



**EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Interdisciplinary Research Grant Application Guidelines and Instructions

for Fiscal year FY2020: July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

*Deadlines: 11:30 pm, Fri., Mar. 1, 2019, electronic submission
4:30pm, Friday, Mar. 8, 2019, for signed paper copy*

Improvements this year

1. Interdisciplinary Grant budgets are limited to \$50,000. Applications that exceed this by *any* amount will not be considered.
2. Online submission is in use. There is a test form to ensure that your computer and software will function correctly. Please see *Section III. Form Access*.
3. There is an important section requesting specification of the role of each investigator on the project aims in the Interdisciplinary Emphasis section.
4. It is essential to the continuation of the RDC that successful applicants employ proper administrative and approval procedures. Please see *Section VIII. Award Administration*.

**Thank you for your interest in the
RDC Interdisciplinary Grant Program**

I. PURPOSE

The National Academies stated that “fostering opportunities for researchers to cross disciplinary and professional boundaries is of paramount importance to scientific progress. Today’s extraordinary societal challenges call for reaching beyond the established patterns and organization of the research community.” In order to help propel research and scholarship beyond the ordinary, the Research Development Committee (RDC) is pleased to announce the **Interdisciplinary Research Grant Program**.

The Interdisciplinary Research Grant Program aims to enhance the research programs of faculty members in all fields and disciplines by providing seed funding to establish unique interdisciplinary research programs, by stimulating the development of new ideas and areas of research, and by developing necessary infrastructure and shared facilities. This competitive, peer-reviewed program provides initial support for new, long-term programs of collaborative interdisciplinary research that will have strong potential to attract external funding. Proposals should involve multiple colleges, centers, and/or departments at East Tennessee State University and collaborating sites.

It is essential to include a statement on how the proposal will increase the likelihood of extramural funding flowing into the university. This “leveraging” of funds is a critical aspect of the mission of the RDC.

The RDC is responsible for distribution of internal funds to support research. These funds are administered by the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Administration (ORSPA) on behalf of the RDC. The RDC approves budgetary allocation of the funds available for the fiscal year, evaluates grant applications, and selects those to be supported. Proposals for this program will be reviewed by an ad hoc review panel selected from members of the RDC and previous Interdisciplinary Grant awardees.

ALL RDC members and the Chair are available for consultation to assist applicants in preparing the application, budget, budget justification, etc. Additionally, the ORSPA staff can answer questions that applicants may have and provide examples of recently funded proposals.

Objective: To nurture interdisciplinary ideas or methodologies to a point where they are ready for and attractive to external funding. This program intends to underwrite the costs of converting ideas into viable research questions to enable faculty members to respond collaboratively and boldly to emerging opportunities in interdisciplinary research.

There are two types of Interdisciplinary application for this objective:**A. The Interdisciplinary Research Seed Grant Program** funds research proposals designed to develop the necessary infrastructure and preliminary data, including supplies, equipment, etc., to initially support new, long-term programs of collaborative interdisciplinary groups with strong potential to attract external funding. These funds will support the research programs of faculty members by providing seed funding to establish cooperative and interdisciplinary research programs. These grants may be used to support the development of a specific group of interactive researchers, or to support the establishment of core equipment facilities or other unique resources that will be used by a variety of programs. These grants support research costs which can include faculty summer stipends, student assistants, supplies, equipment purchases, travel and release time, and equipment.

- Only travel to collect or analyze data, or information pertinent to an existing research project will be considered.

- The RDC will not support publication costs, travel to attend *but not present* at conferences, travel to explore potential collaborations, clerical support for manuscript preparation, support for advanced degrees, preparation of theses or dissertations, publication of theses or dissertations for faculty or graduate assistants, or computer purchases.

B. The Interdisciplinary Symposia Program provides funds to convene interdisciplinary symposia at ETSU on research questions of current significance which are engaging to multiple disciplines. The purpose of the symposia is to encourage development of interdisciplinary research proposals that will be submitted to this program. Symposia are expected to be open events, not invitation only, designed to attract engaged discussion by a large number of researchers. *More specific details about the program, eligibility, evaluation criteria, and application instructions can be obtained from the ORSPA office or the RDC Co-Chair.*

A symposium proposal is a call for an interdisciplinary symposium around a topic of current research significance identified by the investigators. The symposium should involve scholars from diverse disciplines. The design and format of the symposium should encourage communication and discussion that formulates new research questions or promotes new ways to address existing research questions.

All Interdisciplinary applications, both Research Seed Grants and Symposium Proposals, will be judged in a single competition each year. Application budgets of up to \$50,000 are permissible, but not required. If awards in amounts of less than \$50,000 are made, the next highest rated application will be partially funded.

II. ELIGIBILITY

All faculty members are eligible to serve as principal investigators under the criteria for eligibility described in the RDC Major Grant guidelines.

Any full-time employee of the University who holds faculty rank is eligible to apply for funding. However, in the case of individuals on part-time or renewable yearly contracts, the department employing the individual must guarantee that if the grant is awarded the recipient will be in the employ of the University during the time period in which the grant is in effect.

- **ETSU Students, Post-doctoral Fellows, and Medical Residents and Fellows are NOT eligible to serve as PIs or Co-Investigators.**

Investigators may not receive an Interdisciplinary Research Grant more than once every three years and may submit only one application per year. Participation on RDC Major Grant applications does not preclude Interdisciplinary applications. Applications from previously successful interdisciplinary groups or from RDC Major Grantees are welcome and should include information on the success of the prior award, publications, attendance, other notoriety or public awareness, and external funding applications and awards. These will be important criteria for review of such applications.

III. ACCESSING THE FORMS

RDC Interdisciplinary Grant forms are now on-line using FormStack. To complete a form, go to the RDC web site <http://www.etsu.edu/research/rdc/Interdisciplinary/> and click on the link to go directly to the form. You can directly go to https://bgcop.formstack.com/forms/rdc_interdisciplinary_grant_application_form_fy2020

Completing and submitting the form *will require* online access. **However**, users can begin a form, stop and complete it up to 28 days later. Once complete, submit by following the instructions in *Section V: Proposal Submission*.

- Web browser programs such as Firefox, Safari, and Chrome are strongly recommended. *Internet Explorer may not function reliably*. You may test your system by going to the link for the test form shown in Section V: Proposal Submission
- A Word template is provided at the RDC site to prepare text off-line for transfer into the form boxes. This increases accuracy in spell checking and character counting. *The forms do NOT spell check. The forms count all characters, including spaces and punctuation.*
- An Excel template is provided at the RDC site to prepare budget amounts off-line for transfer into the form boxes. *The forms do NOT perform budget calculations.*

IV. PROPOSAL PREPARATION

Proposals submitted that do not follow these guidelines will not be considered for review.

1. SUMMARY INFORMATION

Information critical for reference by the ORSPA staff and the reviewers is placed at the beginning of the form. Each blank is a duplicate of information found in the other sections of the application, so see the instructions in later sections for further explanation. The only exception is the **Date of Submission** box.

- *Please list ALL co-investigators who will be involved in the project.*

2. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR INFORMATION

The PI specifically directs the project and is responsible for reporting progress and budgetary requirements. Any full-time employee of the University who holds **faculty rank** (typically tenure-track) and for whom research is a requirement of their position is eligible to apply for funding. See the Eligibility criteria in II. Eligibility above.

- The **College** entry is a drop-down choice; click on the triangle and hold to see the list.
- Give your ETSU email address for this official university communication.

- Give the phone number at which you can most often be reached, which may not be your office number.
- Give the number of years for your current position and the date when you began your position at ETSU to help reviewers assess the Priority rating.
- Answer the questions regarding funding history including titles of your most recent RDC and/or external grants, including funding agency.
- *A complete cv and funding history will be attached in Section 7.*

3. CO-INVESTIGATOR INFORMATION

Co-Investigators (Co-I's) are an important aspect of the likely success of these interdisciplinary projects. The information blanks for the Co-I's are the same as those for the PI, including a funding history summary and previous RDC awards. A faculty member may be PI on only one submission per application cycle, but may serve as a Co-I on multiple other submissions during that cycle. Please refer to the Eligibility criteria in section II. Eligibility.

Forms are provided for three Co-Investigators. If more faculty are involved, simply provide their cv's and funding histories as attachments in Section 8.

4. PROJECT NARRATIVE

The narrative includes the following sections that must be completed. A Word template is provided at the RDC site to prepare text off-line for transfer into the form boxes. This increases accuracy in spell checking and character counting. *The on-line forms do NOT spell check. The forms count all characters, including spaces and punctuation.*

In all of your responses, please remember that you are writing for a diverse faculty audience. Try to make the compelling points about your grant in a manner clear to any reader, regardless of discipline.

Project Title: Give a descriptive title for the project of 150 characters.

Project Abstract: Provide an abstract or summary in non-technical language that is understandable to all RDC faculty of 3000 characters including spaces and punctuation. The RDC defines non-technical language as terms found in an abridged dictionary. The abstract should provide the reviewer with a *compelling* statement about the entire project.

Project Benefits: Give a brief statement of the benefits of this project, if funded, to the University of 5000 characters. Specifically address the increase in fundability, leverage or visibility that would be achieved with these funds.

Project Description: Give a statement of the hypothesis or problem to be investigated, including the rationale and possible outcomes of 1500 characters.

Interdisciplinary Emphasis: Give the rationale for how your project will nurture interdisciplinary ideas or methods among ETSU faculty. **NEW: Be sure to include a description of the specific role of each investigator in the aims of the project.** This section should be no more than 3000 characters.

Specific Aims: State the activities, objectives or specific aims of the research to be performed in no more than 3000 characters.

Design and Methods: Describe the experimental design and research methods in sufficient detail to be understandable to others in your college, in no more than 5000 characters.

Significance: State the significance of the research and the benefits expected to the field of study in 1500 characters. Include the potential for publications and name any specific journals or books or other means by which the work will be disseminated. You may include discussion of the potential for publishable results, pursuit of additional grants, or other benefit for the university.

Career Aims: Describe in 1500 characters how the results or products of your work will be used to forward the investigators' career paths, including promotion and tenure at ETSU. Include possible outreach outside the university.

Literature Cited: Using footnotes in the text, provide these referenced key citations, *particularly those on which you are an author*, which relate directly to this project, in 10,000 characters or less.

Please note that you may need to use the vertical scroll bars on the right side of the text boxes to view all of your entry. Once submitted the boxes will expand to the correct size for reviewers' use.

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Please answer several questions regarding outcomes from the application, including names of likely publication venues of any type.
- Please also indicate the needed Special Approvals that will be necessary for the project in the left column. Indicate any Special Approvals that have already been obtained in the right column. If checked, attach a copy of the approval document in the Appendix (see Section 8 below).

If this is an application for a Symposium (section IB), attach a completed Symposium template (obtained from the RDC Co-Chair) to the application here in Section 5: Additional Information using the provided attachment entry. The size of the attachment must be less than 2.5 MB.

6. BUDGET

Budget Costs: In this section, list and give the cost of every item in your budget in reasonable detail. An Excel template is provided at the RDC site to prepare budget amounts off-line for transfer into the form boxes. *The on-line forms do NOT perform budget calculations.* Contact Ms. Cynthia Hardin in the ORSPA office for assistance.

One of the most important components is a detailed and justified budget. Use the justification to show how each item relates to a specific aim, procedure or aspect of the application.

Budget Justification: Provide detailed information indicating how item estimates were calculated and justify why specific line items are required by the proposed project. Try to give information about which items are related to which specific aims or objectives of the proposed work. If salary is included in the budget, be sure to indicate when the salaries will be used. For example, if you request a summer stipend, you must indicate which summer months you will work on this project. Remember, RDC grants are only valid for the Fiscal year: from July 1 to June 30.

If any section has no entries, please enter a 0 in the Subtotal box for that section.

Personnel

Summer Stipend: The PI on an academic year appointment may request funding for a summer stipend. The amount of stipend will be equivalent to the teaching of one 3 hour course during the summer, up to a maximum of \$2,500 per grant cycle. **Benefits and health insurance (health insurance is added only if the employee is a 12 month employee) must be added to the stipend request at 23% of the salary figure.** During the entire summer term, the recipient of a summer research stipend will not be permitted to teach more than one course or a maximum of 4 semester hours. The total amount of other summer salary support must adhere to TBR policy. **Research Graduate Assistants:** Graduate Assistants (GA) **will only be supported for 50% of an assistantship (stipend plus tuition)** which will be \$9,800, the approved stipend rate and graduate tuition remission for the FY2019 academic year. Therefore, GAs may work 10 hr/wk for 2 semesters or 20 hr/wk for 1 semester only.

Temporary Employees: Temporary employees are paid an hourly wage and receive benefits (7.65%). Undergrad or graduate students may serve as temporary employees.

Part-time Faculty: The RDC will accept applications requesting release time for the PI during the academic year. Such awards would usually be for a single course (3-4 hours). Applications that request release time for research must include, as an addendum to the grant application, statements from the PI's chair or dean addressing the following points:

1. An explanation why release time through this mechanism is necessary and why release time has not been made available through the regular process of faculty work-load assignments.

2. Assurances that appropriate part-time faculty can be hired to replace the PI without significantly diminishing the quality of the instructional program of the academic unit.
3. Information about the specific teaching load of the PI for the previous 4 semesters and the teaching load the PI will be guaranteed for the award period.
4. Assurances that the teaching load of other faculty in the academic unit will not be increased due to this award of release time.

Independent Contractor or Consultant: The PI must complete an Agreement Routing Form from the Comptroller's Office to determine whether an outside consultant meets University criteria to qualify as an independent contractor or employee. An independent contractor must enter into a Personal Services Contract with the University. An independent contractor will be paid in a lump sum amount.

Operating Expenses and Supplies

Operating Expenses and Supplies are individual items that cost less than \$5,000 excluding computers. Please note that publication costs, reprint costs, thesis publication or preparation and similar costs are NOT allowed.

Equipment is defined as “an individual item greater than or equal to \$5,000”. The University retains title to all equipment purchased until or unless it decides to reassign it. Proposals that request the purchase of equipment **must** include an justification that addresses the following points:

1. Is there documentation of price quotes?
2. Has the equipment been requested through the regular budget process?
3. Have efforts been made to determine if the equipment could be borrowed from another unit of the university?
4. Will the equipment be available for anyone else to use or will the project require its full-time use?
5. Is there clear and convincing documentation/explanation that the primary use of the equipment is for research, not instruction?
6. If possible, attach a statement from the department chair or dean guaranteeing maintenance of the equipment for the duration of the project.

Travel

Only travel to collect or analyze data, or to obtain information pertinent to an existing research project will be considered. Travel to present research results at a conference will not be supported. An itemized list of anticipated expenses should be included. Current guidelines for meals, mileage, and hotel charges are available on the ETSU website: <http://www.etsu.edu/fa/fs/FSForms.aspx>

Please note that PI must ensure that all budgetary figures are correctly calculated and entered on the forms. Errors in the calculations may influence reviewers and lower their enthusiasm for an application.

Symposium

If this is a Symposium application, enter the *Symposium Costs* Subtotal here as calculated from the Symposium budget section of the template. Contact the RDC Co-Chair for more information and forms.

7. INVESTIGATOR CVs AND FUNDING HISTORY

- A. **Curriculum Vita**: Attach a brief CV of **2-3 pages for each investigator**. Include academic degrees earned, employment history, publications and presentations related to the current project proposed here and only for the last five years. The combined size of the files must be less than 5 MB.
- B. **Funding History**: For each investigator, include a list of grants received and applied for **during the last 10 years or as is reasonable for the space**, including non-funded submissions. Please list most recent awards first, and continue in reverse chronological order. If you have submitted this research elsewhere for funding or have plans to do so, please include a statement naming the agency and submission date, and briefly describe any differences between that proposal and the current application.
- *A list of headings that can be copied and pasted is on the form itself and on the Word template as well.*
- C. **Results of Prior RDC Support**: For each investigator, include a list of RDC grants received **during the last 10 years or as is reasonable for the space**, including non-funded submissions. Please list most recent awards first, and continue in reverse chronological order. Please provide detailed information about the outcome of the funded project such as publications, presentations, and student participants.
- *A list of headings that can be copied and pasted is on the form itself and on the Word template as well.*

8. *Optional Appendix Material*

Because the form boxes cannot accept any non-textual information, applicants are **encouraged** to add any pertinent supporting material including graphics, photos, audio, video or other formats. Up to three files of a combined size less than 15 MB may be attached to the application. Prepare the files and then click on the “Select File” box to upload them to the application.

- PLEASE do not use the appendix material to avoid the length limitations of the fill-in boxes. *Excessive appendix material may negatively influence reviewers.*

9. DISCLAIMER

Read the statement, then tick the checkbox and type your name in the **Signature** field to validate your understanding of and agreement with the statement.

V. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION *(improved for FY2020 applications)*

To test online form submission compatibility, use the test site. For the test, go to this link and fill out and SUBMIT the short Trial Form:
https://bgcop.formstack.com/forms/rdc_grant_application_test

- 1. After completing the application, recheck the application for completeness and accuracy. No errors can be corrected once the pdf version of the application is completed.**
2. Once satisfactory, click on the **Submit** button. If there were any omissions or errors on required fields, the submission program will indicate them. Please correct all errors.
3. Click again on the **Submit** button. If no errors, you will receive a confirmation of submission message.
4. You should receive a confirmation of submission message on the web page. You can now quit the website.
5. You will also receive an **email confirmation** of receipt of the electronic form in a message from (xxx@formstack.com). Save this as proof of submission.
6. Your application will now be converted into a single pdf document by the friendly RDC staff ☺. **This pdf file will be emailed to you for routing.** THIS IS THE ONLY VALID MEANS OF ROUTING THE APPLICATION.
7. After receipt, check the pdf file for accuracy, then print it out. The printed copy is now used to route the application for approval signatures from the PI and Co-I, the Chairs and Deans of PI and Co-I. Applications must have these signatures in order to be reviewed.
8. Deliver the fully signed application form **IN PERSON** to the RDC Grants Program at the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Administration, 432 Ross Hall, Box 70565.
9. After the electronic and printed signed versions are submitted by **4:30 pm** in accordance with the deadline dates, the application will then be reviewed.

UPDATED: Submissions must be made electronically by 11:59 pm on Friday, March 1, 2019; routed signed copies are due by 4:30 pm on Friday, Mar. 8, 2019, with no exceptions.

VI. REVIEW CRITERIA

RDC Interdisciplinary Research grants are awarded on the basis of merit of the individual proposal and appropriate justification of specific needs to carry out the research. There are specific guidelines regarding format and content of the application.

Please review the criteria with attention to the Merit criteria. It is often beneficial to include language in the application that directly reflects the terminology of these criteria that will be used in review.

Determination of Proposal Rank Score

Each application is given an OVERALL score based on Merit criteria listed below by each reviewer. The final score is calculated from these scores in combination with other merits of the application after discussion at the review session according to the judgment of the reviewers.

Merit Criteria

The following criteria are applied by the RDC in evaluating proposals:

- The application is generally understandable to any faculty member.
- The description of the research is detailed and permits thorough evaluation.
- The research problem is of sufficient importance, significance, and originality.
- *The problem is truly interdisciplinary and adds synergy to the outcomes.*
- The specific aims are measurable.
- The project is likely to produce new and useful information.
- The methodology is adequate and appropriate to the research.
- The overall design of the research or scholarly activity has been carefully thought out.
- The investigators appear to be familiar with pertinent literature and methodology.
- If a scientific investigation, the proposed research is based on a sound hypothesis that rests on sufficient evidence.
- The proposed budget is reasonable and sufficiently justified.
- There is an excellent possibility of external sponsored support.

Research projects involving human subjects, animals, or hazardous materials can be submitted to the RDC without the relevant approvals in place. However, if the proposal is funded, all Special Approvals must be obtained by the appropriate University committee before funds are released.

LETTERS OF APPROVAL ALREADY OBTAINED FOR THE APPLICATION SHOULD BE ATTACHED IN SECTION 8: OPTIONAL APPENDIX MATERIAL, IN ORDER TO SPEED ACCOUNT PROCESSING IF FUNDED.

VII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

RDC review of proposals and funding decisions will take approximately 6 weeks from the date of submission. Award letters will be sent via email to all successful grant applicants. Unsuccessful applicants also will be notified in writing. All applicants will receive a copy of the reviewers' critiques. If a proposal is not funded, the RDC encourages the applicant to request the reviewers' comments from the RDC Chair, revise the application according to the comments, and resubmit during a subsequent funding cycle.

An award account number will be provided ONLY WHEN ALL special approvals are obtained. Failure to submit special approval verification within 3 months of the award notice *may lead to revocation of the award at that time.*

Accounting procedures and budget administration for these awards are the responsibility of the department of the awardee. The ORSPA office may provide oversight as possible, but the use of the funds should be processed through the applicant's normal departmental processes. ***Failure to spend funds in a timely fashion may lead to revocation of the award.***

The RDC approves budgetary allocation of the funds available for the fiscal year, evaluates grant applications, and selects those to be supported. Grants are awarded for the fiscal year July 1 through June 30. Any RDC allocated money must be spent within this time period. **Please note that you are bound by these Terms and Conditions in the award letter that you will sign if funded.** *Please note that the Accounting office begins closing its books in early June, so funds must be used or encumbered **before** this closing date. There are no exceptions to this policy and applicants who fail to use their funds within these guidelines cannot be reimbursed in any other way.*

VIII. INFORMATION CONTACTS

- David Hurley, RDC Chair hurleyd@etsu.edu
- Brooks Pond, Interdisciplinary Grants Co-Chair pond@etsu.edu
- ORSPA research@etsu.edu
- your College RDC representative see list on RDC website