

Beckman Institute call for seed proposals 2025-2026

Seeding novel interdisciplinary research

The Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology announces an open competition for awards to seed new interdisciplinary research projects. This annual competition continues the self-renewal and reinvention process that has been critically important to the vitality of the Beckman Institute and its ongoing mission to foster novel interdisciplinary research. The expectation is that the 2-3 selected proposals will lead to externally funded research proposals within two years and will form the building blocks of novel programs of research at the Beckman Institute. Selected proposal teams will also be asked to present results at a future Beckman Institute public event.

Proposals must clearly demonstrate a promise beyond what can be achieved by a collection of individual investigator proposals. In keeping with Beckman's core values, proposals that are interdisciplinary, collaborative, and innovative are sought. The vast majority of the proposed research must take place in the Beckman Institute.

Proposals may request up to \$150,000 for two years. Allowable costs include graduate research assistantships, undergraduate research assistants, postdoc partial stipends, user fees to Beckman core facilities, small equipment, and materials and supplies. Funding cannot be used for faculty salaries. Continuation of funding for the second year will be contingent on sufficient progress toward the stated goals at the end of the first year. Funds must be spent within two years unless an extension is granted.

Funded seed projects are expected to fully support the mission and programs of the Beckman Institute, in addition to accomplishing the work described in the proposal. This includes the following expectations: submitting grant proposals related to the seed topic through the Beckman Institute; participating in engagement and partnership activities; and enhancing the Beckman Institute's seminar series through participation and speaker invitations.

Eligibility

- A team of two or three UIUC faculty members may submit a proposal. At least one of these faculty members (either as PI or co-PI) must be a full-time or part-time member of the Beckman Institute. Note that the research team can include other collaborators, but the proposal should be limited to one PI with one or two co-PIs. Other collaborators should be mentioned in the proposal's section of team members as well as in the collaboration and management plan.
- The same faculty member can be on no more than two funded proposals at the same time.
- The vast majority of the work must be performed at the Beckman Institute.

Proposal package requirements:

The proposal package includes the following documents:

1. Proposal itself as described below (up to 4 pages)
 - a. Proposal title
 - b. Names of faculty co-investigators
 - c. Project description that describes
 - i. Objectives and significance
 - ii. Plan of work, including where it will happen at Beckman
 - iii. Intellectual merit, including interdisciplinarity and innovation
 - iv. Broader impacts
 - d. Roster of other team members (e.g., students, postdocs, other collaborators)
 - e. Collaboration/management plan
 - f. List of potential external funding sources and programs to be pursued based on the successful completion of this seed project (please include specific funding calls, not just a mention of NSF or NIH).
2. Budget (suggest using the SPA Budget Template:
<https://sponsoredprograms.illinois.edu/forms/spa-budget-template-fy-25>)
 - a. Fringe benefits should be included if salary is budgeted
 - b. F&A should not be included
 - c. Graduate tuition remission should not be included
3. Budget justification (1 page text)
4. Biosketch for each faculty member (reusing your current NSF or NIH biosketch is fine but other formats are also acceptable)
5. Current and pending support for each faculty member
6. References

The proposed start date of the work should be between May 1 – August 16, 2025. Proposals should be received by the Director's Office no later than 5 p.m. February 14, 2025 via the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation Special Programs application page: <https://specialprograms.research.illinois.edu/>.

Any questions should be directed to the Beckman Associate Director for Research Cristina Álvarez-Mingote at alvarez9@illinois.edu.

Principal investigators are responsible for submitting short annual reports at the end of years 1 and 2 describing:

1. Progress towards accomplishing the objectives of the seed grant
2. Grants they have applied for and/or will apply for related to the seed grant
3. Publications related to the seed grant



Timeline and Evaluation Procedure

- Deadline for submission (5 p.m.): February 14, 2025
- Ratings by the Beckman Institute Program Advisory Committee: March 14, 2025
- Final decisions and notification: March 31, 2025
- Earliest start date for funding: May 1, 2025

Proposals will be evaluated in accordance with Beckman's Values ("EXCITED"): EXcellence, Collaboration, Integrity, Transdisciplinarity, Exploration, Diversity by the Beckman Institute Program Advisory Committee. Three PAC reviewers will rate each application according to below scoring scheme (max points = 25).

Subscale Name	Subscale Scoring	Maximum
Excellence – quality of project's aims, innovation, intellectual merit and broader impacts	1 (lowest) to 10 (highest)	10
Excellence – relevance to Beckman including where the research will be conducted as well as the research's potential to form the building blocks of novel programs of research at the Beckman Institute	1 (lowest) to 5 (highest)	5
Team Excellence – quality of collaboration plan and diversity of team members (in terms of different disciplines, faculty ranks, demographic diversity characteristics)	1 (lowest) to 5 (highest)	5
Clarity of path to external funding	1 (lowest) to 5 (highest)	5

