



Request for Applications

2026 Indiana CTSI Postdoc Challenge Grant Funding to Use Indiana CTSI Designated Core Facilities

A JOINT INITIATIVE BETWEEN

INDIANA UNIVERSITY, PURDUE UNIVERSITY, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

ELECTRONIC RECEIPT DATE: March 12, 2026

Please note that you will be submitting through the Indiana CTSI's grants management software WebCAMP. Please allow enough time to be familiar with a new system.

The WebCAMP user's guide is also available under the funding announcement here:
<https://indianactsi.org/researchers/services-tools/translational-research-development/open-funding-opportunities/>

RFA questions please contact Aaron Zych at ajzych@iu.edu

WebCAMP questions please contact Julie Driscoll at [judrisco@iu.edu](mailto:jdrisco@iu.edu)

GENERAL:

The Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (CTSI) is soliciting proposals from postdoctoral fellows, assistant scientists, assistant scholars, staff scientists, research scientists, and research engineers (*see eligibility criteria below*) to develop translational research through the use of technologies and expertise available at the Indiana CTSI-designated core facilities across our partner institutions. Translational research refers to research in the lab that eventually translates into patient treatment to improve human healthcare. Translation involves applying discoveries made during research (in the lab, through animal studies, etc.) to the development of clinical trials and studies in humans. Note that as the Indiana CTSI is predominately funded by the NIH we must adhere to the unified funding strategy as outlined on the [NIH website](#).

Indiana CTSI-designated Core Facilities

Cores that undergo a yearly accreditation process through the Indiana CTSI across the three partner institutions. An updated list can be found here: www.indianactsi.org/servicecores. **You may only use Indiana CTSI-designated core facilities for this funding mechanism.**

The Postdoc Challenge Experience

The Postdoc Challenge offers eligible investigators at Indiana University-Bloomington, Indiana University School of Medicine, Indiana University-Indianapolis, Purdue University (West Lafayette and Indianapolis), and the University of Notre Dame valuable proposal writing and reviewing experience in areas related to translational research through the use of one or more of the Indiana CTSI-designated core facilities at any of the partner universities. This is a competitive opportunity for **a \$5,000 award** in the form of an expense account for use of core facility services. **Funding is to be used only for services provided by the Indiana CTSI-designated core facilities listed on the [Indiana CTSI website](#).**

This mechanism is meant to provide more than funding. We have integrated a professional development infrastructure for writing and reviewing grants as part of this challenge. Those who express interest in applying will be provided asynchronous materials to support their grant writing. The program will also host several synchronous sessions to support proposal development. To officially register for the Challenge program, please go [here](#).

Grant Review

We invite all those who qualify to submit a proposal under this RFA to also actively participate as reviewers (**even if an application is not submitted**). This engagement provides experience in the review process, in line with NIH peer review. To participate, registration is required [here](#). Those interested in reviewing applications will be provided professional development to assist with preparing for the grant review process (held on ZOOM/TEAMS; **March 20, 2026 from 12-1pm**). Reviewers will receive applications to review (typically 3-4 applications) in late March and the grant review session will occur on **April 15th (ZOOM/TEAMS; 9-1pm)**.

Eligibility and Advisor Consultation

If you are interested in participating in this challenge, you must discuss your proposal with your advisor prior to beginning the application process to ensure your participation will be approved. The duration of the project is one year, and investigators who are not planning on remaining in their postdoctoral positions for their proposed project period should **not** apply to this competition.

Proposals are due by **5pm on Thursday, March 12, 2026** and are to be submitted in a single PDF file using the **Start a Submission** link found here: [Postdoc Challenge Link](#)

WHO MAY APPLY:

IU / IUB / IUI / IUSM: Postdoctoral Research Associates as well as exempt staff in Assistant Scientist or Assistant Scholar positions

University of Notre Dame: Postdoctoral Research Associates as well as exempt staff in Staff Scientist, Research Scientist, Research Engineer, or similar positions

Purdue: Postdoctoral Research Associates as well as exempt staff in Research Scientist positions.

If you have questions about eligibility, please reach out to Aaron Zych at ajzych@iu.edu

RESTRICTIONS:

1. Awarded funds will be “deposited” with the specified Indiana CTSI core and can only be used for core services. Expenses other than for core services are not allowable.
2. One proposal per applicant.
3. Awarded funds are non-transferrable.
4. The duration of the project is one year and investigators who are not planning to remain in their postdoctoral positions for their proposed project period should not apply.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES:

1. Application forms may be obtained online at [Postdoc Challenge Link](#). You **MUST** use the posted application form. Each section should be uploaded separately.
2. You must discuss your proposal with your advisor prior to beginning the application process to ensure your participation will be approved.
3. Funding is for utilization of designated Indiana CTSI core facilities only. Information describing each eligible core is available at www.indianactsi.org/servicecores.
4. There is a **maximum \$5,000 limit** per proposal and funding may only be used for services provided by the core. If more than one core service is requested, the budget and justification must clearly indicate how much will be spent per core.
5. The three-page “Research Plan” section must include the noted sections.
6. The biosketch must be provided in the newest published NIH format.
7. Your **advisor** must provide you with a letter of support which must include how the project will enhance the career objectives of the applicant.
8. The **Core Facility Director** must provide you with a letter of support which must concur with the suitability of the use of the Core and the cost involved. It is strongly recommended that you contact the Core Director early (ideally at least one month before the submission deadline) to give the Director time to prepare the letter.
9. If your proposal is a **resubmission** of a previously reviewed Postdoc Challenge application, it is permissible, and requested to include an additional half-page describing how your current application addresses reviewer concerns. **Upload this as Additional Supporting Pages.**
10. **Proposals are due by Thursday, March 12, 2026 at 5pm** and are to be submitted online via the **“Start a Submission”** link found here: [Postdoc Challenge Link](#)

APPLICATIONS SHOULD FOLLOW THIS SEQUENCE

- **Face Page (pages 1 – 2 of application form)**: Specify the title of the proposal, applicant’s name and his/her institutional affiliation, the mentor / advisor’s name, and the Indiana CTSI core facility to be utilized.

- **Project Summary:** This should be a brief (3 sentence) summary in layman’s terms
- **Project Abstract:** This should be a brief scientific abstract about the project. Proprietary information should not be included.
- **Research Plan** (3-page limit, Arial 11 font, single-spaced, 0.5” margins –failure to comply will make you ineligible). Be sure to focus on how the Core Facility integrates/advances the work. Include the following:
 - Statement of importance (Significance & Innovation)
 - Rigor and Feasibility (Approach)
 - Translational strategy and how the core facility fits into this strategy
 - Project timeline/Milestones
- **Budget and justification** stating how funds will be used for each Core Facility
- **References**
- **Letter of Support – Advisor / Mentor** (1-page limit)
 - Brief synopsis of the project
 - How the project will enhance the career objectives of the applicant
- **Letter of Support – Core Facility Director(s)** (1-page limit)
 - Brief synopsis of the project
 - How this project will use the stated Core facility
 - Budget is appropriate
- **NIH Biosketch**
- **Resubmission Statement (If appropriate submit this in the Additional Supporting Pages Section of WebCAMP):** If this project is a resubmission of a previously submitted Postdoc Challenge proposal, you are permitted an additional half-page to describe how the current proposal specifically addresses the previous reviewers’ comments.

Proposal Development Workshops:

Those who have interest in applying are encouraged to register [here](#) in order to have access to a series of asynchronous presentations that support grant writing. These include:

1. *“Decoding the Research Funding Ecosystem: A Comprehensive Guide to NIH Funding”*
2. *“Discovering Funded Research & New Funding Opportunities”*
3. *“Fundamentals of Effective Grant Writing”*
4. *“Successful Grant Writing Strategies”*
5. *“The Specific Aims Page”*
6. *“Significance, Innovation, Approach and Environment”*
7. *“The NIH Review Process”*

There will also be multiple synchronous (**ZOOM/TEAMS**) sessions that provide an opportunity to ask questions and receive advice on applications:

1. General Q&A session: **January 14th, 2026 9-10am**
2. Session on grant writing strategies: **February 2nd, noon-1 pm**
3. Open office hours for Q&A: **February 16th and 23rd from noon-1pm**

Secure your spot in these professional development sessions by registering [here](#). **Upon registration, you will receive an email providing you with the [links](#) to the asynchronous material and calendar invites for the [synchronous workshops](#).**

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER REVIEWERS:

Regardless of proposal submission, we are seeking volunteers to serve as reviewers for the Postdoc Challenge. Your participation will provide essential feedback to improve research proposals and offer you valuable experience in the peer review process, a vital skill in scientific research. A mandatory workshop for reviewers will be held (**March 20th from 12-1pm**) to review tips and expectations for grant review. The actual grant review session will be **April 15th 2026 from 9:00am – 1:00 pm EST**. If you are interested, please complete this registration link ([here](#)). **Individuals who submit applications may also participate as proposal reviewers.**

REVIEW PROCESS:

Applications will be reviewed and ranked by a group comprised of both faculty and members of the postdoctoral community. The final selection and funding recommendations will be made by the Indiana CTSI Strategy Committee. Awardees will be announced late April/early May 2026. It is anticipated that up to two awards will be funded for each university (6 total awards).

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARDEES:

All awardees must agree to comply with Indiana CTSI internal award funding reporting requirements as described below.

1. Once your project is complete you will be asked to submit a closeout report that describes the project results and impact.
2. You will also be contacted for annual follow up for four additional years to determine any grants, publications, and / or IP that was generated from this project. This will assist us in reporting to NIH on the success of our pilot funding program.
3. By accepting this award recipients agree to notify Matt Allen at matalen@iu.edu in writing if leaving the university prior to the conclusion of the project.
4. A No Cost Extension may be considered if your project is not completed with the allotted time. Directions for requesting an NCE are on the [website](#).
5. Grant recipients are required to acknowledge receipt of Indiana CTSI support in any presentation or publication of work funded by the Postdoc Challenge as follows:

“This [(publication was made possible) (project was supported), or (project was funded)], in part, with support from the Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute funded, in part by Award Number UM1TR004402 from the National Institutes of Health, National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, Clinical and Translational Sciences Award. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.”

PRIVACY STATEMENT:

The email addresses entered in this site will be used exclusively for Indiana CTSI purposes. They will not be made available to any other party for any other purpose.

The files and data submitted to this competition may be used to fulfill federal Indiana CTSI reporting requirements/metrics tracking. In addition, proposals will be shared with scientific peer reviewers and appropriate Indiana CTSI administrative representatives. The Indiana CTSI representative(s) is responsible for managing the peer review process and tracking progress on funded projects.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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