

Request for Applications (RFA): Pilot and Feasibility Studies
Supported by the Neonatal Kidney Collaborative and the Burroughs Wellcome Fund

Overview

We are pleased to announce a new funding opportunity supported by the Burroughs Wellcome Fund. This initiative will provide **three awards**, each of up to **\$5,000 (depending on justification)**, to support pilot and feasibility studies or other research needs that will help investigators progress toward future independent funding. One of these awards will **prioritize early career faculty or trainees**.

These awards are designed to foster innovative, early-stage investigations and provide critical resources to advance preliminary data collection, methods development, or other activities that position applicants for future external funding opportunities.

Eligibility Requirements: Applications must meet the following criteria:

1. Applicant must be a current member in good standing of the **Neonatal Kidney Collaborative (NKC)**.
2. Each application must include contributions by **both** a Pediatric Nephrologist and an Intensivist/Neonatologist.
3. Applications may be submitted by faculty, trainees, or other positions (eg. advanced practice providers, pharmacists, researchers). Early career faculty and trainees of any level are especially encouraged to apply.
4. Proposed projects should represent new pilot or feasibility studies or other efforts that contribute toward the applicant's trajectory for future independent funding.

Required Information: Applicants should submit a proposal that includes the following sections and information, with a total length of submission of no more than 2 pages (Arial, 11 single spaced). References are not required but a small number of high impact references can be used to justify the research need and gap. If used, please use AMA format and include these in the page limit.

Background and Rationale

- Provide a concise description of the research question or pilot project to be addressed.
- Explain the significance of the project and how it supports the applicant's long-term research goals.
- Describe the potential for this work to serve as a foundation for independent funding.

Approach

- Outline the study design and methodology.
- If applicable, describe any datasets, resources, or tools that will be used.
- Highlight the role of the applicant, especially if they are a trainee or early career investigator.

Timeline

- Provide a feasible project timeline with key milestones and deliverables.

- Ensure that the project can be realistically completed with the proposed resources.

Budget Justification

The total grant award will be up to a maximum of \$5,000 for a period of one year. The proposed project should ideally be completed in 1 year, but applicant can request up to a maximum of 2 years in the initial submission if the scope of the proposed project should need a longer time frame (please provide justification for this in the budget page).

Funded projects can potentially be extended as a no cost extension based on the progress made, and at the discretion of the NKC for an additional year. The maximum period for the award will be 2 years. All unspent money at end of 2 years must be returned to the NKC.

The award will allow support for technician/ research assistant salary, supplies/resources, cell, animal or human studies, funds for travel to further collaborations and/or enable a presentation at international professional meetings. **Unfortunately, due to the limited funds available, no salary support for PI/study investigators will be permitted.** Funds will be distributed by check to the chosen project from the NKC in one lump sum. This amount is not for use for indirects.

Submission Guidelines

Applicants must submit their proposals electronically by the specified deadline. Please include:

- A completed proposal document covering Background and Rationale, Approach, Timeline, and Budget Justification.
- Any additional documentation which the applicant feels will strengthen their application

Review and Selection Process (see below rubric)

Proposals will be reviewed by a review committee made up of pediatric nephrologists and intensivists that are members of the NKC. This review group will include members of the Research Committee, Executive Board of the NKC, at least one emeritus member of the NKC and a family member from our Family Advisory Council.

Applications will be evaluated based on:

- Scientific merit and innovation.
- Feasibility of the proposed project.
- Potential to support the applicant's progress toward independent funding.
- Prioritization of early career faculty and trainees (for at least one award).

Important Dates

- **Application Open:** November 1, 2025
- **Application Closes:** January 1, 2026
- **Notification of Selection:** March 1, 2026
- **Project Start Date:** March 1, 2026

Contact Information

For any questions or further information regarding this RFA, please contact RC chairs : **Michelle Starr** (mcstarr@iu.edu) or **Kat Gist** (katja.gist@cuanschutz.edu)

RFA Review Scoring

Each application will be reviewed and scored across the following criteria. Reviewers should provide both **numerical scores** and **narrative comments** to justify their evaluations. Scores should be assigned on a **1–9 NIH-style scale**, where **1 = exceptional** and **9 = poor**.

1. Scientific Merit and Innovation (40%)

- **Exceptional (1–2):** Project is highly innovative, addresses a significant gap in neonatal kidney research, and has strong potential for high impact.
- **Strong (3–4):** Project is solid, with some innovative aspects; addresses an important research area with good potential impact.
- **Moderate (5–6):** Project is scientifically reasonable but lacks novelty or major significance; potential impact is limited.
- **Weak (7–9):** Project has minimal innovation, questionable significance, or lacks a clear scientific rationale.

2. Feasibility of the Proposed Project (25%)

- **Exceptional (1–2):** Well-designed plan with clear objectives, strong preliminary data or rationale, realistic timeline, and appropriate methods/resources.
- **Strong (3–4):** Plan is feasible with some minor concerns about methods, scope, or timeline.
- **Moderate (5–6):** Some feasibility concerns; methods, resources, or timeline may be inadequate or underdeveloped.
- **Weak (7–9):** Major concerns about feasibility; unclear methods, insufficient resources, or unrealistic scope/timeline.

3. Potential for Applicant's Career Development (25%)

- **Exceptional (1–2):** Strong potential to position applicant for future independent funding; project aligns with long-term career goals.
- **Strong (3–4):** Likely to support career development with good alignment to future goals; some room for improvement.
- **Moderate (5–6):** Limited evidence that project will support career trajectory or funding competitiveness.
- **Weak (7–9):** Project unlikely to advance applicant's independence or career trajectory.

4. Applicant Career Stage and Prioritization (10%)

- **Exceptional (1–2):** Applicant is early-career faculty or trainee with strong potential; high priority for support.
- **Strong (3–4):** Applicant is early-stage but with moderate indicators of readiness.
- **Moderate (5–6):** Applicant is more advanced in career stage; project provides limited career development benefit.

- **Weak (7–9):** Applicant does not meet prioritization goals; minimal impact on development.

Pilot and Feasibility Studies – Neonatal Kidney Collaborative & Burroughs Wellcome Fund

Criterion	Weight	Score (1–9)	Comments
1. Scientific Merit & Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance of research question • Novelty/innovation • Potential to advance neonatal kidney research 	40%		
2. Feasibility of Proposed Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of objectives • Appropriateness of methods • Realistic timeline • Availability of resources/environment 	25%		
3. Potential for Applicant’s Career Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with applicant’s career goals • Likelihood to support independent funding • Contribution to applicant’s trajectory 	25%		
4. Applicant Career Stage & Prioritization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early-career faculty or trainee status • Readiness for support • Prioritization for developmental impact 	10%		

Overall Impact Score (1–9): _____

Reviewer’s Narrative Summary: