

## *Limited Call Research Proposal Opportunity*

### **2026 John S. Dunn Foundation Collaborative Research Award Program**

*Administered by the Gulf Coast Consortia*

#### **Pre-proposals due April 1**

The Gulf Coast Consortia (GCC) is pleased to announce the RFA for the 2026 John S. Dunn Foundation Collaborative Research Award Program. Launched in 2009 with generous support from the John S. Dunn Foundation, this seed grant program continues to build the collaborative environment of the Gulf Coast Consortia (GCC) and fund projects with high potential for impacting human health.

The purpose of this program is to foster new, exemplary inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional engagement in the **quantitative biomedical sciences** by providing research seed grants of up to \$100,000 total to support research/preliminary work for 2 years.

The goal of this program is to fund new projects with high potential for future competitive research funding within **2.5 years** of project start and a “best case scenario” plan for transitioning to clinical studies within **5 years**.

Each GCC member institution will select three teams submitting pre-proposals (submitted internally to their own institution) to move to the full proposal stage. After pre-proposal selection by the member institutions, GCC staff will manage the full proposal process with the expectation of 24 full proposals (3 from each institution) to be reviewed and a total of three selected for award of funding.

Funds will be awarded to **new** collaborative teams in which **the PI and co-PI** are from different GCC member institutions: 1) Baylor College of Medicine, 2) Rice University, 3) University of Houston, 4) UT Health Science Center at Houston, 5) UT Medical Branch at Galveston, 6) UT MD Anderson Cancer Center, 7) The Texas A&M (TAMU) Institute of Biosciences and Technology (IBT) in Houston, and 8) Houston Methodist Research Institute.

Scientific disciplines covered by submissions to this program range across a spectrum within the quantitative biomedical sciences.

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#### **Team Eligibility Requirements**

Please read the below eligibility requirements carefully. Proposals that do not meet these requirements will be disqualified. Eligible teams must satisfy all of the following criteria:

1. Faculty:
  - The PI and Co-PI must be faculty with a PhD (tenured or tenure-track), MD, MD/PhD, DO, or PharmD.
  - Co-I: a third team member is optional and must be faculty with a PhD (tenured or tenure-track), MD, MD/PhD, DO, PharmD, or a GCC Core Facilities Director.
2. Institutional Affiliation:
  - PI and co-PI must be faculty at different GCC member institutions.
  - Co-I may be from any GCC member institution or from a GCC affiliate institution (Texas Southern University).
3. New Collaborations:
  - None of the investigators on the proposing team, including co-PIs and Co-Is, should have worked together previously, since the goal of this program is to initiate new research collaborations. An exception is if the Co-I is providing services from a core facility.

- Previous collaborative activity is defined as collaborations that have resulted in measurable outcomes, including but not limited to abstracts, publications (including preprints)\*, grants, patents, etc.
4. One-proposal Limit:
    - Faculty can be PI or a member of the collaborative team on only one pre-proposal.
    - The pre-proposal may be submitted only once, to the PI institution
  5. Previous Recipients:
    - There is a 3-year moratorium for all previous award recipients. Members of any research team that received an award between 2023-2025 are ineligible for the 2026 research grant program.
    - A listing of past recipients can be found [here](#).

Any questions about the above requirements may be sent to [Karen Ethun](#) or [Autumn Marsden](#).

### **Review Criteria for Pre-proposal and Full Proposal**

The review criteria for the Dunn Collaborative Research Award Program include the following:

1. novelty of the proposed research
2. interdisciplinary nature of the work
3. integration of the team
4. quality of the science
5. qualifications of the investigators
6. anticipated level of impact/long-term sustainability
7. potential for transition to clinical studies within 5 years of funding.

Please note: The record of previously funded Dunn awards is not indicative of a preference for types of proposals or fields covered. All proposals in the quantitative biomedical sciences are welcome and given equal consideration.

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### **Pre-Proposal**

Due: April 1

Each team of faculty wishing to compete for a Dunn Collaborative Research Award must first submit a pre-proposal (as a PDF) of no more than 2 pages to the PI institution. Applications that do not adhere to the guidelines below or do not meet requirements for eligibility will be returned without review.

**The pre-proposal** should utilize 11-point Arial font with at least one-inch margins. Additional requirements and guidelines are below. Note that timeline, biosketches, references, and suggested reviewers will not be included in the 2-page limit. The pre-proposal should be a single, combined PDF in the following order:

The 2-page pre-proposal will **ONLY** include\* the following:

1. PI name, title, department, institution, email\*\*
2. Co-PI name, title, department, institution, email\*\*
3. If applicable: Co-I name, title, department, institution, email\*\*
4. Statement attesting to this being a new collaboration among team members (*i.e.*, no joint papers, abstracts, grant of any kind)
5. Statement that the collaborative team leadership (PI and co-PI) is submitting the proposal **only once and only to the PI institution**
6. Title of project
7. Abstract of up to 450 words. If you choose to include Specific Aims, they must also fit within the 450 word limit.\*
8. OPTIONAL: A singular figure (can be multiple panels)\* may be added as long as the pre-proposal does not go over 2 pages. A caption of less than 50 words may be added underneath (does not count toward the 450 word count of the Abstract).

You may not add anything outside of what is outlined above, even if you do not use the entirety of the two pages. If you do, your preproposal may be returned without review.\*

\*\*Please note that if you are invited to submit a full proposal, your team **CANNOT CHANGE** between your preproposal and your full submission. If you add or remove people from your team, your full proposal will not be reviewed.

Separate items also required as part of the pre-proposal submission:

1. Timeline, including milestones, for the 2-year funding period as well as a best-case scenario plan for transition to clinical studies within 5 years of project start. The timeline and milestones (not included in 2-page limit), should be succinct, limited to no more than one page in table format, and should not be used for further description of the proposal.
2. Biosketches for the PI and co-PI (2- page limit). Note: If a Co-I is included, a 2-page biosketch must also be submitted. A biographical sketch of the investigators on the team must be included. Please limit these documents to two (2) pages each with relevant publications (preprints are acceptable)\* using the [form here](#) (margins for biosketch can be 0.5 in)\*. The biographical sketch for the principal investigator should be placed first.
3. References
4. List of suggested reviewers – name, institution and email; a *minimum* of 3 internal to GCC community and 3 external – in the event the team is invited to submit a full proposal. These reviewers will be able to provide an unbiased, knowledgeable review of your team’s inter-disciplinary proposal. Please avoid suggesting reviewers with whom you have conflicts of interest (*i.e.* joint authorship or grants, frequent interaction, collegial affiliations, etc.). **Each team is strongly encouraged to review the [COI form](#) for further information.**

All pre-proposals will be reviewed internally by a designated research review committee of the PI institution. Based on their review, the committee will select three pre-proposals and notify the GCC of the committee selection. GCC will invite the PI of each to submit a full proposal directly to the GCC. Those not invited to submit full proposals will be notified by the PI institution.

Teams should compile all elements of the proposal into a single PDF and submit via email directly to the institutional representative at the PI’s institution (unless otherwise stated):

Baylor College of Medicine  
Sheila Quinn  
Email: [oorawards@bcm.edu](mailto:oorawards@bcm.edu)

Institute of Bioscience and Technology  
Jon Meyers  
Email: [meyers@tamu.edu](mailto:meyers@tamu.edu)

MD Anderson  
Roxanne Smith Parks  
Email: [RSmith11@mdanderson.org](mailto:RSmith11@mdanderson.org) **AND**  
[OSP@mdanderson.org](mailto:OSP@mdanderson.org)

Rice University  
Ashley Booher  
Email: [ashley.booher@rice.edu](mailto:ashley.booher@rice.edu)

University of Houston  
Ashley Merwin **AND** JaMari Robinson  
Email: [armerwin@central.uh.edu](mailto:armerwin@central.uh.edu) **AND**  
[jrobin21@central.uh.edu](mailto:jrobin21@central.uh.edu)

University of Texas Health Science Center  
Questions: Amy Hazen  
Email: [limitedsubmissions@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:limitedsubmissions@uth.tmc.edu)  
**Submissions:** InfoReady portal

University of Texas Medical Branch  
Katherine Kaus  
Email: [limitedsubmission@UTMB.EDU](mailto:limitedsubmission@UTMB.EDU)

Houston Methodist Research Institute  
Eduardo Juarez  
Email: [AcademicAffairs@houstonmethodist.org](mailto:AcademicAffairs@houstonmethodist.org)

## **Full Proposal**

By invitation only.

Invitation to submit: May 1

Due: June 1

Teams should compile all elements of the proposal into a single PDF and submit via email to:  
[GCCDunnSubmissions@gmail.com](mailto:GCCDunnSubmissions@gmail.com).

**The Proposal** should utilize 11-point Arial font with at least one-inch margins. Applications that do not adhere to the guidelines below or do not meet requirements for eligibility will be returned without review. The Proposal should be combined into a PDF in the following in order:

1. **Cover Page:** Please complete the pre-formatted [cover page](#) which includes the following requisite information:
  - a. Project title: Full project title
  - b. Investigator Team: Names, positions, and affiliations of the investigator team involved in the project. The principal investigator should be listed first. The investigator team **MUST BE** the same as the preproposal or your full submission will not be reviewed.
  - c. Administrative Contacts: Name(s), email address(es), and phone number(s) for departmental and other relevant administrators should be included.
2. **Scientific Abstract:** Include a one-paragraph scientific abstract (limit 400 words) that provides:
  - a. a clear description of the area(s) of research that will be the focus of the application
  - b. planned cross-disciplinary approach
  - c. specific objectives of the project.
3. **Lay Abstract:** Include a one-paragraph lay abstract (limit 200 words) that describes the proposal in terms accessible to a non-scientist and that could be used in press releases and communications to the community at large.
4. **Research Plan:** Maximum six (6) pages for the following required elements (including all illustrations and tables).
  - a. Specific Aims Page (1 page)
  - b. Strategy (5 pages)
    1. Background and Significance
    2. Preliminary Studies/Rationale
    3. Research Design and Methods
    4. Description of how the project represents a new collaborative research initiative, the planned cross disciplinary approach, novelty, impact, and plans for seeking external funding to continue the proposed project.
5. Additional items required for submission on separate pages:
  - a. **Timeline**, including milestones, for the 2-year funding period as well as a best-case scenario plan for transition to clinical studies within 5 years of project start. The timeline and milestones should be succinct, limited to no more than one page in a table format, and should not be used for further description of the proposal.
  - b. **References**
  - c. **Investigator Biosketches:** A biographical sketch of the investigators on the team must be included. Please limit these documents to two (2) pages each with relevant publications (preprints are acceptable)\*using the [form here](#) (margins for biosketch can be 0.5 in)\*. The biographical sketch for the principal investigator should be placed first.
  - d. **Budget and Budget Justification:** Each investigator on the collaborative team should submit a preliminary budget and budget justification for each year for review consideration using the GCC Dunn-BRC Budget Forms for Year 1 and Year 2. The combined budgets should not exceed the full award amount (up to \$100,000 total). See the “Research Budget Information” section below for further information. Budgets will be finalized upon notice of award in compliance with the investigators’ home institutions.

## Research Budget Guidelines

GCC Dunn-BRC Budget Forms [Year 1](#) and [Year 2](#)

1. Budget should be specified for both years of award (*i.e.* you must separate year 1 from year 2). **Second year funding will be contingent on demonstrable progress (reported in the annual progress report) consistent with stated Year 1 milestones.**
2. Budgets should be divided between the PI, Co-PI and any co-investigators. Although funds do not have to be equally split among investigators, it should be noted that anything less than 35% allocated to either the PI or Co-PI ***will not*** be scored favorably on the “Integration of Team” criterion. If more than 55% of the total budget is requested in Year 1, advanced approval will be required.
3. Funds may be requested for
  - a. supplies,
  - b. equipment (up to \$5,000 total over the 2 years),
  - c. travel (up to \$2,000 total over the 2 years, NOT per investigator),
  - d. publication costs (up to \$2,000 over the 2 years, NOT per investigator),
  - e. stipends, and
  - f. research staff salaries (graduate students, postdoctoral associates, technical staff, non-tenure track research faculty)
4. Equipment purchases should be limited to \$5,000 unless the equipment is absolutely necessary to meet the aims presented. Justification and preapproval are required for purchases over \$5,000.
5. Costs that are **not** allowed:
  - a. Indirect (F/A) costs
  - b. Salary for the PI, Co-PI and/or co-investigators
  - c. Tuition remission
6. Maximum budget is \$100,000 for duration of two (2) years.  
**Any unused funds at the end of the project must be returned to the GCC.**
7. Under exceptional circumstances, a 6-month no-cost extension may be requested with justification (maximum funding remains \$100,000).
8. If significant progress is not demonstrated by the end of the first year after review by GCC Executive Committee, then unused funds must be returned to the program.
9. If, during the proposal or award period, the status of a faculty member or collaboration changes, the PI(s) must immediately notify [Karen Ethun](#). If prior to Year 2 funding, an awardee transitions to either a non GCC institution or the same institution as their Co-PI, Year 2 funds may be forfeited.

Please note that this award mechanism does not accept Letters of Support.

## Research Post-Award Requirements

1. Condition of Acceptance: A meeting between PIs and GCC leadership will be scheduled to discuss the conditions of acceptance. Funds for Year 1 will be dispensed shortly thereafter.
2. Reports: Grant recipients are required to submit a 1-year progress report 45 days prior to year 2 funding, a 2-year progress report at the end of the funding period, and subsequent annual updates will also be requested for five (5) years post-award for the purpose of tracking subsequent progress for the Dunn Foundation.
3. Research Proposal Reviewer: Grant recipients are required to participate in the subsequent years’ review processes, as needed.
4. Other Requirements: Grant recipients will be expected to present their research outcomes to the Dunn Foundation, the GCC Oversight Committee, or other interested parties and to provide additional information as requested by the GCC Oversight Committee. This information would include a summary of the project as well as impact of the research within the GCC and the larger community.
5. Acknowledgements: Funding from the John S. Dunn Foundation Collaborative Research Award Program must be acknowledged in all publications or presentations associated with or arising from an award.

### **Timeline for Dunn Pre-Proposals and Full Proposals**

- Pre-proposal RFA February 27, 2026
- Pre-proposal submission deadline April 1, 2026
- Selection of 3 pre-proposals deadline April 23, 2026
- Selected pre-proposals to GCC April 24, 2026
- Invitations sent for submission of full research proposals May 1, 2026
- Full research proposal submission deadline June 1, 2026, 11:59 pm
- Review of full proposals Early August 2026
- Notice of awards Late August 2026
- Project start date September 1, 2026
- Project end date August 31, 2028

### **Informational Video**

[YouTube Link](#)

### **Questions?**

[Karen Ethun](#), Executive Director, GCC

[Autumn Marsden](#), Interim Director of Research, GCC

\*Denotes changes from 2025 RFA