2022 Request for Proposals

Research and Economic Development is soliciting applications for the 2022 Ignite Planning Grant Program. Ignite aims to promote new collaborative research efforts and facilitate the development of interdisciplinary teams focused on preparing competitive, large-scale collaborative proposals for significant external funding. Ignite grants seek to enhance existing areas of focus and distinction, accelerate the development of emerging research strengths, and foster interactions between UNC Charlotte faculty and potential collaborators at other institutions. In an effort to eliminate barriers to building collaborative teams and coordinating, planning, and preparing large, interdisciplinary multi-investigator research proposals, Ignite provides 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.

Ignite grants are designed to support and incentivize stronger collaborative relationships among researchers from different colleges and disciplines with the goal of increasing UNC Charlotte’s competitiveness in attracting extramural funding and research support, especially in the areas of focus and distinction identified in the Top-tier Research Commission Report. Recipients of these one-time awards are expected to submit multiple applications and proposals for significant funding from diverse sources within the 24-month award period, thereby helping to position these teams of researchers to obtain the external funding needed to sustain future activities and research related to the project.

Award Focus and Scope

Ignite awards are intended to build capacity in research areas that are strategically important at regional, state, and national levels. While the Ignite program is open to all fields, of particular interest are proposals that focus on (1) one or more of the areas of research focus and distinction identified by the Top-Tier Research Commission and (2) research aimed at addressing questions of diversity, equity and inclusion, including efforts to support and promote socioeconomic and racial diversity in ways that create real economic mobility.

Regardless of the research theme or focus, proposers must fully describe how their research aligns with priority areas identified by state and federal agencies and policy offices (e.g., National Science Foundation’s Strategic Plan, NIH Strategic Plan, Office of Science and Technology Policy Priorities, and National Endowment for the Humanities Strategic Plan) and/or national organizations and professional societies.

Award Amount and Duration

Faculty and staff teams can apply for one-time grants of up to $50,000 per year for up to two years (24 months; $100,000 maximum direct costs). Facility and Administrative (F&A) costs are not required. We anticipate funding 4-5 awards annually. The second year of funding will be contingent upon the team’s performance and progress during year 1, including their successful attainment of proposed milestones. Annual reports detailing the activities and progress of the planning efforts will be due 45 days prior to the anniversary date of the project. Extensions are not permitted.

The expected start date for FY2022 awards is December 1, 2022.
To promote 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, and 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. Only one faculty member can serve as PI and an individual faculty 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 must be submitted electronically using the online form available here by 5 pm EDT on **October 24, 2022**. All proposal components must be compiled in the order listed below and submitted as a single pdf file. **Late and incomplete submissions will not be accepted.**

Proposals must contain the following sections in the order listed 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) 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** (2000 characters): 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 intended to facilitate and stimulate 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 for reviewers to assess the feasibility of the proposed plans and how the research contributes to existing and emerging university research strengths (see Top-tier Commission Report) and aligns with national priority areas.

The Project Description should also (1) outline the participants’ respective areas of expertise and anticipated contributions 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 each year of the award. 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.

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

Ignite awards may not be used for faculty/staff summer salary, post-doc wages, or stipends (and tuition) for undergraduate or graduate students. Teaching release time is allowed but should be limited to one course per year per senior personnel. 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. Preference will also be given to projects with the potential to enhance UNC Charlotte’s competitiveness for large-scale grants, including but not limited to NSF Science and Technology Center (STC) grants, NSF Engineering Research Center (ERC) grants, NSF Materials Research Science Engineering Center (MRSEC) grants, NSF Research Traineeship (NRT) grants, NSF Convergence Accelerator Grants, DOD Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURI) grants, NIH program project/center grants, and NIH T32 training grants.

Ignite 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?
• Does the proposed research theme complement and enhance existing and emerging areas of research focus and distinction at UNC Charlotte (see Top-tier Commission Report)?

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 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

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<td>August 23, 2022</td>
<td>Call for Proposals Released</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 24, 2022</td>
<td>Proposals Due, 5 p.m. ET</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-November, 2022</td>
<td>Awards Announced</td>
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Questions and Inquiries

Questions regarding this program announcement should be directed to Dr. LaVerne Ellerbe, Director of the Center for Research Excellence, at lellerb1@uncc.edu.