

**FY26 Weill Cornell Medicine**  
**AI/Big Data/Enabling Technologies Seed Grant Program Guidelines**

**Deadline: December 1, 2025**

**1. Objective**

With the goal of helping early-stage investigators transition to independent research careers, this program seeks to equip WCM's most promising senior post-doctoral fellows and early career faculty with seed funding to accelerate and amplify the impact of their work through the development and/or integration of new enabling technologies. Applicants must be Clinical Fellows, Senior Postdoctoral Associates, Instructors or Assistant Professors at WCM.

**2. Description**

The most pressing areas of unmet medical need often correspond to complex problems whose solutions lie beyond the limits of existing knowledge. AI, Big Data and other enabling cutting-edge scientific technologies have recently helped to breach these limits and forge the path to new solutions capable of improving health on both an individual and population level scale. This program is designed to encourage the early and creative integration/adoption of such technologies. Applications from all areas and disciplines of biomedical and health services research are welcome. However, preferential consideration will be given to those with a specific focus on AI and big data-based technologies due to their potential for broader and deeper interlinked impacts on health and income in a population-specific manner. This focus aligns with the Mastercard Impact Fund's mission of advancing inclusive growth using data science: to drive translational research and to improving health outcomes and at all income levels.

Candidates can apply for a year of research funding, thus freeing them from clinical obligations and supporting their ability to collect preliminary data needed for a competitive extramural grant application.

Applications must include a letter of support from either the candidate's Department Chair, Division Chief, and/or Center and Institute Director for the Mastercard Seed Grant Program. Letter requirements are described below. The number of awards possible for a given Department, Division or Institute is not limited. Department Chairs, Division Chiefs, and/or Center and Institute Directors are encouraged to provide letters for all eligible candidates under their purview that are qualified and interested in applying.

**3. Important Dates**

Application deadline: **December 1, 2025**

**Eligibility Criteria**

- Applicants must hold an MD, PhD, MD/PhD, or equivalent doctoral degree and seek additional research training under the supervision of a sponsor or sponsors with the intent of embarking on an independent research career.
- Applicants must be Clinical Fellows, Senior Postdoctoral Fellows, Instructors or Assistant Professors, based full-time at Weill Cornell Medicine. Faculty members with primary employment at HSS, MSKCC, Houston Methodist Hospital, Memorial Hospital, WCM Qatar, and Burke Neurological Institute are not eligible to apply.
- Applicants must devote a minimum of 40% of their full-time appointment/effort to research. Surgeons that are interested in applying for this award must have at least 25% of their time dedicated to research activities. The letter of support from the Center/Institute Director, Division Chief and/or Department Chair included in the application (5.i., below) must attest to the protected research time.
- Applicants cannot concurrently hold another Mastercard award or departmental, foundation or other type grant whose purpose is the development of a K award (e.g. CTSC KL2, Jump Start, DOM Fund for the

Future award). Concurrent departmental support for other purposes is acceptable.

For specific questions regarding eligibility or application materials, please contact Amna Aslam at [ama4015@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ama4015@med.cornell.edu).

#### **4. Support**

Funding may be used to cover research related expenses including salary support for the candidate, personnel research expenses such as salaries for technical personnel, supplies, equipment, publication costs, and travel related to professional development conferences. The funding guidelines are listed below:

- Salary/Fringe: Up to \$25,000 for salary (including fringe) for the candidate or key personnel
- Project support: Up to \$50,000
- Maximum annual award amount: \$50,000
- Funding period: January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026

#### **5. Application**

- a. NIH style Biosketch
- b. Candidate's current and pending support
- c. Detailed budget for a one-year period (PHS 398 FP4)
- d. Letter of support from the Center/Institute director, Division Chief and/or Department Chair.
  - The letter of support from the Center/Institute director, Division Chief and/or Department Chair is weighed heavily in determining the success of the application. The letter should explicitly state that the applicant has at least 40% protected time (25% for surgeons) dedicated to research. Other topics should include 1) a brief description of the candidate's research plan; 2) a career development plan; 3) assessment of scientific environment in which the work will be performed; 4) evidence of institutional commitment in terms of space, equipment, protected time and other resources 5) the level of enthusiasm for the candidate's likelihood for career success.
- e. In no more than 3 pages (single spaced, 1-inch margins, font no smaller than 11 pt), please describe the following:
  - The specific health challenge being addressed.
  - The innovation and novelty of your approach, emphasizing how the proposed technology will be applied and enhance the impact of this research on the health outcome of interest as well as its broader potential impact on biomedical research.
  - The specific proposed activities and description of how these activities will advance the project, including any preliminary data collection, algorithm development, or pilot studies that will set the foundation for future research activity.
  - Key go-no go milestones and timelines as well as potential contingency plans.
  - The researchers involved in this project, detailing each member's unique background, skills and integration with other team members.
  - Identify potential sources of external funding and specific timelines to be pursued.
  - Explain how the proposed activities during the seed funding period will enhance competitiveness for these funding opportunities, particularly in AI and health-focused grant programs.

#### **6. Application deadline and submission**

Applications should be submitted to Amna Aslam at [ama4015@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ama4015@med.cornell.edu) as a **single pdf file** using the naming convention: PI\_LASTNAME\_DEPARTMENT.pdf.

#### **7. Review Criteria**

- a. Significance, innovation and potential impact. The proposal should specifically also demonstrate how the proposed technology will push the boundaries of what is currently known or possible and its ultimate potential translational impact.
- b. Project personnel and demonstration of requisite expertise.
- c. Clarity and Feasibility of Proposed Research Activities. Proposed research activities should be feasible within the timeline given and requested budget.
- d. Clarity and Feasibility of Potential Funding pathways. The pathway to subsequent funding should be clearly detailed, including a description of how the proposed research activities and outputs will allow the team to become more competitive for the prospective external funding sources.

**8. Restrictions and reporting conditions:**

- a. Awardees are required to attend career development sessions for the 2026 Mastercard Mentoring Program.
- b. Each awardee must submit a research progress report by March 1, 2027. Progress reports must include:
  - i. A two-page narrative consisting of the following sections: Major goals of the project; accomplishments under these goals; and goals for the coming year.
  - ii. A list of quantifiable measures of progress resulting from Mastercard Seed Grant Program funding, such as new publications, new related funding, invited presentations, awards or honors, service on national or international committees, academic promotion, etc.
  - iii. A current “other support” document listing pending and active grants