

The DeLTA Center is inviting undergraduate, graduate and post-doctoral members to submit proposals for funding small research projects during the 2026 calendar year.

This program of the DeLTA Center—now in its 22<sup>nd</sup> funding cycle—generally funds *interdisciplinary research projects* that span multiple disciplinary approaches to learning and development. Our goal is to seed new and exciting trainee-led research that creates or enhances collaboration across the DeLTA Center and that highlights the unique contributions of a multi-disciplinary center. Work with animals, typical developing humans (including infants, children, adults and older adults), atypical populations, or computational models are all encouraged. Work need not focus only on traditional developmental change (in children) – learning, aging and other sorts of change are also encouraged. We especially encourage new or emerging work, though we will also consider ongoing collaborative projects. Project should embrace the multi-level developmental systems approach to development that is the core of the DeLTA Center.

There are no hard and fast rules about what counts as interdisciplinary. This will be evaluated by the reviewers (who are other trainees in the summer). In the past, this group has favored projects that bridge two or more labs, and preferably from different departments. But projects that are highly interdisciplinary within a single department (or even a single lab) can also be funded at their discretion. The key is innovation, and a mixture of ideas that might not normally meet. It can be helpful in some cases to establish a multi-disciplinary (but not necessarily multi-departmental) advisory committee, but this is not necessary.

As always, the applicant's home lab (or collaborating labs) must be an *active* member of the DeLTA Center (we know who you are) and the applicant must be as well. New students are expected to become active. Ongoing participation in center activities by the mentor(s) or the applicant(s) are often taken into account by the review panel. Post-docs, graduate students, undergraduates and other trainees are eligible to apply, though the project must be clearly led by the trainee. Applications originating from multiple trainees are encouraged, though there must be faculty sponsorship for the project.

Up to \$1500 is available for each funded research project; budgets larger than that may be considered with justification. Funds can be used for supplies, participant compensation, staff assistance, or equipment. Conference travel is not permitted, though travel for collaborative purposes may be. Other expenses may be allowed at the discretion of the DeLTA Center Director. Please ask in advance. All awardees will be expected to present their research findings at a DeLTA Center meeting.

**Proposals are due May 5, 2025.** A single PDF should be emailed to the DeLTA Center email box ([delta-center@uiowa.edu](mailto:delta-center@uiowa.edu)). Projects will be reviewed, and funding decisions will be made by a panel of student and post-doc reviewers over the early part of the summer and funding will be available immediately.

### **Proposal instructions**

The first page should use the attached cover page and be signed by the student PI(s), and any and all of the faculty mentors. Please make sure that the project description is copy and pastable (not a scan) so that it can be posted to the website, distributed over email, etc. The cover page does not count against the page limits.

The project description should not exceed three pages (this limit does not include the cover page, references, CV or other materials). Please use a font no smaller than 11 pt Arial, with margins no smaller than .5". Single spaced text is fine (and typical). Shorter proposals are acceptable. The project description should address the following topics. These can be done in separate sections or as part of an overall narrative.

- *Research aims and background*: A short synopsis of your question, and why it is important.
- *Approach* and how you intend to answer your questions. Make sure you include some details about how the project will be executed – who will do what, how both labs are involved, and a rough timeline of activities.
- *Interdisciplinarity, Innovation and Developmental Systems*: A description of how your project is innovative, how it will build on multiple approaches, how it will leverage the strengths of multiple labs, and how it is consistent with the broader theme of developmental systems.
- *Fit of the project to the Funding Goals*: How does this project fit into the research programs of the sponsoring lab(s) and the research program of the applicant? Will this project lead to longer-term collaborations between the labs?
- *Projected outcomes*: What will this project lead to? Will the project provide pilot data for a grant or dissertation? Is this the beginning of a longer term line of research? Will it lead to a conference presentation or journal publication? Will this project catalyze a longer-term collaboration between labs?
- *Contributions*: What are the material contributions of each lab/mentor and what specifically will the student be doing? Will there be other people involved and what will they do. What are the intellectual contributions of the project? Does this project reflect a merging of long term research interests of both labs? Or is it receiving technical or intellectual expertise from one lab to benefit primarily questions from the other? Or is it something genuinely new to both?
- *Revisions*. Applications that are revised from prior funding cycles may include one additional page summarizing changes that were made in response to the prior round of reviews, or addressing and rebutting the concerns.

After the project proposal, applicants should include two additional documents. This does not count against the page limit.

- 1) *Budget*: How will the money be used. Please include both a table of expenses, and justification describing how you reached these amounts (a standard NIH style budget justification is fine). If a larger than usual budget is request, justification should be included. If the necessary budget to complete your project is larger than the funding limit please include a statement as to how the project can be completed if funded.
- 2) The applicant's complete CV.
- 3) A short bio of the mentors (this should include department/background, research interests, a sentence or two about how this project fits with their work, and references of up to five representative publications that are relevant to this project.

This funding mechanism is open to both new proposals and revisions of proposals that were submitted during previous review cycles. For revisions, we will make every attempt to use at least one of the reviewers from the prior cycle. Bear in mind that the best proposals tell a clear, persuasive story, and emphasis the importance of the work, the scientific questions, not necessarily the details. Reviewers are generally more interested in *why* you want to do what you propose, not *what* you propose to do. Proposals should be written for a broad audience with some background in learning and/or development.