

2026-27

UDRF-SI

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
RESEARCH FOUNDATION-
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
RESEARCH FOUNDATION

UPDATED: September 2026

UDRF-SI (2026-2027)

KEY AWARD INFORMATION

Letter of Intent due	October 6, 2026, 5:00 p.m. ET <i>Only applicants who submit an LOI may submit a full proposal</i>
Full Proposal due	October 27, 2026, 5:00 p.m. ET
Award notification	By December 18, 2026
Earliest project start date	February 1, 2027
Award amount	Up to \$55,000 for full project period
Award period	Up to two years
Applicant team	One untenured, tenure-track PI and at least one tenured faculty mentor Co-PI
Questions	researchdev@udel.edu

ABOUT UDRF-SI

The University of Delaware Research Foundation, Inc. (UDRF) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation, that while independent of the University, is chartered primarily to support its research mission. In 1994, the UDRF Board of Trustees focused that support on providing research grants to early-career faculty, awarded through the UDRF program.

In 2008, UDRF added the University of Delaware Research Foundation - Strategic Initiatives (UDRF-SI) program, which makes awards to collaborative research teams pairing an early-career investigator with a senior, tenured faculty mentor. UDRF-SI supports innovative, high-impact scientific research that aligns with the university's strategic objectives and is likely to elevate the research prominence and external funding competitiveness of UD faculty researchers.

ELIGIBILITY

UDRF-SI grants support research that uses rigorous scientific methods to advance knowledge in the field. Proposals from any discipline are eligible; the program does not restrict eligibility by college or department. Proposals must be clearly positioned to attract future external funding from a federal, foundation, industry, or other sponsor.

Applicant teams must include exactly **one untenured, tenure-track faculty Principal Investigator (PI)** and **at least one tenured faculty Co-PI**, who serves as the PI's mentor. Continuing Track and Research Track faculty may participate as an additional Co-PI but may not serve as a PI or as the mentor Co-PI. Postdoctoral researchers and staff appointments may not serve as PI or Co-PI. All PIs and Co-PIs must be UD employees whose appointments began before the LOI submission deadline. A faculty member may appear on only one UDRF-SI proposal per cycle, in any role.

A faculty member who has previously received a UDRF-SI award as PI may not serve as PI again but may participate as a Co-PI. Faculty may apply to both the UDRF and UDRF-SI programs in the same cycle but may receive only one award.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Proposals are evaluated on research quality, the PI's trajectory toward independence, the strength of the mentoring relationship, societal benefit, and likelihood of future external support. Selection for funding will be based on:

1. **Research Plan (40%):** Does the work address a significant problem, and are the premise, design, methods, and analytic plan rigorous, reproducible, and achievable within the two-year funding period?
2. **Principal Investigator (PI) and Career Development (20%):** Does the PI show strong potential for an independent, externally funded research program, and would this award meaningfully advance that trajectory?
3. **Mentorship and Environment (20%):** Is the mentor well qualified, including a record of external funding and prior mentoring of early-career faculty? Does the mentoring plan specify meeting cadence, project milestones, and support for building external networks? Do the department and college demonstrate commitment to the PI's development?
4. **Broader Impacts and Future External Funding (20%):** Does the proposal articulate how the work will advance the science and contribute to specific, desired societal outcomes? Does it identify future external funding opportunities and how completion of the proposed work will generate the preliminary data needed to compete for them?

AWARD SELECTION

UDRF-SI grants are awarded based on eligibility and merit and administered by the UD Research Office. Review proceeds in two stages. UD faculty experts first evaluate each proposal against the criteria above and provide written comments and scores. An administrative panel responsible for advancing research both within and across colleges then reviews the scored proposals. The UDRF Board of Trustees approves the release of funds to support awarded proposals.

PROPOSAL INFORMATION

PROJECT BUDGET

The total project budget may be up to \$55,000: **\$35,000** from UDRF, **\$10,000** in matching funds from the PI's college, and **\$10,000** in matching funds from the Provost's Office. Matching funds from the PI's college and the Provost's office are required for every UDRF-SI proposal.

BUDGETING GUIDELINES

- **Personnel:** Graduate research assistant (RA) stipends, hourly wage, and other positions providing technical assistance are allowable (not PI or Co-PIs).
- **Faculty effort:** Faculty salary is unallowable as a direct cost. The PI must cost-share measurable effort aligned with the scope of work, at a minimum of 5% FTE, with departmental approval secured by the PI. The mentor Co-PI is included at 0% effort.
- **Fringe Benefits:** Fringe benefit costs are required for all personnel categories budgeted.
- **Direct Research Expenses:** Equipment, travel, participant support costs, and supplies and other direct research costs typically allowed by federal sponsors are allowable.
- **Unallowable Budget Categories:** Facilities and administrative (F&A) costs, graduate tuition, international travel, and faculty salary are not allowed.

Budget changes exceeding 25% of the total award and re-budgeting into categories not in the original budget require prior approval by the Research Office. See the UDRF-SI Post-Award section below for more information.

PROPOSAL DURATION

UDRF Strategic Initiatives grants are awarded for up to two years with periods of performance commencing from the project start date. No-Cost Extensions may be granted when circumstances warrant, up to two per award. Instructions can be found in the UDRF-SI Post-Award section.

PROPOSAL COMPONENTS & FORMATTING

Submit the UDRF-SI proposal using the [UDRF-SI Proposal Template](#). All components should be single-spaced using 11-pt Arial font with one-inch margins. Assemble the completed template along with the References, Budget Justification, biosketches, and Current & Pending Support into a single PDF and submit that file. Proposals that are incomplete or that exceed the stated page limits will be returned without review.

Executive Summary: A one-page section consisting of three sub-sections:

- **Overview:** Describe the scientific scope of the proposed work, what the award will accomplish, and how it advances the PI toward an independent research program.
- **Research Significance and Approach:** Describe the problem or gap being addressed and why the proposed approach is rigorous and achievable within the award period.
- **Broader Impacts and Future Funding:** Describe how the work will benefit society and identify the external funding opportunities to be sought.

Project Description: A three-page section organized in the four labeled subsections below. The Project Description should be clear to a reviewer with a technical or scientific background who is not an expert in the field. It must include:

- **Aims and Significance:** The problem or gap the work addresses, its significance to the field, and the specific aims of the proposed project.
- **Approach and Timeline:** The premise, design, methods, and analytic plan, and why they are rigorous and reproducible. Include a project timeline demonstrating that the work is achievable within the award period. Relevant figures and tables may be included.
- **Career Development and Mentoring:** The PI's current research trajectory and how this award advances it toward securing an externally funded award. The mentor's qualifications for the role including external funding and prior mentoring of early-career faculty. The mentoring plan, including meeting cadence, project milestones, and support for building external networks.
- **Broader Impacts and Funding Trajectory:** How the work will benefit society. The specific funding opportunities to be sought and how the results will position the PI to compete for them.

PROCEDURES FOR SUBMITTING PROPOSALS

STAGE 1: Letter of Intent

Only applicants who submit an LOI by the deadline may submit a full proposal.

1. A **Letter of Intent** (LOI) must be submitted by October 6, 2026, 5:00 p.m. ET using the [online application](#). The LOI must include:

- full names, departmental affiliations, and email addresses of the PI and Co-PI(s)
- a proposed project title
- a short abstract of the proposed work (250 words maximum)
- any new space, facilities, or equipment needed to complete the proposed scope of work
- PI anticipated cost-shared effort (5% FTE minimum; see Budgeting Guidelines)

2. PIs who submit an LOI will receive instructions for submitting the full proposal.

STAGE 2: Full Proposal

1. The [UDRF-SI Proposal Template](#) must be used, and the proposal must be submitted as a single PDF. Proposals must include:
 - Cover information: project title, PI and Co-PI names, departments and colleges.
 - Executive Summary (1 page maximum)
 - Project Description (3 pages, maximum)
 - References (2 pages maximum)
 - Budget table and Budget Justification (1 page maximum)
 - Biosketch for PI and (each) Co-PI (3 pages maximum, NSF or NIH format)
 - Current & Pending Support (C&P) for the PI and each Co-PI, excluding departmental start-up funds

References, biosketches, and Current and Pending Support do not count toward the Executive Summary or Project Description page limits.

2. Applications must be submitted through the online application portal by 5:00 PM ET on the deadlines above.
3. It is the PI's responsibility to ensure that their department chair and college dean (or designee) have approved the scope of work, the cost-shared effort, and the college's \$10,000 matching commitment before submission.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE RESEARCH FOUNDATION STRATEGIC INITIATIVES (UDRF-SI) GRANTS

UDRF-SI grants are made with the following understood commitments from the PI.

1. Acceptance signifies intent to continue employment at the University for the period of performance. Awards are not transferable and terminate upon the PI's departure from the University.
2. Research conducted under a UDRF-SI grant must comply with the the University Research, Sponsored Programs, Technology Transfer and Intellectual Property Policies, including the patent, copyright, and publication policies in the [Faculty Handbook](#).
3. If the proposed research includes human subjects or private identifiable data, or the use of non-human vertebrate animals, the protocol must be reviewed and approved by the [Institutional Review Board](#) or the [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee](#), respectively, before any UDRF-SI funds are expended.
4. The University exercises no direction or supervision over the details of the research but requires adherence to the original aims and purposes of the grant. Changes to the scope require prior approval from the Research Office.
5. A final report must be submitted to the Research Office no later than ninety (90) days after the grant end date using the [UD Internal Seed Grant Final Report form](#).
6. Unless the accepted proposal provides otherwise, program income earned during the award period is returned to UDRF, up to the amount of the award. This term does not modify University policies on patents, copyrights, and publications.
7. Any funds unspent at the end of the period of performance are returned to UDRF.
8. Every publication resulting from a UDRF-SI grant must acknowledge the support of the University of Delaware Research Foundation. Grantees must provide a citation for each resulting paper, book, or other publication to the Research Office at (researchdev@udel.edu).
9. UDRF-SI award recipients may be expected to serve as reviewers for subsequent cycles of UDRF-SI competitions.

UDRF-SI POST AWARD

AWARD ADMINISTRATION

Awards funded at a level different from the amount requested require a revised budget before a purpose code can be established. The PI's departmental administrator enters the award into PeopleSoft for tracking and reporting; instructions are in the Appendix. Each award is assigned an award number and purpose code, which should be included in all future correspondence and post-award reporting.

RE-BUDGETING

Cumulative budget transfers exceeding 25% of the total award, and re-budgeting into categories not in the original budget, regardless of amount, require prior approval from the Research Office. Requests must be submitted using the [UD Internal Seed Grant Request form](#).

NO-COST EXTENSION REQUESTS

Requests for no-cost extensions (NCE) must be submitted to the Research Office using the [UD Internal Seed Grant Request form](#) no earlier than 90 days and no later than 30 days before the award end date. Requests must state the reason for the extension and its duration. A maximum of two NCEs may be granted per award [each NCE can be up to 12 months].

FINAL REPORT

A final report must be submitted to the Research Office using the [Seed Grant Final Report Form](#) no later than 90 days after the grant end date.

APPENDIX

PROCEDURES FOR AWARDED PROPOSALS

FACULTY PROCEDURES

1. Within 5 business days of award notification, the PI must contact their department administrator so that a record can be initiated in UD's Grant Management System, PeopleSoft (PS).
2. The PI must provide their department administrator with a single PDF of the full proposal submission.
3. The PI must work with the department administrator to develop the detailed budget required for PeopleSoft entry using the [detailed budget template](#). Awards funded at a level different from the amount requested require a revised budget before a purpose code can be established.

DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATOR PROCEDURES

Department administrator guidance for using [UD's Grants Management System](#) is available on the Research Office website and by contacting the applicable department's assigned Contract & Grant Specialist in the Research Office.

UDRF-SI PEOPLESFT PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sponsor ID: 2910 - University of Delaware Research Foundation
2. Purpose: RSCH4 - Foundation Research
3. Budget Considerations:
 - Up to \$35,000 (from UDRF) entered as direct costs. (Purpose Code Fund Type 45)
 - \$10,000 (from the Provost Office/Research Office) entered as cost share from department ID #01551. (The Provost's Office does not need to approve the Proposal Summary Form).
 - \$10,000 (from College Dean) entered as cost share from the appropriate department ID.
 - Faculty salary is unallowable as a direct cost. Enter the PI's cost-shared effort, aligned with the scope of work, at a minimum of 5% FTE (see Budgeting Guidelines). The PI must obtain departmental approval.
 - The Co-PI faculty mentor (tenured faculty) should be entered as Co-PI with 0% effort.
 - Graduate student stipend or hourly wage is allowable; however, graduate student tuition is prohibited.
 - Include fringe benefit expenses when applicable.
 - F&A Pricing Setup: F&A costs are not permissible on UDRF awards.
 - Choose "Industrial Research On-Campus" for the rate type; overwrite the F&A rate to zero.
 - Pricing Method should be FIXED
4. Under the Attachments tab, upload a single PDF copy of the full proposal submission using the following naming convention: ProposalID_Other.
5. Routing of [FIN Proposal Approval Summary \(PAS\) webform](#) should include PI, Department Chair, College Dean and OSP per standard procedures.