Proposal Assistance Toward High-impact funding (PATH) Award
Spring 2026 Request for Proposals (RFP)

The Proposal Assistance Toward High-impact funding (PATH) Award is a new internal grant designed to support principal investigators (PIs) on a trajectory to submit external large-scale funding proposals of at least $1 million. PIs are expected to develop projects that will address priority topics for ISU (*health, energy, environmental stewardship and security, and community connection*), have the strong potential to build research capacity and promote collaboration, and drive innovation and impact. All projects will be considered, including projects conducting or developing research, instruction, program development, outreach, service, workforce development, etc. External funding proposals are expected to be submitted within 1-2 years from award letter date. Therefore, projects should be in a state that is relatively close to submission stage (i.e., where they are supported by sufficient preliminary data), but require additional support to get the PI and project team over the hump for timely submission. This award is not intended for projects that are in initial stages, such as for conducting pilot studies. By supporting PIs that are on track to submit competitive funding proposals in priority areas, the ISU Office for Research is aiming to increase our success rate in obtaining substantial funding from federal agencies or other external sources in areas of significant growth and mission alignment. Proposals will be reviewed by the Office for Research and area experts (either within or outside of the university). It is anticipated that 2-3 proposals will be awarded this year, with support to begin in summer 2026. Awards will provide up to $50,000 each.

Purpose

PATH awards support development and submission of high-impact external funding proposals for opportunities that advance areas of university research excellence and growth and that demonstrate competitiveness for large-scale funding. The goal is to support faculty on the path to competitive, high-quality grant submissions in areas of research excellence that generally align with federal and state priorities, as well ISU's mission and responsibility to serve our communities.

Priority Topics

Topics that will be supported by the PATH award will be announced when new RFPs are released. For 2026, priority topics include the following:

- *Health*
- *Energy*
- *Environmental Stewardship and Security*
- *Community Connection*

Topics for 2026 align with ISU's state-designated health mission, Idaho's Higher Education Research Strategic Plan, federal research priorities, areas of research excellence and opportunity at ISU, and our institutional mission to improve the intellectual vigor, cultural vitality, and health of our communities. These topics are meant to be broad, umbrella themes that can support efforts within and across different disciplines, types of research, and funding opportunities. For example, mixed-methods research that addresses digital learning in education or cultural preservation and tribal engagement may fall under *Community Connection*. Basic, clinical, and translational biomedical research across disciplines, including population health projects, may fall under *Health.* It is possible that projects may fall under multiple priority topics as well. There are no limitations or constraints on which disciplines or types of projects will be supported. For instance, projects in *Energy* may be supported by teams in nuclear engineering or geosciences, as well as teams in history and public policy. However, it is important to demonstrate how the specific project topic relates to one or more priority topics that are outlined above.

Amount

PATH awards will provide up to $50,000 to support eligible projects for a 12-month period. The minimum request amount is $10,000. A longer award period may be requested and will require a strong rationale.

Eligibility

All full-time faculty are eligible to submit proposals for a PATH award. PIs are strongly encouraged to have experience with the funding agency, which may include a prior funding track record as a PI from the agency where submission is intended.

Eligible Costs and Activities

Funding is to support essential work that will lead to successful application of a high-impact, external funding proposal. Activities to be accomplished and submission of the proposal should fit within the period of PATH funding (12 months). Therefore, travel and publication costs must be encumbered during this time. Funds may be used to support the following:

- Salary support (i.e., summer salary and course release) for the PI to engage in project and grant development, and any work connected to the project
- Salary support for students, post-docs, or technicians to assist with work connected to the project, such as preliminary data collection, publication, or grant writing
- Travel and event support related to project planning activities, such as networking, team building, workshops, and project development
- Costs associated with establishing, facilitating, and deepening relationships with industry and community partners, and collaborators

- Costs associated with preliminary data collection, analyses, proof of concept, and publication of work that is central to the project; this may include purchase of supplies, statistical support, and publication costs
- Consultation with technical experts, including travel expenses to bring in consultants
- External grant writers with relevant expertise
- Soliciting external peer reviews before submitting the proposal
- Other necessary investments designed to prepare a competitive proposal or to position the PI for a successful proposal

Equipment purchases (items generally above $10,000 or that require a service contract) are not eligible costs. Applicants seeking support to initiate a new line of research, preliminary data for a new project, or for an external proposal less that $1 million are encouraged to apply to the Support Program for Advancing Research and Creativity (SPARC) in Fall 2026.

Application Requirements

Applications <u>must</u> include the following.

- A 3-page maximum proposal narrative that includes:
  - Description of the project and project team
  - Description of competitiveness of the PI for the specific funding opportunity (i.e., prior funding history with the agency, appropriate training or leadership experience, etc.)
  - Project innovation and impact within a priority topic area
  - Potential for building research capacity and promoting collaboration
  - Project timeline, including external grant submission deadline
- A detailed budget, using the Internal Grant Competition Budget Template. (Because this is an internal grant, Facilities & Administrative Costs should not be included in the budget.)
- A budget justification with a description and rationale for each item. No page limit.
- A CV in the form of the targeted grant.
- A copy of the external notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) that the PI is applying to.
- The proposal and budget narratives must be single-spaced, with no smaller than 11 pt font.
- ***Applications that do not include the required information or that do not follow page limitations and instructions will not be reviewed.***

Applications <u>may</u> include these components, if relevant:

- Expression of interest from private industry, non-profit, or philanthropic entity
- Commitment letters from team members

All proposals will be routed through Cayuse for signatures. Applicants are *strongly* encouraged to coordinate with their department chair and dean prior to submission. Applicants may receive only one PATH award every three years.

Review Process

Applications will be evaluated by the Office for Research and area experts (within or outside of the university). Emphasis in the review process will be placed on the competitiveness of the project and PI for the specific external funding opportunity, as well potential for impact and the relation to priority topic areas for the university. The Vice President for Research and Economic Development is responsible for all final decisions.

Post-Award Expectations

PATH awardees are expected to submit their external grant proposal by the deadline shared in the application (see **Application Requirements**). If the external proposal is not submitted, individuals will not be eligible for future PATH awards. Additionally, awardees will be required to have a mid-point check-in with the Office for Research, approximately half-way through the period of their PATH award, regarding project and proposal progress.

Deadline

The first PATH deadline is May 1, 2026. Awards are expected to be made in early summer. It is anticipated that 2-3 awards will be made in 2026. If funds remain available after the Spring deadline, then an early Fall deadline may be announced. Otherwise, the next deadline is expected for Spring 2027.

Contact Information

Please reach out to Michele Brumley (michelebrumley@isu.edu) with questions regarding the PATH award. For submission of applications, applicants must work with Steve Wright (stevewright@isu) in the Office of Sponsored Programs and Support (OSPS) to submit and route proposals through Cayuse. OSPS also is available to assist with budget-related questions and using the budget template.