



Mid-South REACH Product Development Grants Request for Applications (RFA): Cycle 2

Background:

The Mid-South REACH (Research Evaluation and Commercialization Hub) program is a National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded program that extends across four states: Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia. The primary goal of this grant program is to accelerate the real-world impact of biomedical and health-related innovations through education, mentorship, and financial support for aspiring entrepreneurs. Mid-South REACH is led by Vanderbilt University in collaboration with the University of Louisville, Jackson State University, and George Mason University. In this grant cycle, over 15 grants will be awarded across four states to fund product development activities, including new project awards and competitive renewals. Beyond funding for product development and translational research, Mid-South REACH, in collaboration with Mid-South I-Corps, will provide commercialization-related education and training for awardees, as well as coaching and strategic feedback from field experts, including the NIH and their partners (see <https://ncai.nhlbi.nih.gov/ncai/resources/other>).

The Mid-South REACH program is not a traditional grant program. It is focused on product development and requires milestone-based project management in six-month increments, renewable up to four times. Project Managers in each of the Mid-South REACH states are available to assist with the preparation of pre-applications. Applicants invited to submit a full application will work with Project Managers and/or mentors on product development plans and project timelines.

Important Dates:

Pre-applications due:	November 8, 2024 by 5:00 PM (CT)
Full application invitations sent:	November 25, 2024
Full applications due:	January 17, 2025 by 5:00 PM (CT)
Full application pitch presentations:	February 10-21, 2025*
Anticipated award start/end dates:	April 1, 2025 – September 30, 2025

**Exact dates to be determined*

Eligibility:

- Open to faculty, staff, trainees, and students at universities and technical schools in the following mid-south states: Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia. Specific eligibility information by state is listed below. No prior experience with NIH funding is required.
- Applications must focus on the development of products/technologies that have **the potential to improve patient care or enhance human health**. There are no specific disease requirements, and all types of products (e.g., therapeutics, diagnostics, devices, tests, software) are eligible.
- Products, technologies, and/or ideas should **both**:
 - 1) originate from within an eligible university/community college in Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia.
 - 2) either (a) have existing intellectual property protection (e.g., patent, copyright, trademark) or (b) have potential to create new intellectual property. IP must be owned or affiliated with a participating university/community college. Technologies that are already licensed to a company are not eligible.





Eligibility (continued):

- Disclosure of projects/technologies to an applicant’s respective technology transfer office is not required to submit a pre-application; however, disclosure will be required prior to the submission of a Mid-South REACH full application (if invited).
- Multiple Principal Investigators are permitted.
- All personnel (including faculty sponsors) who are listed on an application must agree to participate and submit the application.
- Non-faculty applicants must identify a faculty member who is willing to sponsor their application.
- Clinical trials ([by NIH definition](#)) are not allowed.
- Eligible institutions by state:

Kentucky	Mississippi	Tennessee	Virginia
Eastern Kentucky University	Alcorn State	Belmont University	Christopher Newport University
Morehead State University	Delta State University	Chattanooga State Community College	George Mason University
Murray State	Hinds Community College	East Tennessee State University	James Madison University
Northern Kentucky University	Jackson State University	Meharry Medical College	Longwood University
Kentucky Community & Technical College System*	Mississippi State University	Middle Tennessee State University	Norfolk State University
Kentucky State University	Mississippi Valley State University	Tennessee Board of Regents**	Old Dominion University
University of Kentucky	University of Mississippi	Tennessee State University	Radford University
University of Louisville	University of Southern Mississippi	Tennessee Tech University (Innov & Entrepr.)	University of Mary Washington
Western Kentucky University		Union University	University of Virginia
		University of Memphis	Virginia Commonwealth University
		University of Tennessee-Chattanooga	Virginia Military Institute
		University of Tennessee-Knoxville	Virginia State University
		Vanderbilt University	Virginia Tech
		Vanderbilt University Medical Center***	William & Mary

*Represents 16 institutions across Kentucky

**Represents 37 institutions in Tennessee

***This is a limited submission opportunity. Applicants **must** be approved by the Brock Family Center for Applied Innovation to apply, or your application will not be considered or funded. Please contact ken.holroyd@vumc.org

Pre-application preparation and submission:

Mid-South REACH pre-applications require two components:

1. **Pre-Application:** A short (2-page) description of the problem you are trying to address and the solution you envision. This will be prepared offline and uploaded to the portal. The Pre-Application Questions template may be downloaded from the [Mid-South REACH website](#) or from the NIH Pre-Application portal (link below).





2. **Online submission portal:** Applicants will be asked to provide information about the project and investigators, including previous innovation-related experience and technology stage. You will also upload your completed Project Description Template.

Submit your pre-application via the NIH Pre-Application portal:

<https://redcapedc.rti.org/seed/surveys/?s=39WPKM3L99EXELJR&hub=KU86GD49M2SAE41&preapp=1>

Questions and assistance:

Mid-South REACH Project Managers can assist you with various aspects of the pre-application preparation, including the review of drafts prior to submission. We encourage informal inquiries about whether an idea or product would be suitable for this program. If needed, Mid-South REACH Project Managers may also be able to help identify a suitable collaborator(s) and/or faculty sponsor (for non-faculty applicants).

Please reach out with any questions related to the Mid-South REACH grant program or to schedule an appointment to discuss your project/idea or pre-application. You can email Project Managers directly:

For investigators in:	Please contact:
Kentucky	midsouthreach@louisville.edu
Mississippi	technologytransfer@jsums.edu
Tennessee - Universities	MidSouthREACH@vanderbilt.edu
Tennessee – Vanderbilt University Medical Center*	ken.holroyd@vumc.org
Virginia	nihreach@gmu.edu

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Review of pre-applications:

Pre-applications will be reviewed by the Mid-South REACH team in each state to verify if they are responsive to the RFA and may be excluded if not suitable for this grant program.

Responsive pre-applications will be reviewed by a panel consisting of the Mid-South REACH Internal Advisory Committee (IAC) and the Leadership Team based on criteria, including scientific merit, clinical relevance, intellectual property position, market potential, time to market, and portfolio diversity. The REACH IACs are made up of reviewers with scientific, clinical, entrepreneurial, technology transfer, and/or commercialization expertise from universities within each of the state partners. All applicants who submit a pre-application will be notified of the outcome (invited or not invited to submit a full application) and will receive written feedback from the Mid-South REACH IAC review.



Next steps:

Applicants who are not invited to submit a full application are encouraged to meet with Mid-South REACH Project Managers to discuss IAC feedback, areas in which the application could be strengthened, and/or strategies for alternative funding.

Applicants who are invited to submit a full application will receive further instructions and information regarding the preparation of their full application and pitch presentation to the Mid-South REACH External Review Board (ERB). Submission of a full application will involve additional training in research commercialization and assistance in creating a detailed product development plan and project milestones. Final funding decisions will be made following a review of the full applications, pitch presentations to the Mid-South REACH ERB, and input from the NIH Technology Guidance Committee (TGC).

Mid-South REACH: Kentucky

Eligible institutions in Kentucky include all public research universities and the community and technical college system (see page 2).

In the first year, Mid-South REACH Kentucky will administer \$500,000 in matching funds from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, University of Louisville, and University of Kentucky. These awards will be provided over two funding cycles per year.

Budget and duration:

- For **Cycle 2, applicants should budget \$41,750** in direct costs for the 6-month award period. Applicants will be asked within the pre-application to outline how these funds will be used, but submission of an itemized budget is not required at this stage.
- **For Cycle 2, a total of 6 awards** are planned across Kentucky, with 2 projects funded at UofL, 2 at UK, and 2 across regional universities/community and technical college system.
- Teams will be eligible for competitive renewal.