



## Program for Artificial Intelligence Readiness (PAIR) FAQs

This page includes collections of answers to our most Frequently Asked Questions about the AIM-AHEAD PAIR program. View the AIM-AHEAD General FAQs [here](#).

### Frequently Used Links:

-PAIR CFP: <https://www.aim-ahead.net/pair-cohort-2-cfp/>

-PAIR HelpDesk: <https://helpdesk.aim-ahead.net/ticket/create/PAIR>

-InfoReady for submission:

<https://aim-ahead.infoready4.com/#freeformCompetitionDetail/1952956>

### Program Overview

AIM-AHEAD PAIR Program-Related FAQs

#### What is the purpose of the AIM-AHEAD PAIR Program?

The AIM-AHEAD Program for AI Readiness (PAIR) leverages AIM-AHEAD's capabilities to jump-start AI for health equity research in eligible institutions (as defined in the Eligibility Section). Low-resource organizations encounter substantial challenges stemming from their limited experience in AI/ML research related to health equity, a lack of adequate AI/ML infrastructure, insufficient collaboration across disciplines, and limited grant funding. PAIR is specifically crafted to strengthen the foundational elements of these organizations, paving the way for sustainable success in research endeavors. Through a two-phase funding model, PAIR will facilitate the connection between institutions and AIM-AHEAD resources, along with experts in AI/ML and health equity research, and grant-writing coaches. This collaborative effort aims to establish AI/ML health equity research labs, fostering cross-disciplinary teams dedicated to conducting research projects and proficient grant writing.

#### What does the PAIR Program offer participating institutions?

- Grant-funding (up to \$250,000)
- Grant Writing Training
- Research Planning & Proposal Training

- Mentorship (from AI Experts)
- NIH Proposal Preparation

**What is the duration of the PAIR Program?**

Institutions selected for Phase 1: *12 Months*

Institutions selected for Phase 2: *12 Months*

**How often will the PAIR Program be awarded?**

PAIR is expected to launch a new cohort every year. More details regarding 2026 Cohort will be coming soon.

**How is the PAIR Program CFP different from the Data Infrastructure Capacity Building Program CFP for the first phase?**

The PAIR Program aims to provide comprehensive support to multidisciplinary teams from low-resource MSIs (Minority-Serving Institutions) through the establishment of an AI Health Equity Lab at your institution. The Data Infrastructure Capacity Building Program is a different program that focuses on 4 specific focus areas that participants select from with different objectives and outcomes. Applicants are encouraged to apply to both.

**Can one institution receive multiple AIM-AHEAD awards in a given year?**

Yes, the same institution can apply for all AIM-AHEAD CFPs.

**Will the PAIR Program produce any publications?**

Publications are case by case. If research is ready for publishing, then yes. It is not expected that all participants will have a publication at the end of Year 1.

**What are the expected outcomes for the PAIR Program?**

Phase 1 Outcomes

1. Institutional support & Teaming
2. Research project development
3. Data resource selection and feasibility

Phase 2 Outcomes

1. Research project Idea is Finalized
2. Implementation of the Project
3. Completed Proposal for NIH Submission
4. New AI/ML Research Lab

**Who will be the mentors/program consultants?**

Program provides three different types of mentors and consultants:

1. AI Machine Learning Experts
2. Subject Matter Expert (e.g., Health Equity or Public Health Expert)
3. Grant Writing Coach

**Can institutions identify their mentor or partner with AI-intensive institutions?**

Awardees are welcome to nominate experts, which a committee will evaluate and make the matching decision. As we are targeting low-resourced institutions who are low in AI capacities, their choice of experts might not be the best fit.

## Eligibility

AIM-AHEAD PAIR Eligibility-Related FAQs

### Is my Institution Eligible to Apply?

The PAIR program is intended for organizations that are not well-supported by grants from NIH on AI/ML research. An institution may suggest one team with key personnel from the same institution or affiliated institutions. Only one application per institution (normally identified by having a unique DUNS number or NIH IPF number) is allowed. ***If your institution already has an existing PAIR award, you are not eligible to apply for PAIR Cohort 2.***

### Higher Education Institutions

- Public/State Controlled Institutions of Higher Education
- Private Institutions of Higher Education

The following types of Higher Education Institutions are always encouraged to apply for NIH support as Public or Private Institutions of Higher Education:

- Hispanic-serving Institutions
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)
- Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs)
- Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions
- Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)

To be eligible for this FOA, the applicant institution must be a domestic institution located in the United States and its territories which:

- Hold an active RCMI award or has received an average of less than \$50 million per year of NIH support for the past three fiscal years; and
- Has a historical and current mission to educate students from any of the populations that have been identified as underrepresented in biomedical research as defined by the National Science Foundation NSF, see <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/wmpd/> (i.e., African Americans or Blacks, Hispanic or Latino Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, U.S. Pacific Islanders, and persons with disabilities) or has a documented record of: (1) recruiting, training and/or educating, and graduating underrepresented students as defined by NSF (see above), which has resulted in increasing the institution's contribution to the national pool of graduates from underrepresented backgrounds who pursue biomedical research careers and, (2) for institutions that deliver health care services, providing clinical services to medically underserved communities.

### Foreign Institutions

- Non-domestic (non-U.S.) Entities (Foreign Institutions) are not eligible to apply.
- Non-domestic (non-U.S.) components of U.S. Organizations are not eligible to apply.

Foreign components, as [defined in the NIH Grants Policy Statement](#), are not allowed.

## Required Registrations

### Applicant organizations

Applicant organizations must complete and maintain the following registrations as described in the SF 424 (R&R) Application Guide to be eligible to apply for or receive an award. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. Registration can take 6 weeks or more, so applicants should begin the registration process as soon as possible. The [NIH Policy on Late Submission of Grant Applications](#) states that failure to complete registrations in advance of a due date is not a valid reason for a late submission.

- [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#) Applicants must complete and maintain an active registration, **which requires renewal at least annually**. The renewal process may require as much time as the initial registration. SAM registration includes the assignment of a Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) Code for domestic organizations which have not already been assigned a CAGE Code.
  - [NATO Commercial and Government Entity \(NCAGE\) Code](#) Foreign organizations must obtain an NCAGE code (in lieu of a CAGE code) in order to register in SAM.
  - Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) - A UEI is issued as part of the SAM.gov registration process. The same UEI must be used for all registrations, as well as on the grant application.
- [eRA Commons](#) - Once the unique organization identifier is established, organizations can register with eRA Commons in tandem with completing their Grants.gov registration; all registrations must be in place by time of submission. eRA Commons requires organizations to identify at least one Signing Official (SO) and at least one Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) account in order to submit an application.
- [Grants.gov](#) Applicants must have an active SAM registration in order to complete the Grants.gov registration.

### Program Directors/Principal Investigators (PD(s)/PI(s))

All PD(s)/PI(s) must have an eRA Commons account. PD(s)/PI(s) should work with their organizational officials to either create a new account or to affiliate their existing account with the applicant organization in eRA Commons. If the PD/PI is also the organizational Signing Official, they must have two distinct eRA Commons accounts, one for each role. Obtaining an eRA Commons account can take up to 2 weeks.

### **If my institution already has an existing PAIR award from a previous cohort, can I apply for a new cohort with a new team?**

If your institution already has an existing PAIR award, you are NOT eligible to apply for a new cohort, even if you apply with a different project/team.

### **What if my institution does not have a negotiated NIH IDC number?**

Please reach out to [PAIR HelpDesk](#) as early as possible. Do not wait until the last day of submission.

### **Are we required to have datasets to apply? Will new data sources be provided?**

No. Data sources will be provided. Outside sources are welcomed but not required.

**Does my current research interest have to involve AI?**

It depends on your background (e.g., healthcare, AI, computer science, etc). As long as you are interested in advancing health equity using AI, then you are welcomed to explore the PAIR program. Additionally, if you do not have any AI machine experience but want to partner with faculty who do, you are welcomed. The same concept applies to individuals with an AI machine background but does not have experience in healthcare. Minimum is 2 faculty members.

**Can my institution participate if we already have an existing AI Lab?**

If your lab is not doing health equity research, then yes. Generally, the lab should be in need of help with successfully launching AI for health equity. Please submit specific inquiries to the PAIR Help desk for further information.

**Application**

AIM-AHEAD PAIR Applications-Related FAQs

**What is the Application Submission Deadline?**

Submission Deadline is: January 15th 2025 at 5:00pm (EST)

**How do I submit the application?**

Please submit your application on the link here:

<https://aim-ahead.infoready4.com/#freeformCompetitionDetail/1952956>

Please submit the single word document or PDF file to the online submission system.

**When will I be notified if I was selected to participate in PAIR?**

Awardees will be announced on February 26, 2025.

**How many institutions will be selected for the PAIR program Phase 1?**

15 Institutions for this round of funding.

**What kind of team is needed to apply for the PAIR Program?**

An institution may propose a single team with key personnel from the institution itself or affiliated institutions, including at least 2 but no more than 3 Co-PIs, each from a distinct discipline. To meet the program's goals, each team is encouraged to have at least one investigator with a background in a health-related field and one investigator with a computer science background with basic knowledge of AI.

**If my department is limited in terms of faculty backgrounds, can I partner with a sister institution to meet the multidisciplinary team requirements?**

The applicant institution is encouraged to partner with multiple disciplines or departments within the institution. Please refer specific inquiries to the [PAIR HelpDesk](#).

**Will the team be considered multidisciplinary if the members are from the same department? For example, a bioengineer and a computer scientist?**

Yes, as long as the disciplinary and skill sets are different then the team will be considered multi-disciplinary. We recommend the team consists of one faculty with some health background and one with some AI background to avoid any gaps. New ideas are welcomed.

**How many faculty are needed to form a team?**

Minimum requirement is 2 faculty. Maximum is 3, if budget allows.

**Can two or more institutions “team up” and apply together? Are “joint” submissions welcomed?**

No. There is one institution per application. An institution may suggest one team with key personnel from the same institution or affiliated institutions. The PAIR Program consists of one university/institution with representatives from multiple disciplines or departments within the institution.

**If my institution has several campuses, will each campus be considered a different institution?**

Please check with your OSP or research office to see if all campuses are considered one institution.

**Can team members be subcontracted from another institution?**

No. Please refer to the AIM-AHEAD website for CFP that welcomes multi-institution collaborations.

**Can you provide an example of a multidisciplinary team or collaboration? Will a math disease modeling faculty, a statistician, and a microbiologist work?**

Yes. All multidisciplinary teams are welcomed as long as the requirements for healthcare and/or AI background is met. Please refer specific inquiries to the [PAIR HelpDesk](#).

**What happens if one institution submits multiple applications?**

Reach out to your institution’s Sponsored Research Program office to see if any other PI plans to submit a proposal for PAIR. It is encouraged that all interested parties from the same institution form a team and submit one application on behalf of the institution. *Only one application per institution* (normally identified by having a unique DUNS number or NIH IPF number) is allowed.

**Who should represent/participate on behalf of the institution?**

The institution’s key personnel should be composed of individuals who plan to remain at the institution for an extended period of time.

**Can a senior staff scientist apply for this grant? Can a fellow trainee be recruited after the grant is obtained or before the application?**

It depends on the institution. Minimum 2 faculty members. Must apply as a team of multi-disciplinary researchers. Please submit specific inquiries to the PAIR helpdesk on AIM-AHEAD Connect.

### Who should submit the proposal on behalf of the institution?

Applications are submitted on the [AIM-AHEAD InfoReady platform](#). Applicants can decide who will submit the application on the institution's behalf.

### What major items are needed for the application?

- **Title Page (2-page limit):** Project Title, List of Principal Investigator(s) with institutional affiliations, cross-disciplinary multi-PI structure (refer to eligibility criteria), and the project summary/abstract, the specific aims, and the intended target demographic.
- **Project Plan (3-page limit):** Description of the proposed project must include *the following elements*:
  - The way in which the institution will benefit from this program in building AI/ML research capacities to address health inequity and increasing diversity.
  - Current AI research capacity if available, as well as faculty and staff expertise to establish AI research lab.
  - How the proposed project is aligned with one or more of the AIM-AHEAD North Stars defined below:
    - North Star I: Develop a diverse, equitable, and inclusive AI/ML Workforce
    - North Star II: Increase knowledge, awareness, and community engagement/empowerment in AI/ML
    - North Star III: Use AI/ML to address disparities and minority health in behavioral health, cardiometabolic health, and cancer
    - North Star IV: Build community capacity and infrastructure in AI/ML to address community-centric health disparities and minority health
  - Well-defined outcome measure for rigorous evaluation.
- **Project Timeline (0.5-page limit):** Submit a clear timeline and plan to achieve project milestones.
- **Project Budget and Budget Justification (2-page limit):** Funds may be used only for expenses directly related to the proposed project's development. The award is subject to the negotiated indirect cost rate, and a rate of 10% applies in the absence of a negotiated rate. Please make a copy of the [budget template](#) provided.
- **NIH-style Biosketch of the Principal Investigator and any key personnel (5-page limit per person)**
- **Letters of Support (minimum one required):** Letter(s) of support from the school or institution leadership (such as deans, provosts, or vice presidents for research) should spell out institutional commitment to the project and outline resources that will be made available to the project's leader, including protected time for the faculty and staff to participate in this program. These letters should also detail how the proposed program fits into the institution's overall plan for better serving the community and advancing the cause of health equity.

### How many letters of support are required for a team with multiple PIs?

The PAIR Program is about building capacity at the institution. This program requires a multi-disciplinary partnership within the institution. It is recommended that every PI on the team submits a letter from their own department chair or dean. However, one letter of support from a higher institutional authority (e.g. Vice President of Research) will be sufficient. The goal is commitment from the institution—thus multiple letters of support is a plus for the application.

### **What if my institution does not have a negotiated NIH IDC number?**

Please reach out to PAIR via [PAIR HelpDesk](#) as early as possible. Do not wait until the last day of submission.

### **What are the required elements in the Project Plan?**

Description of the proposed project must include *the following elements*:

- Describe how your project is aligned with 1 or more North Stars:
  - North Star I: Develop a diverse, equitable, and inclusive AI/ML Workforce
  - North Star II: Increase knowledge, awareness, and community engagement/empowerment in AI/ML
  - North Star III: Use AI/ML to address disparities and minority health in behavioral health, cardiometabolic health, and cancer
  - North Star IV: Build community capacity and infrastructure in AI/ML to address community-centric health disparities and minority health
- Ways in which the institution will benefit from this program in building AI/ML research capacities to address health inequity and increasing diversity.
- Current AI research capacity if available, as well as faculty and staff expertise to establish AI research lab.
- Well defined outcome measure for rigorous evaluation.

### **Where can I find more information/help with the submission process?**

Questions regarding the submission process may be directed to:

<https://helpdesk.aim-ahead.net/ticket/create/PAIR>

### **PAIR Program Participants**

AIM-AHEAD PAIR Participant-Related FAQs

### **In addition to faculty, who can participate on the PAIR Program projects?**

Undergraduate, Graduate, and Post-Doc students are welcomed to participate on teams.

Modest postdoc/graduate student support is allowed.

### **Can high school students participate on the PAIR Program team or projects?**

High school students cannot be included in the budget, but are welcomed to work on projects.

Send inquiries regarding high school students to PAIR help desk for more information-- as AIM-AHEAD has summer opportunities they may qualify for. Generally, all funds should be spent at the same institution.



## **PAIR Program Grants & Budget**

AIM-AHEAD PAIR Grant & Budget-Related FAQs

### **What is the maximum percentage of indirect cost this program allows?**

There is no maximum percentage. It will depend on the negotiated NIH IDC. If your institution does not have a NIH IDC, please reach out to [PAIR HelpDesk](#) immediately.

### **Will the grant include both direct and indirect costs?**

Includes both direct and indirect costs. PAIR will cover the costs for grant-writing training, mentorship, and other necessary resources to enhance project success. Specific budget questions can be directed to the [PAIR HelpDesk](#).

### **What types of costs can be included in the budget?**

The program budget goal is to build capacity. The budget can include salary support and training (e.g., PI salary and Faculty salary). *Not included in the budget* are hardware purchases (e.g., expensive equipment and datasets) or student tuition and fees. PAIR will provide the costs for data, grant-writing training, and other necessary resources to be successful.

### **What types of costs are excluded in the budget?**

Expenses omitted from the budget include hardware purchases (e.g., expensive equipment and datasets), student tuition and fees, and food (for travel). PAIR will provide the costs for data, grant-writing training, and other necessary resources to be successful.

### **What types of costs will the PAIR Program cover in addition to the grant funding?**

The PAIR Program will provide the costs for data, grant writing training, and other resources that are key to success.

### **Are consultant salaries allowed in the PAIR Program budget?**

Please send an inquiry to the [PAIR HelpDesk](#) for required consultants before submitting the applications.

### **Can a private sector partner be listed as a consultant on the budget?**

Please submit inquiries to the [PAIR HelpDesk](#) in order to discuss specific needs of private consultants. The PAIR program will provide consultants/mentors out of the program budget.

### **Are Post-Doc or Research Assistant Salaries allowed in the PAIR Program budget?**

Salary support is mainly for faculty who are committed to the university and capable of building long-term capacity at the institution. Modest postdoc/graduate student support is allowed (primarily in Phase 2, if applicable).

## **PAIR Program Grant Writing & Training**

AIM-AHEAD PAIR Grant Writing & Training-Related FAQs

**What type of training grants will be given (e.g., R01, R21, K)? Is this according to the career level?**

Yes, we will introduce different funding mechanisms, some of which have eligibility requirements based on the stage of career.

**What other funding mechanisms are offered outside of NIH?**

One objective of PAIR is to increase proposal submissions from low resourced institutions to NIH. Although we are targeting NIH, we will introduce other funding mechanisms such as foundations, CDC, and FDA.