidate's career development plan, this award will affect the trajectory of the candidate's career.
 - *Diversity:* The candidate is a member of an underrepresented population in clinical research according to NIH definition.

Requirements if funds are awarded:

1. CITI Training: All investigators must certify that they have completed CITI training at the time of the application.
2. IRB and PRMC Approvals: All IRB and PRMC protocols must be approved prior to expenditure of any funds. Applicants are thus advised to begin the IRB process as soon as the application is submitted, and prior to notification of award. Elise Barrow (ecb4001@med.cornell.edu) and team are available to assist with this process and can be reached by filling out the departmental [Research Team Help Request](#).
3. Clinical Trials: Award recipients conducting an NIH-defined Clinical Trial must also complete Good Clinical Practice (GCP) training. The PI must certify that this training has been completed when the delayed onset human subjects research materials are submitted to NCATS for review. Please review the [NIH definition of a clinical trial](#). All applicable clinical trials must be registered in clinicaltrials.gov.
4. Deliverables: Recipients should submit a 200-word description of the activities that were conducted and made possible with the award by March 30 of the year after which the award is granted, with links, if available, to electronic copies of application(s) for external funding made possible by the grant, and any materials – publications, working papers, reports, etc. – produced as a result. Faculty members who do not submit this will be ineligible for future internal grants. Awardees will also present the results of the project in a department-wide forum.
5. Publications: All publications, conference presentations, and posters that benefit in whole or in part from support provided by the Thomas Caputo Research Award must:
 1. Acknowledge the grant funding. We recommend use of the following language: “The project described in this publication was supported by the Thomas Caputo Research Award from the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology at Weill Cornell Medicine. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the Weill Cornell Medicine.”
 2. ORCID IDs: All key personnel on the project must obtain an ORCID ID which provides a persistent digital identifier that the investigator owns and controls, and that distinguishes the investigator from every other researcher.

Application Guidelines

Application Form

Proposals will be no more than eight pages (single spaced, no less than 11 pt. font and 0.5" margins), including four pages of research strategy, a one-page detailed project timeline and path to external funding, a one-page budget and justification, up to one page addressing the inclusion or exclusion of underrepresented individuals, and one page addressing protection of human subjects. (References may exceed the page limit).

- The research strategy should include the following sections: specific aims; significance; hypotheses; background and rationale; and a research plan (including data analysis plan). Research may be pre-clinical, epidemiological, translational, or clinical.
- The detailed project timeline should list tentative dates of all procedures for the proposed research project, as well as benchmarks for success. Procedures may include but are not limited to: data collection processes; analysis of results; and final report writing. This section should also include information about a clear path to external funding, including how the pilot funds would bolster the submission of extramural grants and which mechanisms of funding would be pursued.
- The budget should contain sufficient detail so that each item can be separately judged. Computer related items (e.g., personal computers, printers, modems, etc.) are extremely unlikely to receive budget approval. No salary support for faculty principal investigators will be provided. No indirect costs for the institution will be provided. Typical budget items may include but are not limited to: subject honoraria and travel expenses; instrumentation costs; assay and lab test costs; and/or payment to research assistants. Elise Barrow (ecb4001@med.cornell.edu) is available to assist with budget creation; applicants should fill out the [Research Team Help Request](#) to access this assistance.
- If individuals from underrepresented groups will not be included, detailed justification of the rationale for their exclusion is mandatory. Such exclusion may lower enthusiasm for the proposal.

In addition to the proposal as outlined above, each application must include:

- A letter of support from section chief or department chair.
- A letter of support from the proposed mentor.
- Candidate's current NIH biosketch.
- Mentor's NIH biosketch.
- Letter detailing any current research funding (role on project, title, type of project, and source of funds).

How to Submit

Proposals must be emailed as a single PDF to caputoresearchaward@med.cornell.edu. Questions can be addressed to the same email.