FY 2026 STEP Program
for Faculty Researchers

SEED GRANTS FOR TRANSITIONAL AND EXPLORATORY PROJECTS

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Resources

STEP Grant Program Website
https://www.siue.edu/funding/internal-funding/step.shtml

STEP Proposal Library
email siueresearch@siue.edu for an appointment to review.

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Agenda

➢Program Basics

➢Review Criteria

➢Application Sections

➢Budget Planning

➢Time for Questions

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The Basics!

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Deadline: Friday, January 17, 2025, 4:30 p.m. (on the dot!) via Kuali Build Application

➢Application are submitted through the Kuali Build system where they will route to your Chair, Unit Research Committee, and Dean for approval, then to ORP for R&D Committee Review

➢Link to form: https://siue.kualibuild.com/app/5ef4daa9f86c25001bd3eb71/run

➢If you start and want to save your application to work on later use this link to get back to your original application:
https://siue.kualibuild.com/app/builder/#/my/drafts

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Project Period

July 1 – June 30

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Purpose

Seed Grants for Transitional and Exploratory Projects (STEP) provides seed funding on a competitive basis to SIUE faculty and staff to support research and creative activities. Seed funding is used to jumpstart junior faculty research or encourage to the initiation of new research directions. Seed grant funding is not intended to sustain or supplement current research programs.

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For Junior Faculty - Projects must:

➤ Help undertake pilot projects that will aid in establishing careers as independent investigators and enable successfully applying for extramural funding;

➤ Applicants in the pre-mid-term review stage of their career may submit proposals to revise dissertation material. However, applicants must make a strong argument for how the STEP project may propel the applicant's career in a significant and lasting research direction

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For Established Faculty - Projects must:

➢ Perform transitional and exploratory research (particularly on novel or pioneering ideas), to determine project feasibility, and to develop preliminary data to support extramural applications.

➢ Demonstrate how the STEP project represents a significant transition in their research as opposed to previous activity. Successful proposals by established faculty will outline specific differences between the STEP project and previous scholarly activities, including publications and conference presentations, so that an educated lay reader is able to discern the new direction of the proposed project.

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Ineligible Activities

➢ Faculty development (including conference travel)

➢ Institutional research

➢ Public service and consulting

➢ Departmental or curriculum development

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Eligibility - who can apply?

➢ Full-time, continuing members of the faculty including research faculty.

➢ All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply, including minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and protected veterans. Faculty with disabilities desiring accommodations in the application process should contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access at (618) 650-2333.

➢ **All applicants, including PIs and Co-PIs, must have submitted final reports and fulfilled the terms and conditions, including submission of an external grant proposal, of projects previously funded by the SIUE Graduate School at least 5 business days before this program deadline in order to be eligible for this program.**

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Personnel –
Who can be on the proposal?

➤ Principal Investigator (PI)
   Note: an applicant may only serve as PI on ONE proposal to the STEP program.

➤ Co-PI

➤ Key Personnel (include c.v., does not have to meet requirements)

➤ Graduate Assistants and student workers

➤ Just remember that personnel tends to be the most expensive budget portion.

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Award –
How much money can I get?

➤ Up to $16,000: awards average $5,000 -$10,000

➤ Annette and Henry Baich award: $1,000 for best STEP basic research application in sciences/disciplines covered by Sigma Xi.

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Application Sections

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Application Package

➢ **Application Form in Kuali Build**
- ▪ Complete all information in the form
- ▪ **Upload Full Proposal in single PDF in order indicated below:**
  1. Project Abstract (150-word limit)
  2. Narrative (limit 10 double-spaced pages, 1" margins)
  3. External Funding Potential Form (link to template)
  4. References
  5. Appendix (optional)
  6. Curriculum Vitae (Limit two pages each, 1" margins)
  7. Previous Funding Forms(s) ◦ – if none, include the form with "N/A" (link to template)

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Application package (cont.)

➢ **Budget**
- o Read the Budget section in the guidelines carefully
- o Make sure you have thought about why each line is critical to the success of your project!

➢ **Budget Justification**
- o Address each budget line item
- o Include rationale for including each item in the budget
- o REMEMBER, inadequate explanations can result in non-funding

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Application package (cont.)

Project Abstract (150-word limit)
- o the abstract should be understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader. It should contain a summary of the proposed activity and be a comprehensive description of the proposed project.

Narrative/Project Description
- o 10 double-spaced , numbered pages with 1"margins
- o Use following fonts with minimum size
  - ◦ Times New Roman 11 point/Arial 10 point
- o Include sections headers for:
  - ◦ Alignment with STEP purpose
  - ◦ Introduction and Background
  - ◦ Procedures/Project Plan
  - ◦ Facilities
  - ◦ Timeline
  - ◦ Anticipated Results

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Narrative (10 pages)

- **Alignment with STEP Purpose**
  - Not the same as the Abstract, speak directly to STEP program goals
- **Introduction and Background**
  - Make an argument for significance, contribution to the field
  - Don't forget Lit Review
- **Procedures or Project Plan**
  - Methods and *why* these are the best methods
  - If portions are risky, mention plan 'B'
- **Facilities and Resources**
  - Even if it's only your office and computer
- **Timeline**
  - A chart or table format is recommended
- **Anticipated Results**
  - Publications and presentations
  - External grants – target specific grants, argue your competitiveness (USE THE FORM!!)

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External Funding Form

AGENCY	PROGRAM	DEADLINE	AMOUNT

External Funding Potential:
You must provide this plan for external funding after the narrative section. You will use this table (template on website) to list the potential funding sources. The programs do not have to be an exact match, but use the section to build the argument that your planned STEP outcomes are supported by the funders' research mission, forecast, trajectories or current funding direction. Include argument for you research and competitiveness for external funding potential. In your discussion, include alternatives if the direction of the funder you list in the table changes.

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References

- ➢ No page limit
- ➢ Only include pertinent references

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Appendix

➢Appendices are optional

➢Only include items necessary to reviewers understanding of the research project

➢May include evidence of access to needed resources/people such as:
- Letters of Commitment
- Subcontractors experience
- Sample surveys/protocols
- **DO NOT** include graphs, charts or other items that belong in the Narrative!
- **DO NOT** use the Appendix to circumvent the page limitations of the Narrative!

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Curriculum Vitae (CV)

➢Maximum length – 2 pages

➢PI & Co-Investigator (if applicable) must each submit a CV (up to 2 pages each)

➢ Include ONLY activities relevant to the proposed project

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Previous Funding Form(s)

➢Use form on STEP website

➢Use one page per previous grant

➢Applies to any external funding received and any internal funding received in the last 3 years.

➢These forms are used to assess applicant's capacity for
- Producing strong outcomes and
- Meeting the terms and conditions of an internal award

➢**If applicant has not received any funding previously a single form is completed with the statement, "No internal or external funding received"**

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Previous Funding Form(s) (cont.)

Previous Funding Form

Results From Prior External and Graduate School Support
Use one page per award (previous 3 years only).

Project Director or Co-I		Program	Amount	Period of Support
Title of Previous Project				
Project Summary: In the space below, summarize the results of completed work for your grant supported research project. Include a list of publications, presentations, or other documentation that resulted from the project. (Use an additional page, if necessary)				

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Application Submission Order

➢ **Reminder: Upload Full Proposal in single PDF <u>in order indicated below:</u>**
  ◦ Project Abstract (150-word limit)
  ◦ Narrative
  ◦ External Funding Potential Form
  ◦ Reference List (no page limit)
  ◦ Appendix
  ◦ C.V. (2 pages each)
  ◦ Previous Funding Form(s)

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Budget Considerations

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Allowable Budget Categories

➢ Call staff replacement during the academic year
➢ Summer salary
➢ Student Workers (hourly rate); GAs (salary)
➢ Commodities
➢ Contractual Services
➢ Equipment
➢ Some telecommunications
➢ Travel – directly related to collection of data only
➢ Human Subjects Incentives
➢ Other

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Unallowable Costs

➢ Costs related to 'ineligible activities'
➢ Salary for collaborators **external** to SIUE
➢ Office supplies and items that should normally be provided by your department
➢ No funds may be used for equipment repair or maintenance
➢ Conference travel
➢ No funding may be used for telecommunications EXCEPT for purposes of telephone surveys

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Salary

If the investigator requests academic year assigned time for research, salary dollars are for replacement costs at the call staff rate for release time.

Check with your department before putting this in your budget for both allowability and cost!!!!

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Salary (cont.)

➢ Summer salary is at the investigator's base salary
  o Salary = $5,000/month. One month (approx. 4.33 weeks) @ 100% effort = $5,000 plus cost-of-living increase
  o Maxes out at $9,000 or one month, the lesser of the two
  o **Contact your department regarding any potential technical overloads.**

➢ When calculating salary dollars for summer salary, applicants should consider the typical 3% annual cost of living increase or any anticipated promotions. ($5,000 x1.03 - $5,150)

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Salary (cont.)

➢ If you wish to hire a SIUE faculty or staff member as a 'consultant', their compensation must be included under the 'salary' budget line.

  o Time for this individual is paid as either summer time (a portion of the monthly base salary) or academic year assigned time (call staff rate)

➢ Hiring students in summer: students must be enrolled at the time of the work on the grant.

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Contractual Services Outside SIUE

➢ If working with a contractor outside SIUE, be sure to:
  o Get a quote from the contractor for the scope of work they will perform, include this in the appendix

  o International research: hiring citizens of other countries as 'contractors' can be somewhat involved. Contact ORP if you are considering this.

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Budget: Travel

➢**No funds are available for travel or related costs occurring outside the project period, July 1-June 30**

➢Travel funds are awarded only for non-local travel for the purposes of data collection

➢No consulting or attending professional conferences allowed

➢International projects: please contact ORP to discuss your budget and planning

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Budget: Human Subjects Incentives

➢Cost for human subjects incentives is allowable. Include as Other Costs in your budget.

➢Budget justification must include number of incentives and type of payments

➢Narrative needs to include a 'Plan B' if you don't get access to a population or number of subjects

➢ Avoid using gift cards when possible

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Other Budget Items to Consider

➢Funding for equipment is limited and only allowed for specialized items essential to the nature of the research

➢Software is considered a contractual service if it is renewed annually – otherwise it is a commodity

➢Be sure to include lab costs (e.g. Vivarium, hazardous waste disposal, etc.)

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Budget Justification

In writing your budget justification sections in the Kuali Build form, be sure to:

➤Itemize costs

➤Show the math and justify why each cost is included

➤Salary time complements the narrative: why you need this time over and above regularly assigned research time

➤Narrative outlines role of students but this is additional space to discuss their roles and time allocation needed for the work they will be doing

➤Include vendor estimates for larger purchases and justify why this vendor was selected specifically for this project

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Proposal Writing Tips

➤Most reviewers make their decision in the first paragraph

➤Audience = your 'smartest undergraduate' or a *New York Times* reader

➤Be straightforward, thorough, succinct: state *what* you're going to do; argue *why* it's important; state it again with an *outlook* to the project's outcomes and life post-grant
   o Make sure the reviewers can envision every step of the project
   o Keep in mind: where does this one-year project lead you in the long term?

➤**Follow the guidelines exactly!**

➤Include section headings

➤Keep the scope feasible for the STEP project period (one year)

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Program Review and Criteria

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Review Process

➢Applications are submitted in the Kuali Build application and reviewed by ORP to ensure eligibility and compliance.

➢Applications are routed first to the Department Chair and then the Unit Research Committee, which completes the Proposal Critique Form and provides review comments and rankings to ORP.

➢Applications then route to the Dean's Office for review and approval.

➢The Graduate School's Research and Development Committee review Unit Research Committee recommendations and comments before completing their evaluations and recommendations to the Dean of the Graduate School, who makes all final funding decisions.

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STEP Scoring Rubric

➢Designed to mitigate implicit bias in the internal review process

➢Up to 40 points possible

➢Detailed rubric is available on the STEP program website

➢Assesses proposal components on a 1-8 point scale

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STEP Scoring Rubric Components

➢Assesses the following proposal components on a 1-8 point scale:

1. Narrative - Alignment with STEP Goals
2. Narrative - Procedures & Project Plan
3. Narrative - Timeline
4. Previous Funding Forms
5. Budget / Budget Justification

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Review Criteria Rankings

➢Applicants get scored on each criterion indicated on the previous slide

➢Each area is scored on a scale of:
o Exemplary (7-8)
o Adequate (5-6)
o Needs Improvement (3-4)
o Insufficient (1-2)

➢Scores in the 6-8 range are generally considered to be 'fundable'

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Discussion Points

➢Is the project a new direction for an established faculty member?

➢Is the budget aligned with project activities and timeline? (e.g. summer salary when all work occurs in the academic year)

➢Are all criteria as detailed in the STEP Scoring Rubric met?
o Rubric is available on the STEP website
o Rubric provides details about expectations for each category

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Terms and Conditions of Award

➢Upon notification of award, awardees must complete the STEP Award Acceptance Form in Kuali Build.

➢Awardees must
1) submit a final report for STEP in the Internal Grants Report Form in Kuali Build by the first Monday in August following the end of their award period and
2) submit a proposal to an external sponsor by June 30 of the fiscal year after the award period ends. Must route 10 business days before submission due date.

➢ External proposals may be submitted before the end of the STEP project period if approved by ORP. External proposals, if related to the awarded STEP project, must advance rather than duplicate the original STEP project.
o Student and Faculty Internships/Fellowships or primarily professional development activities will not qualify as an external submission. Faculty Fellowships that are scholarship or research focused will qualify as an external submission.

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Final Tips

➤Feel free to call ORP

➤Let us help with budget and narrative questions

➤Have your colleagues read your drafts

➤Contact your chair and dean about your project, especially if you want a course buyout

➤Read funded proposals in our STEP library at the Graduate School

➤STEP Kuali Build Application Form (Preview)

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QUESTIONS?

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