Flash Grant

Proposal Guidelines & Instructions

Deadline for Application

FY2027 Cycle 2 Deadline:

Wednesday, October 21, 2026 (noon)

This solicitation is open to proposals **focused on topics related to New Approach Methodologies (NAMs)**.

In 2025, the U.S. FDA released its Roadmap to Reducing Animal Testing in Preclinical Safety Studies, outlining "a strategic, stepwise approach for FDA to reduce animal testing in preclinical safety studies with scientifically validated new approach methodologies (NAMs), such as organ-on-a-chip systems, computational modeling, and advanced *in vitro* assays."[1] These *in vitro* human-based systems and other innovative platforms can be used to evaluate immunogenicity, toxicity, pharmacodynamics, and efficacy in preclinical drug studies. In support of this initiative, the current cycle of the Flash Grant program has topics of interest that include, but are not limited to:

- *In vitro* human-derived organoids
- Organ-on-a-chip technologies with human-derived, multi-cell co-cultures
- Microphysiological systems (MPS)
- High-throughput cell-based screening
- Reconstructed or maintained *ex vivo* human tissues
- Other novel model systems that reveal basic mechanisms or explore safety, efficacy, and/or toxicity for human disease
- Integrative systems that use combinations of the above NAMs

Proposals primarily focused on artificial intelligence (AI), in silico modeling and/or simulations, or in-silico experiments are strongly discouraged, even if they align with the NAMs topic. Additionally, Flash Grants do not support development of consumer products and/or mobile apps.

Award announcements will be made in January 2027

If you have any questions about whether your project fits within these criteria, use the contact information at the end of this document to contact NCBiotech staff.

Pre-Submission Information

Application materials can be found on the Flash Grant webpage at: *www.ncbiotech.org/Flash*

Flash Grant FAQs are located at: *www.ncbiotech.org/FlashFAQ*

Read these Flash Program Guidelines & Instructions thoroughly prior to preparing an application. If you have any questions about the program, use the contact information at the end of this document.

Online Submission Portal

Flash Grant proposals are submitted using the online application system, Fluxx. **PIs applying for the first time must register for an account in Fluxx at least 5 business days before submission of the proposal.** See Step 7, page 13 for details.

If you have applied for a grant using the Fluxx funding portal previously (for any NCBiotech funding program), you do not need to register again.

Eligibility

Eligible Institutions

Any North Carolina university or non-profit research organization may apply.

⊗ *Companies and individuals are not eligible to apply for Flash Grants*.

Principal Investigator Eligibility

At the time of submission, the Principal Investigator (PI) must hold a full-time, tenure-track, or tenured faculty appointment, or an appointment as permanent, full-time, clinical or research faculty at the applicant institution or hold an equivalent position.

⊗ *Postdoctoral research fellows and adjunct faculty are not eligible. Other non-permanent research personnel are advised to schedule a consultation with program staff to determine eligibility.*

⊗ *The PI may not have more than two active awards from the North Carolina Biotechnology Center at the same time.*

Intellectual Property Eligibility

No prior invention disclosure, patent application, patent award, or other intellectual property filing relating to the project is required to submit a Flash Grant proposal.

For any project with an associated intellectual property filing or award [*e.g.,* invention disclosure to a university technology transfer office or patent committee/counsel, trademark, copyright, provisional patent application, full patent application, PCT filing, or awarded patent], the technology transfer office of the applicant institution must provide a letter of support attesting that the IP rights are assigned to the institution and have not been committed through license or exclusive option to license to any third party at the time of application.

Purpose

NCBiotech's Flash Grant program was created to identify and energize the most creative ideas that exhibit early indications of exceptional commercial potential. Like a flash of inspiration, Flash Grants infuse a quick jolt of funding at a critical early point when a small, targeted influx of funds can be crucial to shaping innovative research ideas into high potential life sciences technologies.

Flash Grants support short, tightly focused research projects in these two categories:

1. To obtain initial exploratory, proof-of-concept, or feasibility data necessary to suggest the disruptive potential of a life sciences technology.

   and/or

2. To conduct the final experiment(s) needed to advance a basic life sciences research program into the translational research phase of development.

Disruptive life sciences technologies are those that may significantly alter the way a market or industry functions, how a product is developed or sold, or how a disease is treated. Disruptive technologies may also displace or render previous products, methods, and business models obsolete.

Translational research represents the shift in the research from the basic or foundational phase establishing the underlying biological mechanisms (the "how does it work" phase of research) into the earliest stages of product development (the "what is the product/market/route towards commercialization" phase). A "pre-translational" Flash Grant proposal might describe a laboratory project that will generate data necessary to advance to subsequent *in vivo* studies, pre-clinical or clinical trials, or *in situ* field trials.

These micro-grants are intended to provide funding for projects that may ultimately generate follow-on funding, intellectual property filings, licenses, and startup company formation, but are too early for traditional grant funding mechanisms.

Project Requirements

Successful Flash Grant projects are those with project outcomes that clearly advance a line of research or application that has the potential to lead to the creation of a disruptive technology or actionable body of knowledge and/or will advance the research into the translational research phase of development. Projects that are basic science in nature are strongly discouraged.

This solicitation for FY27 Cycle 2 is open to proposals related to **New Approach Methodologies**, as detailed on page 1 of these guidelines.

Required Elements of the Project

All projects must meet the following requirements:

- Directly addresses a recognized unmet need
- Describes a well-defined scientific or technical project that definitively:
  - Addresses a specific question
  - Has well-defined, measurable success/completion metrics
  - Has a clear endpoint
- Describes a well-defined scientific or technical project with aims that are achievable within the requested budget and timeline

Compelling Proposals

A compelling and competitive Flash Grant proposal will, additionally, demonstrate several of the following features:

- Has strong potential for creating, expanding, or advancing protectable intellectual property
- Involves high-risk and/or high impact research
- Includes next steps that aligned to the goals of the project and are appropriate for the stage of development

Program Details

Amount and Period of Funding

A maximum of $30,000 may be requested for projects of up to 12 months in duration.

An additional supplement may be requested by applicants from non-R1 universities for undergraduate interns required to execute the project. See the Flash Grant FAQs webpage to determine whether your institution qualifies for the intern supplement.

For Budget details, see Step 3, page 8, or the Flash Grant FAQs.

There is no match requirement for the Flash Grant program.

Funding Decisions and Payments

Funding decisions will typically be announced within 120 business days of submission. The awards selection process is competitive. Award funding is subject to availability of funds and partial funding may be awarded.

If awarded, grant funds will be disbursed in a two-part payment structure with 75% of funds released at the start of the funding period and 25% held back until approval of required final reporting.

Resubmissions

Only one resubmission of a previously considered Flash Grant proposal is allowed. Any resubmitted proposal must be identified as a resubmission on the online submission form and on the coversheet.

- *A resubmitted proposal must align to the RFP topic and guidelines of the cycle in which it is submitted.*

Review Process

- Examination by NCBiotech staff and/or outside subject matter experts to ensure the proposed project meets program requirements and goals and to evaluate the potential for success.
- Final approval by NCBiotech's senior management.

Evaluation Criteria

Each proposal will be evaluated to determine its compliance with the proposal requirements, and its fit for the program cycle topic areas. Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Degree of fit with the Flash Grant "Required Elements" and with the "Compelling Proposals" elements listed on page 4.

2. Clarity and specificity of the rationale, clear study design with appropriate controls, detailed expected findings or deliverable(s), and a realistic budget and timeline.

Post-award Reporting

A post-award final report that describes the outcomes and impact of funded activities is required. A final financial statement indicating how the funds were spent is also required. More information on reporting requirements will be provided on request or if a grant is awarded.

After a grant is closed, the PI is required to participate in periodic surveys designed to track information on subsequent funding, patents, publications, jobs, companies created, licenses executed, *etc.*, resulting from the awarded project. This information will be used to demonstrate the impact of our programs and may be collected for up to 10 years.

Grantees will notify NCBiotech if subsequent grants are received as a result of Flash Grant funding.

Grantees will acknowledge NCBiotech in publications resulting from Flash Grant support.

Information Release

NCBiotech announces its awards through press releases and other publications. These communications typically include the Project Title and Public Information Summary.

The Public Information Summary is provided by the applicant with the online application and should be written for a lay audience.

No information is released on declined proposals.

Confidentiality

As part of the grants review process, NCBiotech routinely shares the contents of grant applications with both internal and/or external experts to assess the merits of each application.
The Biotechnology Center will endeavor to maintain the confidentiality of all information provided by the applicant. While measures are in place to ensure the appropriate handling of all information provided, the applicant is responsible for limiting the disclosure of any sensitive information that should not be shared outside of the Biotechnology Center.

We encourage applicants to consult with their institution's technology transfer office or intellectual property professional for more specific counsel, as necessary.

Application Instructions

Application materials are located on the Flash Grant webpage at *www.ncbiotech.org/Flash*.

A complete Flash proposal is comprised of a completed application form and four documents:

1. Coversheet signed by the PI and a representative of the institution's sponsored research office
2. Flash proposal
3. Budget form
4. Supporting documentation

A proposal checklist is provided on the Flash Grant webpage.

Step 1: Read the Guidelines & Instructions

Read these Flash Grant Program Guidelines & Instructions thoroughly prior to preparing an application. If you have any questions about the program, use the contact information at the end of this document.

- *Applications that do not include the signature of a representative of your institution's Sponsored Research Office (or an authorized official) on the coversheet will be administratively declined without review.*

- *Applications that do not follow all requirements and instructions may be administratively declined without review.*

- *Applications that do not have an exact match title across all required documents may be administratively declined without review.*

General Proposal Formatting Guidelines

- Use standard font (such as Calibri, Cambria, or Times New Roman) no smaller than 11 point.
- Page set-up should be for single-spacing on 8½"x11" paper.
- Number each page.
- Margins should be ¾" to 1".
- Do not use logos or letterhead on any pages of the proposal except for support letters.

Step 2: Prepare the Flash Proposal

The proposal should be no more than **3 pages** in length and must include the sections listed below. Use the **headings** provided to identify the sections of the proposal.

A. Problem (suggested 2 sentences)

Define the problem or unmet need that this project will address.

B. Rationale (suggested ½ page)

- Please explain why your technology/line of research/discovery applies to either the disruptive category and/or the bridge to translational research category.
- Briefly describe how this line of research will contribute to the development of a commercially available solution to a recognized problem and how your product/discovery/technology/scientific finding will be used.
- Briefly describe how your solution will be superior to available alternative solutions for this problem.

C. Current Status of Research (suggested 1 paragraph)

- Describe the work that has been done to date on this project. Indicate the source of preliminary funding for this project.
- Describe any intellectual property (invention disclosure, patent application, issued patent, trademark, copyright, *etc.*) that has been established to protect the invention(s) relating to this project and line of research. If intellectual property covers this project, the university's technology transfer office is required to write a Letter of Attestation to be included with the supporting documents (See Step 4, page 11 for details).

D. Experimental Design/Tasks/Timeline (suggested 2-4 paragraphs with 1 graphic)

- Describe the specific task(s) or experiment(s) to be accomplished. Detail the possible outcomes for each task.
- Provide a graphic that demonstrates a timeline for completing the project tasks.

E. Deliverables (suggested 1 paragraph)

Projects should have at least one defined, measurable success/completion metric and should be milestone-oriented with a clear endpoint or deliverable identified.

F. Next Steps (suggested 1 paragraph)

Discuss the immediate and long-term next step(s) after completion of the project. Include information pertaining to future intellectual property protections and/or regulatory approvals to be sought based on the results of this project.

G. Pathway to Commercialization (suggested 1 paragraph)

Discuss how the deliverables will advance the scientific knowledge towards a commercialization potential or product.

H. Roles and Responsibilities (suggested one sentence per person)

Describe the specific roles and responsibilities for any key personnel conducting the work on this project.

Inclusion of a to-be-determined postdoctoral fellow, research technician, or other staff member is strongly discouraged. Significant delays can be anticipated for hiring and training of TBD personnel. This does not apply to undergraduate student interns, who may be hired after receipt of an award.

I. References (optional; does not count toward page limit; one page maximum)

References may be included but are limited to a maximum of one page; hyperlinks are allowed.

Step 3: Complete the Budget Package

The Budget Package consists of one (1) PDF document that encompasses two parts. The two parts of the Budget Package include:

1. The Budget Form
2. Required Quotes and Statements of Work if applicable

Budget Package Instructions

- Prepare your budget using the Flash Budget Form provided on the Flash webpage.
- **Use of the Flash Budget Form is required.**
- Please include the PI full name and title at the top of the form. **The title must match exactly with the title used on the Coversheet as well as the Technical Proposal.**

- Each budget line item must include a justification on the line provided within the Budget Form. The justification should be no more than one or two sentences long.
- The Budget Form is provided in Excel but must be converted to PDF for submission.
- **Ensure that all lines of the Budget Form are legible after conversion to PDF format prior to submission.**
- **Combine the Budget Form PDF and any required documentation (quotes, statements of work, etc.) into a single PDF file prior to submission**

Budget Guidelines

- **A maximum of $30,000** for project periods ranging up to **12 months** may be requested.
- There is no match required for a Flash Grant.
- A $7,500 supplement is available exclusively to applicants at non-R1 universities to engage an undergraduate intern for a 12-month project. For semester-long interns, the maximum that can be requested is $3,750.

  These supplemental funds are in addition to the $30,000 maximum for the base grant. Supplemental funds may not be requested for expenses other than an undergraduate intern.

  See the Flash Grant FAQs webpage to determine whether your institution qualifies for the intern supplement.
- NCBiotech grants do not fund any type of overhead or indirect costs.
- Quotes must be provided in the budget package for all contracted research services, core facility fees, library licensing fees, business case development materials, software subscriptions (limited to ≤ 1 year in duration) consultant services, or any equipment over $500.

Budget Form

The Budget Form is comprised of the following 5 sections:

A. **Non-R1 Intern Supplement** - this is the only section that can indicate salary of any kind. To request the intern supplement of up to $7,500, fill out section A. Non-R1 Intern Supplement on the budget form. Otherwise, leave this section blank.

B. **Technical Project Direct Costs** - Experimental Materials and Supplies – materials and supplies listed in this section can be grouped by type and do not require quotes. Examples include reagents, kits, chemicals, disposables, consumables, plasticware, glassware, pipettes, safety materials (gloves, personal protective equipment, etc.).

C. **Technical Project Direct Costs Requiring Quotes** - Description and justification for all core facility fees/charges, nucleic acid synthesis and sequencing, animal purchase, animal per diems, animal housing costs, *etc*. Quotes or statements of work must be provided for all costs included in this section. Quotes must align exactly with the requested amounts listed in the budget form.

D. **CRO, CMO, Contractual, and Consultant Costs** - Description and justification of any contract research, contract manufacturing, other contractual, and consultant costs, including business case materials, if applicable.

   ❖ Quotes or statements of work must be provided for all costs listed in this section.

   ❖ Quotes must align exactly with the requested amounts listed in the budget form.

E. **Scientific/laboratory equipment, Computational equipment, and Software** - Description and name of scientific/laboratory/computational equipment. The total amount requested in section E must be less than $5,000. Software licenses are limited to one year or less in duration.

   ❖ Quotes or statements of work must be provided for all costs listed in this section.

   ❖ Quotes must align exactly with the requested amounts listed on the budget form.

Allowable items as requested funds include, but are not limited to:

- For non-R1 universities requesting an undergraduate intern supplement, a maximum of $7,500 for the year (or $3,750 for a semester) can be requested. To request the intern supplement, fill out section A. Non-R1 Intern Supplement on the budget form. Otherwise, leave this section blank.
- Routine, standard laboratory supplies, kits, disposables, and experimental supplies (can be grouped, no quotes needed)
- All equipment purchases listed in Section E must total less than $5,000.
- Contracted research services (quotes required)
- Contractual and consultant fees (quotes or Statement of Work required)
- Animal purchase and *per diems* (quotes required)
- Core facility fees (quotes required)
- Commissioning an independent professional assessment of the business case for technology development (quotes or Statement of Work required)

⊗ *Technical project activities cannot be subcontracted to any commercial firm or individual with financial ties to the PI. These arrangements carry the risk that the project may appear as subsidized R&D for a company, which is not consistent with program objectives.*

Unallowable items as requested funds include:

- Indirect costs/overhead/facilities and administrative (F&A) costs
- Travel expenses of any kind
- Legal fees including licensing or litigation fees
- Patenting and publication costs
- Equipment purchases totaling over $5,000
- Software subscriptions longer than one [1] year

⊗ *Salary for any personnel is **NOT** allowable, except for an undergraduate intern at non-R1 universities. (See above for details). All supplemental undergraduate intern funds requested must be used for undergraduate intern salary only.*

⊗ *Undergraduate, graduate, or professional student stipends, tuition, housing support, and fees are **NOT** allowable.*

Quotes

If you are not sure which items on the budget require quotes, please seek a consultation regarding your budget.

All quotes must be on letterhead, dated, and signed by the vendor.

⊗ Hyperlinks to vendor websites are not acceptable as quotes. You must upload the actual quote or a screenshot from the website as a PDF showing the item being requested and the quoted amount.

Quotes are required for all budget line items in Sections D and E of the budget form, including for core facility fees, contracted services, *per diem* animal fees/rates, or any line items over $500 per individual piece listed on the budget form, which includes:

- Core facility fees
- Animal purchase and per diems
- Contracted manufacturing costs
- Contracted research costs
- Equipment costing over $500
- Business case development materials

Limit quotes to a maximum of 3 pages each.

For consultants, a Letter of Commitment or Statement of Work may be provided in lieu of a quote, provided that the letter/SOW is dated, is on letterhead, and directly references the total cost, tasks, and deliverables to be provided.

For *per diem* or fee schedule documents, the exact rates being used must be clearly highlighted on the quote and justified within the budget justification.

The budget form and any additional required documentation must be combined into a single PDF file prior to submission.

Step 4: Prepare the Supporting Documentation

Combine the following Supporting Documents into a single PDF file.

Proposals where individual documents are uploaded separately may be administratively declined.

A. Biosketches (Required, 1 page each)

Biosketches are required for all personnel named in the Roles and Responsibilities section (see above). Use of the form provided on the Flash Grant webpage is required.

B. If applicable: Letter of Attestation from the Technology Transfer Officer (or appropriate authorized institutional official)

If there is any intellectual property related to the line of research/project (invention disclosure, provisional patent application, full patent application, issued patent, trademark, copyright, *etc*.), this letter should:

a. Confirm the current status of intellectual property (IP) protection relating to the core technology, including filing numbers, titles, and dates where appropriate.

b. Attest that the IP rights are assigned to the applicant's institution and have not been committed through license or option to license to any third party at the time of application.

c. Confirm the university's commitment to continued IP development.

d. Provide a non-confidential summary of any licensing discussions to date relating to the technology.

e. Indicate how the proposed project will support continued IP development and licensing efforts.

C. Letters of support from university representatives, partners, or other stakeholders (Optional, but encouraged)

A maximum of three letters may be submitted. Include letters of support that demonstrate enthusiasm for the proposed project.

D. Documentation for projects involving animal or human studies
(Required if applicable)

- Document that notification of the research has been made to the Institution's IRB or IACUC:
  - A letter from the IACUC or IRB documenting that notification of the proposed research project has been made at the time of the application and that approval from the IACUC/IRB will be sought if the project is awarded if an approved protocol is not currently in place. This letter must be on the institutional IACUC/IRB's letterhead, signed, and dated.

    Or

  - Documentation from the IACUC or IRB stating that an approved protocol is in place to support the research. This letter or other documentation must provide the name of the investigator of the approved protocol, all persons entitled to work under that approved protocol, the title of the approved protocol, the approval date and duration of the approved protocol, and confirmation from the IACUC/IRB that the proposed research project falls within the approved protocol.

- Power Analysis
  - Provide a power analysis indicating that the studies proposed have the correct number of human or animal subjects required to achieve an *a priori* confidence level of at least 80%,

    Or

  - For proof-of-concept studies, provide the rationale for why a power analysis is not warranted.

Step 5: Complete the Coversheet

Use the Cover Sheet form provided on the Flash webpage.

The Cover Sheet must be signed by the PI and an authorized official of the Sponsored Research Office at the time of submission.

Step 6: Convert all of your proposal documents into PDF format

Convert your four proposal documents directly into four PDF files.

⊗ *Do not print and scan the proposal into a PDF document as this increases the size of the file and can distort the images.*

Step 7: Complete the Online Application Form

IMPORTANT FIRST STEP:
The PI for the Flash proposal must register for an account on the NCBiotech Funding Portal, Fluxx (*https://ncbiotech.fluxx.io*), at least five days prior to the deadline in order to submit a proposal. Click *here* for more information on the registration and application process.

If you have applied for a grant using the Funding Portal previously (for any NCBiotech funding program), you do not need to register again.

The PI must submit the proposal through their NCBiotech Funding Portal account. Proposals cannot be submitted through accounts belonging to OSR representatives.

After the registration is completed, log into your Fluxx account. The Flash application form will be located under the "Apply for Funding" folder at the left of the screen. Follow the instructions provided.

⊗ *Proposals sent by e-mail or hard copy will not be accepted.*

Principal Investigator and Organization Information

The contact information for the submitting PI and organization will be pre-populated on the application form.

Proposal Information

Complete all other fields on the form regarding the project.

Public Information Summary

A Public Information Summary is required and is entered directly into the application form. If your proposal is funded, this concise, easy-to-read summary may be used in NCBiotech press releases and

other publications. This summary is intended for a general audience and should not include complex scientific terminology.

The summary should convey to the citizens of North Carolina why the project is important. The maximum allowable length for this summary is 50 words.

Upload your four PDF documents

Follow the instructions for attaching the required documents to the online application (Coversheet, Proposal, Budget Form, and Supporting Documentation).

Important: Only one of each of the proposal files may be attached to the application for a total of four attachments.

- ⊗ *Applications which have multiple individual files uploaded instead of the four PDF files noted above are subject to administrative declination.*

Step 8: Review and Submit

Carefully review your application package then submit your Flash application prior to the Program Deadline.

Submission of your grant application indicates that:

1. You have read and understand the information and directions in this Application Package and agree to be bound by the conditions stated herein.

2. You release the North Carolina Biotechnology Center from any claim for damages caused by:
   a. Disclosures required under the provisions of any North Carolina or United States law, statute, or regulation,
   b. Disclosures made in connection with the North Carolina Biotechnology Center's funding review and approval process,
   c. Disclosures required by rule or order of any court of competent jurisdiction,
   d. Any other non-negligent, inadvertent, unintentional, unknowing, or immaterial disclosure.

3. All research conducted during the proposed project is performed in accordance with established university policies and procedures, including—but not limited to—policies and procedures applicable to research involving human subjects, laboratory animals, or hazardous agents and materials.

4. If the project proposed involves vertebrate animals, the project complies with federal guidelines for vertebrate animal care and experimentation.

Submission Notification

You will receive a confirmation email notifying you that the Biotechnology Center has received your application.

Contact Information

Michelle Collins
Director, Grant Process Operations
michelle_collins@ncbiotech.org

References

[1] FDA Roadmap to Reducing Animal Testing in Preclinical Safety Studies. www.fda.gov/media/186092/download?attachment