BRIGHAM HEALTH
BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S
Program for Interdisciplinary Neuroscience

WOMEN'S brain INITIATIVE

Women's Brain Initiative
2026 Research Pilot Award Program

The Women's Brain Initiative (WBI), a component of the BWH Program for Interdisciplinary Neuroscience, is pleased to invite proposals for its 2026 Research Pilot Award Program. The application deadline is **Sunday Sept 13, 2026**.

The overall aim of the WBI is to advance our understanding of how sex differences affect the brain—including the risk, progression and treatment of brain disorders—and how female-specific factors may influence brain health. WBI programs are open to investigators from across all Brigham research and clinical departments and from any field related to women's brain health. Further Information may be found at https://www.bwhneurosciences.org/womens-brain-initiative/

The WBI Pilot Award Program is targeted to early-career investigators at the Brigham, including postdoctoral research fellows, clinical fellows, instructors, and assistant professors within 3 years of appointment as of the application deadline. Please see the WBI website for information about past awardees.

Applicants may request up to $50,000 direct costs plus indirect costs up to 20%, for a 1-year funding period. We intend to support up to four awards in the current cycle.

Clinical, translational and basic research will be considered. Researchers in any department or discipline are welcome to apply, provided their proposal has direct relevance to the goals of the Women's Brain Initiative. We especially welcome proposals that address brain health as it relates to low-resource communities. For applicants who do not have an independent lab, preference will be given to proposals that demonstrate the applicant's ability to develop novel research directions that are distinct from the ongoing projects of their PI mentor, and/or to acquire additional training that will support their transition to future independence.

Timetable

RFP announced:	July 15, 2026
Proposals due:	Sept 13, 2026
Recipients announced:	Late Oct/early Nov 2026
Funding commences:	Soon after announcement

Funds and purpose

UPDATE, SEPT 4, 2026: After this RFA was posted, MGB announced that the indirect cost floor will increase from 20% to 25%, effective Oct 1, 2026. Therefore, WBI is increasing our total budget for this pilot program, to cover the increased IDC rate; applicants may request direct costs up to $50,000 as before, plus 25% indirect costs, for a total of $62,500.

Pilot awards will be for up to $50,000 direct costs, plus indirect costs not to exceed 20%, over a one-year period. The funds should be fully expended by the end of this period. Requests for no-cost extensions will need to be justified and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Funds can be used for salary support, research costs, travel expenses associated with external collaborations, and/or participation in scientific meetings during the project period (subject to normal institutional policy on such expenses).

Eligibility

You are invited to submit a proposal if you meet the following criteria:

- You have a doctoral degree (e.g., MD, PhD, DVM or equivalent) and are a member of the BWH research community (i.e., a primary appointment at BWH that is expected to continue throughout the funding period).
- You are an early-career investigator (postdoc, clinical fellow, instructor or equivalent, or assistant professor within three years of appointment as of the submission deadline).
- US and non-US citizens are welcome to apply.
- Each applicant may submit only one application.

Other Terms of the Program

- All recipients will be expected to: (i) provide a report at the end of the funding period, and (ii) participate in WBI events where they will present their work to internal or external audiences.

- All recipients shall remain full-time employees at BWH for the duration of the award. If a recipient departs from BWH during the award period, all unspent funds shall be returned to the Women's Brain Initiative.

- The funds should be fully expended by the end of the funding period. Requests for no-cost extensions will need to be justified and may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Review Criteria

Applications will be judged by a panel of expert reviewers, who will be invited to consider the following criteria when making their recommendations:

- **Applicant qualifications**—Does the applicant's track record demonstrate exceptional accomplishment, future promise, and commitment to basic or clinical research? Do they have the necessary skills and training to conduct the proposed work? For applicants who do not have their own lab, do they show the potential to develop an independent research program in the future?

- **Significance**—Does the project address an important scientific question or technical/practical challenge relevant to the Women's Brain Initiative?

- **Approach**—Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential pitfalls and consider alternative approaches? Is the project feasible and likely to be completed in the proposed time frame with the proposed resources?

- **Budget**—Is the requested budget realistic and adequately justified?

- **Career Development**—What training or skills will the applicant gain through the proposed work? Does their lab and collaborative network provide opportunities (e.g., training, mentorship, access to resources and expertise) that will advance the applicant's research and career development?

- **Path Forward**—If the aims of the proposal are achieved, is there potential for further funding (e.g., federal, philanthropic, commercial), a durable collaborative relationship, changes in clinical practice and/or other tangible outcomes?

Applications will be reviewed by a Selection Committee comprised of Brigham faculty members. Decisions by the Selection Committee shall be final. No written feedback will be provided to applicants.

Full Application (due Sunday Sept 13, 2026)

1. Completed cover sheet (available **here**)
2. A research statement describing the work that you propose to undertake (maximum three pages). Figures and tables must fit within the three-page limit. References may be on a separate page and will not count toward this page limit. Text should be 11-point font or larger (Times New Roman, Arial or similar), with margins at least 0.5 inches. Single spacing is allowed, provided all material is readily legible.

3. A personal statement describing your interest in women's brain health, including future career goals and training to be gained through this award. Also, please include: (i) the anticipated fraction of your time to be devoted to this project; (ii) the start date and anticipated timeline for your project, assuming that funds become available soon after awardees are notified; (iii) other funding sources and amounts obtained to date and/or other funding applications pending for this work or related work; and (iv) how results may lead to further funding opportunities or other tangible outcomes. (Maximum 500 words.)
4. Budget, up to a maximum total $50,000 direct costs over one year. The budget must also include applicable indirect costs, not to exceed 20% (i.e. the total budget including IDC should not exceed $60,000). Please include a brief explanation/justification of the major budget items and timeline.
5. Applicant's CV or NIH biosketch and a summary of current and pending support
6. For applicants who do not have an independent lab, a letter of support from your PI or primary faculty mentor. The letter should describe key resources that will be available to the applicant, including any additional funding sources that will support their training and research project
7. For applicants who do not have an independent lab, your PI's CV or biosketch including their current and pending support.

All items, in the above order, must be compiled into a **single** PDF**.** Only the single PDF document will be shared with the reviewers. Incomplete application packages may be rejected.

How to apply

- No letter of intent is required.
- Deadline for the receipt of the application is **Sunday Sept 13, 2026**.
- Applications must be submitted by email to cgjennings@bwh.harvard.edu and with a copy to bwhneurosciences@bwh.harvard.edu
- Applications must conform to the format requirements specified above.
- To preserve the format of your application and to facilitate distribution to reviewers, you must submit your ***completed application as a single PDF*** document. Multiple PDFs, Word or other file formats will not be accepted.

For questions about the Women's Brain Initiative and its Pilot Award Program, please contact either Charles Jennings (Executive Director) or Ursula Kaiser (Faculty Director).

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Applications must be submitted no later than Sunday, Sept 13, 2026.