Seed Grants for Transitional and Exploratory Projects (STEP) Guidelines

Purpose

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

<u>**For junior faculty - Projects must:**</u>
- help undertake pilot projects that will aid in establishing careers as independent investigators and enable successfully applying for extramural funding;

- applicants in the pre-mid-term review stage of their career may submit proposals 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.

<u>**For established faculty - Projects must:**</u>
- perform transitional and exploratory research (particularly on novel or pioneering ideas), to determine project feasibility, and to develop preliminary data to support extramural applications.

- demonstrate how the STEP project represents a significant transition in their 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.

Eligibility

All full-time continuing members of the faculty may apply to the STEP program. Faculty may only submit one proposal on which they serve as PI. Research staff members on continuing appointments who have served as an investigator or co-investigator on an externally sponsored grant are also eligible for the STEP program. 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, 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.**

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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.)

Awards

Pending available funds, funding is for one fiscal year (July 1st – June 30th) 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 at least one proposal for external funding as a PI or Co-PI through the Graduate School's Office of Research and Projects. The Total Budget for your external submission must be equal to or greater than your STEP Award Budget. The PI and Co-PIs may submit separately or together. Joint submissions are subject to review by ORP administration to assure allowability as the amount being sought must be substantial enough to warrant two persons meeting the external submission requirement. Submission as key personnel does not fulfill this requirement. Contracts and internships do not meet the requirement of an external submission. Failure by STEP PIs and Co-PIs to submit either the final report or a proposal for external funding makes the recipient of a STEP ineligible for all other Graduate School sponsored support. Previous STEP awardees who plan to apply should consult the eligibility guidelines above.

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Deadlines and Submission

Deadline: January 21, 2021: Applicants submit their full proposal by completing the STEP Award Application form in Kuali Build Application.

Estimated Announcement date: Late March/Early April
Project Period: July 1st – June 30th
Final Report: Due on the first Monday of August following the end of the project year.
Program Website: https://www.siue.edu/funding/internal-funding/step.shtml

External Submission: No later that July 1st of the Fiscal Year following the project end.

Application/Nomination Procedures:

1. You must submit your full application by completing the STEP Award from 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 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. They will receive notification with instruction show to complete the School/College Research Committee only section and take approval action. All submitted proposals will be evaluated and rank ordered by the School/College Research Committee. The rank order will then be entered into the application form by the Committee Chair. See Evaluation Process below.

5. The proposal will then route to your School/Research 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.

Evaluation Process/Criteria

Rank ordered proposals will then be reviewed by the R&D Committee, under the guidance of the Associate Dean, using a disciplinary-based review system. Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. The alignment of the project with STEP purpose (25%)
2. The originality/creativity and significance of the proposed research or creative activity (20%)
3. The clarity and appropriateness of the research design and procedure (30%)
4. The research proposal's potential for external funding (25%)
5. The appropriateness of the budget and strength of the budget justification

Scores and comments will be provided using the following scoring scale:

POOR: 1

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FAIR: 2
GOOD: 3
VERY GOOD: 4
EXCELLENT: 5

The Subpanel Review Rubric is available on the internal grants' webpage, under program materials/ handouts labelled Proposal Review Rubric and Graduate School Guidelines for Reviewers. Examples for each section and scale are provided on the rubric. The R&D Committee will oversee the final review process, consider the rankings from each department/school/unit, and make funding recommendations to the Associate Provost for Research and Graduate School Dean. Applications are generally considered "fundable" when receiving overall scores in the very good to excellent scoring range (4.0-5.0).

The Kuali Build Application Form:

You will fill out the form with all of your Information as well as your Co-Investigator's, if applicable.

- Project Title
- Project Abstract (150 word Limit)
- You will check if any special Compliance considerations are included in your proposal, such as Human Subjects, Animal Care, etc..
- Preferred STEP Sub-Committee for Review
- Any faculty conflicts
- Upload Full Proposal in single PDF in order indicated below
- Enter your Budget and Budget Justifications

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

Note the following when preparing your budget:

- No funding is available for charges incurred outside the project period (July 1 – June 30).
- Investigators may request academic year assigned time for research, otherwise known as "course-buyout." When requesting academic year assigned time for research, salary should be calculated at the call-staff rate. Contact your department administrator for specific information about how to calculate the call staff rate for your planned course-buyout.
- **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*.
- 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.
- 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

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the budget justification. Fringe benefits need not be included.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Telecommunication costs are limited to the purposes of telephone surveys for research.
- Funding for equipment is limited to items essential to the nature of the research. 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.
- Purchase of computer software and any copying services should be listed under the Contractual Services line.
  - Budget estimates for commodities and contractual services should be well-documented and justified.
  - General supplies and items that should normally be provided by a department are not considered as allowable costs.
  - Funding is available for incentive payments to study participants. However, guidelines apply. Please consult Jill Laughlin(jilaugh@siue.edu) for more information.

2. *Budget Justification:* Justify the funding request in narrative form in the spaces provided in Application. Each individual line item request on the Budget Request Form 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.**

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Proposal Format

Submit the following elements as a single PDF in the order listed below and on the Application in Kuali Build. 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. Application Cover page - Download and complete the Application Cover Page from the STEP website.

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 documents not specifically requested in this list. Use these named section headings in your proposal.

- Alignment with STEP Purpose: 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.

- Introduction and Background: 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.

- Procedures or Project Plan: 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.

- Facilities: 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
- Timeline: 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.

Anticipated Results : 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. *Reference List* **(no 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 may not be used to provide data that belongs in the narrative.

6. *C.V.* **(2 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 STEP website (https://www.siue.edu/funding/internal-funding/step.shtml). 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.

****Terms and Conditions of the Award Reminders****

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. Each PI and Co-PI must submit an external grant as a PI or Co-PI on the external submission. The entire STEP award team may submit externally as a team, or each team member may submit as a PI or Co-PI on separate projects. The Budget Total for the external proposal must be equal to or greater than your STEP Budget. **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.

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Program Timeline

- **January 21st, 2021:** All proposals must be submitted <u>electronically via the</u> Kuali Build application by **4:30pm.**
- **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
- Annette and Henry Baich Award webpage: https://www.siue.edu/funding/internal-funding/baich.shtml
- Reviewer Guide for the SIUE Graduate School Internal Research Grant Programs: https://www.siue.edu/funding/internal-funding/reviewers.shtml
- Final Report webpage: https://www.siue.edu/funding/internal-funding/final_reports.shtml

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