



ACGME *Back to Bedside* Initiative Request for Grant Proposal (RFP) 2026-2028

The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) announces continued support of its *Back to Bedside* initiative for a fifth funding cycle to begin August 1, 2026.

Vision: The *Back to Bedside* initiative imagines a world in which residents and fellows engage and connect with their patients to build meaning and fulfillment in their work, thereby improving health care.

Mission: Through enhancements in education, *Back to Bedside* empowers residents and fellows to transform their clinical learning environment to allow them to engage on a deeper level with what is at the heart of medicine: their patients.

Key Dates

Announcement	January 15, 2026
RFP Submission Deadline	April 20, 2026
Awardees Notified	June 10-12, 2026
Acceptance Deadline	June 19, 2026
Public Announcement of Awardees	June 24, 2026
Award Start Date	August 1, 2026
Learning Collaborative 1	August 2-3, 2026
Virtual Pod Check-In 1	November 2026
Virtual Pod Check-In 2	January 2027
Virtual Pod Check-in 3	May 2027
Learning Collaborative 2	October 2027
ACGME Annual Educational Conference	February 24-26, 2028
Award End Date	July 31, 2028

Principal Aim of *Back to Bedside*

The overarching aim of *Back to Bedside* is to cultivate joy and meaning in work by improving the physician-patient relationship. Recognizing that residents and fellows are uniquely equipped to identify areas for improvement in graduate medical education (GME), *Back to Bedside* supports residents and fellows across a diverse range of Sponsoring Institutions and programs to lead transformative projects that address the ongoing desire for learners to connect deeply with patients despite a rapidly changing health care environment. In addition, *Back to Bedside* creates a Learning Collaborative for the awardees to support programmatic and institutional change while establishing a framework to scale innovations for national dissemination.

Back to Bedside hopes to support processes, initiatives, curricula, projects, or other activities designed and implemented by and for residents and fellows that improve their ability to have meaningful interactions with their patients. By fostering activities that build a sense of meaning in work and reminding residents and fellows of the reason they entered the profession in the first place, this initiative hopes to encourage all residents and fellows to look at how they can improve their learning environment.

Background

In May 2016, the ACGME Council of Review Committee Residents (CRCR) held a meeting with the focused topic of “Meaning in Work.” The session opened with an introduction to the theories of Daniel Pink, among others, on internal motivation and personal satisfaction. Central to these theories is that satisfaction in work and life is attained when three conditions are met: (1) personal autonomy; (2) potential for or attainment of mastery; and (3) meaning in work.¹ The CRCR undertook an exploration of how residents and fellows can find meaning in their daily work. A consensus emerged that the patient-doctor relationship was central to meaning in work during medical education and training and professional life, and the *Back to Bedside* initiative was born.

The success of *Back to Bedside* has been overwhelming. In the first four cycles, 114 projects at GME programs across the country have been funded (project summaries can be found [here](#)). The outcomes of projects have been disseminated through numerous presentations, posters, and peer-reviewed publications, fueling the growth of *Back to Bedside* into a larger movement to keep joy and meaning through patient connection at the forefront of GME.²

1. Pink, Daniel. 2009. *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. Riverhead Books.
2. Arslanian, T., S. McLaughlin, A. Nadkarni, N.J. Rubin, W.J. Svetanoff, E.M. Mohanraj, D. Jardine, and H. Panic. 2024. “Defining Success Across the Stages of the *Back to Bedside* Cycle: Reflections From the Third Cohort.” *J Grad Med Educ.* Dec;16(6):769–72. doi: 10.4300/JGME-D-24-00938.1. Epub 2024 Dec 13. PMCID: PMC11641878.

Opportunity Description

The ACGME seeks proposals for funding awards to support two-year projects. These projects must study the implementation of a resident-/fellow-developed intervention to enhance meaning in clinical learning environments by fostering the physician-patient relationship.

Awardees will receive mentorship and education from the ACGME in the form of two Learning Collaborative meetings held at the ACGME office in Chicago, Illinois. These interactive gatherings are designed to build necessary skills for project management, implementation, and dissemination, as well as facilitate opportunities for networking and collaboration. The awardee group will also convene and present their work at the ACGME Annual Educational Conference in Orlando, Florida on February 24-26, 2028.

In addition to providing project funding, the ACGME will provide a travel stipend to offset transportation and lodging costs.

Awardees will also participate in virtual check-ins between Learning Collaborative meetings.

Awardees and mentors will be expected to implement their projects, provide quarterly project updates, attend all Learning Collaborative meetings, report on their findings at the 2028 ACGME Annual Educational Conference, and meet all internal deadlines related to the learning collaborative.

Assessment Criteria for a Proposed Activity

Initiative Goal: Promote resident- or fellow-initiated projects to improve the meaning in daily work by enhancing the patient-physician relationship.

Key Elements

1. Resident- or fellow-developed and led
2. Strengthens resident and fellow relationships with patients
3. Sustainable
4. Adaptable to other training programs or contexts
5. Supported by an ACGME-accredited Sponsoring Institution or clinical site with ACGME-accredited programs (see FAQs for details of expected support)
6. Evaluated using a well-defined outcome measure
7. Supported by a Faculty Mentor (see FAQs for definition of this role)

Special consideration will be given to innovative and cost-efficient proposals that address the intersection of meaning in work and enhanced patient-physician relationship building.

Project Funding Options

Teams may apply for project funding up to two different levels depending on the scope of their proposal. Applicants should carefully consider the appropriate project funding for the needs of their project and do not need to request the full amount from either option. Special consideration will be given to exceptionally innovative and cost-effective projects that can be sustained after the ACGME funding period has ended.

- Option 1 – up to \$10,000
- Option 2 – up to \$5,000

Travel Stipend

A stipend for transportation and lodging is available to help offset costs for the Resident/Fellow Project Lead and the Faculty Mentor to attend three meetings: two Learning Collaborative meetings (two days in length) with other awardees at the ACGME office in Chicago, Illinois and the Annual Educational Conference in Orlando, Florida in February 2028.

The Sponsoring Institution must commit to providing any additional travel funds and registration fees for the 2028 ACGME Annual Educational Conference for the Resident/Fellow Lead and Faculty Mentor to attend. The travel stipend may not be used for conference registration fees.

Project Funds and Travel Stipend Distribution

Upon completion of a grant agreement, fifty percent of project funds and fifty percent of the approved travel stipend will be distributed (with a distribution goal of August 1, 2026). Project teams may need to rely on initial financial support from their institutions to attend the August Collaborative meeting while awaiting grant agreements and funding distribution.

The remaining funds will be distributed on August 1, 2027, contingent upon completion of quarterly updates, participation in Virtual Check-Ins, attendance at Learning Collaboratives, and overall project progress.

Evaluation and Assessment

Each proposal should include an evaluation plan that focuses on outcomes or activities the project leader would consider evidence of successful implementation of the project and its impact on cultivating meaning in work by improving the physician-patient relationship. No standard outcome measures are being mandated across all projects; however, use of validated tools is recommended. Applicants are encouraged to utilize measures that assess residents'/fellows' sense of autonomy, meaning in work, and/or patient-focused outcomes as primary project outcomes.

Proposals should clearly specify the design (including quality improvement) and methods (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed). For quantitative and qualitative projects, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval/exemption is not required prior to submission of the proposal but is expected to occur in a timely fashion to allow project completion. Quality improvement projects must be appropriately approved at the clinical site (e.g., the project should receive Non-Human Subjects Research determination by appropriate institutional personnel).

Sponsoring Institution Responsibilities

Sponsoring Institutions, participating sites, or programs must support these innovations through investment in time, mentoring, facilities, and funding.

Specifically, institutions must provide confirmation of a commitment to support awarded residents and fellows with:

- allotted time and administrative resources commensurate with the project needs;
- dedicated time to their present project at grand rounds, division conferences, patient-family councils, institutional education day, etc.;
- funds for transportation, lodging, and meals identified in the proposal budget that go beyond the travel stipend provided by the ACGME;
- funds for registration fees for the Resident/Fellow Project Lead and Faculty Mentor to attend the 2028 ACGME Annual Educational Conference in Orlando, Florida. The Sponsoring Institution is encouraged to support additional team members'

attendance; and,

- (optional) funds for travel and lodging for additional Resident/Fellow project team members to attend two Learning Collaborative meetings (two days in length) with other awardees at the ACGME office in Chicago, Illinois over the course of the award funding period; up to three additional resident/fellow project members may attend.

Submission Instructions

Use the template below to draft your proposal and submit final answers via [THIS SURVEY](#) by 11:59 p.m. Central on April 20, 2026. Late submissions will not be accepted.

To be considered responsive to this RFP, each applicant must answer all of the questions in the Qualtrics survey linked above and ensure that each answer does not exceed the specified length (word total) noted, or to indicate if a question does not apply.

This is a competitive award process. Awards will be granted based on the strength of the proposal and the needs of the *Back to Bedside* initiative.

The proposal must include the following sections:

I. Contact information

1. Project Title
2. Resident/Fellow Project Lead Contact Information
 - a) Name
 - b) Address
 - c) Specialty/program
 - d) PGY/anticipated graduation date/year
 - e) Email (work)
 - f) Email (permanent)
 - g) Phone
3. Resident/Fellow Project Co-Lead Contact Information (if applicable)
 - a) Name
 - b) Address
 - c) Specialty/program, PGY/total years required to complete specialty training
 - d) Email (work)
 - e) Email (permanent)
 - f) Phone
4. Resident/Fellow Team Members (for each team member, include permanent email and PGY)
5. Faculty Mentor Contact Information
 - a) Name
 - b) Title
 - c) Address
 - d) Specialty/program
 - e) Email (work/institution)
 - f) Email (permanent)
 - g) Phone
6. Sponsoring Institution
 - a) Name
 - b) Address
 - c) ACGME Sponsoring Institution Code

7. Program Coordinator

- a) Name
- b) Email

II. Initiative Narrative

8. Describe your concept for an innovation to cultivate meaning in work by improving the physician-patient relationship. Include a two-to-three-sentence summary of the project that could be used on the ACGME website if the project is funded. (Limit 500 words)
9. Detail your plan for evaluation of the progress of your project. Consider applicable measurement tools (qualitative and/or quantitative study methodologies) in your project design. Provide specific survey or study tools intended for use and details for other evaluation tools. Note that at least three time points for data collection, including baseline assessments, are encouraged. (Limit 250 words)
10. Describe your plan for dissemination of your project and outcomes to impact other residents and/or fellows. Consider internal and external audiences, the community that will be impacted, and opportunities for scholarly work and/or non-traditional dissemination methods (including social media). (Limit 250 words)
11. Describe the project succession plan, with particular attention to addressing resident/fellow turnover during the entire cycle of the project and how the project will be sustained when award funding ends. (Limit 250 words)

III. Project Funding Amount

Applicants must choose which funding option is needed for the scope of their project and indicate the full amount requested, as outlined in the detailed project budget. The amount requested should not include estimated travel costs as the travel stipend will be determined by the needs specified in the travel budget. *Special consideration will be given to exceptionally innovative and cost-effective projects that can be sustained after the ACGME funding period has ended.*

Indicate the funding request for the proposed project:

- Up to \$10,000
 - Exact Amount:
- Up to \$5,000
 - Exact Amount:

Upload the following as one single PDF document:

Use 12-point font and one-inch margins; include the travel budget (required), project budget (required), letters of commitment (required), and letters of support (optional) as a single PDF.

IV. Travel Budget and Stipend

The ACGME will provide up to \$5,000 per project team to assist with travel and lodging expenses for the Resident/Fellow Project Lead and Faculty Mentor to attend two meetings in Chicago, Illinois and the Annual Educational Conference in Orlando, Florida.

Please use the [travel expense guide](#) to help you determine your needs for a stipend and create your travel budget. The travel budget should include a clear breakdown of needs for the travel stipend and estimated expenses that go beyond the stipend that the Sponsoring Institution must commit to cover.

The travel stipend may not be used to pay for registration fees for the Annual Educational Conference.

Based on where your program is located, travel stipend needs may vary. Indicate your travel needs:

Chicago Travel

- My team will need funds to cover air travel to Chicago.
- My team lives locally and will not need travel funds to get to Chicago.
- My team will drive or take the train to Chicago.
 - Indicate round-trip mileage or ticket price

Orlando Travel

- My team will need funds to cover air travel to Orlando.
- My team lives locally and will not need travel funds to get to Orlando.
- My team will drive to Orlando.
 - Indicate round-trip mileage

Travel Stipend Amount Requested:

V. Project Budget Instructions and Forms

Provide a detailed budget for the two-year project period. The submitted budget must be detailed and specific. The project budget should not include estimated travel costs as funding for travel will be determined by the needs you indicated in the travel budget.

The budget may include:

- Support for data management and research personnel (e.g., statistician, research assistant)
- Materials and supplies
- Licensing fees for measurement tools (e.g., Maslach Burnout Inventory)
- Publication costs
- IRB costs
- Technology development or capital expenses

The budget for award money may *not* include:

- Institutional overhead

- Indirect costs

VI. Letters of Commitment

1. Include a letter of financial commitment from the designated institutional official (DIO) of your institution that explicitly states they have reviewed the project proposal, additional travel needs (above the requested travel stipend), and the project budget, and that the institution will contribute support, including time, administrative resources, and funds for:
 - registration fees (estimated at \$800 per person for residents/fellows and \$1,500 for the Faculty Mentor) and any additional expenses that go beyond the provided amount for at least a Resident/Fellow Lead and Faculty Mentor to attend and present at the 2028 ACGME Annual Educational Conference in Orlando, Florida.
2. Include a letter of support from the program director indicating approval for the project to be implemented and support for the attendance of the Resident/Fellow Project Lead and up to three additional project members at the activities listed above.

VII. Letters of Support

Applicants *may* submit up to three additional letters from leadership within the Sponsoring Institution (such as the DIO), the clinical site, or program in support of the proposal. Such letters should not exceed two pages each.