MISSISSIPPI INBRE
IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence

Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA):
Project Development Grant (PDG)

1. Funding Opportunity Description

The Mississippi IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (MS-INBRE) invites faculty at Mississippi Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs) with research interests in biomedical sciences to apply for the **Project Development Grant (PDG)** under the MS-INBRE Developmental Research Project Program.

The purpose of this FOA is **to strengthen biomedical research capacity at Mississippi PUIs** by supporting faculty-led research projects that actively engage undergraduate students. These awards provide **up to $100,000 per year for two years** to help faculty establish or expand research programs within their own institutional laboratories.

Protected Research Time: Each PDG awardee must commit **50% effort (6 calendar months per year)** to research and career development, documented by an institutional letter of support.

Undergraduate Engagement: Participation of undergraduate students in the research project is mandatory and should be clearly described in the application.

Mentoring: Applicants must identify at least one **Research and/or Career Mentor** with expertise relevant to the proposed scientific area. Mentors should be established investigators with experience securing external funding and maintaining an independent research program. Mentors may serve as collaborators and can be from outside the applicant's institution if necessary.

MS-INBRE award funds **do not provide funds to mentors for salary, supplies, or travel**. Instead, mentors are expected to provide support and guidance, ensuring the MS-INBRE award recipient has protected time and resources for their career development and research. The mentor's effort is considered a non-sponsored activity, and salary or other mentor expenses are not allowed to be charged to MS-INBRE awards.

Mentors **may** separately provide **services** for the proposed research project, which would be included in the budget as Other – Service Fee; however, applicants must clearly distinguish between services rendered as part of the funded project and the mentor's advisory role.

Mentee Expectations

These describe what the mentee should anticipate from the mentoring relationship:

- **Guidance and Support**: Expect constructive feedback and advice to help with professional and personal growth.
- **Learning Opportunities**: Anticipate gaining new skills, knowledge, and perspectives from the mentor.
- **Open Communication**: Expect honest, respectful, and transparent dialogue.
- **Goal Alignment**: The mentor will help align discussions with your career objectives and development plan.
- **Confidentiality**: Expect that conversations remain private and respectful.

Mentee Responsibilities

These outline what the mentee is accountable for in the relationship:

- **Be Proactive**: Take initiative in scheduling meetings and driving the conversation.
- **Set Clear Goals**: Define what you want to achieve from the mentorship.
- **Prepare for Meetings**: Come with questions, topics, or updates to make sessions productive.
- **Act on Feedback**: Implement suggestions and share progress with your mentor.
- **Maintain Professionalism**: Respect the mentor’s time and maintain confidentiality.
- **Communicate Regularly**: Keep the mentor informed about challenges and successes.

Mentor Expectations:

- Commitment: Meet monthly and conduct quarterly progress reviews with mentee.
- Accessibility: Respond timely to mentee inquiries.

Mentor Responsibilities:

- Provide guidance on research design, methodology, and compliance.
- Support mentee in identifying funding opportunities and preparing grant applications.
- Guide mentee in manuscript writing.
- Offer career development advice, including networking and publication strategies.
- Participate in scheduled progress reviews and provide constructive feedback.
- Maintain communication with mentee and program leadership throughout the project.

Award Milestones: Recipients are expected to meet specific milestones during the award period, including progress on research aims, student involvement, and career development activities.

Project Development Grant Milestones, Productivity, Expectations	
Meetings with Scientific Mentor	Monthly
Monthly MS-INBRE Networking Meetings	Required
Include at least 1 undergraduate on project	Required
Make progress on project Specific Aims	Required
Present at a national/international scientific meeting	Annually
Attend Manuscript and Grant Writing workshop	Encouraged
Have review of research-based paper	Year 1
Submit and publish manuscript in a peer-reviewed journal	Yearly
Have pre-review of NIH R-type grant proposal	Year 2
Submit NIH R-type proposal	Year 2
Revise and resubmit to NIH; re-package proposal for other sponsors	Year 2
Graduate from program	Year 2*
Submit non-competing renewal for EAC review	Year 1

*Graduate at end of Year 2 or upon receipt of other funding, whichever occurs first

2. Eligibility

Applicants must be **full-time, permanent faculty members** at a Mississippi Predominantly Undergraduate Institution (PUI) with a rank of **Assistant Professor or higher**. Faculty should be **research-active**, demonstrated by at least one peer-reviewed publication within the past four years.

Applicants must commit **6 calendar months of effort per year** (e.g., 3 summer months and 3 months during the academic year) to research and career development, documented by an institutional letter of support.

Restrictions:

- Faculty from Mississippi research-intensive universities (USM, MSU, JSU, UM, UMMC) are not eligible.
- Individuals with an active NIH research grant (including COBRE or CTR-IN) at the time of award are ineligible.
- Only one application per cycle may be submitted.

3. Award Amounts

- Total allowable direct costs: **$100,000/year for 2 years**
- Indirect costs (F&A) are in addition to the allowable direct costs.

4. Key Dates

- Letters of Intent: February 15, 2026
- Full Applications (by invitation only): April 7, 2026
- Award Period: September 1, 2026 - August 31, 2028

5. Letter of Intent (LOI) Requirements

To help applicants leverage MS-INBRE resources and ensure eligibility, a Letter of Intent (LOI) is required prior to submission of a full Project Development Grant (PDG) application. The LOI allows MS-INBRE staff to provide guidance and connect applicants with mentors and technical support.

Required LOI Uploads:

- **Upload 1:** NIH Biosketch for the Principal Investigator, identified Mentor(s), and any other significant contributors.
  - Use the **NIH-approved format via SciENcv**: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/
  - NIH Biosketch Instructions: NIH Format Guide

- **Upload 2:** Specific Aims page (one-page limit)
  - **Guidance:** How to Write Specific Aims

6. Full Proposal Submission Requirements

Applicants invited to submit a full Project Development Grant (PDG) application must include the following components. All documents should follow NIH formatting guidelines (11-point Arial font, 0.5-inch margins).

A. **Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) Letter**
   Attach a letter signed by your institution's AOR confirming:
   - Review and approval of the proposal and budget.
   - Commitment to provide the required 6 months of protected research time.

B. **Budget and Budget Justification**
   Submit the NIH Research & Related Budget Form with detailed justification (Section L).
   - Justify all proposed expenses for the award period.
   - Include salary support, undergraduate student involvement, supplies, travel, and equipment.
   - NIH Budget Form instructions: NIH Budget Guide

C. **NIH Biographical Sketches**
   Provide biosketches for:
   - Principal Investigator
   - Mentor(s)

- Other Significant Contributors

Use SciENcv: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/

Each personal statement must address the proposed research and mentoring role.

D. **Research Plan (7 pages total, not including references)**
   - **Specific Aims (1 page)**
     Guidance: Specific Aims Tips
   - **Research Strategy (6 pages)**
     Organize into:
     - Significance & Innovation (combined, 1 page)
     - Approach (include subsections for each aim):
       - Rationale, Hypothesis, Overall Strategy
       - Preliminary Studies (focus on feasibility)
       - Experimental Design, Methods, Rigor & Reproducibility
       - Expected Results and Outcomes
       - Potential Problems and Alternative Strategies
     - Timeline
   - **Bibliography/References** (no page limit)

E. **Additional Information (up to 6 pages)**
   Include:
   - **Undergraduate Student Involvement** – Describe how undergraduate students will participate in the research project. Include:
     - Number of students expected and their roles (e.g., data collection, analysis, presentations).
     - Training and mentoring plans for students.
     - Opportunities for students to present research (posters, conferences).
   - **Mentor Plans** – Identify your mentor(s) and describe their role in your research and career development. Include:
     - Frequency and format of meetings (e.g., monthly virtual or in-person).
     - Specific ways the mentor will support your research (e.g., technical guidance, grant writing).
     - How the mentor will help you prepare for future funding (e.g., NIH R-type proposals).
     - Attach a mentor letter of commitment in Section G.
   - **Use of MS-INBRE Network Resources** – Explain how you will leverage MS-INBRE resources to strengthen your project. Examples:
     - Core facilities or specialized equipment, https://msinbre.org/core-facilities/.
     - Bioinformatics or data analysis support, https://msinbre.org/dsc-services/.
     - Access to workshops, training, or networking events.
     - Collaborations with other MS-INBRE investigators.
   - **Dedicated Research Time** – Describe how you will structure your 6 months of protected research time. Include:

        - Breakdown of summer vs. academic year effort.
        - Institutional support for this commitment (e.g., course release, administrative support).
        - Strategies to ensure uninterrupted research time.
    - **Future Plans/Goals -** Outline your long-term research and career development goals. Include:
        - Plans for external funding applications (e.g., NIH R15, R03, or other mechanisms).
        - Expected publications and presentations.
        - How this project will position you for sustained research activity at your institution.
        - Broader impact on your department and undergraduate education.

F. **Compliance and Regulatory Documentation (if applicable)**
   Include the following if relevant to your project:
    - Animal and Human Research Protection
    - Select Agent and Biohazard
    - IRB or IACUC Approval Letter

G. **Letters of Collaboration and Support**
    - **Mentor Letter (Required):** Must describe the mentor's role, commitment to regular meetings, and support for career development.
    - **Additional Letters (Optional):** From collaborators or institutional partners providing resources or expertise.

H. **NIH Other Support Page**
    - Provide an NIH Other Support document for the PI and any key personnel using SciENcv: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/
    - Include all active and pending support.