Notice of Funding Opportunity

Application due Thursday, July 16, 2026

National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)

Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centers (RERC) Program: RERC on AI-Driven Assistive and Rehabilitation Technologies

Opportunity number: HHS-2026-ACL-NIDILRR-REGE-0212

Contents

Before you begin

If you believe you are a good candidate for this funding opportunity, secure your SAM.gov and Grants.gov registrations now. If you are already registered, make sure your registrations are active and up-to-date.

SAM.gov registration (this can take several weeks)

You must have an active account with SAM.gov. This includes having a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

See Step 2: Get Ready to Apply

Grants.gov registration (this can take several days)

You must have an active Grants.gov registration. Doing so requires a Login.gov registration as well.

See Step 2: Get Ready to Apply

Apply by the application due date

Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, July 16, 2026.

To help you find what you need, this NOFO uses internal links. In Adobe Reader, you can go back to where you were by pressing Alt + Left Arrow (Windows) or Command + Left Arrow (Mac) on your keyboard.

Step 1:
Review the Opportunity

In this step

Basic information

Administration for Community Living

National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)

Research and development leading to AI-driven technologies to improve health and function outcomes of people with disabilities.

Summary

Research and development leading to AI-driven assistive and rehabilitation technologies to improve health and function outcomes for people with physical disabilities that impact their mobility or their reaching, grasping, and manipulation.

Funding details

Type: Grant

Expected funding: $975,000

Expected awards: 1

Funding range: $970,000 to $975,000 per budget period
We plan to fund one award in five 12-month budget periods for a total five-year period of performance of September 1, 2026, to August 31, 2031.

Length of project period: 60-month project period with five 12-month budget periods.

Have questions? See Contacts and Support.

Key facts

Opportunity name: Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centers (RERC) Program: RERC on AI-Driven Assistive and Rehabilitation Technologies

Opportunity number: HHS-2026-ACL-NIDILRR-REGE-0212

Federal assistance listing: 93.433

Statutory authority: Title II of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. 29 U.S.C. § 762(g) and 764(b)(3)(a)

Key dates

Application deadline: July 16, 2026

Informational conference call: June 17, 2026

Optional notice of intent deadline: June 24, 2026

Expected start date: September 1, 2026

Expected award date: September 1, 2026

Eligibility

Who can apply

Eligible applicants

Only these types or organizations may apply:

- States.
- Public or private agencies, including for-profit agencies.
- Public or private organizations, including for-profit organizations.
- Institutions of higher education.
- Indian tribes and tribal organizations.

Faith-based and community organizations that meet the eligibility requirements are eligible for awards under this funding opportunity.

Other eligibility requirements

You must propose to run an RERC on AI-Driven Assistive and Rehabilitation Technologies that is responsive to each of the requirements in the Program Description section of this notice.

Disqualifying factors

We will review your application to make sure it meets these responsiveness requirements.

We won't consider an application that:

- Is submitted after the deadline.
- Is not responsive to each of the requirements in the Program Description section of this notice.
- Is from an individual, including a sole proprietorship, or a foreign entity.
- Is received in paper format that didn't have a previously approved exemption from ACL.
- Proposes a budget that exceeds $975,000 in any single budget year.
- Proposes a project period that exceeds 60 months.

Application limits

If you submit the same application more than once under this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO), we will only acknowledge the last on-time submission.

Cost sharing

This program has no cost-sharing requirement, meaning you do not need to contribute to the costs of this project.

If you choose to include cost-sharing funds, we won't consider it during review.

Cost sharing commitments

If awarded, you must provide the amount of cost-sharing funds you promised. We put these commitments in the Notice of Award.

If you don't provide your promised amount, we may decrease the amount of funding we give you or use other enforcement actions.

You'll have to include your cost-sharing funds when you fill out your federal financial reports.

Post-award requirements

Before you apply, make sure you understand the requirements that come with an award.

See Step 6: Learn What Happens After Award for information on regulations that apply, reporting, and more.

Statutory authority

Title II of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. 29 U.S.C. § 762(g) and 764(b)(3)(a)

Program description

Background

While assistive and rehabilitation technologies are evolving and being improved over time, many existing devices lack adaptability, personalization, and seamless integration into daily life. Artificial intelligence (AI), including machine learning, may offer transformative potential to address these gaps by enabling smarter, more responsive, and individualized technologies.[1],[2],[3] AI integration could be the next stage of development for assistive and rehabilitation technologies, moving these products from static aids to intelligent, adaptive systems that empower their users through continuous learning and personalization.[4],[5]

Assistive technologies

Assistive technologies address activity and participation difficulties encountered by people with disability by augmenting, compensating for the loss of, or restoring function to improve performance.[6] However, many traditional assistive devices do not effectively address individual needs. These traditional devices offer generic solutions that may not address specific challenges or preferences of people with physical disabilities.[7] Some assistive technology is difficult to learn or operate, especially for users with limited motor abilities. Complex user interfaces and poor usability limit participation and independence.[8] Assistive devices often operate in isolation and are not well integrated or compatible with other systems and home environments, reducing overall effectiveness.[9],[10],[11] Additionally, the characteristics of existing technologies such as durability, weight, size, power sources, and control algorithms have yet to be optimized for ease of use and functionality in the real world.[12] This often results in technologies being non-intuitive, obtrusive, or difficult to control, reducing user acceptance and adoption.

AI has the potential to address many of these persistent problems facing assistive technologies. Through advanced algorithms, AI can tailor assistive devices to the specific functional needs, preferences, and environments of individual users, providing more personalized and effective support.[13] AI has the potential to enable devices to predict their user's intentions and adapt the device's responses. This improves usability and satisfaction.[14] Smart assistive devices powered by AI can learn from usage patterns to optimize assistance provided to the user. Devices powered by AI can also enhance safety through features like fall detection and obstacle avoidance, and ultimately support greater independence.[15]

Assistive technologies that could benefit from AI integration include but are not limited to: Walking aids, wheelchairs, prosthetic devices, orthotic devices, and exoskeletons.

Rehabilitation technologies

Rehabilitation technologies, which restore, maintain, or slow the decline of function,[16] also face several ongoing challenges that limit their effectiveness and adoption. Clinical use of these technologies varies significantly across inpatient, outpatient, and community settings.[17] Despite advancements in rehabilitation technologies, clinicians often choose not to use them in their practice.[18],[19] Many rehabilitation devices have limited therapeutic impact because they are not personalized or adaptable to individual patient needs and progress.[20] Rehabilitation technologies that facilitate repetitive exercises lead to low user engagement, motivation, and adherence.[21] Rehabilitation technologies typically don't allow clinicians to monitor, track, record, and adjust their patients' progress.[22]

AI has the potential to enhance rehabilitation technologies by addressing these issues. Collaborative control in AI-driven rehabilitation technologies allows clinicians, people with disabilities, and AI to collaborate in clinical decision-making. AI could support rehabilitation by providing quantitative patient analysis and pattern recognition, while clinicians guide and refine therapy based on real-time feedback and expert judgment.[23] AI systems can personalize rehabilitation plans by analyzing comprehensive patient data to dynamically adjust therapy based on real-time performance and recovery.[24] AI-powered wearable sensors and connected devices enable remote monitoring and telerehabilitation. This can broaden access to rehabilitation technologies and allow continuous feedback outside traditional clinical settings.[25] To improve engagement, AI can be used to gamify exercises and create personalized interactive environments, motivating patients to adhere to their programs.[26] AI algorithms also enable automated assessment of patient movements, delivering corrective feedback to enhance therapy effectiveness.[27] Overall, AI integration could make rehabilitation more personalized, accessible, engaging, data-driven, and efficient, overcoming many barriers that currently limit rehabilitation technology efficacy and adoption.

Rehabilitation technologies that could benefit from AI integration include but are not limited to: Light-weighting and unweighting rehabilitation technologies, assistance/resistance technologies, motion capture and biofeedback technologies, augmented or virtual reality technologies, and game-based rehabilitation technologies.

Purpose of this program

This priority is in alignment with:

- Executive Order 14212, on Establishing the President's Make America Healthy Again Commission.
- The following ACL strategic priorities:
    - Whole person health.

ACL's Administrator establishes a priority for the funding of a Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on AI-Driven Assistive and Rehabilitation Technologies. We are establishing this priority to sponsor research, development, and evaluation activities toward innovative AI-driven assistive and rehabilitation technologies that contribute to improved health and function outcomes for people with physical disabilities that impact their mobility or their reaching, grasping, and manipulation.

You are required to address the following in your proposal

Under this priority, the RERC must increase the understanding of the scientific and engineering principles of human locomotion, reaching, grasping, and manipulation, and incorporate those principles into the design of AI-driven assistive and rehabilitation technologies for people with disabilities and their clinicians and caregivers. Research and development under this priority must be designed to lead to state-of-the-science knowledge and evidence-based AI-driven assistive and rehabilitation technologies.

The RERC must be designed to optimize the accessibility, affordability, usability, utility, acceptability, and wide use of the assistive and rehabilitation technologies and devices that it focuses upon. The RERC must involve people with disabilities, their families, caregivers, clinicians, and other key stakeholders in the design and implementation of RERC research, development, and evaluation activities.

The RERC must conduct research, development, and evaluation activities toward both assistive and rehabilitation technologies. Any software engineering activities conducted by the RERC must be carried out as part of a broader technology development effort. NIDILRR will only support software development if the software is integral to a piece of hardware that is also being developed through the RERC.

Applicants should consult the NIDILRR Long-Range Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2028 [PDF] when preparing their applications. According to the plan, assistive technologies address activity and participation difficulties encountered by people with disability by augmenting, compensating for the loss of, or restoring function to improve performance. Rehabilitation technologies restore, maintain, or slow the decline of function. This RERC must be designed to improve health and function outcomes of people with physical disabilities that impact their mobility or their reaching, grasping, and manipulation.

The RERC must conduct advanced engineering research and development activities that contribute to improved outcomes for people with physical disabilities that impact their mobility or their reaching, grasping, and manipulation. Applicants under the priority in this notice are required to specify in their proposal the following:

a) The target population or populations of people with physical disabilities that impact their mobility or their reaching, grasping, and manipulation.

b) The technological and informational products to be produced.

c) The benefits of those products to people with disabilities.

d) The means of testing and evaluating the products to be produced.

e) The way the RERC will involve people with disabilities, their families, caregivers, clinicians, and other key stakeholders in the design and implementation of RERC research, development, and evaluation activities.

As a national center, the RERC must conduct high-quality research, development, technical assistance, capacity building, knowledge translation, and dissemination activities that address significant needs, promote independence, and improve the quality of life and community living outcomes of people with disabilities. In order to optimize benefits to people with disabilities, the RERC must ascertain the efficacy and safety of proposed strategies, technologies, or interventions, and collaborate with appropriate entities to facilitate the transfer and adoption of development products. The RERC must follow and understand emerging technologies and communicate to NIDILRR, ACL, and other appropriate stakeholders about the potential opportunities and drawbacks associated with these technologies.

The RERC must ensure that all websites and information products that the RERC develops or maintains are in compliance with standards developed under section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794d). For websites, this compliance currently requires meeting Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0/2/1 AA success criteria.

The RERC must also contribute to the following outcomes

1. Increased technical and scientific knowledge relevant to its designated priority research area. The RERC must contribute to this outcome by conducting high-quality, rigorous research projects. The RERC must use appropriate engineering knowledge and techniques to collect, analyze, and/or synthesize research data.
2. Increased innovation in technologies, products, environments, performance guidelines, or monitoring and assessment tools applicable to its designated priority research area. The RERC must contribute to this outcome through the development and testing of these innovations. The RERC must apply appropriate engineering knowledge and techniques to achieve development objectives.
3. Improved research capacity in its designated priority research area. The RERC must contribute to this outcome by collaborating with the relevant industry, professional associations, and institutions of higher education, health care providers, or educators, as appropriate, to train research and development professionals in its designated priority research area.
4. Improved awareness and understanding of cutting-edge developments in technologies within its designated priority research area. The RERC must contribute to this outcome by communicating with NIDILRR, people with disabilities and their

representatives, disability organizations, service providers, professional journals, manufacturers, State Assistive Technology Act Programs, and other interested parties about trends and evolving product concepts related to its designated priority research area.

5. Increased impact of research and development in the designated priority research area. The RERC must contribute to this outcome by providing technical assistance to relevant public and private organizations, people with disabilities, employers, and schools on policies, guidelines, and standards related to its designated priority research area.
6. Increased transfer of RERC-developed technologies to the marketplace. The RERC must contribute to this outcome by developing and implementing a plan for ensuring that all technologies developed by the RERC are made available to the public. The technology transfer plan must be developed in the first year of the project period in consultation with the NIDILRR-funded Initiative to Mobilize Partnerships For Successful Assistive Technology Transfer (IMPACT) Center.
7. Improved usability and accessibility of products and environments in the RERC's designated priority research area. The RERC must contribute to this outcome by emphasizing the principles and goals of universal design in its product research and development. For purposes of this section, the term "universal design" refers to the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

In addition, the RERC must:

- Have the capability to design, build, and test prototype devices and assist in the technology transfer and knowledge translation of successful solutions to relevant production and service delivery settings.
- Evaluate the efficacy and safety of its new products, instrumentation, or assistive devices.
- Provide as part of its proposal, and then implement, a plan that describes how it will include, as appropriate, people with disabilities or their representatives in all phases of its activities, including research, development, training, dissemination, and evaluation.
- Provide as part of its proposal, and then implement, in consultation with the NIDILRR-funded National Center on Knowledge Translation for Disability and Rehabilitation Research, a plan to disseminate its research results to people with disabilities and their representatives, disability organizations, service providers, professional journals, manufacturers, and other interested parties.
- Conduct a state-of-the-science conference on its designated priority research area in the fourth year of the project period, and publish a comprehensive report on the final outcomes of the conference in the fifth year of the project period.

- Coordinate research projects of mutual interest with relevant NIDILRR-funded projects, as identified through consultation with the NIDILRR project officer.
- Specify the stage or stages of research projects that they are proposing. If the applicant proposes to conduct research that can be categorized under more than one stage, including research that progresses from one stage to another, those stages must be clearly specified. These stages (exploration and discovery, intervention development, intervention efficacy, and scale-up evaluation) are defined on ACL's website.
- Specify the stage or stages of development of the development projects that they are proposing. If the applicant proposes to conduct development that can be categorized under more than one stage, those stages must be clearly specified. These stages (proof of concept, proof of product, and proof of adoption) are defined on ACL's website.

Funding policies and limitations

Changes in HHS regulations

As of October 1, 2025, HHS has adopted 2 CFR 200, with some exceptions included in 2 CFR 300. These regulations replace those in 45 CFR 75.

Policies

- All activities proposed in your application and budget narrative must align with applicable law, including but not limited to statutes, executive orders, federal regulations, and applicable judicial holdings. Accordingly, discretionary awards shall not be used to fund, promote, encourage, subsidize, or facilitate: racial preferences or other forms of racial discrimination by the recipient, including activities where race or intentional proxies for race will be used as a selection criterion for employment or program participation; denial by the recipient of the sex binary in humans, or the belief that sex is a chosen or mutable characteristic; illegal immigration; or any other initiatives that compromise public safety. If an application does not align, the application will not receive funding to the extent permitted by law and applicable court orders.
- We will only make awards if this program receives funding. If Congress appropriates funds for this purpose, we will move forward with the review and award process.
- Support beyond the first budget period will depend on:
  - Appropriation of funds.
  - Satisfactory progress in meeting your project's objectives.
  - A decision that continued funding is in the government's best interest.
- If we receive more funding for this program, we will consider:

  - Funding more applicants.
  - Extending the period of performance.
  - Awarding supplemental funding.
- You may not use funds from this NOFO for any diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEI and DEIA) activities. This includes:
  - DEI- or DEIA-related research.
  - Activities that discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or other protected traits.
- Under this NOFO, you can't continue existing projects without expansion or new and innovative approaches.
- Meals are allowed only in limited circumstances linked to program activities, like during travel or when approved in advance by ACL. See Allowable Costs and Activities, Exhibit 4: Selected Items of Cost, Meals in the HHS Grants Policy Statement.
- There are restrictions on certain telecommunications and video surveillance equipment. See 2 CFR 200.216 to make sure this does not apply to any proposed equipment in your application.

Unallowable costs

- Construction or major rehabilitation of buildings.
- For guidance on other types of costs that we restrict or do not allow, see General Provisions for Selected Items of Costs of the Uniform Guidance, 2 CFR 200.420.

Indirect costs

To charge indirect costs you can select one of two methods:

Method 1 – Approved rate. You currently have an indirect cost rate approved by your cognizant federal agency.

Method 2 – *De minimis* rate. If you do not have a negotiated indirect cost rate, you may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate (see 2 CFR 200.414(f)). This rate may be up to 15% of modified total direct costs (MTDC). See the definition of MTDC (2 CFR 200.1). You can use this rate indefinitely.

You may not charge costs included in your indirect cost pool as direct costs.

Subawards

As the prime recipient, you must maintain a substantive role in the project. This means that you conduct funded activities and provide services necessary and integral to completing the project.

Monitoring your subrecipient's activities alone as described in 2 CFR 200.332 is not a substantive role.

We do not fund awards where your role is primarily a conduit for passing funds to other organizations unless that arrangement is authorized by statute.

All subrecipients must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) through the System for Award Management (SAM.gov).

Subrecipients must meet the eligibility requirements of this NOFO.

Salary rate limitation

The salary rate limitation in the current appropriations act applies to this program. You may not use awarded funds to pay a salary at a higher rate than the rate for Executive Level II.

For the Executive Level II salary, please see the Office of Personnel Management information on executive and senior level employee pay.

The salary limitation reflects a person's base salary (including any portion of the salary that is paid with indirect costs). It does not include fringe benefits or any income the person is allowed to earn outside of the duties of the applicant organization.

This salary limitation also applies to subawards, contracts, and subcontracts under an ACL grant or cooperative agreement.

Program income

If you earn any money from your award-supported project activities (known as program income), you must use it for the purposes and under the conditions of the award. Find more about program income at 2 CFR 200.307.

Step 2:
Get Ready to Apply

In this step

Find the application package

The application package has all the forms you need to apply. You can search for it at Grants.gov using opportunity number HHS-2026-ACL-NIDILRR-REGE-0212. Then select the Package tab.

We recommend that you select the **Subscribe button** from the View Grant Opportunity page for this NOFO to get updates.

You can also find materials at Applying for Grants on ACL's website.

If you can't use Grants.gov to download application materials or have other technical difficulties, including issues with application submission, contact Grants.gov for assistance.

Get registered

SAM.gov

You must have an active account with SAM.gov to apply. SAM.gov registration can take several weeks. Begin that process today.

To register:

- Go to SAM.gov Entity Registration and select Get Started. From the same page, you can also select the Entity Registration Checklist for the information you will need to register.
- You must agree to the financial assistance general certifications and representations [PDF] specifically. Those for contracts are different.

When you register, you will also receive your required Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

Once you register:

- You will have to maintain your registration throughout the life of any award.
- If your organization has multiple UEIs, use the one associated with your physical location.

Grants.gov

You must also have an active account with Grants.gov. You can see step-by-step instructions at the Grants.gov Quick Start Guide for Applicants.

Join the informational call

We will provide general information about this funding opportunity at an informational conference call. It will be held on:

- Wednesday, June 17, 2026
- 1 to 3 p.m. ET

You must register for this call in advance.

Contact Megan.Alvarado@acl.hhs.gov to register for this call.

Step 3:
Build Your Application

In this step

Application contents and format

Applications include five main components. This section includes guidance on each. Make sure you include each of these:

Component	Submission format
☐ Project abstract	Use the Project Abstract Summary form
☐ Project narrative	Use the Project Narrative Attachment form
☐ Budget narrative justification	Use the Budget Narrative Attachment form
☐ Attachments	Insert each in the Other Attachments form
☐ Other required forms	Upload using each required form

Required format

Required format for application contents.

Font: Times New Roman or Arial

Format: PDF

Size: 12-point font
Footnotes and text in graphics must be 12-point.

Spacing for Project narrative main content: Double-spaced

Spacing for Budget narrative: As needed

Spacing for project summary, tables, footnotes: Single-spaced.
Please note: Applicants who unnecessarily place project narrative text in tables or figures to avoid the double-spacing requirement run the risk of exceeding the page limit.

Margins: 1-inch

Include page numbers.

Project abstract

Page limit: 1 page

Provide a detailed yet concise description of your proposed project, activities, and intended outcomes. The abstract can be single- or double-spaced.

Project narrative

Page limit: 80 pages

The project narrative is the most important part of the application. We use it as the primary basis to decide whether your project addresses the requirements described in the program description section of this NOFO. We also use the content narrative to review the merit of your project. The project narrative should give a clear and concise description of your project.

You should address these merit review criteria as you write your project narrative.

- Responsiveness to the priority.
- Alignment with ACL Strategic Priorities.
- Design of research activities.
- Design of development activities.
- Design of training activities.
- Design of dissemination activities.
- Plan of operation.
- Project staff.
- Adequacy and accessibility of resources.

Include all critical information in the project narrative and not in appendices.

Cite all of your sources in the project narrative.

We will instruct reviewers to disregard all content on the pages beyond the 80th page of your project narrative.

Work plan

You must provide a work plan for your project within your Project Narrative. The work plan connects your goals, anticipated outcomes, and the major tasks you are proposing.

The work plan must cover all years of the project period.

To complete your work plan, see the project work plan sample template on our website.

Budget narrative justification

Page Limit: None

The budget narrative supports the information you provide in Standard Form 424-A. See other required forms.

It includes added detail and justifies the costs you ask for. As you develop your budget, consider:

- If the costs are reasonable and consistent with your project's purpose and activities.
- The restrictions on spending funds. See funding limitations.

Justify all the costs, including showing how you calculated them. To create your budget narrative, see the sample format [PDF] on our website.

You must submit a budget for each year of grant funding requested.

Attachments

You will upload attachments in Grants.gov using the Other Attachments Form.

Table of contents

Page limit: None

The table of contents should show where and how the important sections of your proposal are organized. While you will submit your proposal electronically, the reviewers may use printed copies during the review process. The table of contents will assist reviewers as they evaluate your proposal.

References

Page limit: None

You must provide references for works cited in the project narrative. You may provide references in any format (i.e., APA, AMA, MLA). The format must be consistent throughout the project narrative.

Vitae/biosketches of key personnel

Page limit: None

You must provide vitae or biosketches of key personnel for the project. The vitae or biosketches should include information that is relevant to your proposed project. You are encouraged to use the NIH's biographical sketch format. This format gives reviewers a

concise description of your training, expertise, and productivity that is related to the proposed project.

Data management plan

Page limit: None

You must provide a data management plan for your project. We will review the data management plan for compliance before making an award.

The data management plan is your plan for making your NIDILRR-funded data available to the public at the end of your grant. The Data Management Plan must include the following:

- A description of the types of data you will collect for your project.
- A description of how you will organize, store, and preserve your project data.
- A description of the metadata to be provided for useful analysis of the data by others. Metadata include descriptions and labels for variables and values in your dataset.
- A description of the data repository that you will use to make your data available to the public at the end of your grant. We recommend that you use the ICPSR as your data repository, but you may select a different data repository.
    - If you select a different data repository, you must provide information on how the data repository will provide long-term preservation and free public access to the project data.
- If applicable, describe why your data cannot be submitted to a data repository.
- A description of the informed consent process that will enable data sharing.
- Costs associated with data management can be included in your budget.

If you require technical assistance in preparing your data management plan for this application, contact ICPSR at ICPSR-help@umich.edu or 734-647-2200.

Commitment letters

Page limit: None

You must include commitment letters from key individuals and organizations that will have a significant role in carrying out your project. A letter should explain their role and commitment to your project.

Summary of key individuals and organizations

Page limit: None

You must submit a list of key individuals and their organizations that will have a significant role in your project. This includes consultants and contractors.

We will use this information to screen for conflicts of interest with potential peer reviewers for your application.

Indirect cost rate agreement

Page limit: None

Please attach a copy of your current indirect cost rate agreement approved by the Department of Health and Human Services or another Federal agency.

Other required forms

You will need to complete some standard forms. Upload the standard forms listed below at Grants.gov. You can find them in the NOFO application package or review them and their instructions at Grants.gov forms.

Forms	Submission Requirement
Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	With application.
Supplemental Information for the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance [PDF]	With application.
Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)	With application.
Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)	With application.
Project Narrative Attachment form	With application.
Attachments	With application.
Project/Performance Site Location(s)	With application.
Grants.gov Lobbying form(Certification Regarding Lobbying)	With application.
Project Abstract Summary	With application.

Important: Public information

When filling out your SF-424 form, pay attention to Box 15: Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project.

We share what you put there with USAspending. This is where the public goes to learn how the federal government spends their money.

Instead of just a title, insert a short description of your project and what it will do.

See instructions and examples [PDF].

Step 4: Learn About Review and Award

In this step

Application review

Initial review

We review each application to make sure it meets the responsiveness requirements listed in the disqualification factors section. If your application does not meet these criteria, we will disqualify it and we will not move it to the merit review (scoring) phase.

If your application exceeds the page limit for the project narrative, we will instruct reviewers to not review the pages that exceed the page limit. See the required format section.

Merit review

A panel reviews all applications that pass the initial review. The members use the criteria and subcriteria below. Review criteria come primarily from NIDILRR's program regulations (45 CFR 1330.24).

Criterion	Total number of points = 100
1. Responsiveness to the priority	10 points
2. Alignment with ACL Strategic Priorities	5 points
3. Design of research activities	25 points
4. Design of development activities	25 points
5. Design of training activities	5 points
6. Design of dissemination activities	5 points
7. Plan of operation	10 points
8. Project Staff	10 points
9. Adequacy and accessibility of resources	5 points

Criteria

Responsiveness to the priority (Maximum points: 10)

- The extent to which the applicant addresses all requirements of the absolute or competitive priority.
- The extent to which the applicant's proposed activities are likely to achieve the purposes of the absolute or competitive priority.

Alignment with ACL strategic priorities (Maximum points: 5)

- The extent to which the proposed project aligns with ACL's strategic priorities of Whole-person health.

Design of research activities (Maximum points: 25)

- The extent to which the proposed design includes a comprehensive and informed review of the current literature, demonstrating knowledge of the state-of-the-art.
- The extent to which each research hypothesis or research question, as appropriate, is theoretically sound and based on current knowledge.
- The extent to which each sample is drawn from an appropriate, specified population and is of sufficient size to address the proposed hypotheses or research questions, as appropriate, and to support the proposed data analysis methods.
- The extent to which the source or sources of the data and the data collection methods are appropriate to address the proposed hypotheses or research questions and to support the proposed data analysis methods.
- The extent to which the data analysis methods are appropriate.
- The extent to which input of individuals with disabilities and other key stakeholders is used to shape the proposed research activities.
- The extent to which implementation of the proposed research design is feasible, given the current state of the science and the time and resources available.
- The extent to which the applicant identifies and justifies the stage of research being proposed and the research methods associated with the stage.

Design of development activities (Maximum points: 25)

- The extent to which the proposed project shows awareness of the state-of-the-art for current, related products.
- The extent to which the proposed project employs appropriate concepts, components, or systems to develop the new or improved product.
- The extent to which the proposed project employs appropriate samples in tests, trials, and other development activities.
- The extent to which the proposed project conducts development activities in appropriate environment(s).
- The extent to which input from individuals with disabilities and other key stakeholders is obtained to establish and guide proposed development activities.
- The extent to which the applicant identifies and justifies the stage(s) of development for the proposed project; and activities associated with each stage.
- The extent to which implementation of the proposed design is feasible, given the current state of the science and the time and resources available.

Design of training activities (Maximum points: 5)

- The extent to which the proposed training materials are likely to be effective, including consideration of their quality, clarity, and variety.
- The extent to which the proposed training methods are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration.
- The extent to which the proposed training materials and methods are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Design of dissemination activities (Maximum points: 5)

- The extent to which the materials to be disseminated are likely to be effective and usable, including consideration of their quality, clarity, variety, and format.
- The extent to which the methods for dissemination are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration.
- The extent to which the materials and information to be disseminated and the methods for dissemination are appropriate to the target population, including consideration of the familiarity of the target population with the subject matter, format of the information, and subject matter.
- The extent to which the information to be disseminated will be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Plan of operation (Maximum points: 10)

- The adequacy of the plan of operation to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, and timelines for accomplishing project tasks.
- The adequacy of the plan of operation to provide for using resources, equipment, and personnel to achieve each objective.

Project staff (Maximum points: 10)

- The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from people with disabilities, who may include but are not limited to people with disabilities who have the greatest support needs.
- The extent to which the key personnel and other key staff have appropriate training and experience in disciplines required to conduct all proposed activities.

Adequacy and accessibility of resources (Maximum points: 5)

- The extent to which the applicant is committed to provide adequate facilities, equipment, other resources, including administrative support, and laboratories, if appropriate.
- The extent to which the facilities, equipment, and other resources are appropriately accessible to individuals with disabilities who may use the facilities, equipment, and other resources of the project.

Risk review

Before making an award, we review the risk that you will mismanage federal funds or fail to complete the project objectives. We need to make sure you've handled any past federal awards well and demonstrated sound business practices.

We use SAM.gov Responsibility/Qualification to check this history for all awards likely to be over $250,000. We also check Exclusions.

If we find a significant risk, we may choose not to fund your application or to place specific conditions on the award.

You can see more details about risk review at 2 CFR 200.206.

Selection process

When making funding decisions, we consider:

- Merit review results. These are key in making decisions but are not the only factor.
- The larger portfolio of agency-funded projects, including project type and geographic distribution.
- The past performance of the applicant. We may choose not to fund applicants with management or financial problems.
- Reasonableness of proposed costs to the expected results and the likelihood you will achieve those results.
- Available funding.

We may:

- Fund applications in whole or in part.
- Fund applications at a lower amount than requested.
- Decide not to allow a prime recipient to subaward if they may not be able to monitor and manage subrecipients properly.
- Choose to fund no applications under this NOFO.

The ACL Administrator makes all final award decisions.

Before we make final funding decisions, ACL leadership will review all potential awards. They will check for:

- Adherence to applicable laws.
- Alignment to agency priorities (see Administration for Community Living's (ACL) Mission, Vision & Strategic Priorities).
- To the extent allowed by law and court orders, we will give a funding preference to applications that align with agency priorities. Your application may receive this preference if it aligns with the following ACL strategic priorities: Whole-person health.

Award notices

If you are successful, we will email a Notice of Award (NoA) to your authorized official. We will email you or write you a letter if your application is disqualified or unsuccessful.

The NoA is the only official award document. The NoA tells you about the amount of the award, important dates, and the terms and conditions you need to follow. Until you receive the NoA, you don't have permission to start work.

To see what is in a NoA, see an example on our website [PDF].

Step 5:
Submit Your Application

In this step

Application submission and deadlines

See find the application package to make sure you have everything you need.

Make sure you are current with SAM.gov and UEI requirements. See get registered. You will have to maintain your registration throughout the life of any award.

Deadlines

Optional notice of intent

Due on Wednesday, June 24, 2026.

We ask that you let us know if you plan to apply for this opportunity. We do this to plan for the number of expert reviewers we will need to evaluate applications. You do not have to submit a notice of intent to apply.

Please email the notice to Megan.Alvarado@acl.hhs.gov.

In your email, include:

- The funding opportunity number and title.
- The name and contact information for the project principal investigator.
- A brief description of the proposed activities.
- A list of key individuals and their organizations that will have a significant role in your project.
- A list of individuals whose selection as a peer reviewer might constitute a conflict of interest due to their involvement in the application development.

Application

Due on Thursday, July 16, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. ET.

Grants.gov creates a date and time record when it receives the application. If you submit the same application more than once, we will accept the last on-time submission.

The grants management officer may extend an application due date based on emergency situations such as documented natural disasters or a verifiable widespread disruption of electric or Grants.gov service.

If you can't submit your application because of problems with Grants.gov, you will need verification for us to consider accepting your application. Call the federal service desk before the application due time and record your tracking number. Save your tracking number and any error messages you receive.

Submission methods

Grants.gov

You must submit your application through Grants.gov. See get registered.

For instructions on how to submit in Grants.gov, see the quick start guide for applicants. Make sure that your application passes the Grants.gov validation checks or we may not get it. Do not encrypt, zip, or password protect any files. The link above will also help you learn how to create PDFs.

If you can't submit your application because of problems with Grants.gov, you will need verification for us to consider accepting your application. Call the Federal Service Desk before the application due time and record your tracking number. Save your tracking number and any error messages you receive.

See Contacts and Support if you need help.

Intergovernmental review

This NOFO is not subject to executive order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. No action is needed.

Application checklist

Make sure that you have everything you need to apply.

Narratives

Component	How to Upload	Included in page limit?
☐ Project abstract	Use the Project Abstract Summary form	No
☐ Project narrative, including work plan	Use the Project Narrative Attachment form	Yes
☐ Budget narrative justification	Use the Budget Narrative Attachment form	No

Attachments

Insert each in a single Other Attachments form.

Component	Included in page limit?
☐ Table of contents	No
☐ References	No
☐ Vitae/biosketches of key personnel	No
☐ Data management plan	No
☐ Commitment letters	No
☐ Summary of key individuals and organizations	No
☐ Indirect cost agreement	No

Other required forms

Upload using each Other required form.

Component	Included in page limit?
☐ Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	No
☐ Supplemental Information for the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance	No
☐ Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)	No
☐ Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)	No
☐ Project Narrative Attachment form	No
☐ Attachments	No
☐ Project/Performance Site Location(s)	No
☐ Grants.gov Lobbying form (Certification Regarding Lobbying)	No
☐ Project Abstract Summary	No

Step 6: Learn What Happens After Award

In this step

Post-award requirements and administration

Administrative and national policy requirements

There are important rules you need to know if you get an award. You must follow:

- All terms and conditions in the Notice of Award. You can find information at managing a grant on our website. We incorporate this NOFO by reference.
- The rules listed in 2 CFR 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements, effective October 1, 2025. These replace those in 45 CFR 75, with some exceptions in 2 CFR 300.
- The HHS Grants Policy Statement (GPS). This document has terms and conditions tied to your award. If there are any exceptions to the GPS, they'll be listed in your Notice of Award.
- All federal statutes and regulations relevant to federal financial assistance, including those highlighted in the HHS Administrative and National Policy Requirements [PDF].
- All anti-discrimination laws: By applying for or accepting federal funds from HHS, recipients certify compliance with all federal antidiscrimination laws and these requirements and that complying with those laws is a material condition of receiving federal funding streams. Recipients are responsible for ensuring subrecipients, contractors, and partners also comply.
- The ACL Public Access Policy [PDF].
- All regulations for the protection of the rights, welfare, and wellbeing of human subjects involved in research conducted or supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The HHS Office for Human Research Protections has information and resources related to these important requirements.

Compliance and oversight

Recipients must demonstrate ongoing compliance with the Administration for Community Living's (ACL) Mission, Vision & Strategic Priorities through program design, implementation, performance reporting, fiscal management, and evaluation.

Failure to meaningfully align funded activities with applicable statutory authorities and agency priorities may result in corrective action, additional reporting requirements, enforcement actions, or other remedies consistent with 2 CFR Part 200 and the terms and conditions of the award.

Through alignment with these priorities, funded projects will help ensure that older adults and people with disabilities can live with dignity, independence, and full participation in the communities they call home.

Managing award changes

After award, either you or ACL may request changes. We manage these using the rules at 2 CFR 200 and 300, including 2 CFR 200.308 and 2 CFR 300.308.

Reporting

If your application is successful, you will have to submit financial and performance reports. To learn more about reporting, see Managing a Grant, Funding Requirements on our website.

Financial and performance reports

The terms and conditions in the Notice of Award will have information on performance and financial reports including:

- How often you will report.
- Any required form or formatting.
- How to submit them.

FFATA and FSRS reporting

The Federal Financial Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires:

- Data entry at the FFATA Subaward Reporting System for all sub-awards and sub-contracts you issue for $30,000 or more.

Contacts and Support

In this step

Agency contacts

Program and eligibility

Thomas Corfman
Email: Thomas.Corfman@acl.hhs.gov
Telephone: 202-795-7328

Financial and budget

Nicole Dunning
Email: Nicole.Dunning1@acl.hhs.gov

Review process and application status

Thomas Corfman
Email: Thomas.Corfman@acl.hhs.gov
Telephone: 202-795-7328

Help with systems

Grants.gov

Grants.gov provides 24/7 support. Hold on to your ticket number.

- Telehone: 1-800-518-4726
- Email: support@Grants.gov.

SAM.gov

If you need help, you can

- Call 866-606-8220.
- Live chat with the federal service desk.

Reference Websites

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
- HHS Office For Human Research Protections
- Home Page | ACL Administration for Community Living
- Applying for Grants | ACL Administration for Community Living
- Application Tips | ACL Administration for Community Living
- How to Apply for a Competitive Grant | ACL Administration for Community Living
- Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)
- United States Code (U.S.C.)

Endnotes

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