

## Mentored Research Development Award (MRDA) Program Preliminary Application and Full Proposal Instructions

### *MRDA Submission Overview*

Pre-applications are due by March 10, 2025 and full Proposals are due on April 14, 2025. Submission requires registration on the ACCEL site ([www.de-ctr.org](http://www.de-ctr.org)). From the ACCEL dashboard (<https://dash.de-ctr.org/auth/login>) navigate to Funding > Funding Opportunities > Mentored Research Development Award Program. For the Preliminary Application click on "Submit a Preliminary Application." For the full Proposal, click on "Submit Proposal."

#### **WEBSITE HELP**

For issues with the website, use [Help \(de-ctr.org\)](http://www.de-ctr.org/help) (located at 'More' in the upper right corner then 'Help'), and enter a ticket for a quick response from our web team. **We recommend using Chrome as your browser.**

### *Overview of the Pre-Application (Letter of Intent) Submission Portal*

(The hyperlinks below provide video-based guidance)

#### **PROJECT INFORMATION**

In this tab you will be asked to provide your institution and indicate if you have enough protected time to write your grant.

#### **TEAM MEMBERS**

In this tab your name and role as PI will be automatically populated from your ACCEL profile. Please note that multiple PIs are not currently permitted for MRDAs. Within this tab, use the Add New Team Member button to add your Primary/Sponsoring Mentor(s) and any other members of your mentorship team. For each mentor added to the team, you will be asked to upload a version of their Biosketch. These [Biosketches](#) can be updated as needed before final submission of your application.

#### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

This tab asks you to complete some demographic questions that we use to characterize the group of MRDA applicants. If you complete the demographic questions in your ACCEL profile, those answers will automatically populate this section of your MRDA application (and all future ACCEL applications asking for this information).

#### **MRDA TYPE DETERMINATION**

This tab asks you to read about and select the type of MRDA you want. Your choice should be determined based upon the type of position you have (i.e., clinician scientist, academic investigator) and whether you have sufficient protected time to write your grant proposal. As mentioned in the RFA, the ACCEL PDC is committed to assuring that MRDA Scholars from all scientific backgrounds and situations are successful. Individuals who have faced significant difficulty in their prior research efforts due to their personal circumstances or the lack of accessible resources in their training environment can request an "enhanced MRDA," to cover effort or funding above what is provided by a standard MRDA to bolster their professional network and develop their grant proposal. Submission of a request for enhanced levels of support must receive administrative approval prior to submission of a full application. Someone from the PDC will reach out to you after review of your pre-application to collect additional information and provide approval of the MRDA option you are seeking.

**PAST MRDA EXPERIENCE**

This tab asks if you have held an MRDA in the past and whether you received effort offset as part of that award.

**GRANT PROPOSAL INFORMATION**

This tab asks you to provide information on the type of grant proposal will you be writing during your MRDA period (e.g., ACCEL Pilot grant; REACH Center Pilot grant; R21). Please include a link to the Notice of Funding Opportunity or Request for Applications if you have access to it. It also asks for the due date of that grant and an overview of the research you will propose in the planned grant submission. NOTE: This information will be used by the PDC to begin to identify reviewers for your MRDA application. This entry is not used to judge the scientific merit of the work you propose. Next, this section asks when you would like to start and end MRDA funding. Submissions for this MRDA round should begin after July 1, 2025 and should end by June 30, 2026. Finally, this section asks you to upload signed Mentor and Mentee Expectation Forms. **YOU SHOULD CONTACT JULIANNE ROSS FOR BLANK VERSIONS OF THESE FORMS.**

**SUMMARY AND SUBMIT**

This final tab reviews the various sections and will alert you to elements that are missing or incomplete. Once all sections are complete, please click the submit button.

## Overview of the Full Proposal Submission Portal

(The hyperlinks below provide video-based guidance)

### PROJECT INFORMATION

In this tab you will be asked to enter your Project Title, your Project Abstract (limit of 30 lines of text) and a [Lay Abstract](#).

### TEAM MEMBERS

In this tab your name and role as PI will be automatically populated from your ACCEL profile.

There is a spot asking if this is a Multiple PI project -Please note that **multiple PIs are not currently permitted for MRDAs** – ensure that this is checked “No.”

Next, use the Add New Team Member button to re-add Mentors to your Team. You must have at least one Primary/Sponsoring Mentor. Use the Role drop down box to identify each Team Member you add as either a “Primary/Sponsoring Mentor” or a “Mentor.” For each mentor added to the team, you will be asked to (re)upload their Biosketch. Please ensure that these [Biosketches](#) fulfill the requirements described below.

You will be asked if this is a new Mentorship Team. If you have previously worked with a Primary/Sponsoring Mentor named on this application, please check “Yes.”

### MENTORING PLANS

Those identified as Primary/Sponsoring Mentor(s) will receive an email with a link to complete a *Mentorship Plan*. This tab shows when they were contacted and allows you to see when the [Mentoring Plan](#) is completed. You should work with your Primary/Sponsoring Mentor(s) to create these plans, and your Primary Mentor(s) must upload the material. Additional instructions for the *Mentorship Plan*(s) are provided below.

### IDP (Individual Development Plan)

This tab will direct you to create or update your [IDP](#) and provides a link to do so. The *IDP* asks you about your career goals and steps to achieve those goals. Information on how the *IDP* will be reviewed is provided below.

### EDUCATION

This tab asks you to complete questions about your education that we use to characterize the group of MRDA applicants. If you completed the education fields in your ACCEL profile, those answers will automatically populate this section of your MRDA application (and all future ACCEL applications asking for this information).

### DEMOGRAPHICS

This tab asks you to complete some demographic questions that we use to characterize the group of MRDA applicants. If you completed the demographic questions in your ACCEL profile, those answers will automatically populate this section of your MRDA application (and all future ACCEL applications asking for this information).

### MRDA TYPE DETERMINATION

This tab asks you to confirm the type of MRDA you are seeking. Your choice should be determined based upon the type of position you have (i.e., clinician scientist, academic investigator) and whether you have sufficient protected time to write your grant proposal. As mentioned in the RFA, the ACCEL PDC is committed to assuring that MRDA Scholars from all scientific backgrounds and situations are successful. Individuals who have faced significant difficulty in their prior research efforts due to their personal circumstances or the lack of accessible resources in their training environment can request an “enhanced MRDA,” to cover effort or funding above what is provided by a standard MRDA to bolster their professional network and develop their grant proposal. Please select the MRDA type that you and a member of the PDC decided is most appropriate for you.

If you select “Clinical Investigator” or “Academic Investigator,” specific follow-up questions will appear, including a request for the name of the individual who will release you from your current responsibilities to provide the time and effort you are requesting for your MRDA.

### ORCiD

This tab prompts you to set up and link your [ORCiD](#) account to your application. We use this information for tracking purposes, and **it is required** to submit your application. For questions or assistance with your ORCiD number, email [mentoring@de-ctr.org](mailto:mentoring@de-ctr.org).

## FILES

All of the sections of your application will be attached through use of this tab. They are listed here in alphabetic order: Letters of Support from your Department Chair, Mentor, Other; MRDA Plan and Timeline; PI Biographical Sketch; Previous MRDA Awardees: Progress Report (for past MRDA awardees only); References (work cited in your Research Summary); Research Summary; and, Summary of Non-salary Expenses Requested. **Instructions regarding the preparation of each of these application components are provided below.**

## CONSULTATIONS COMPLETED

This tab asks you to indicate if you have already consulted with various institutional and ACCEL resources regarding the **grant** you are proposing to write during MRDA funding. **We do not expect you to have completed any of these consultations at the time of your MRDA submission.**

## SUMMARY/SUBMIT

This tab will review the components of your application and alert you to items that have not yet been completed. Once all of the items are complete, you can submit your application.

## *MRDA Proposal Component Instructions*

Applications should be prepared using 11pt Arial (or larger) font with ½ inch (or larger) margins. Applications must include the following sections:

- i. A *Research Summary* (no more than 2 pages) including:
  - a. **Background and significance** of the clinical/translational problem to be studied in the planned grant application and a draft of your specific aims;
  - b. Overview of the **approach**/methodology to be used;
  - c. **Long-term research goals and potential impact** of the line of research being developed by the applicant;
  - d. The specific target funding agency (e.g., ACCEL, NIH, NSF, AHA), funding mechanism name and number (e.g., pilot grant, R21, CAREER Award, Grant-in-Aid), and grant submission deadline.
- ii. An *MRDA Plan and Timeline* (no more than 2 pages) including:
  - a. The amount and duration of effort requested (percent effort/months or course release/semester) -OR- the amount of funds requested and an overview of how it will be spent (details regarding funds will be provided in a Budget Request as described below);
  - b. An overview of planned MRDA activities and a description of resources readily available to the applicant to ensure attainment of the MRDA objectives (e.g., mentoring team, collaborators, analytical tools, ACCEL resources, grant readers/reviewers). See list of *Activities Covered* below. Please specify the frequency and duration of meetings with your Mentor(s);
  - c. A detailed timeline of planned MRDA activities beginning with initiation of the MRDA work and ending with submission of the targeted grant. Submissions for this call should propose an MRDA start date on or after July 1, 2025. MRDA activities should be built into SMART goals (See: <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/careers/research/fellows/career/individual/create/index.cfm>) with plans and deadlines related to activities such as talking to a Program Officer, completing the first draft of the Aims page, completing the first draft of the Approach, getting feedback on and revising drafts, requesting a Mentoring and Advisory Council (MAC) Mock review, etc.
- iii. *Summary of Non-salary Expenses Requested*. This is a required attachment. If you are requesting effort offset as a Clinician Investigator or Academic Investigator, please attach a document that says, "No Non-salary Expenses are being Requested." If requesting a "Funds But No Protected Time" MRDA, create a **Draft Budget Request with Justification** including:
  - a. An itemized list of each non-salary related request (e.g., travel, trainings, services, fees);
  - b. The direct cost for each item;
  - c. A justification for each item (emphasizing impact on grant competitiveness);
  - d. The total direct costs requested.

## Activities Covered

MRDAs are designed to support activities associated with writing and submitting highly competitive clinical and translational research grants. MRDAs CANNOT be used to support new research activities such as the enrollment of subjects or prospective data acquisition. The following list includes examples of activities that are allowed under an MRDA and that should be integrated into your MRDA Plan as appropriate:

- i. Meet with mentors and collaborators;
- ii. Participate in PD Core grant development workshops, peer group sessions, and mock study sections;
- iii. Draft, refine, and finalize the specific aims and research strategy for a research grant submission;
- iv. Complete analysis of existing pilot data and prepare figures for a research grant submission;
- v. Determine best research methods and alternative approaches for the targeted grant submission;
- vi. Consult and collaborate with the ACCEL BERD Core to develop an effective study design and analytic approach for a research grant submission and an envisioned larger program of research;
- vii. Draft documents for Institutional Review Board consideration;
- viii. Respond to comments / suggestions from previous reviewers or from leaders in the field to whom a copy of your potential grant submission was sent for review.

## MRDA Proposal Supporting Documents Instructions

- i. Complete or update your *Individual Development Plan (IDP)*: (<https://dash.de-ctr.org/profiles/idp/overview>). Please see review criteria for the IDP described below.
- ii. Upload NIH-formatted *Biosketches* for yourself and all members of the mentoring team. These Biosketches MUST be in current NIH format (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>). **The Biosketches of the mentors should describe their experiences as mentors and why they are appropriate mentors for this applicant and this research plan.**
- iii. Create a *Mentoring Plan* with your Primary/Sponsoring Mentor(s). **Prior to completing the *Mentoring Plan(s)*, each Primary/Sponsoring Mentor should complete a Mentoring Profile on the ACCEL website.** This requires each Mentor to create an ACCEL account and login. Once in the portal, the Mentor should navigate to the Profiles tab at the top of the screen, select “Mentor Profile,” indicate that they would like to create a Mentoring Profile, and complete the items about their mentoring experience. **They can then navigate to the “Mentoring Plans” tab. There they can choose your MRDA by the title and click “complete plan.”** The information from their Mentoring Profile will be pulled into the Mentoring Plan. They will be asked to upload a copy of their Biosketch. They will also be asked to:
  - a. Describe/characterize the nature and extent of their working relationship with you;
  - b. Indicate how they helped you prepare the MRDA application;
  - c. Describe how they envision the proposed project fostering your expertise in Clinical and Translational Research;
  - d. Specify how frequently you will meet together and how long each meeting will be;
  - e. Identify the specific skills that they will help you develop during the project period;
  - f. Indicate whether they have reviewed your IDP;
  - g. Commit to completing a mentor-mentee compact if the MRDA is awarded; and
  - h. Provide additional information regarding the Mentorship Plan. **This final section of the Mentoring Plan should clearly specify how the Mentoring Team (if there is one) will collaborate together to support you in achieving your MRDA Plan and writing a strong grant application.**
- iv. *Letters of Support* from each member of the mentoring team **detailed your potential, describing their current mentoring relationship (if any) with you, and providing specifics regarding their role and contributions during the MRDA funding period (e.g., how frequently you will meet, and what the focus of the meetings will be).** Please create one pdf that includes letters from all your named Mentors and attach it next to: “Letter of Support – Mentor.” If there are additional letters of support, please combine those letters into a single pdf for uploading next to “Letter of Support – Other.”

- v. A letter provided by your Division Chief or Department Chair confirming support for your participation in the MRDA program and **providing assurance that you currently have protected time or will be released from clinical, teaching, or other responsibilities for the amount of time/effort and duration requested**, consistent with the Timeline specified, should the MRDA application be approved.  
**If non-salary support is requested, the letter must:**
  - a. detail the support requested (e.g., attendance at a specific conference, etc.)
  - b. clearly describe the applicant's need for the requested resources.**If an effort offset is requested, the letter must:**
  - a. acknowledge that, if awarded, the MRDA will be used to offset clinical, teaching or other non-research effort and will not be used to cover time already released for research, free time spent on research, or time spent on days off;
  - b. clearly state the specific time release for the MRDA activities (i.e., % effort and number of months; number of courses and number of semesters)
  - c. IF A CLINICIAN INVESTIGATOR MRDA IS SOUGHT: indicate agreement to split the MRDA-associated salary costs with the ACCEL Program.
- vi. Applicants who have received a previous MRDA must provide a *Progress Report* document detailing:
  - a. the outcomes of their previous MRDA funding (e.g., grant funding, publications, presentations)
  - b. a detailed explanation of the need for additional MRDA support

### ***Candidate, MRDA Plan, and Research Summary Review Criteria***

The following criteria will be used to evaluate the merit of the proposal:

- i. The likelihood of the applicant's success in competing for an external grant based on the Mentor's assessment of the candidate's research potential (i.e., as detailed in *Letter(s) of Support*) and a review of the application materials (e.g., *Research Plan, Biosketches*).
- ii. The clarity, specificity (i.e., use of SMART goals), and scope of the *MRDA Plan* and the likelihood of successfully accomplishing the proposed objectives in the proposed *Timeline*.
- iii. The availability of collaborators, core lab resources, analytical tools, and other relevant resources to support the applicant.
- iv. The relevance of the envisioned grant proposal to the DE-CTR ACCEL mission. Although all meritorious applications will be considered for funding, in cases where multiple applications are ranked at the same level of merit, priority will be given to areas of emphasis defined by the DE-CTR ACCEL. We encourage submissions describing Community Engaged Research and/or addressing Social Determinants of Health, Health Disparities/Equity, and Substance Use (e.g., the Opioid Epidemic).  
 ACCEL prioritizes:
  - a. Projects addressing medically underserved populations
  - b. Projects addressing conditions disproportionately affecting Delawareans

Please note that priority will be given to those who have not previously been a recipient of an MRDA.

### ***Individual Development Plan Review Criteria***

Reviewers will assess whether the *MRDA Plan* is consistent with and will facilitate your career goals as detailed in your *IDP*. A focus will be placed on the research goals (e.g., achieving external funding, launching a research program) you state in your *IDP*.

### ***Mentor(s) and Mentoring Plan Review Criteria***

The following criteria will be used to evaluate the mentoring components of the application:

- i. The Primary/Sponsoring Mentor(s) has appropriate experience as a mentor to junior faculty seeking research funding (e.g., past record of numerous successful mentees detailed in *Mentoring Profile*).
- ii. The Mentor(s) is/are suitable for this project (topic area, study design/methods, involvement in proposal) and this mentee (*Biosketch(s), Letter(s) of Support*).

- iii. The *Mentoring Plan* is appropriate for this project and mentee, each mentor's role in the plan is clear, and each mentor is devoting enough time to the professional development of the mentee to accomplish the *MRDA Plan*.

### *MRDA Submission, Review, and Required Activities Timeline*

Due Date	Action
March 10, 2025	Preapplication (Letter of Intent) due
April 14, 2025	Proposals are due for Mentoring Oversight Committee review
April 28, 2025	Additional information requests are sent to applicants to clarify budget requests (if needed)
June 18, 2025	Funding decisions will be made by the Executive Committee and awardees will be announced
July 1, 2025	MRDA Scholars will be admitted to the MRDA program; scholars may begin work
June 30, 2026	Work on all MRDAs must be completed

**Comments or Questions** about the MRDA program?

Contact the PDC Program Coordinator Julianne Ross at [Julianne.Ross@nemours.org](mailto:Julianne.Ross@nemours.org).



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