

Funding Overview

The Carol and Gene Ludwig Pilot Grant Program in Neurodegeneration provides grants to support high-risk/high-reward research projects in promising areas of neurodegenerative disease, with the goal of building a cohort of researchers focusing on the mechanisms of neurodegeneration and translation of the new knowledge into clinically useful tools.

Funding Opportunity

Ludwig Pilot Grant Program

Funding Amount

Up to \$150,000 direct costs per year for up to two years (5% indirect costs or up to \$7,500 indirect costs per year). The committee is expecting to fund 2 projects annually. Funding will be based on merit and the second year of funding contingent upon progress at the end of Year 1.

Key Dates and Submission Information

Request for Application Open: February 13, 2026, and annually thereafter.

Letter of Intent: March 13, 2026, and annually thereafter (*Invitations for full applications will be sent out in April*).

Full Application: May 15, 2026, and annually thereafter.

Anticipated Award Decision: June 2026, and annually thereafter.

Project Duration: 24 months from July 1-June 30

Letters of intent and full application packages should be sent to Nadia Propp (np2221@cumc.columbia.edu) prior to the application deadline.

Eligibility

To promote research collaborations, applications must be submitted by research teams consisting of two or more PIs with faculty appointments at Columbia University with one of the PI's being in the field of **Neurodegeneration**. Teams should have at least two fields of research experience and expertise. Research teams may not include non-CU investigator as PIs or collaborators, unless the external investigator offers unique technology and resources. Previously awarded Ludwig Scholars may apply only if the previous award will be inactive by the start of a new funding program, and it is a new team and a new topic. An investigator can be a PI or a co-applicant/collaborator on only one LOI and one final proposal.

Topics of Interest

The Ludwig Family Foundation Pilot Research Program seeks applications focused on developing new knowledge about the cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying the role of cerebrovascular disease in pathogenesis of Alzheimer's disease and related neurodegeneration and dementia.

- For the 2026 RFA, we welcome applications that address the following topic:
 - **Biology of Resilience and Resistance to Alzheimer's Disease**
- Resilience is defined as better-than-expected cognition in the face of risk factors (genetics, lifestyle, etc.) and pathology (proteinopathies, vasculopathies, white matter hyperintensities, etc.). Resistance is defined as lower-than-expected pathology in the face of risk factors (genetics, lifestyle, etc.)
- Potential themes include but are not limited to the role of astrocytes, oligodendrocytes, neurons, microglia, border associate macrophages, pericytes, endothelial cells, fibroblasts, adaptive immune cells, glymphatics and blood brain barrier dysfunction.
- Projects may propose the application of tools including but not limited to animal models, 3D models, genetics, imaging, multiomics, spatial transcriptomics, proteomics, lipid and metabolism biology.
- The proposed work program must focus on neurodegenerative disease, and an emphasis on **neurodegenerative dementias** is especially encouraged.
- The proposed work program should be multidisciplinary and should contain at least two independent laboratories with naturally complementary skills.

Budget

Allowable costs include:

- Personnel time and effort
- Fringe and associated personnel costs
- Direct research expenses including supplies, services, animals, etc.
- Up to \$2500 for travel to conferences to present research
- Publication costs
- Participant support costs

Unallowable costs include:

- Administrative or overhead costs
- Capital Equipment

Funding will be allocated annually up to \$150,000. Year 2 funding is contingent upon progress at the end of Year 1. Carryforward is allowable upon approval of Year 2. Separate from the funding intended to directly support the project, recipients will receive 5% indirect costs, up to \$7,500 per year.

Letter of Intent Requirements

Project team – list of personnel and research expertise.

Research description (1 page total)

Application Requirements

Proposal narrative – (5 page limit, not including references)

Detailed budget

Budget justification – (1 page)

NIH format Biosketch for all key personnel

Other support for all key personnel

Review Criteria

Impact

Collaboration

Innovation

Feasibility

Alignment with mission

Reporting Requirements

Awardees will be referred to as “Ludwig Investigators” and are required to submit annual progress reports based on the following schedule:

Year 1 Progress Report - June 30, 2026, and annually thereafter

Year 1 Financial Report

Final Progress Report

Financial Report – July 31, 2027

In addition, awardees are required to meet with the program directors and fellow Ludwig Scholars monthly for 60 minutes to provide an informal update on research progress. Meetings

should be followed up with a brief 1-2 paragraph summary. Carol and Gene Ludwig Family Foundation support must be acknowledged on all publications and presentations.

Administrative Requirements

Any changes to the project team require prior approval from the committee.
Significant changes (up to 25%) to the project team's level of effort commitment require approval from the committee.
Significant changes in the project direction require prior approval from the committee.

Key Contacts:

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