Texas A&M University
Division of Research
TARGETED PROPOSAL TEAMS (TPT) FUNDING PROGRAM
2024-2025 Request for Proposals *(Draft Version)*

Background and Purpose

A new investment initiative to grow the research enterprise of Texas A&M University was established in 2023: the ASCEND initiative, which includes the i) Research Leadership Fellowships (RLF) program (the 2024 Request for Proposals had been previously released), and ii) the Targeted Proposal Teams (TPT) program. The Division of Research is pleased to announce the 2024-2025 TPT Request for Proposals (RFP) - the second year of the program. As federal agencies and other sponsors continue to prioritize interdisciplinary research of national and global importance, the TPT program should be viewed as an investment to foster collaborative and interdisciplinary research and enhance leveraging extramural funding at Texas A&M University. The TPT is designed to provide seed funding for innovative research and creative ideas in three categories: 1) Collaborative Seed Grants; 2) Proposal Planning Grants; and 3) Grants on the Edge.

Funding

The 2024-2025 TPT program includes two calls for proposals, one per academic semester (i.e., Fall 2024 and Spring 2025). A total of $5,000,000 is available for the two calls distributed across the three funding categories. It is anticipated that about 12 awards per funding category will be made for each call based on the quality of the proposals and recommendations of the Review Committee.

Eligibility and Requirements

- The TPT program is open to faculty members from Texas A&M University and its Texas A&M University System partner research state agencies (i.e., Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Texas Engineering Experiment Station) who are eligible to apply as principal investigators for external funding. To apply to this program, at least two eligible faculty investigators from diverse disciplines must collaborate and submit a proposal as a team.
- An investigator may be named as Principal Investigator (PI) on only one proposal per TPT category (i.e., an investigator may serve as PI for one Collaborative Seed Grant, one Proposal Planning Grant, and one Grants on the Edge). Submission of multiple proposals in the same category by the same investigator as PI will result in the disqualification of the proposals. However, a PI for one proposal may serve as Co-PI on multiple proposals.
- Current awardees (PIs) of an active TPT grant are not eligible to submit a TPT proposal (as PI) this year.
- TPT funds cannot be used for equipment or travel to conventional academic meetings or conferences.

- Awards are subject to the availability of funds and budgetary approvals. Funding levels for successful proposals may vary depending on the Review Committee's assessment of budgetary need and proposal ranking.
- Proposals recommended for funding will be reviewed for research compliance requirements (including IRB, IACUC, IBC, and Export Control requirements, as appropriate). Funds will be released only after appropriate compliance requirements have been met.
- No-cost extensions are not permitted. Unspent grant funds will be returned to the TPT program.
- Awardees are expected to:
  - Engage with the VPR Office of Research Development Services (RDS) after notification of the award and submit sponsor feedback to this office.
  - Submit a final report to the TPT program within 60 days of the completion of the award, outlining the outputs, outcomes, and impact of the project. The final report should include specifics about the targeted submission, results of the research, new funding targets identified during the process, efforts underway to obtain external funding, and efforts to generate publications,
  - Submit a competitive proposal seeded by the TPT award to an external funding agency within 12 months of completion of the award.
  - Submit annual progress reports for two years following completion of the TPT award to document progress on the following metrics: publications, extramural grant funding, or new projects stemming from the award. Any abstracts or publications arising from the award must acknowledge TPT funding.

Proposal Deadline: September 16, 2024.

Proposal Submission:
TPT proposals must be submitted by the PI via the InfoReady portal by September 16, 2024.

TPT Award Categories

1) Collaborative Seed Grants[1]
Purpose:
The purpose of the TPT Collaborative Seed Grants program is to increase research and creative capacity by funding teams of interdisciplinary researchers pursuing curiosity-driven, high-risk, high-reward projects in their early stages of development. By supporting innovative research and creative projects, the program aims to increase the competitiveness of future interdisciplinary proposals for external funding and fuel discoveries that address complex research questions and/or enhance our human experience. Collaborative Seed Grants proposals must include at least two eligible faculty investigators from diverse disciplines.

Size of Award and Budget Guidelines:
Discovery Seed Grants will provide up to $60K over 12 months. Allowable expenses include:

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[1] Adapted from similar internal programs at The Ohio State University and the University of Michigan

- Personnel costs: Salary and benefits for Research Associates, Postdoc, or Graduate Students (stipend, tuition, and required fees) to support data collection or analysis.
- Research supplies and expenses associated with project deliverables.
- Expenses associated with project specific travel to meet with external collaborators.

Include a budget table and a brief budget justification describing the anticipated allocation of requested seed funding (i.e., the percentage of funds allocated to the different budgetary categories).

Proposal Requirements and Review Criteria:

Proposals must include the information outlined below. Proposals that do not follow these guidelines will be returned without review.

Proposal Title: Provide a title for the proposal.

Principal Investigator: Provide the name, affiliation, and contact information of the Principal Investigator (PI). Please ensure the PI signs the cover page.

Co-Principal Investigators: Provide the name, affiliation, and contact information of each Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI). There is no limit to the number of Co-PIs.

Proposal Summary: Provide a 250-word summary including significance and impact.

Project Narrative (maximum of three pages): Provide a narrative understandable to a non-specialist describing the challenge(s) to be addressed and the high-risk/high-reward concepts being proposed. Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

a. Significance and Impact, including an explanation of the challenge(s) to be addressed, intellectual merit and significance, expected outcomes and impact of the work on the society, and the anticipated contribution to the strategic research mission of Texas A&M University. Provide a timeline of proposed activities for which the team is seeking grant funds. (60 points).

b. Proposal Team: Include a brief statement of the role(s) of team members on the proposed project and how their expertise or background prepares them for the execution of the proposed work. (30 points).

c. Extramural Funding Opportunity: please list potential external sponsor(s) to which the proposal will be submitted by the end of the grant period (10 points).

References (not included in the page limit): All work cited in the proposal should be referenced.

Biosketch: Append a maximum two-page biosketch/CV for the PI and each Co-PI.

2) Proposal Planning Grants

Purpose:

The purpose of the TPT Proposal Planning Grants program is to support and facilitate interdisciplinary teams that will submit large-scale extramural proposals to a targeted federal funding agency, a private foundation, the commercial sector, a state agency, or other sponsors. Such opportunities require significant team engagement often over multiple years and advance planning to develop a successful proposal. Examples of proposal targets include but are not limited to: National Science Foundation (NSF) National Artificial Intelligence Research Institutes, NSF Engineering Research Center, NSF Materials Research Science & Engineering Centers, NSF Science and Technology Centers, NSF Centers for Chemical Innovation, Department of Defense (DOD) Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative, Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Energy, Efficiency & Renewable Energy, DOE Advanced Research

Projects Agency-Energy, DOE Energy Frontier Research Centers, National Institutes of Health (NIH) Program/Center grants (i.e., P01, P30 and P50), and National Endowment for Humanities (NEH) major grant programs. Specific target opportunities may vary depending on the targeted global challenge or societal problem.

Proposal Planning Grants must include at least two eligible faculty members from diverse disciplines. The program is open to faculty from all disciplines and proposals from all topics will be considered. Proposals supporting the following six strategic research themes identified in the Texas A&M University [Research Enterprise Strategic Plan (2023-2030)](#) are encouraged: i) Community and Economic Resilience (including Arts Ecosystem and Culture); ii) Emerging Technologies and Innovations (including AI and Machine Learning); iii) Health and Quality of Life; iv) National Security; v) Space Exploration; vi) Sustainability and Environment (including Food-Energy-Water-Health Nexus).

In addition to the awarded funds, the Division of Research will support each planning grant awardee with the following resources: team facilitation, management of proposal development processes including the organization of documents, creation of templates, proposal review including review, graphics and figures, the collection of documents such as letters of support and biosketches/CVs, and coordination with Sponsored Research Services to accomplish budget development, compliance review and submission.

Size of Award and Budget Guidelines:
Proposal Planning Grants will provide up to $100K for a 12-month performance period. Allowable expenses are designed to be flexible to meet the needs of different types of teams. Examples include:
- Personnel costs: Salary and benefits for Research Associates or Postdoc to assist with team facilitation and proposal development efforts.
- Expenses associated with proposal specific travel to meet with targeted sponsor(s) or external collaborators.
- Expenses related to hosting proposal team meetings, workshops, or symposia.
- Salary or course buyouts to facilitate team building and submission of targeted extramural proposal: The PI may request partial summer salary and course buyouts with appropriate college approvals in place.
- Expenses related to data analyses and data compilation.

Include a budget table and budget justification. Budget justification must clarify how funds will lead to successful proposal development and submission.

Proposal Requirements and Review Criteria:
Proposal must include the information outlined below. Proposals that do not follow these guidelines will be returned without review.

Proposal Title: Provide a title for the proposal.

Principal Investigator: Provide the name, affiliation, and contact information of the Principal Investigator (PI). Please ensure the PI signs the cover page.

Co-Principal Investigators: Provide the name, affiliation, and contact information of each Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI). There is no limit to the number of Co-PIs.

Proposal Summary: Provide a 250-word summary including significance and impact.

<u>Proposal Narrative (maximum of three pages):</u> Provide a narrative describing the overall merit and significance of the proposed research, including a timeline of proposed activities for which the team is seeking seed funding. Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

a. Overall Merit and Significance of the Application, including an explanation of the significance and intellectual merit of the work, novelty, feasibility of methodology, probability of success, and the anticipated contribution to the strategic research mission of Texas A&M University. Does the proposal address current/emerging challenges of societal and strategic importance? How will the proposal concept advance the field or broaden the horizon for future research? Provide a timeline of proposed activities for which the team is seeking grant funds. (40 points).

b. Composition and Qualifications of the Proposal Team, including a list of proposing team members and a brief statement of their role(s) and responsibilities on the proposed project, research productivity and track record as reflected in the biosketch, justification for interdisciplinary team-based approach, and availability of relevant facilities and instrumentation. Provide a justification for each team member to demonstrate that interdisciplinary aims and outcomes are greater than the sum of their parts. Describe the specific skills or abilities of the team and the projected need for contractor/consultant services to ensure funding success. (15 points).

c. Evidence of Preliminary Data (i.e., pilot data) is a requirement of this program. Provide a summary of existing work and data acquisition by the team, relevant experience and capacity of the proposal team related to the targeted extramural grant opportunity, and how the planning grant will lead to successful submission of a competitive large-scale proposal within 12 months of completion of the planning grant. Note that funds for new data collection are expected to be minimal. (15 points).

d. Broader Impacts and Relevance of Proposed Project to Texas and/or National Priorities, including a description of the broader impacts of the proposed project and its potential to benefit society. Provide a clear justification of how the proposed project is aligned with the priorities of the State of Texas and/or the national research agenda and how such alignments will lead to future extramural funding. (15 points).

e. Plans for Leveraging Extramural Funding, including identification of targeted extramural funding opportunity(s) and timeline for proposal development. This must include sponsor name, target program, point of contact/program director, anticipated RFA release, and estimated date for proposal submission by the team to the funding program. (15 points).

<u>References</u> (not included in the page limit): All work cited in the proposal should be referenced.

<u>Biosketch:</u> Append a maximum two-page biosketch/CV for the PI and each Co-PI.

3) Grants on the Edge

Purpose:

The purpose of the TPT Grants on the Edge program is to provide funding to enhance the competitiveness of previously submitted extramural grant proposals. When a research or creative proposal is favorably reviewed by an extramural grant review panel or study section (by receiving a competitive rating) but did not make the funding cut, the PI/team may request funding support to enhance the proposal or generate research data in support of proposal resubmission. Grants on the Edge must include at least two eligible faculty members from diverse disciplines.

Size of Award and Budget Guidelines:
Grants on the Edge will provide up to $25,000 (for targeted extramural proposal budgets of $2 million or less) and up to $50,000 (for targeted extramural proposal budgets of more than $2 million) over 12 months, to support eligible PIs/teams who have had research proposals submitted and reviewed by external funding agencies since 2023 that were not funded but demonstrated merit. The program funding will provide support to address review panel comments, generate additional preliminary data, or conduct other activities aimed at improving the chances of success upon resubmission of the grant proposal. Allowable expenses are designed to be flexible to meet the needs of different proposals. Examples include:

- Personnel costs: Salary and benefits for Research Associates, Postdoc or Graduate Student to assist with additional data collection and proposal revision/refinement.
- Research supplies or materials.
- Travel to meet with sponsor.
- Proposal development and review service (i.e., expert reviewer service).

Include a budget table and budget justification. Budget justification must clarify how funds will be used to enhance/improve the proposal for resubmission.

Proposal Requirements and Review Criteria:
Proposal must include the information outlined below. Proposals that do not follow these guidelines will be returned without review.

Title of the Unfunded Extramural Submission: Provide a succinct title for the proposal.

Principal Investigator: Provide the name, affiliation, and contact information of the Principal Investigator (PI). Please ensure the PI signs the cover page.

Co-Principal Investigators: Provide the name, affiliation, and contact information of each Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI). There is no limit to the number of Co-PIs.

Project Summary/Abstract of the Unfunded Extramural Submission.

Proposal Narrative (maximum of two pages): Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

a. Merit of the Research Proposed in the Unfunded Extramural Submission. Please include a synthesis of the panel/study section summary, scores/rankings, and overall recommendations for the unfunded extramural submission. Highlight need for additional preliminary data or weaknesses that could be addressed with Grants on the Edge funding. Detailed feedback from review panel/study section should be submitted as an appendix. (25 points).

b. Merit of the Proposed Improvements. Proposals should include a description of the proposed improvements in response to the review panel/study section that will move the submission from Good to Great, how the requested budget will be used to improve the resubmission, and specific plans and timelines for resubmission of the proposal (i.e., agency/specific target funding program, target submission date, budget amount, etc.). Note that PI/team will be required to resubmit the proposal within 12 months of completion of the Grants on the Edge award. (25 points).

Biosketch: Append a maximum two-page National Science Foundation (NSF) or National Institutes of Health (NIH)-formatted curriculum vitae for the PI and each Co-PI.

Appendix: Attach detailed feedback from the review panel/study section.

Proposed Timeline for TPT 2024 RFP (Collaborative Seed Grants and Proposal Planning Grants)

Early July 2024	Anticipated Release Date for TPT 2024 RFP.
Mid July 2024	First Information/Q&A Session about the RFP (by Zoom).
Late August 2024	Second Information/Q&A Session about the RFP (by Zoom; for faculty who are not available for the first information session).
September 16, 2024	Proposal Submission Deadline; Submit via InfoReady.
September-November 2024	Proposal Review and Funding Recommendations.
Mid November 2024	Funding Decision Notifications to PIs/Teams.
November-December	Completion of Requirements for Release of Funding.
January 1, 2025	Project Start Date.

Proposed Timeline for TPT 2024 RFP (Grants on the Edge)

Early July 2024	Anticipated Release Date for TPT 2024 RFP.
Mid July 2024	First Information/Q&A Session about the RFP (by Zoom).
Late August 2024	Second Information/Q&A Session about the RFP (by Zoom; for faculty who are not available for the first information session).
September 16, 2024	Proposal Submission Deadline; Submit via InfoReady.
September-October 2024	Proposal Review and Funding Recommendations.
Late October 2024	Funding Decision Notifications to PIs/Teams; Completion of Requirements for Release of Funding.
November 1, 2024	Project Start Date.