OFFICE OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT (ORD)

Idea Seed Grant Program

Program Overview

The program provides pilot funding between **$5,000 – $20,000** and/or pre-proposal support for UNC scholars and researchers to approach novel ideas addressing important problems or roadblocks in a current line of inquiry. This unique program provides “right place, right kind” resources by coupling seed funding and person-time to support competitive teams of UNC researchers. In addition to funding for preliminary data collection, travel, and team-building activities, awardees will receive expert guidance in planning and preparing grant applications for extramural funding opportunities.

This updated program is part of the university-wide pilot funding portfolio from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (OVCR), with the goal of furthering the University’s pre-eminence as a national and world-renowned leader in foundational research, creative practice, and the translation of research into social settings.

This competition is open to any field of research and/or scholarship conducted by PI-eligible UNC-CH scholars and researchers meeting the Program Outcome Guidelines.

Desired Program Outcomes and Selection Criteria

Enabling faculty projects is a primary goal of UNC Research, and early-stage idea support of scholars and research teams can be a difference maker in proposal decision outcomes.

The ORD team is piloting this revision to the Idea Seed Grant Program that will now **accept applications anytime.**

Projects will be prioritized by the OVCR along the following criteria:

* Teams have identified relevant pre-solicitation funding forecasts (e.g., NEA & NEH announcements, NIH Concept Clearances, NSF Dear Colleague Letters, etc.) or open solicitation/RFA/FOA from private and public sponsors.
  + If the solicitation is a “limited submission” (i.e., a sponsor limits the number of applications it will accept from an institution), then the standard Limited Submissions and Awards process must be completed before an Idea Seed Grant will be considered. Details about that process may be found here: [UNC Limited Submissions Process](https://research.unc.edu/research-development/limited-submissions/)
* Teams are proposing the co-creation of projects with NC Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Minority Serving Institutions, Primarily Undergraduate Institutions, and Community, Technical, and Regional Colleges; and/or projects involving underserved regions of NC.
* Teams have receptive confirmation from a program official or sponsoring organization regarding the proposed concept.
* Teams demonstrate a commitment to the development of a competitive project with milestones and deliverables oriented toward an application submission timeframe.
* Teams have planned and realistic pathways to project sustainability beyond the support from this program.

Important Dates

This competition is now accepting applications anytime and will receive initial review upon receipt. It is planned that awards will be made promptly after internal review by OVCR leadership and offered on a deliverables-oriented schedule. Up-to date instructions will always be kept on [the](https://research.unc.edu/research-development/finding-funding/internal-funding/) ORD website.

**Award Description**

Assistance from ORD

As a benefit of the award, experienced project managers from ORD will provide pre-proposal support for successful teams at no cost to the project.

In addition, applicants may request budgets between $5,000 - $20,000, commensurate with the scope of work, for up to one year. Applicants requesting smaller project budgets or on a shorter submission calendar, may be prioritized. Well-justified allowable costs may include:

* Cost associated with the generation of preliminary data or prototypes, such as research consumables, research scientist/GRA/Postdoc support, or core facility services.
* Travel to sponsors, collaborators, or other appropriate sites are allowable but must be well justified.
* Up to $2,000 for team formation activities, such as workshops and meetings (e.g., food costs, meeting venue).
* Publication costs if manuscripts are an expected product of the research endeavor.
* In general, faculty salary is **unallowable**. Specific exceptions may be discussed with the administration team.

Eligibility

Standard rules for UNC PI eligibility apply (including tenured, tenure-track, fixed-term, and clinical faculty). Early career investigators who are within five years of their faculty appointment are strongly encouraged to apply. Early career investigators are encouraged, but not required, to include a more senior researcher to serve as advisor/mentor. These individuals are not required to be listed as a co-PI on the proposal. The advisor/mentor is encouraged to provide a letter of support outlining their role in the process. The OVCR is committed to building and supporting a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming research culture at UNC-CH.

Application Requirements

*Requests for support should be directed to* ***ord@unc.edu*** *and should include the following:*

***Cover page*** ***(template provided)***

* Proposal Title
* Lead PI(s)
* Other team members
* Other planned collaborators outside of UNC (does not need to be finalized)
* Total funding being requested
* Preliminary compliance questions
* Approval signature of the applicant’s dean, chair, or other supervisor
* Abstract – 200 words

***Project Description*** **(no limit, but suggest a 3-page maximum)**

Writing to a broad scholarly audience, please address the following:

* ***Significance***: Describe the nature of the extramural support opportunity, current roadblock(s) in the field, or creative idea.
* ***Approach***: How will proposed project address the landscape described in *Significance?*
* ***Innovation***: What is the expected impact of your idea or proposed solution(s) on the problem or in the field and discipline?
* ***Rationale for Support:*** Describe why the funds are critical to the project objectives.
* ***Milestones and Anticipated Outcomes:*** Provide a general timeline of milestones to be pursued and expected project outcomes. How will this support lead to increased success in obtaining extramural research funding (i.e., preliminary datasets, creative blueprints and renderings**,** orother field-specific milestones)?
* ***Continuation / Sustainability Plan***: What future potential funding opportunities will be targeted or what steps will the project team take to ensure sustainability of seed-supported products? Please identify any relevant forecast or open funding opportunities with estimated submission windows***. Applications demonstrating foundation or sponsor willingness to accept a full proposal will be given priority review.***
* ***Team***: Broadly describe the team formation landscape and identify any gaps to be addressed during post-award support.
* ***References Cited:*** References are not required but are allowable. References do not count toward the page limit.

***Biographical Sketches (any format***, ***no limit on number of biosketches)***

* Required for Lead PI and any key personnel listed as a team member.
* No required format but summary-style NIH/NSF biosketches are welcomed.

***Budget & Brief Budget Narrative / Justification (up to 1 page)***

* All funds must be well-justified within the scope of work. These funds can be used for activities that will support development of ideas to make the project more competitive for external funding or large internal seed funding.
* Allowable Costs that could be supported by this funding include, but are not limited to:
  + Cost associated with the generation of preliminary data or prototypes, such as research consumables, research scientist/GRA/Postdoc support, or core facility services.
  + Travel costs to sponsors, collaborators or other appropriate sites are allowable but must be well justified.
  + Up to $2,000 for team formation activities, such as workshops and meetings (e.g., food costs, meeting venue).
  + Publication costs if manuscripts are an expected product of the research endeavor.
* Unallowable costs include:
  + In general, faculty salary is unallowable. Specific exceptions may be discussed with the administration team.

Key Review Criteria

***Approach and Innovation***

* Alignment with Program Outcomes above. The project addresses an important problem or roadblock to a current line of inquiry and is feasible with budgeted funds and anticipated timelines. Applicants must demonstrate how the proposed project will be beneficial to their field of expertise.

***Project Outcomes***

* Applicants must outline what the anticipated outcome of the funds will be. Examples include:
  + Teams responding to pre-solicitation funding forecasts (e.g., NIH Concept Clearances, NSF Dear Colleague Letters, etc.) or an open solicitation/RFA/FOA from private and public sponsors
  + Co-creation of research, creative project, and/or instructional endeavors with faculty at HBCU /MSI/TCU partners
  + Proposals seeking external funding to published calls for proposals
  + Development of original manuscripts, datasets, platforms, or other research resources that will be of broad use to researchers internal and external to UNC, leading toward supported grant applications
  + Other PI-defined deliverables likely to attract strong extramural interest and support
* Clear identification of sponsor funding forecasts, internet accessible concept clearances, or other preselection announcement, if available and/or receptive confirmation from a program official or sponsoring organization regarding the proposed concept.

***Other Selection Criteria***

* Team composition that reflects creative or technical expertise of the overall proposed project
* Commitment to the development of a competitive project and an application submission timeline

Terms of Award

The award is for 1 year, but a no-cost extension for up to 6 months is allowable with proper justification and approval from ORD. This request must be submitted at least 90 days prior to the expiration of an award and contain evidence of measurable progress. Unexpended funds will revert to the OVCR.

Final reports are due at the project’s conclusion. The final report will provide a summary of the project and accomplishments, copies of submitted proposals or other materials, and a detailed financial report with comprehensive invoicing of all expenses. Awardees are expected to provide updates to ORD for up to 3 years about progress in obtaining funding to sustain the Idea Seed Grant project. Awardees are expected to serve as reviewers for other OVCR-sponsored competitions.

Questions

For all questions related to this program, please contact the Office of Research Development at [ord@unc.edu](mailto:ord@unc.edu)