



COVID-19 Flash Grants (Spring/Summer 2020)

Request for Proposals

Research and Economic Development is pleased to announce a special call of the Ignite Planning Grants Program for investigators who wish to prepare proposals that respond to funding opportunities associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ignite planning grants are intended to enhance existing areas of excellence, accelerate the development of emerging research strengths, and foster interactions between UNC Charlotte faculty and potential collaborators at other institutions. The program aims to lower and eliminate barriers to building collaborative teams and coordinating, planning, and preparing large, interdisciplinary multi-investigator research proposals by providing funds to (1) convene conferences and meetings, (2) coordinate workshops, (3) support travel costs for potential collaborators from other institutions, (4) hire grant-writing consultants and content specialists, and (5) conduct other proposal-development and team-development activities.

COVID-19 Flash Grants are intended to support and incentivize stronger collaborative relationships among researchers from different colleges and disciplines with the goal of positioning teams to be able to respond to new, external funding opportunities related to COVID-19. One expected outcome of the program is the submission of at least one proposal for significant funding from a diversity of sources within the 3-6-month award period. Thus, these one-time awards are intended to help teams of researchers position themselves to obtain the external funding needed to sustain future activities and research related to the project.

Award Focus and Scope

COVID-19 Flash Grants are designed to build capacity in research areas that are strategically important to COVID research and recovery. Areas of research that might be considered include, but are not limited to: (1) transmission, detection, diagnosis, and treatment of COVID-19 and other viruses, (2) development and implementation of educational models for distance/remote learning, including the use of online instructional tools and virtual reality technology, (3) effects of the pandemic on educational outcomes and learning gains, especially in K-12 students, (4) social, economic, and behavioral impacts of the global pandemic and associated stay-at-home orders, and (5) development of new technologies and products with the potential to positively impact the nation's ability to respond to the COVID-19 crisis (e.g., artificial intelligence, digital and remote health, diagnostics and medical devices, disinfection and sterilization techniques). Proposers will need to fully describe how the research contributes to existing and emerging university research strengths and aligns with national priority areas identified by state and federal agencies and policy offices to address COVID-19 research and recovery (e.g. <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/niaid-strategic-plan-details-covid-19-research-priorities>). The Center for Research Excellence maintains a searchable database of COVID-19 funding opportunities, which can be found [here](#).

Award Amount and Duration

Faculty and staff teams can apply for one-time grants of between \$5,000 - \$10,000 for 3-6months. Teams that engage one of our [University Business Partners](#) will be eligible for an additional \$5,000, for a total of up to \$15,000. Facility and Administrative (F&A) costs are not required. Extensions will not be granted.

Flash grants will be accepted on a rolling basis between May 1 and September 1, 2020. Proposers should anticipate an expected start date that is 1 month from the date of submission.

To help ensure the success of proposals resulting from Ignite awards, successful teams will be expected to partner with the Center for Research Excellence to prepare and submit proposals through the Center's Complex, Large, Interdisciplinary Proposal Preparation (CLIPP) program.

Who Can Serve as PI?

Full-time, tenured/tenure-track faculty at UNC Charlotte are eligible to serve as principal investigator (PI) on Ignite proposals. UNC Charlotte faculty (tenured/tenure-track, teaching, adjunct, and/or research faculty), instructors, post-docs, staff, as well as faculty and researchers from other institutions are eligible to serve as senior personnel. There is no limit to the number of senior personnel on a project.

A faculty member may only serve as PI on one proposal or active award. However, individuals may participate as senior personnel on up to three (3) proposals and/or awards.

Proposal Preparation Guidelines and Requirements

Proposals will be accepted on a continuing basis as an email attachment to ignite-planning@uncc.edu. All proposal components must be compiled in the order listed below and submitted as a single pdf file. **Incomplete submissions will be returned without review.**

Proposals must contain the following sections in the order and with the headings indicated below (minimum 11 point font, single-spaced, minimum 1-inch margins)

- a) **Cover Page** (1 page) with the (1) project title (2) the names, departments, and institutional affiliations of all participating personnel (only one faculty member can serve as PI; remaining team members should be listed as senior personnel), (3) total amount requested, and (4) anticipated duration of the project.
- b) **Project Summary** A short (2000 characters with spaces) synopsis of the proposed partnership describing the nature of the collaboration, the theme of the proposed research, and the project's potential contribution to existing areas of excellence and research strength at UNC Charlotte. The summary should be written for a general, non-technical audience.
- c) **Project Description** (5 pages maximum) describing the goals and objectives of the project and the plan of work, including activities aimed at facilitating and stimulating collaboration among team members and steps that will be taken to assist the team in developing competitive applications for external funding. Proposed activities may include: workshops and planning sessions, stakeholder engagement meetings, collaborator workshops and conferences, team-building training sessions, pilot studies, travel to explore potential collaborations and establish new partnerships, travel to meet and interact with federal and state program officers, and engagement of consultants and grant-writers. The Project Description should include sufficient detail that reviewers can assess the likelihood and feasibility of the proposed plans and how the research contributes to existing and emerging university research strengths and aligns with national priority areas.

The Project Description should also (1) outline the participants' respective areas of expertise and anticipated contribution to the project, (2) describe the nature and success of prior or existing collaborations among group members, and (3) identify the process for identifying additional collaborators that may be needed to expand the capabilities of the team. **Projects that are highly interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary and include unusual and non-traditional combinations of participants from diverse disciplines and backgrounds are highly encouraged.**

- d) **Expected Outcomes and Planning Roadmap** (1 page) that includes a projected schedule of activities and a list of anticipated milestones and deliverables during the 3-6 month project period. This section should also include a detailed list and analysis of existing and anticipated external funding opportunities that will be targeted by the team and a timeline (with due dates) for application.
- e) **NSF-style Biographical Sketches** (2 pages max per participant) for the PI and all senior personnel listed on the cover page.

- f) **Budget and Budget Justification** detailing how requested funds will be used to support the activities outlined in the Project Description. Annual and summary budgets should be listed on a single page and formatted using the required budget template available [here](#). The Budget Justification is limited to 2 pages.

The following are allowable expenses: travel (including per diem), workshop and training materials and supplies (including meals and coffee breaks), speaker fees, transportation, clerical services, consulting services and fees, computing services, and other expendable materials and supplies.

COVID-19 Flash Grant awards are **not** intended to be used for faculty/staff summer salary, post-doc wages, or stipends, and tuition for students. Teaching release time is not allowed. Subawards are not permitted, but personnel external to the university can serve as consultants. Equipment purchases are not allowed.

- g) **Current and Pending Support** for all senior personnel (formatted using the standard NSF-format available [here](#)).

h) References Cited

- i) **Letters of Collaboration** from all non-UNC Charlotte senior personnel listed on the Cover Page. The contents of the letters should be limited to the following statement:

If the planning grant submitted by Dr. [insert name of the Principal Investigator] entitled [insert the proposal title] is selected for funding, it is my intent to collaborate and participate in the activities detailed in the Project Description section of the proposal.

Review Criteria and Evaluation

Proposals will be reviewed using the criteria listed below, but special consideration will be given to projects that (1) include highly interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teams and approaches, (2) complement existing research strengths, and (3) align with areas and themes of state and national priority related to COVID-19 research and recovery. Preference will also be given to projects that have the potential to enhance UNC Charlotte's competitiveness for large-scale grants.

COVID-19 Flash Grant proposal evaluation criteria were adapted from NSF's Merit Review Criteria and include:

Intellectual Merit

- What is the potential for the proposed research to advance knowledge and understanding within the fields and disciplines represented in the project?
- To what extent does the proposed research explore creative and original concepts?
- Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well organized, and based on sound rationale?
- How well qualified is the team to conduct the proposed activity?
- Does the proposed research align with regional, state and national priorities?

Broader Impacts

- To what extent does the proposed project encourage new collaborative partnerships among university researchers? Among UNC Charlotte researchers and faculty at other institutions?
- Does the proposed research theme complement and enhance existing and emerging areas of research excellence at UNC Charlotte?

- Does the project include a diverse group of researchers representing a range of disciplines?
- What is the potential of the project to enhance the ability of UNC Charlotte to complete for large-scale grants from federal and state agencies?

Timeline for Review and Award

- Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis between May 1 and September 1, 2020.
- We anticipate being able to complete the review of proposals within 3 weeks of submission. Therefore, PIs should anticipate a project start date that is 1 month from the date of submission.

Inquires

Questions regarding this program announcement should be directed to Lesley Brown, Director of the Center for Research Excellence, at labrown@uncc.edu.