UAB The University of Alabama at Birmingham.
Diabetes Research Center

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Comprehensive Diabetes Center

TO:

University of Alabama at Birmingham Faculty (November 2026)

FROM:

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Nutrition Sciences Department

SUBJECT: RFA FOR PILOT PROJECT RESEARCH FUNDING FROM THE DIABETES RESEARCH CENTER (P30 DK079626)

Research Focus

The pilot and feasibility program is intended to provide seed support for new and innovative research projects directed at basic, clinical, or community-based research questions that broadly pertain to diabetes, diabetes complications, and cardiometabolic disease. Pilot projects should be designed to generate sufficient data as the basis for further extramural funding (e.g., R01 applications). In fact, a key priority for your application should be to focus on potential for subsequent extramural or R01 grant funding. We will entertain 2-year projects if justification for the need is made to effectively develop an R01.

Eligibility

Funding will be available to full-time UAB faculty members who must meet one of the criteria listed below. Applications from post-doctoral fellows will be considered if there is a clear plan and written documentation for transition to a faculty position at UAB before the initiation date of the pilot grant award. Post-doctoral applicants will be asked to identify a faculty member who will provide research advice, but the work should support independent research and career development for the fellow/junior faculty member.

- Junior Investigators (e.g., Faculty without previous NIH R01 or equivalent).
- Established investigators outside of diabetes who wish to apply their expertise in this area.

- Established investigators in diabetes who want to pursue new high impact/high risk projects to test truly innovative ideas that represent a clear departure from ongoing research interests.

Note: We will also consider multidisciplinary projects that involve both basic and clinical scientists who combine efforts in 'translational' research protocols.

Funding and Review Process

The P/F program will fund up to five studies at about $45,000 each for one year. Applications will be selected for funding based on merit using NIH study section criteria. Projects will be favored if there is potential lead to NIH R01 funding. DRC core facilities will be available to assist P/F investigators. Applications will be evaluated by the Pilot & Feasibility Grant Review Committee in two stages. More information can be found at the DRC website.

First Level Review

All basic and clinical investigators interested in pilot project funding are asked to submit a one-page description of the project that includes hypotheses, specific aims, and a research design and methods summary including models/systems that will be employed, along with an NIH biosketch. Remember to include a description of how the pilot award would be used to develop NIH research grants, particularly R01s. Each application should also include a cover letter that details co-investigators and any cores intended to be used. **The applications for first level review will be due Thursday, January 14th, 2027**. Please submit the applications here.

Second Level Review

Following first level review by the DRC P&F Review Committee, approximately 7-10 of the top applicants will be asked to complete the second level review process, and these applicants should be notified no later than the 2nd week of February 2027. This application will use the PHS398 forms, an example of which can be found on our website or on the NIH website except that the project description is restricted to 5 pages. The applications must include:

- Cover Letter to include Name, Title of project, co-investigators and any cores intended to be used.
- PHS 398 Face Page
- PHS 398 Abstract Page
- Full budget (not modular) using PHS 398 budget pages (first year OR first and second year, as appropriate). The PI can budget up to 10% salary. If the budget

allocations do not match the scope of the work, this will be considered as unfavorable in the review process.

- The new NIH formatted biosketch with the contribution to science section.
- Specific Aims page (not part of the research strategy section)
- Research Strategy – To include description of the research, excluding references, is limited to 5 pages. Include development plan for NIH grant application based on this work or other major national funding program.
- A list of three possible outside reviewers for your proposal with contact information.

Applications for second level review will be due Wednesday, March 24th, 2027. Funding for those selected is anticipated to begin June 1, 2026. Please send these applications electronically to Mrs. Rachelle Lawhorn via email.

Acceptance

Acceptance of the pilot award will require the PI to adhere to a plan for submitting grants to extramural funding agencies, to present a research seminar at or near the time of study completion, and to report research progress to Dr. Habegger.

Questions

If you have questions concerning eligibility or the submission of these proposals, please contact Mrs. Rachelle Lawhorn via email or by phone at 996-7433. Or contact Dr. Kirk Habegger via email or by phone at 934-9835.