

## STATION 41 THERAPEUTICS ACCELERATOR

### REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

The **Station 41 Therapeutics Accelerator** invites investigators from the **University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)** to submit proposals for collaborative drug discovery and preclinical development projects. This initiative fosters partnerships between UAB principal investigators/inventors and **Southern Research (SR)** investigators, leveraging SR's applied science expertise and biotechnology entrepreneurship mentorship.

*Formerly known as the Alabama Drug Discovery Alliance (ADDA), this program has been rebranded as the **Station 41 Therapeutics Accelerator**. While the ADDA name is retained for legacy reference, the new framework reflects an evolved approach to drug discovery.*

We maintain a transparent and collaborative relationship with the UAB Harbert Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (HIIE) to ensure shared intellectual property (IP) protection policies for project-related innovations.

### FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The program now offers a flexible suite of grant mechanisms, designed to support projects at various stages of drug discovery and early preclinical development. This structure is aligned with current industry best practices.

### PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must submit the following documents:

- 1. Five-Page Proposal** (*Templates available upon request*)
  - **Page 1: Goals, Hypothesis, Specific Aims, and Milestones**
    - Clearly outline the objectives, including Go/No-Go decision points
  - **Page 2: Drug Discovery Critical Path Figure**
    - Select the appropriate grant mechanism template to illustrate the project roadmap (see Mechanisms on Page 2)
  - **Pages 3–5: Project Narrative**
    - Background and Significance
    - Pilot or Preliminary Data (if available)
    - Research Design and Methods (Approach)
    - Key Personnel (bullet-point format encouraged)
- 2. Cover Letter**
  - A brief introductory letter summarizing the project's relevance and potential impact.
- 3. NIH Biosketch**
  - Required for the Principal Investigator (PI) and, if applicable, co-investigators.
- 4. References**

### File Format & Submission

- **Combine all documents into a single PDF file.**
- **Email the proposal to both contacts below:**
  - **Erik Schwiebert**, Director, Station 41: [eschwiebert@southernresearch.org](mailto:eschwiebert@southernresearch.org)

*Applicants should inform Erik of their intent to apply and direct any process-related questions. They are encouraged to find an SR co-investigator for proposal design. Templates, background materials, and SR scientist introductions are available upon request.*

### DEADLINES & REVIEW PROCESS

- RFP Announcement: **Mid-March 2025**
- Submission Window: **Open through the end of April 2025**
  - The extended deadline accommodates other critical funding cycles during this period.
- Proposal Review: **May 2025**
  - A confidential review panel consisting of SR and UAB scientists will assess submissions under the oversight of the Executive Director and Program Manager.
  - If a Confidential Disclosure Agreement (CDA) is required, please contact Dr. Schwiebert to arrange one.

### BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

A detailed budget **is not required** at the time of submission. For selected proposals, the Station 41 team will collaborate with the PI to develop a budget that ensures equitable resource allocation between the UAB laboratory and SR's applied science units.

***We look forward to receiving your proposals and fostering innovative collaborations in drug discovery and preclinical development.***

## **Appendix: The New Station 41 Therapeutics Accelerator Grant Mechanisms**

### ➤ **Pre-HTS Assay Design Grant (\$50-100K for 1 year or less)**

You may have a compelling drug target for one or more human disease indications with unmet clinical need; however, you need to design and optimize a high-throughput screening (HTS) friendly assay first. The grant is created anew and positioned for this key first step.

*Importantly, projects that are successful can progress to either or both mechanisms below.*

### ➤ **Traditional HTS Critical Path-driven Grant (\$100K-200K over 1-2 years)**

ADDA's traditional and previously utilized mechanism. However, there is a range of funding support and time, that seeks to fit the complexity of the primary HTS and primary and secondary validation steps. It may be that a combination of active small molecule screening and virtual screening is performed to control costs as well as maximize the chemical diversity of small molecules screened. It will also be guided by a Critical Path of assay steps that is agreed upon by all parties and set in stone before the project begins. This will be a collaborative effort with the expertise from both SR and UAB.

### ➤ **Computer Model-driven Drug Discovery and Validation Grant (\$150K for 1 year)**

New grant mechanism that seeks to capture the emerging discipline of computer-aided drug discovery. This project may not need to use artificial intelligence (AI). It could utilize deep and/or iterative machine learning or computer model-driven or protein structure-driven drug design. The nature of the therapeutic does not have to be a small molecule; it can be an antibody, a peptide, an antibody-drug conjugate, or a large protein therapeutic. This will be a collaborative effort with the expertise from both SR and UAB.

*Importantly, projects that are successful in either or both grant mechanisms above may progress to the new added mechanisms below.*

### ➤ **The Post-HTS Chemistry Optimization (\$150K for 1 year)**

Grant mechanism intended for those that already have a candidate hit-to-lead or lead therapeutic (also referred as a "pharmacophore scaffold"), that is not optimized. The chemistry could be medicinal chemistry to improve potency while maintaining efficacy and/or it may involve formulation chemistry to improve the solubility ahead of in vivo studies using one or more possible routes of administration. This work is not particularly innovative; however, it is essential to the future success and progression of the lead therapeutic in preclinical development. SR has deep expertise with these important chemistry steps.

*Importantly, projects that improve and progress as a result of successful chemistry optimization may progress to the final mechanism below.*

### ➤ **Accelerator-to-Venture "Bridge" Grant (\$50K for 1 year)**

We are also discussing the need for the Accelerator-to-Venture "Bridge" Grant to position the project for entry into our Station 41 Venture Studio. Projects will likely require time to reach this step. This mechanism will be reserved for viable projects where a key experiment needs to be performed (for example, in vivo proof-of-concept in an animal model or in vitro PoC in a diseased human cell model) to position the project to seed a new venture. Simply put, if the project is successful, that success drives its progression through the grant types and through the Accelerator.

*A single project may benefit from as many as 4 "stepwise" grant mechanisms.* Our job is to help you navigate these steps and to provide the correct grant fit at the correct time. The ideal outcome is a project that benefits from multiple grant types (up to \$400,000 in funding) and seeds a new startup company concept within our Station 41 Incubator or around our Station 41 Hub Concept to augment the Birmingham life sciences and biotechnology ecosystem. The Accelerator will also assess each project continually for the suitable "proof-of-concept inflection point" where a Small Business grant can be sought in parallel, submitted by a newly formed startup or small business concern.