

To: School of Medicine Faculty  
From: Katherine L. Nathanson, MD and Matthew D. Weitzman, PhD  
Co-Chairs, PSOM Limited Applications Selection Committee  
Re: 2026 Brain Research Foundation (BRF) - Scientific Innovations Award (SIA)  
<https://www.thebrf.org/scientific-innovations-award/>

The Brain Research Foundation's (BRF) Scientific Innovations Award (SIA) Program provides funding for innovative science in both basic and clinical neuroscience. This funding mechanism is designed to support creative, exploratory, cutting-edge research in well-established laboratories, under the direction of established investigators.

The BRF has invited the University to nominate one senior faculty member (Associate or Full Professor) to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) for the Scientific Innovations Award (SIA). The Office of the Vice Provost for Research (OVPR) is managing the final candidate review and selection process. Each school within the University may put forth one nominee.

**Eligibility:**

- **Appointment:** Must hold a position at the rank of associate or full professor.
- **Research focus:** Must be working in the area of brain function in health and disease, including studies related to normal human brain development or specifically identified disease states. This encompasses molecular and clinical neuroscience, as well as studies of neural, sensory, motor, cognitive, behavioral, and emotional functioning.
- **Funding history:** Current major NIH or other peer-reviewed funding is preferred but evidence of such funding in the past three years is essential.
- **New research project:** The grant proposal must detail a new research project that is not funded by other sources.
- **Bridge funding:** The grant is not to be used as a source of bridge funding.
- For any sponsored research projects, the applicant must be eligible to serve as Principal Investigator for the project, unless otherwise noted in the LSO. Please see [Penn's PI Eligibility requirements](#) to ensure you are eligible.

**Objectives:**

- The objective of the SIA is to support projects that may be too innovative and speculative for traditional funding sources but still have a high likelihood of producing important findings.
- It is expected that investigations supported by these grants will yield high impact findings and result in major grant applications and significant publications in high impact journals.
- This should be a unique project for senior investigators who are encouraged to stretch their imagination into areas that can substantially change an area of research.

**Funding and Award Period:**

The total award is limited to \$150,000 (direct costs) for a two-year grant period. The first grant payment of \$75,000 will be made upon completion of the SIA Acceptance Form. The final payment of \$75,000 will be made contingent upon receipt of a Preliminary Progress and Financial Report. Funds must be utilized within the grant period.

**Allowable Costs:**

100% of these SIA funds must be utilized for direct costs.

- **Allowable costs:**
  - Laboratory animals and equipment: Purchase and care of laboratory animals, and small pieces of laboratory equipment totaling \$5,000 or less.

- Supplies and salaries: Laboratory supplies and salary for scientific and technical staff, including postdoctoral fellows and laboratory technicians.
- **Non-allowable costs:**
  - Facilities and administrative costs: These are overhead costs associated with the general operation of the institution, such as utilities, building maintenance, and administrative support. These costs are not covered by the grant.
  - PI salary recovery: The grant does not allow for the recovery of the Principal Investigator's salary. This means the PI's salary cannot be paid using these funds.
  - Travel: Expenses for both domestic and foreign travel are not permitted. This includes airfare, accommodation, meals, and other travel-related costs.
  - Conference fees: Registration fees for attending conferences or seminars are not covered by the grant.
  - Computers and software: Personal computers, computer hardware, and software purchases are not allowed. This includes desktops, laptops, tablets, and any related software.
  - Large laboratory equipment: Any laboratory equipment costing more than \$5,000 is not permitted. This restriction ensures that the funds are used for smaller, more immediate research needs.
  - Tuition reimbursement: The grant does not cover tuition costs for any personnel, including graduate students.
  - Graduate student stipends: Stipends for graduate students are not covered by the grant. This means that the grant cannot be used to pay for the living expenses of graduate students.

#### **PSOM Limited Applications Committee LOI Submission Guidelines**

Each nominee must submit a proposal that includes the following:

- **Cover Page**: Candidate's name, academic rank, department, email address, phone number and campus address, month and year of appointment to Penn faculty.
- **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.
  - Note: Please craft the research statement in a manner that is easily understood by a broad audience.
- **CV or Biosketch**, which includes educational background, professional appointments, awards and honors. Include all current research support (start-up and external) and pending support, including dollar amounts and start/end dates.
- **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.

Materials must be submitted as a single pdf in the following order: Cover page, research proposal, references, and NIH Biosketch. The subject line should read: SIA\_Candidate's Surname\_Candidate's first name e.g. SIA\_Smith\_Jane.

Proposals must be submitted by **12:00pm, Tuesday, April 22nd**, to Kaitlyn Hagarty at [kaitlyn.hagarty@pennmedicine.upenn.edu](mailto:kaitlyn.hagarty@pennmedicine.upenn.edu). If you have any questions, please contact Kaitlyn at [kaitlyn.hagarty@pennmedicine.upenn.edu](mailto:kaitlyn.hagarty@pennmedicine.upenn.edu).