

Guidelines for SPG Proposal Submissions

Funded jointly by the MSU Foundation and MSU colleges, the Strategic Partnership Grants (SPG) Program is an important funding mechanism to support promising new initiatives in key areas of research, scholarship and multidisciplinary collaboration. A successful SPG concept would be of sufficient caliber that it would achieve several of the following aspirations:

- Create a nexus of national/international research preeminence that will raise the stature of the university, significantly differentiating MSU from its peers.
- Promote productive and sustained research collaboration and productivity among faculty that, without this funding, would otherwise not occur.
- Promote work that is high risk, high return, with a potential for high reputational benefit.
- Position MSU faculty to compete successfully for significant external funding by creating a path to sustainability of the research endeavor; builds a bridge to a future, not a project that ends at the end of the SPG funding.
- Promote the development of research ideas with significant (long term) commercial potential and/or broad community or global impact.

The SPG program enables such opportunities by supporting research and scholarship that is leading-edge, interdisciplinary, and capitalizes on the existing intellectual and research resources at Michigan State University. The SPG program advances MSU Foundation's mission to provide grant funding for the development of new knowledge, to lay the groundwork for centers of excellence at the university, and to invest in the development of Michigan State University as one of the nation's leading research institutions. Managed by the Office of Research and Innovation (OR&I), proposals for new and innovative research initiatives are solicited annually in a two-stage review process (preliminary proposals and invited full proposals). Up to five applications will be submitted for review by the MSU Foundation in June of each year.

Eligibility

The SPG program is open to multidisciplinary or multi-institutional PI teams comprised of:

- Full time tenured and tenure-track faculty
- Faculty with uninterrupted, multi-year, fixed term appointments in academic departments (faculty with visiting or adjunct appointments are not eligible)
- Faculty with one-year appointments who obtain written confirmation from their departmental chair that they will be appointed through the duration of the grant (letters from the chair should be attached to the faculty's CV and uploaded under the PI/Co-PI Information tab).
- Academic specialists in the continuing appointment system who have the majority of their effort in the research category (the term "faculty" in this RFP includes these specialists)

Each investigator will be required to provide an up-to-date vita and complete a current and pending support form.

Pre-Proposal Evaluation Process

Pre-proposals will first be reviewed by OR&I to assure that proposals are assigned to an appropriate review panel. The panels, comprised of faculty appointed by the OR&I, will be encouraged to recruit additional ad hoc reviewers to their team, in order to assure excellent coverage of the subject matter of their full cohort of pre-proposals. Panels will review the pre-proposals, prepare written reviews, and present their findings to a meeting of the Council of Research Deans (CORD). Each panel will present a rank-ordered executive summary of support for proposals that should be invited to submit full proposals, as well as a list of proposals not recommended to go further in the process.

CORD will subsequently deliberate to select from among the recommended proposals to deliver to OR&I an appropriate number and intellectually diverse set of programs to be invited to submit full proposals. Feedback from the review process will be provided to all applicants. For those programs moving forward to full proposals, CORD feedback will include the identification of “issues” that transcend the scholarship of the proposal, i.e., potential institutional barriers to success that may not be evident to faculty on the review panels; as well as suggestions to applicants that would improve the chances of success of a full proposal, especially missed opportunities for collaboration across colleges.

Full Proposal Evaluation Process

The review panels that initially reviewed the SPG pre-proposals will review the full proposals. These panels will again be encouraged to recruit additional reviewers to their team, in order to assure excellent coverage of the subject matter of their full cohort of full proposals. Each panel will present to CORD and OR&I a rank-ordered executive summary of support for proposals that should move ahead in the selection process, as well as a list of proposals not recommended to go further in the process.

CORD will subsequently deliberate to select from among the recommend proposals, to deliver to OR&I up to five proposals to be invited to present to the grants committee of the MSU Foundation Board of Directors. Feedback from the review process will be provided to all applicants.

Review Criteria

SPG applications may be in one of two categories. Upon review, the OR&I reserves the right to shift a proposal from one category to the other, based on the nature of the proposed work and the outcomes sought.

1. Research and Scholarly Development:

Intended to support the efforts of a faculty team to pursue an innovative, early phase research or scholarly direction, to develop broad community or global impact of an applied research or scholarly effort, and/or to undertake a potentially high risk, high reward research initiative. Proposed future sustainable funding sources and a link to specific solicitation(s) of interest to the team should be identified in the proposal.

Funding for this SPG category has a maximum of \$480,000 inclusive of a 20% cash match from college or related sources, budgeted at \$160,000/year for up to three years. For the sake of clarity, this means up to \$400,000 MSUF funding, matched by up to \$80,000.

2. **Center Development:**

Intended to support the assembly of a faculty team, with a track record of working together on shared goals, and delivery of related results, as evidence of their preparedness to secure significant external funding that would support a center or large multidisciplinary program. Proposed future sustainable funding sources and a link to specific solicitation(s) of interest to the team should be identified in the proposal.

Funding for this SPG category has a maximum of \$240,000, inclusive of a 50% cash match from college or other sources, budgeted at \$120,000/year for up to two years. For the sake of clarity, this means up to \$160,000 MSUF funding, matched by up to \$80,000.

Review criteria for the two categories will include assessment of:

- **Scope and Significance:** Does the proposal address an important problem? If its aims are achieved, how will scientific, cultural, or artistic knowledge be advanced? What will be the effect on the concepts or methods that drive this field?
- **Prominence and Leadership:** Does the stature, experience and track record of the investigators indicate a high probability for development of the project into an area of prominence and leadership?
- **Collaboration:** Does the proposal articulate a plan for creating sustainable collaborations among faculty in varying disciplines, departments, and colleges?
- **Risk:** Does the proposed work represent a high risk – high return proposition? Does the proposed program articulate a credible plan to mitigate that risk, and optimize the chance for reward? Is an SPG award the only likely path to funding, because of the risk profile of the project?
- **Arts and Humanities:** In cases where extramural support is not commonly available for an activity in these areas, does the proposal demonstrate how greater distinction to the proposed initiative and to the University will ensue through dissemination or presentation in significant venues or publications?
- **Value Added:** Can the proposed research or scholarship be achieved at MSU in the absence of SPG support? Why is this a good investment for MSU? Is there a strong probability that this project will lead to both enhanced MSU reputation and future external support? Is there a credible possibility that the work could lead to a future commercial opportunity that would return monetary value to MSU?

Additional review criteria for Research and Scholarly Development proposals include:

- **Securing Future Resources:** Does this project clearly define how it will use the SPG grant funds to build paths to obtain identifiable and sustainable external funding that will support the research theme in the future?

Additional review criteria for Center Development proposals include:

- **Securing Future Resources:** Does this proposal identify an extant funding agency initiative/grand challenge/RFP that aligns to the goals and objectives of the proposed Center? Do the current assets at MSU (human and capital) form an adequate base on which this proposed Center can be built? Does the proposal offer a thorough assessment of the competitive landscape, and how MSU is or will be superior to those competitors in pursuit of this Center award? Does the proposal clearly articulate how the use of SPG grant funds will make an MSU application to this agency competitive?
- **Governance:** Does the proposal articulate a plan for governance of the Center, both under MSU rules, and in line with funding agency guidelines? Does the application anticipate the evaluation criteria on which the sustainable funding for the Center will depend, and articulate plans to both measure and achieve those metrics?

Post Award Information

All SPG awards are 24 to 36 months beginning on July 1 and ending on June 30. Accounts will be established in the principal investigators name and be maintained by his or her department. All projects must meet the approvals for use of human and animal subjects. Account numbers will be released in July; all expenses incurred from July 1 on can be charged retroactively. Principal investigators will be notified via email when accounts are established. Start dates are firm. If there is a need to postpone the start of research, investigators are asked to submit a request for an extension. Extensions will not change the start date but will extend the duration of the grant. All extensions are subject to approval.

There will be an annual review of every funded project at the completion of each year of funding. This review will include a written report (usually due in the March to early April time frame) and a presentation to the OR&I, CORD, and the MSU Foundation (usually in late April). A final written report will be solicited two years post award.

Details concerning the annual review will be sent to the lead PI via email each spring.

Ownership of intellectual property derived from the SPG program is retained by MSU under institutional policy. Commercialization of MSU owned intellectual property resulting from SPG grants is coordinated by MSU Technologies.