



TO: South Dakota Institutions of Higher Education

FROM: Liza Clark, Director of Government Affairs and Economic Development
Patrick Weber, SD EPSCoR Director

SUBJECT: Call for Teams: Governor's Research Centers of Excellence – Phase I

DATE: March 12, 2026

- **Proposal Due Date:** April 22, 2026
- **Announcement of Awards:** May 2026

All communications regarding this program should be sent to:
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Call for Teams: SD Governor's Research Centers of Excellence – Phase I Request for Proposals

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM

The South Dakota Governor's Research Centers were inaugurated in 2010. Several Centers have been funded since, and many have matured into successful research initiatives, or have spun off successful technology commercialization. Developing the South Dakota Science & Technology Plan 2030 underscored that modest resources for public research are most effectively leveraged if purposefully directed at specific areas in which South Dakota has an advantage.

The reformulated South Dakota Governor's Research Centers of Excellence (GRCE) takes a new approach. Research themes will be strategically defined, GRCE teams will be chosen based on short concept papers and team strength and expected GRCE outcomes will focus on leveraging into high-impact non-state funding that provides for a realistic timeline for research to mature into commercial spinoffs.

The South Dakota Board of Regents invites proposals for Phase I of the Governor's Research Centers of Excellence initiative. This program will ultimately establish two Centers of Excellence that advance South Dakota's research competitiveness, commercialization capacity, and STEM workforce development in alignment with the South Dakota Science & Technology Plan 2030.

1. Focus Areas

Funds totaling \$3.6 million annually will support the establishment of at least two Centers of Excellence:

- Rural Health Research Center of Excellence
Developing innovations to address critical challenges in rural health care delivery including advancing digital infrastructure and health security, reducing chronic disease.
- National Security Research Center of Excellence
Advancing applied research and commercialization in advanced materials and manufacturing, critical resources, cybersecurity, data analytics, food/biosecurity, energy security, and/or infrastructure resilience to strengthen state and national security.

2. Phase I Objective

In Phase I, multidisciplinary leadership teams will make the case for establishing and leading a center of excellence.

Phase II will include a discussion of budget and in-depth planning for the activities of the proposed research center. Phase I is focused on building a leadership team; therefore, proposers are not expected to build out a budget and schedule of activities.

Phase I will select multidisciplinary leadership teams to collaborate with the Research Affairs Council in developing full proposals for Phase II funding. Teams will:

- Define a vision for a Center of Excellence that positions South Dakota as a national leader in one of the two areas above.

- Describe how their research agenda aligns with the Science & Technology Plan’s strategic priorities, including:
 - Increasing research and commercialization activity.
 - Building public-private partnerships.
 - Supporting the “Grow Our Own” STEM talent initiative; and
 - Fostering high-tech employment opportunities.
 - Outline a plan to leverage GRCE funding into larger and longer-term funds.
 - Outline a plan for sustained excellence.

3. Leadership and Team Composition

- Must include members from at least four of the six South Dakota regental institutions.
- No more than two representatives from any single institution.
- No more than 5 leadership team members.
- Teams should demonstrate cross-disciplinary expertise and strong, existing collaborations with industry and federal partners. Therefore, teams must include in the proposal:
 - A description of current partnerships with industry and other external stakeholders, including examples of joint projects, commercialization efforts, or applied research initiatives.
 - Evidence of prior success in securing funding (federal, state, or private) by leadership team members, highlighting how these experiences position the team for future large-scale proposals.

4. Broader Engagement Requirement

While the leadership team will be small, it is expected to actively engage a wider network of faculty and researchers, including:

- Researchers from state-wide entities including primarily undergraduate institutions (PUIs), private institutions, tribal colleges and universities, or technical institutions.
- Partners in private industry and nonprofit organizations.

Only South Dakota regental institutions are eligible to receive GRCE funds.

Proposers will describe a plan to build and sustain this broader coalition to ensure long-term statewide impact.

5. Proposal Requirements

Proposals are due **April 22, 2026, 5pm CST**. All proposals should be electronically submitted as a single file in PDF format as an email attachment to Marcy Olsen at marcy.olsen@sdbor.edu.

Proposals should include:

1. Leadership Team and Engagement Plan:
Identify team members and outline strategies for engaging additional faculty, PUIs, industry partners, or experts from other organizations.
2. Vision and Strategic Alignment:
Describe how the proposed center will: Advance the goals of the [*South Dakota Science & Technology Plan 2030*](#) by

- a. Increasing research and commercialization activity.
 - b. Building public-private partnerships.
3. Student Development Plan:
Explain how the center will contribute to workforce development through internships, research experiences, and graduate training consistent with the “Grow Our Own” strategy. Explain how the center could add employment opportunities to retain graduates.
4. Path to Sustainability:
Provide a roadmap for securing extramural funding and building partnerships to ensure long-term viability.

6. Formatting and Length

Proposals must follow NSF-style formatting:

- a) Use one of the following fonts identified below:
 - Arial (not Arial Narrow), Courier New, or Palatino Linotype at a font size of 10 points or larger.
 - Times New Roman at a font size of 11 points or larger; or
 - Computer Modern family of fonts at a font size of 11 points or larger.

A font size of less than 10 points may be used for mathematical formulas or equations, figures, tables, or diagram captions and when using a Symbol font to insert Greek letters or special characters. Other fonts not specified above, such as Cambria Math, may be used for mathematical formulas, equations, or when inserting Greek letters or special characters.

- b) No more than six lines of text within a vertical space of one inch.
- c) Margins, in all directions, must be at least an inch. No proposer-supplied information may appear in the margins.
- d) Paper size must be no larger than standard letter paper size (8½ by 11 or 11 by 8½).

Maximum Length: 5 pages (excluding cover page, references and biosketches for each member of the leadership team).

Cover page must include the title of the project, the Focus Area, and the name and affiliation of each of the Leadership Team members.

Provide an NSF-style biographical sketch for each team member ([NSF Biographical Sketch](#)) that is generated using SciENCv ([SciENCv](#)). The biographical sketch must include Synergistic Activities ([Synergistic Activities](#))

Recommended length for each of the four required sections:

1. Leadership Team & Engagement Plan (1–1.5 pages)
2. Vision & Strategic Alignment (1–1.5 pages)
3. Student Development Plan (0.5–1 page)
4. Path to Sustainability & Funding Track Record (1 page)

7. Selection Criteria

- Alignment with state priorities and high-impact research areas.

- Strength of collaborative leadership team and engagement strategy.
- Demonstrated existing industry partnerships and funding track record.
- Potential for federal and industry funding.
- Commitment to student engagement and STEM workforce development.

8. Program Calendar

- Proposals (required – by 5 PM CST):
 - April 22, 2026
- Review and Down Select
 - May 2026