NC State University  
Office of Research and Innovation  
Kenan Institute for Engineering, Technology and Science

Research and Innovation Seed-Funding Program  
Spring 2021

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

The Research and Innovation Seed-Funding (RISF) program is now accepting proposals from NC State faculty and EHRA professionals.

Proposal due date: Thursday, April 22, 2021 at 11:59 p.m.

INTRODUCTION

Background
NC State’s Office of Research and Innovation (ORI), in partnership with the Kenan Institute for Engineering, Technology and Science (KIETS), established the Strategic Research Initiatives Program (SRI) in 2010 to augment and replace the multi-disciplinary component of the Faculty Research and Professional Development (FRPD) program. The individual faculty component of the FRPD program remained unchanged and can be found at https://research.ncsu.edu/rdo/funding/frpd/. The SRI program was renamed Research and Innovation Seed-Funding (RISF) Program later that same year.

Program Description
The primary goal of the RISF program is to assist NC State researchers in developing collaborative interdisciplinary programs of strong intellectual merit that have high potential for significant future external support from government agencies, corporations, industrial consortia or foundations. Encouraged are projects that align with NC State’s strategic research areas: Designing Healthy and Resilient Societies, Harnessing Data for Decision Making, Enriching the Human Experience, Creating Safe, Secure and Intelligent Systems, and Driving Food, Water and Energy Solutions. Proposed projects should be high-risk/high-gain and initiate new areas of research or enhance existing research areas at NC State.

ORI and KIETS leadership recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the research enterprise at NC State. Faculty, staff, and students continue to encounter project delays, compounded by a lack of funding needed to propel research programs forward. Given this, the Spring 2021 RISF call for proposals solicits compelling, new interdisciplinary research projects that will help sustain programs, laboratories and/or graduate students whose funding may otherwise be in jeopardy due to research disruptions caused by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. It is intended that this cycle of the RISF program will prioritize the support of NC State researchers whose programs are in need of a critical funding stimulus to help offset the longer term consequences of the pandemic.

Interdisciplinarity will continue to be a key component of projects awarded under the Spring 2021 RISF cycle. The definition of “interdisciplinary” is dynamic and the topic of continual revision. For the RISF program, interdisciplinary research is defined as “research that integrates
information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice," according to the definition used by the National Academies. The term disciplines can be construed as meaning branches of scholarship (formal sciences, natural sciences, social sciences, applied sciences, and humanities). Conceptual interdisciplinary research (the exchange of ideas across fields to enhance understanding) and instrumental interdisciplinary research (using tools from other fields) are both acceptable.

Projects must be new research initiatives that do not duplicate former efforts of the principal investigator(s) with either the same or different co-investigators. When describing external funding possibilities, be as specific as possible, including agency names, programs, dates and potential amounts.

Proposals which seek funds to enhance scholarship or faculty professional development are not eligible for this program. See http://research.ncsu.edu/rdo/funding/internal-funding/ for internal funding opportunities that address these topics.

Projects Supported
Project activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Collection of preliminary data needed for external proposal submission;
- Organizing and holding workshops on emerging multidisciplinary research areas;
- Support of a high-level seminar series to promote networking to form an innovation program;
- Development of concepts and white papers for large-scale centers, institutes or cluster hires;
- Identification and recruitment of industrial, academic and/or government partnerships in support of initiatives;
- Support for release time, travel, workshops, and other expenses associated with conceptualization and preparation of large grants;
- Development of plans to promote industrial research collaborations;
- Creation and support of resources such as websites, research collaboration sites or social networking tools to facilitate large-scale research programs;
- Organizing and participating in conferences or meetings designed to identify, create, or strengthen international research collaborations.

AWARD INFORMATION

Type of Award
Solicitations are typically announced in the spring semester. However, due to program changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 solicitation will consist of a spring and fall call. Spring 2021 awards will be effective for projects lasting up to twelve calendar months, beginning with the fiscal year (July 1) following the solicitation announcement. Awards are typically distributed as a combination of F&A and 7-account funding.

Funding Amount
Investigators can request up to $25,000 in RISF funds. RISF Awards typically range between $10,000 and $25,000. Extension of the award period to complete proposed activities is at the discretion of ORI.
Cost Match
A minimum 25% cost match is required from internal or external sources and should be included in the total project budget. For example, if $25,000 of RISF funds are requested, a match of at least $6,250 is required, resulting in a total project budget of $31,250. Internal sources may be college and/or department support, including salary release time.

Federal funds, or other funds already earmarked for another purpose are not acceptable. A clear distinction between a request for RISF funding for release time and release time used as a source of matching funds must be indicated in the budget.

Eligibility
All NC State faculty and EHRA professionals are eligible to submit as Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-PI. There is no limit on the number of proposals in which a single researcher may participate. There is no limit on the number of proposals a PI may submit. While not eligible to submit on their own, support for student and postdoctoral researchers may be included in the budget. Non-NC State personnel can participate as co-PIs on an application; however, funds are restricted to NC State personnel and cannot be transferred to external partners. Single-PI applications are discouraged.

PROPOSAL CONTENT AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS
Proposal Content
The proposal should be written to target a broad audience, not necessarily subject matter experts.

Spring 2021 RISF proposals must include the following elements:

- **Cover page (please use the Spring 2021 Cover Page Template):** The cover page includes the title of the proposed project, contact information of the submitting principal investigator, list of Co-PIs and other key personnel, total budget amount (requested amount and matching funds), five (5) keywords, 200 word synopses of the proposed project, a description of the interdisciplinary nature of the project, and a description of how the proposed project will mitigate the impact of the pandemic on program/lab sustainability and/or graduate student funding (note: please discuss matching fund commitments in advance of proposal submission with your department chair and/or associate dean for research);

- **Proposal (please use the Spring 2021 Proposal Template):** The proposal must address how the proposed activities are consistent with the goals of the RISF program. The project description should include sufficient detail such that reviewers can evaluate the appropriateness and feasibility of the proposed plans, the interdisciplinary nature of the project, as well as the potential for external funding. When describing external funding possibilities, be as specific as possible, including agency names, programs, dates and potential amounts. Please keep in mind that not all reviewers will be experts in every proposed field of study, and thus project descriptions should be written for a broad audience.

Submission Instructions
Spring 2021 RISF proposals should be submitted electronically to the RISF program administrator:

Electronic submission through InfoReady Review: Proposals must be submitted by the
PI or Co-PI through the InfoReady Review system (https://ncsu.infoready4.com/). Before uploading a proposal, users must login using an NC State UnityID. The system only allows one submission per user. In the case of multiple submissions by a single PI, the PI should request that a Co-PI or other team member submit additional proposals. In the case of errors in a submitted proposal, contact the RISF Coordinator at research-development@ncsu.edu for instructions on submitting a revision.

**Due Date**
Proposals for the Spring 2021 solicitation are due **on April 22, 2021 at 11:59 p.m.**

**REVIEW**

**PLEASE NOTE:** RISF PROPOSALS WILL BE REVIEWED BY THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE AND POSSIBLY ADDITIONAL **ad hoc** REVIEWERS. THE AUDIENCE IS **NOT** SUBJECT AREA SPECIALISTS, AND THE PROPOSAL SHOULD BE WRITTEN FOR A **BROAD** AUDIENCE.

**Timeline for the Spring 2021 Solicitation**

- **February 2021**  
  Request for Proposals announcement sent to URC, ROC, RSC members and Funding listserv; posted to website and InfoReady Review (https://ncsu.infoready4.com).

- **April 22, 2021**  
  Proposals due by electronic submission through InfoReady Review (https://ncsu.infoready4.com) no later than 11:59 P.M.

- **June 2021**  
  Principal Investigators notified of award status; summary of reviewer comments emailed to submitting PIs; non-proprietary abstracts of awarded proposals will be posted to the RISF Past Awards website.

- **July 1, 2021**  
  Award period begins.

**Review Criteria**

Each proposal will undergo an internal review based on the following criteria:

- **Potential for future funding:** The potential for extramural follow-up funding for the project is high and is clearly described;

- **Intellectual merit:** The proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts. The program specifically seeks to support high-risk work with potential for high-reward;

- **Integration of multiple disciplines:** Multiple disciplines are integrated and contributory to the objectives;

- **Description and feasibility of the project:** The goals and objectives of the project are clearly defined and aligned with the specific purposes of the RISF Program. The project does not duplicate former efforts surrounding the problem area. The proposed plan of work is adequate to meet the goals of the project. The proposed project is feasible. The description of how the requested funds will be used is appropriate. Cost matching requirements are met;
- **PI and team qualifications:** The PI and key personnel are qualified to achieve the goals of the project. Roles of team members are clearly defined.
- **COVID-19 Impacts:** The PI and key personnel have clearly described how the ongoing pandemic has disrupted or otherwise negatively impacted their research programs, and presented a strong rationale for how the newly proposed project and requested funding will help sustain their programs, laboratories, and/or graduate students.

**Review and Selection Process**

RISF reviews are managed by the University Research Committee (URC) and may be reviewed by colleagues outside of the project discipline. To be ranked highly, proposals must use language that can be understood by persons lacking expertise in the discipline. Highly ranked proposals will clearly state the:

- Problem or need to be addressed;
- Innovativeness of the solution;
- Specifics of activities;
- Appropriateness and contribution of the named team members;
- Interdisciplinarity of the approach;
- Expected outcomes from one year (or less) of work;
- Long-term implications for the work; and
- Specific extramural agencies and programs likely to fund ongoing proposals generated from this effort.

Reviews and funding recommendations made by the URC are evaluated by ORI and KIETS, and the number of awards and the amount of each award are determined.

**NOTIFICATION OF AWARD**

Submitting PI(s) will be notified usually within three (3) business days of award selection. A synopsis of reviewer comments will be provided, and awarded proposals will receive instructions for transfer of funds.

As a result of program modifications in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, proposals selected for Spring 2021 RISF awards will be subject to additional requirements, which must be satisfied prior to the receipt of funding. Specifically:

- Proposals selected for an award will have to be submitted through PINS routing prior to the release of funds:
  - **PINS submission:** Submit through your college research administrator at http://research.ncsu.edu/sparcs/systems-portal/pins/. Select “NCSU Research and Innovation Seed Funding Program” as the sponsor.
- Proposals selected for an award will have been chosen under the assumption that matching funds will be provided as indicated on the RISF cover page:
  - A detailed budget with justification as well as letter(s) of support from source(s) of matching funds will be requested from the RISF program administrator. Other letters of support may also be provided;
- Should proposals selected for an award (i) not be submitted and approved through PINS routing or (ii) be denied matching funds from their proposed source(s), such proposals will be eliminated from funding consideration.

Selected awardees will be contacted with further information and instruction regarding these
additional requirements by the RISF program administrator.

It is the responsibility of PIs to notify departmental accounting personnel to identify suitable project numbers and make a request for transfer of funds prior to the beginning of the funding period.

**REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

The principal investigator will be required to report on measurable outcomes of their seed-funding effort (*i.e.*, extramural funding for the project, published reports, graduate students funded, etc.). The first report will be due approximately one month after the close of the grant period, and an additional report will be due one-year after the close of the grant period (see schedule below). Periodic status updates on the progress of the project may be requested at the discretion of ORI. **Failure to submit these reports in a timely manner will preclude the PI from receiving future awards from any ORI internal seed-funding program.**

**Reporting Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Report Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 31, 2022</td>
<td>Year End Report due to Research Development Office (ORI/RDO) that describes accomplishments to date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 31, 2023</td>
<td>One-Year Progress Report due to Research Development Office (ORI/RDO) that describes accomplishments to date</td>
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**PROGRAM CONTACT:**

Questions regarding this solicitation may be directed to:

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