Seed Grants for Transitional and Exploratory Projects (STEP) Guidelines

> **NOTE:**
> - **All requirements for any internal program awards to the PI and all co-PIs must be met prior to applying for the STEP**
> - **Required external submission for STEP must equal or be greater than the STEP awarded amount for the PI and all Co-PIs.**

Purpose

The Seed Grants for Transitional and Exploratory Projects (STEP) program provides seed funding on a competitive basis to SIUE faculty to support research and creative activities. Seed grant funding is used to jumpstart junior faculty research or to encourage the initiation of new research directions. Seed grant funding is not intended to sustain or supplement current research programs.

For junior faculty the following points apply to all projects:
- **must** help undertake pilot projects that will aid in establishing careers as independent investigators and enable successfully applying for extramural funding; and
- **may** be submitted by applicants in the pre-mid-term review stage of their career to revise dissertation material. However, applicants must make a strong argument for how the STEP project may propel the applicant's career in a significant and lasting research direction.

For established faculty, all projects must:
- demonstrate how the STEP project represents a significant transition in the applicant's research as opposed to previous activity. Successful proposals by established faculty will outline specific differences between the STEP project and previous scholarly activities, including publications and conference presentations, so that an educated lay reader is able to discern the new direction of the proposed project; AND
- perform unique and exploratory research (particularly on novel or pioneering ideas) to determine project feasibility and to develop preliminary data to support extramural applications;

Eligibility

All full-time, continuing members of the faculty, including research faculty, may apply to the STEP program. **Faculty may only submit one proposal on which they serve as PI (Principal Investigator).** The terminal degree must be completed by the time of submittal. All applicants must have submitted completed final reports and fulfilled the terms and conditions, including submission of an external grant proposal in an amount equal to or exceeding previous STEP awards, of projects previously funded by the SIUE Graduate School at least 5 business days before this program deadline in order to be eligible for this

program. This requirement applies to all PIs and Co-PIs of the previous internal award. All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply, including minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and protected veterans. Faculty with disabilities desiring accommodations in the application process should contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access at (618) 6502333.

Definition of Research and Creative Activities

Research and creative activities are broadly defined as all creative, critical, scholarly, and/or empirical activity that expands, clarifies, reorganizes or develops knowledge or artistic perception. This definition includes the theorization, demonstration, implementation, and application of research.

Ineligible Activities include:
- Faculty Development – activities such as learning a new technique, language, methodology or completing a thesis or dissertation;
- Institutional Research – studies related directly to the operation of the University that are not generalizable and have little application beyond SIUE;
- Public Service and Consulting; and
- Departmental Curriculum Development, such as the preparation of curriculum materials, curriculum modifications, and student interest surveys. Curriculum Development that includes empirical studies of the effectiveness of new program formats, or techniques and content that are generalizable and have application beyond SIUE may be considered research for this grant program.

Award Description

Pending available funds, funding is for one fiscal year (July 1-June 30) and is awarded by budget line item. All line items must be allowable costs. Awards will not exceed $16,000; typical awards will range from $5,000 to $10,000.

Annette and Henry Baich Award

An additional $1,000 will be awarded to the best STEP application out of the pool of eligible proposals. For further information about eligibility, visit the Annette and Henry Baich Award website at https://www.siue.edu/funding/internal-funding/baich.shtml.

Terms and Conditions

As a condition of the award, recipients must submit a final report, and the PI **and** each Co-PI must submit and have accepted for review at least one proposal for external funding as a PI or Co-PI in an amount equal to or exceeding the STEP award through the Graduate School's Office of Research and Projects. All submissions must be in compliance with University and ORP guidelines related to but not limited to routing and compliance. Final reports are due to the Office of Research and Projects by the first Monday in August, following the completion of the research project. One final report is submitted on behalf of the team.

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Each PI and Co-PI must submit an external grant as a PI or Co-PI on the external submission. All submissions must be in compliance with University and ORP guidelines related to routing and compliance. The total budget for each external submission must be equal to or greater than your STEP award budget. <u>The entire STEP award team may submit externally as a team (with approval by ORP), or each team member may submit as a PI or Co-PI on separate projects.</u> Joint submissions are subject to review by ORP administration to assure allowability as the amount being sought must be substantial enough to warrant two individuals meeting the external submission requirement. Submission as key personnel does not fulfill this requirement.

- Contracts, letters of intent, primarily professional development activities and student/faculty internships do not meet the requirement of an external submission. A separate external submission is required for each internal program. A single external proposal will not meet the external submission requirement for more than one internal award program.

Both the Final Report and the submission of an external grant through the Office of Research and Projects using the electronic management system, Kuali Research, are required to remain eligible to receive Graduate School funding. Failure by STEP PIs and Co-PIs to submit either the final report or a proposal for external funding in compliance with University and ORP guidelines makes the recipient of a STEP grant ineligible for all other Graduate School sponsored support. Previous STEP awardees who plan to apply should consult the eligibility guidelines above.

Program Timeline
Information Sessions: there will be information sessions offered annually in the fall to review the application process and criteria. If you are interested in attending one of these workshops, please sign up here. While these workshops are not required, they are highly recommended.

- **Submissions are due on the Third Friday in January:** Applicants submit their full proposal in Kuali Build **no later than 4:30pm on the 3rd Friday in January.** The STEP Application form in Kuali Build is accessible via The Graduate School's Forms page.
- **February/March:** STEP applications are reviewed by your department, school/college, and the SIUE Graduate School R&D Committee.
- **Late March/Early April:** Estimated award announcement date.
- **First week in April:** Summer contracts due to Graduate School
- **July 1- June 30:** Project Period
- **First Monday in August following the end of project period**: Final Report deadline (Reminder: in order to be eligible for other internal grant programs, applicants must have completed the final reports and met the terms & conditions of previous internal awards.

Other Resources
- STEP Program website: http://www.siue.edu/funding/internal-funding/step.shtml

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- Annette and Henry Baich Award webpage:
  https://www.siue.edu/funding/internalfunding/baich.shtml
- R & D Committee Reviewer Guide for the SIUE Graduate School Internal Research Grant Programs:
  https://www.siue.edu/funding/internal-funding/reviewers.shtml
- School/College Research Committee Reviewer Guide
- Final Report webpage: https://www.siue.edu/funding/internal-funding/final_reports.shtml

Application/Nomination Procedures:
1. You must submit your full application by completing the Seed Grants for Transitional and Exploratory Projects (STEP) form in Kuali Build.

2. Following the submission deadline, the Office of Research and Projects (ORP) will review your application for completeness and compliance.

3. The proposal will route to your Department Chair in Kuali Build for approval. They will receive notification with instructions on how to complete take the Approval Action. Note: This section will not be visible to applicants and is only viewable to other approvers, ORP administrators and the R&D Committee.

4. The proposal will then route to your School/College Research Committee Chairperson in Kuali Build for approval. The Chairperson will receive notification with instructions on how to complete the School/College Research Committee only section of the form. All submitted proposals will be evaluated and ranked by the School/College Research Committee. The rank order, scores and Comments will then be entered into the application form by the Committee Chair.

5. The proposal will then route to your School/College Dean in Kuali Build for approval. They will receive a notification with instructions on how to take the approval action.

6. The proposals, following the evaluations/approvals from the Department Chair, the School/College Research Committee, and School/College Dean, will be reviewed by the Graduate School's R&D Committee. See Evaluation Process below.

School/College Research Committee Review

 Each School/College Research Committee Chair will receive notification that their school or college has proposal to review. Below are the review criteria used for this review:

Review Criteria:

#1. Clarity and appropriateness of the research design and procedure
#2. Alignment of project with STEP purpose
#3. Potential for external funding
#4. Originality/creativity and significance of the proposed research or creative activity
#5. Appropriateness of the budget and strength of budget justification

Each Criteria will be scored on a 1-5 Scale
Poor = 1; Fair = 2; Good = 3; Very Good = 4; Excellent = 5

R & D Committee Evaluation Process/Criteria
After the application/nomination procedures above are completed, rank-ordered proposals will then be reviewed by the R&D Committee, under the guidance of the Associate Dean of the Graduate School, using the **STEP R & D Scoring Rubric** is available on the [STEP website.](STEP) Sub-criteria for each section and scale are provided on the rubric. Individual proposal components will be evaluated and comments provided using the following scoring scale:

Exemplary (7-8)
Adequate (5-6)
Needs Improvement (3-4)
Insufficient (1-2)

Depending on the availability of funding, applications are generally considered "fundable" when proposal components are scored in the 5-8 point range.

STEP Kuali Build Application Form:
You will fill out the form with all of your information as well as that of any named Co-Investigator(s), if applicable, in addition to the following sections:

- Project Title
- Preferred STEP Subcommittee for Review
- You will check and describe if any special Compliance considerations are included in your proposal, such as Human Subjects, Animal Care, etc.
- Any faculty conflicts of interest
- **Upload Full Proposal in single PDF in order indicated below:**

    1. Project Abstract
    2. Narrative
    3. External Funding Potential Form
    4. Reference List (no limit)
    5. Appendix

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6. C.V. (2 pages each)

7. Previous Funding Form(s)

- Enter your Budget and Budget Justifications in the appropriate fields.

Proposal Format

Upload and submit the following attachments as a single PDF in the order listed below to your STEP application in Kuali Build. **Use the following format when naming your PDF: STEP_PILastNameFirstName.pdf.** It is the responsibility of the applicant and the not the Graduate School to ensure that all elements of the application meet the program requirements. *Applications that do not conform to these guidelines will be returned without review.*

1. *Project Abstract (150-word limit):* the abstract should be understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader. It should contain a summary of the proposed activity and be a comprehensive description of the proposed project.

2. *Narrative* (**10 pages**): the narrative is to be no longer than 10 double-spaced pages, with 1" margins and font sizes at minimum Times New Roman 11 or Arial 10. Individuals wishing to use LaTeX programming language should contact the Graduate School for template code. Pages are to be numbered. The page limitation does not include the cover page, endnotes, references, appendix, budget, budget justification, or vitae. Please note that proposals might not be reviewed by specialists in your specific discipline. Care should be given to writing a proposal that can be understood by an educated general audience.

   Your narrative must include the following sections. Please do not submit narrative items not specifically requested in this list. Use these named section headings in your proposal.

   a. <u>Alignment with STEP Purpose</u>: Explain in no more than 150 words how the proposed project aligns with the purpose of the program, as stated in the guidelines above. This section is not necessarily identical with the project Abstract but rather makes a convincing argument that the proposed project meets the STEP program goals.

   b. <u>Introduction and Background</u>: Provide an overview of the research project or creative activity, including a clear statement of the problem and the objectives of the proposed project. Describe the background to the project, including a review of the appropriate literature. Clearly explain the significance of the research or creative activity and how the project contributes new knowledge or fills a gap in the research. Clearly explain how the proposed project differs from your current and past scholarly activities.

c. <u>Procedures or Project Plan</u>: Provide a detailed description of the methodology used to conduct the research or creative activity. The description should reflect the nature of the project. Research projects that are experimental in nature should clearly describe the design of the experiment and the methods for acquiring and analyzing data. Non-experimental projects, such as those in the humanities and fine arts, should describe the works to be examined, research sources (e.g. library and manuscript collections), and an appropriate plan for carrying out the work. Include a description of any required compliance activities, such as the need to obtain human subject research approval.

d. <u>Facilities and Resources</u>: Address the facilities and equipment, either on SIUE's campus or at other locations that are available and will aid in the completion of the project. Investigators are highly recommended to outline approved access to such facilities and/or plans for retaining permission to use external facilities. If the investigator plans to use only standard office space and computer equipment, the investigator may mention this in the proposal.

e. <u>Timeline</u>: Include a timetable that shows each project activity. Align the scope of work and the timeline. Note that the project must be completed by June 30 of the fiscal year awarded.

f. <u>Anticipated Results</u>: Include a description of the anticipated results and tangible outcomes, such as publications and proposals for external funding. Describe how the results of the research fit into your broader, long-term research plan.

3. ***External Funding Potential Form***, available from the [STEP program website](#) and include in your application packet after your narrative. The potential funding opportunities do not have to be an exact match, but use the section to build the argument that your planned STEP outcomes are supported by the funders' research mission, forecast, trajectories or current funding direction Include argument for your research and competitiveness for external funding potential. In your discussion, include alternatives if the direction of the funders you list in the table changes.

4. ***References*** (**no page limit**)**:** Include a list of references showing your familiarity with the pertinent literature.

5. ***Appendix***: Information may be included in an Appendix if it is necessary to the reviewers' understanding of the research project and to provide evidence of access to needed resources and people. Such appendices may include, but are not limited to: letters of commitment from consultants, sub- contractors and supporting facilities; letters of commitment from foreign contacts and institutions; letters of commitment

from library or archive administrators; and sample surveys or protocols for human subjects research. Appendixes <u>may not </u>be used to provide data that belongs in the narrative.

6. ***Curriculum Vitae (CV)* (two pages)**: The Primary Investigator (PI) and any Co-Investigators (Co-Is) shall each submit a two-page *curriculum vitae* with a listing of activities relevant to the proposed project. This document should include those activities most relevant to the proposed project and demonstrate expertise to carry out the proposed work.

7. ***Previous Funding Form(s)***: Complete and attach the Previous Funding Form, available from the <u>STEP website</u>. This form applies to funding previously received from both external sponsors and the SIUE Graduate School for the previous three years. Applicants may use one page per previous grant. Applicants who have not previously received external grants or research funds from the Graduate School should submit the form with the statement "No internal or external funding received." Reviewers will use this form to assess the applicant's capacity for producing strong outcomes and meeting the terms and conditions of the internal award.

Budget:
Applicants may request funding for academic year release time, summer salary, graduate assistantships, student wages, travel, commodities, contractual services, equipment, and telecommunications.

Budget Justification:
Justify the funding request in narrative form in the spaces provided in Kuali Build application. Each individual line item request in the budget section must be fully explained and its presence in the budget carefully justified in an item-by-item narrative. Please keep in mind that the review committees rely heavily on the budget justification when making decisions about funding. If salary and/or assigned time for research are requested, the time requested must match the scope of work. If assigned time is requested, the current percent of assigned time for scholarship must be indicated and an explicit justification for the additional time must be made. **Explanations that are inadequate can result in a project either not being funded or having its requested funding reduced substantially. Stronger proposals explain the math and reasoning behind the subtotals.**

Note the following when preparing your budget:
1. No funding is available for charges incurred outside the project period (July 1 – June 30).
2. Investigators may request academic year assigned time for research, otherwise known as a course buyout. When requesting academic year assigned time for research, salary should be calculated at the <u>call staff rate</u>. Contact your department administrator for

specific information about how to calculate the call staff rate for your planned course buyout.

3. **Investigators may request summer salary up to $9,000 or one month of summer salary, whichever amount is the lesser of the two**. Commitment overload is not permitted during the term of the grant. Technical overloads may be permitted if the investigator is teaching during the portion of the summer when not committed to the STEP project. **100% time/effort commitment is required while receiving summer salary from the STEP program**.

4. When calculating summer salary dollars, applicants should consider the typical 3% annual cost of living increase and any anticipated promotions for the next fiscal year. Fringe benefits should not be included in the total calculation for summer salary.

5. Applicants wishing to hire SIUE faculty and staff as consultants in contractual services should calculate the total cost of services according to the SIUE consultant's base salary. The total percentage of time and effort pledged by the SIUE consultant to the project should be included in the budget justification. Fringe benefits need not be included.

6. Salaries for collaborators external to SIUE are typically not funded. If work with an external collaborator is essential to the project, provide sound justification for the need, and include specific data related to any budget requests in the budget justification. Typically, external entities will be paid through a contractual service voucher. The recipient is responsible for all required paperwork.

7. Students working on any internal grant must be enrolled as a current student during each semester of the project in which the student is employed by the grant.

8. Travel funds are awarded for non-local travel for data collection only. No funds are available for consulting or for attending professional conferences. **No funds are available for travel or related costs occurring outside the project period, July 1 – June 30**. International travel must be completely justified.

9. Telecommunication costs are limited to the purposes of telephone surveys for research.

10. Funding for equipment is limited to items essential to the nature of the research.

11. Those purchasing computers on STEP grants should remember that computers purchased through University funds are University property. Applicants are encouraged to outline a plan for what happens to the computer after completion of the project. Equipment maintenance or repair is not eligible for funding.

12. Purchase of computer software and any copying services should be listed under the Contractual Services line.

13. Budget estimates for commodities and contractual services should be well-documented and justified.

14. General supplies and items that should normally be provided by a department are not considered as allowable costs.

15. Funding is available for study participant incentives. However, guidelines apply. If your incentive is for human subject research, you must follow the approved IRB protocol. It is recommended that PIs have a check issued to participants from the

grant's account. However, if you wish to use gift cards as incentives, a number of safeguards must be adhered to:

    a   You agree to follow all purchasing rules of the University when purchasing incentives, including gift cards.

    b   Gift cards will be kept in a secured, locked location.

    c   You agree to maintain appropriate records for tracking purposes, including logs of gift card numbers, dates disbursed, amounts, recipient's name, and recipient's signature.

Program Contact:

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