

To: School of Medicine Faculty  
From: Katherine L. Nathanson, MD and Matthew D. Weitzman, PhD  
Co-Chairs, PSOM Limited Applications Selection Committee  
Re: Brain Research Foundation (BRF) Seed Grant Program  
<https://www.thebrf.org/seed-grants/>  
<https://www.thebrf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/2026-SG-Guidelines.pdf>

The University has been invited to nominate one faculty member to submit a letter of intent for the 2026 Brain Research Foundation (BRF) Seed Grant Program. The Office of the Vice Provost for Research (OVPR) is coordinating the final candidate review and selection process. Each school within the University may put forth one candidate.

**Program summary:**

The Brain Research Foundation's Annual Seed Grant Program was initiated in 1981. The purpose of the program is to provide start-up monies for new research projects in the field of neuroscience that will likely lead to extramural funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) or other outside funding sources.

**Objectives:**

The objective of the BRF Seed Grant Program is to support new and innovative projects, especially those of junior faculty, who are working in new research directions. BRF Seed Grant awards are not intended to supplement existing grants.

**Funding and award period:**

- Each total grant is limited to \$100,000 (direct costs) for a two-year grant period. The first grant payment of \$50,000 will be made upon completion of the Seed Grant Acceptance Form (June 2026). The final payment of \$50,000 will be made contingent upon receipt of a preliminary progress and financial report (June 2027). Funds must be utilized within the grant period.

**Eligibility:**

- To be eligible, PI must be a **full-time Assistant or Associate Professor on the tenure or clinician educator tracks**, working in the area of studies of brain function. This includes molecular and clinical neuroscience as well as studies of neural, sensory, motor, cognitive, behavioral and emotional functioning in health and disease.
- Research assistant professors and research associate professors are not eligible.
- The grant proposal must detail a new research project that is not funded by other sources. This grant is not to be used as bridge funding.
- Please see [program guidelines](#) for full details regarding eligibility.
- For any sponsored research projects, the applicant must be eligible to serve as Principal Investigator for the project, unless otherwise noted in this opportunity. Please see [Penn's PI Eligibility requirements](#) to ensure you are eligible. Only one Principal Investigator (PI) may apply per application

**Funding specifics:**

- 1) Funding is to be directed at pilot research projects that are both innovative and will likely lead to successful grant applications to NIH and other public and private funding entities.
- 2) **Assistant Professor (on the tenure or clinician educator tracks)** – Junior faculty with a new research project that will generate pilot data that will lead to R01 funding or a comparable outside grant will

be first priority. Must provide abstract and specific aims for current grants and indicate if there is any overlap.

- 3) **Associate Professor (on the tenure or clinician educator tracks)** – Faculty who are pursuing new research directions. Must explain how the project is a new research direction. Must provide abstract for current grant(s) and indicate if there is any overlap.
- 4) **Note:** A new technique is not considered a new direction unless it pertains to a different area of study.
- 5) Seed Grants are NOT to be used for bridge funding between grants.
- 6) 100% of these BRF Seed Grant funds must be utilized for **direct costs** (please see [program guidelines](#) for full details).

### **PSOM Review Process:**

Each candidate must submit:

- Cover page with name, title, academic rank, department, date of appointment to faculty (month and year), email address, phone number, campus address, and title of research proposal.
- A research proposal (maximum 2 pages, not including references; single-spaced, 12-point font with one inch margins): Include research aims and description of how this fits the funders interests.
  - Include a preliminary set of aims, a discussion of previous or related work, and a preliminary budget estimate with major costs for compensation, supplies, etc.
  - Assistant Professors - describe a new research project.
  - Associate Professors - describe a new research direction.
  - Include a closing paragraph that explains how this research will develop next steps.
  - **Note:** Please craft the research statement in a manner that is easily understood by a broad scientific audience.
- CV or Biosketch, including current, past, and pending funding with award amounts (direct dollars per year).
- Prior Submission Update: If you have submitted for this funding mechanism in the past, please provide on a separate page a brief explanation (1-5 sentences) explaining how the current application differs from prior submissions, highlighting any significant updates or changes to the proposal or your circumstances.

Submission should be in a single pdf file in the following order: cover page, research proposal, CV or biosketch, prior submission update (if applicable).

The pdf document should be titled as follows: BRF\_InvestigatorSurname\_Investigator first name. For example: BRF\_Doe\_Jane.

Proposals must be submitted to Kaitlyn Hagarty at [kaitlyn.hagarty@pennmedicine.upenn.edu](mailto:kaitlyn.hagarty@pennmedicine.upenn.edu) by **12:00 PM** on **Thursday, September 18, 2025**.

Questions can also be directed to Kaitlyn Hagarty at [kaitlyn.hagarty@pennmedicine.upenn.edu](mailto:kaitlyn.hagarty@pennmedicine.upenn.edu).