Research Council Awards:
Seed Funding for Innovation
2026 Request for Proposals

OVERVIEW

Serious researchers in the sciences and social sciences and creative artists and scholars in the humanities know the value of seed money, as federal and foundation dollars become scarcer and pilot work is increasingly necessary to secure future extramural funding. Since 1943, Rutgers University has recognized that University support is critical to faculty members to test new and emerging ideas in diverse disciplines across the University through the **Rutgers Research Council Awards program**. For over 80 years, the Research Council (RC) awards program has focused on enhancing the opportunities for faculty to solve complex theoretical and empirical disciplinary problems in the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and arts. The Council is constituted by faculty representing the many fields of active research found across all four Chancellor-led units of our university, and Council members review and allocate research funding directly to their faculty peers. As a public land grant and anchoring institution, the University is committed to research and creative activities that can impact the future of our communities and our social relations within the University and the State of New Jersey and beyond. Total funding for this program is approximately $300,000, with awards ranging up to $25,000.

ELIGIBILITY

Full-time faculty members of Rutgers University *at the time of application* may apply. This designation includes non-tenure track, tenure-track, and tenured faculty at any career stage. Faculty members must hold a terminal degree (i.e. PhD, MD, JD, MFA or equivalent). The following are ***not*** eligible to apply: coadjutant appointees, teaching and research assistants, post-doctoral fellows, visiting faculty members, and full-time administrators. Faculty who have received a Research Council Award in the prior three cycles (2023, 2024, 2025) are ineligible to submit. All Co-investigators on the project must be affiliated with Rutgers. Faculty must indicate how studying the issues will advance their field of inquiry**.**

PRIORITIES

All awards are made on the basis of merit. Faculty at all ranks are eligible for an award. Priority is given to tenure-track faculty in their first or second three-year probationary appointment who have not yet

been evaluated for tenure, to faculty at the Associate rank, to NTT faculty engaged in an active research and academic program, and to proposals from faculty who have not received an external or internal award in the past three (3) years.

AWARDS PROGRAMS

By means of seed-funding awards, the RC supports new and innovative pilot studies that can lead to significant funding and publication in all fields of learning in the University, as well as for creative work in the arts. Funding is available through four separate programs.

I. The **Individual Fulcrum Award Program** is tailored to individual researchers and those in the creative arts who are testing new ideas to accelerate their scientific inquiry, program of research, scholarship, or creative production. It provides awards to early career faculty who have not previously received funding for the proposed work. It is also for Associate rank faculty who are embarking on a new scholarly direction post-tenure and for more senior faculty who can clearly demonstrate that their project represents a new direction—not an extension of prior work or similar to work for which they have received funding over their career. These awards are not intended as bridge funds to support ongoing scholarly or research initiatives. These awards are meant to support new ideas that will develop a new line of research or artistic endeavors.

The maximum amount of the Individual Fulcrum Award Program is $15,000.

II. The **AI for Societal Impact Award Program** supports innovative research that explores how artificial intelligence can be used to address or mitigate major human and societal challenges, including (but not limited to) those related to health, safety, social justice, climate change, education, and environmental sustainability

The maximum amount of the AI for Societal Impact Award Program is $15,000.

III. The **Collaborative Multidisciplinary Award Program** offers the opportunity for a group of faculty across disciplines to work together on a new, shared problem of line of research. The program is designed to foster and reward collaboration, as complex intellectual and social problems often require multiple perspectives and viewpoints to solve them. The program also encourages the growth of networks for increased research capacity and strengthened intellectual community. Applicants for this award must clearly justify why looking at the issues from various disciplinary perspectives is important. Collaborations on research and creative projects across campuses, STEM, humanities, and social sciences, faculty ranks, racial/ethnic backgrounds, gender and gender identity, and sexual orientation are encouraged. **The minimum number of collaborators is three and they must either be listed as PI or Co-PI. It is acknowledged that certain fields, such as psychology, are sufficiently broad. Accordingly, investigators representing substantially different branches within such a field may also satisfy this requirement.**

The maximum amount of the Collaborative Multidisciplinary Award Program is $25,000 for up to two years.

LIMITATIONS

Applicants may submit maximum requests of $15,000 to the Individual Fulcrum Award Program, the Social and Racial Justice Award Program, and the Climate Action Award Program. The Collaborative Multidisciplinary Award Program has a maximum award amount of $25,000. Each award is awarded for a 2-year period. Smaller award requests are also possible and will be reviewed according to the same criteria and process as larger award requests. Please be aware that the Research Council may ultimately award less than the original amount requested. Applications requesting more than the maximum allowable amount will not be reviewed.

Faculty members may only be a principal investigator, co-principal investigator on one Research Council Seed Funding Awards application in any given year. Applicants cannot submit a request for funding to the Research Council for a project that is currently being supported by external funding. The proposed project must be different from the one for which they already received funding. Faculty members may not submit the same proposal to any other Rutgers internal funding program in the Fiscal year 2027.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application should be submitted via InfoReady.

The application should include the following:

1. Project Title
2. Five (5) keywords that may include up to three (3) words from the title
3. Abstract (100 words max)
4. Project Overview and objectives/aims of this project (25 words)
5. Project Description (3 page max) which includes:
    a. Team (list lead researcher and any team members and include their chancellor unit, school, department affiliation, as well as their roles and responsibilities)

b. A statement that identifies the rationale for the project
c. The proposed study methods (e.g., data collection, measures or scales to be used, performance/creative arts methods, data analysis strategies)
d. A description of the anticipated implications of the findings for practice, policy, and research, including the impact of the findings on fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion
e. A description of the plans to disseminate the findings
f. Plans and prospective sources for external funding to extend the proposed project

6. Budget (use template provided on InfoReady)
7. Budget Justification. Describe how each budget item is necessary for the successful completion of the project.
8. A bio-sketch or abbreviated CV covering the last five years of work for each team member (2-pages maximum per member; format is flexible—can be NIH or NSF format or any other format of choice; both teaching and research accomplishments should be included)
9. Timeline (Gantt chart)
10. Department Request. For requests to purchase equipment, please upload a letter from a Chairperson or Director stating that the equipment is not already available for use (if applicable)

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

Proposals will be reviewed by Research Council members from disciplines from all four Chancellors' units. They will be scored on

1) Intellectual merit/Significance
2) Innovation/Originality
3) Methodology/Approach
4) Broader impacts
5) Potential for extramural funding

Please be sure to include sections with these headings within the proposal. Be specific when referring to potential for extramural funding.

BUDGET

All programmatic costs must be justified. Award funds may include the following:

- Compensation for research assistants or consultants.
- Travel to present findings from the research project specifically funded by the Research Council at professional conferences.
- Travel to conduct the research or creative initiative.

Requests to purchase equipment must be accompanied by a letter from a Chairperson or Director stating that the equipment is not already available for use.

Research Council Awards *may not be used* for:

- Summer salary, salary supplement, or to pay any part of an award recipient's salary.
- Publication fees charged by a journal.
- General scholarly purposes not directly and specifically required for this project (for example, non-allowable expenses would include purchase of software that is not specific to this project; memberships in professional societies; journal subscriptions; conference expenses and honorariums; book purchases unrelated to the research project.

Awards may be spent *only* for the specific project and activities described in the funded proposal. Please note that all Rutgers University policies on the use of university funds must be followed.

AWARD CONDITIONS

Award notifications, conditional upon the availability of funds, will be e-mailed in April.

The applicant agrees to comply with the Institutional Review Board (IRB), IACUC, and conflict of interest (COI) requirements as a condition of receiving awards.

If the research project involves human or animal subjects, the recipient must provide proof that they have complied with IRB/IACUC requirements.

The recipient must also have entered the appropriate information into the COI website.

Funds must be spent in accordance with the proposed budget, and follow all University policies on the use of funds. Requests to modify one's budget plan or scope of work should be emailed to (rcg@oq.rutgers.edu), along with a justification.

All awards will begin on July 1, 2027. All funds must be committed by May 1, 2029 and expended by June 30, 2029.

DELIVERABLES

Award recipients are asked to submit a one year progress report and a final report. The final report is due within 30 days after the funding ends. This report should describe all work that has been completed related to the project, describing findings and presentations, if any. The final report should also include any presentations, publications, grant submissions, if any, and other studies that build upon the findings of the funded project. Include any plans for continuing the project beyond the grant period and for securing extramural funding

Public Products: As a public research University, Rutgers has an obligation to disseminate the results of its research. There is an implicit duty to inform the public of research findings. All RC award recipients are expected to develop a short public product which will be disseminated as a scholarly or creative product on the RC website. It can take the form of a one-page research brief or video for the performing and creative arts.

Award recipients may be invited to present their project at a campus research event.

For more information, contact:

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