

## Grand Challenges Exploratory Research Grants

### *Frequently Asked Questions*

The following information is provided to further clarify Grand Challenges Exploratory Research Grant requirements as research scholars complete their final proposal submissions, which are due by June 15. Questions not addressed below can be submitted to [gcrsrch@umn.edu](mailto:gcrsrch@umn.edu) for a response. Please see the [proposal guidelines](#) for additional details.

#### **Co-Principal Investigator (co-PI) eligibility**

##### ***Must co-PIs be tenure track faculty?***

In general, the expectation is that co-PIs will be members of the tenure track faculty; *at least one co-PI must be tenure track*. If adequately justified by the specific needs of the proposed project, however, a co-PI may hold a regular research line or research support position, rather than a tenure track position. The purpose of this program is to enhance the future interdisciplinary research capacity of the Twin Cities campus; research scholars, whether or not tenure track faculty, who hold continuing positions and who are committed to that objective are eligible to be co-PIs.

##### ***May the co-PIs be from the same college if the proposed project is broadly interdisciplinary?***

Yes. The Twin Cities Campus Strategic Plan calls for steps to be taken to transcend institutional boundaries, in pursuit of movement toward “one university” in which interdisciplinary collaborations flourish without restrictive barriers. In that spirit, the Grand Challenges Research initiative intends to support research collaborations that bring together researchers from different colleges. The fundamental objective, however, is to expand the reach of interdisciplinary collaborations, in order to foster innovative ways of thinking about and studying Grand Challenges issues. If that objective can be met through broadly interdisciplinary collaboration within a college, co-PIs may be based in multiple departments within the same college.

##### ***Are Twin Cities campus faculty and researchers the only eligible participants in Grand Challenges Exploratory Research Grants?***

Yes, but with a caveat. The Grand Challenges Research initiative, an element of the Twin Cities Campus Strategic Plan, is based on resources drawn from the Twin Cities campus, and hence is limited to the researchers of the campus. If a Twin Cities-based co-PI proposes a worthy project that, in order to be successful, requires participation by others beyond the Twin Cities campus, however, and if that requirement is well justified in the proposal, then the campus limitation can be relaxed.

#### **Proposal submission questions**

##### ***May a faculty member submit more than one proposal?***

Yes, absolutely. There are no limitations on the number of collaborative interdisciplinary projects on which a researcher proposes to participate.

##### ***May proposals be submitted under more than one of the Grand Challenges categories?***

A proposal is not to be submitted multiple times (as if for distinct competitions), because proposals will not be separated according to the five priority Grand Challenges for review. Proposals are invited and, indeed, encouraged that bridge or cut across two or more of the Grand Challenges, however.

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***Is June 15 a firm deadline?***

The review process will begin shortly after June 15. While that date is not an absolutely firm deadline (because we want to enable faculty to submit strong proposals), it should definitely be targeted in order to assure appropriate review of all proposals. If extra time is needed to complete the proposal, notification should be submitted to [gcrsrch@umn.edu](mailto:gcrsrch@umn.edu) by June 15 indicating that a proposal is being prepared and will be submitted shortly thereafter. Please be aware that a second “call for proposals” under the Grand Challenges Research initiative will likely be issued later in the summer or during next academic year. This second call, as well as future rounds, will offer opportunities for those who may currently experience time constraints in submitting their proposal.

***How can we address the difficulty of the short time frame for forming the necessary cross-disciplinary partnerships?***

The proposal requires a minimum of two co-PIs. Although it is desirable to have a somewhat larger team of researchers representing diverse disciplines, we do not expect that the more extensive group is necessarily or fully formed by the time of the proposal submission. It is better to have in place a core of two (or more) researchers from different disciplines and for that core to have a clear conception of an innovative collaborative research direction that can be built on and expanded over longer time, than to devote a great deal of time trying to compose a large and broadly interdisciplinary team.

***Will there be support for faculty salaries?***

These grants are intended to enhance the interdisciplinary capacity of the University to address Grand Challenges, rather than as a salary supplement to enable faculty to complete an existing writing or creative project. Accordingly, the expectation is that most of the funds will be used for research support and capacity enhancement, not faculty salary. If some modest portion of the funding is required for faculty salary for the success of the proposed research, however, and if that requirement is well justified in the proposal, an exception may be permitted.

***May proposals be focused centrally on curricular development?***

A hope underlying the Grand Challenges research initiative is that the supported research will have positive spin-offs for curricular innovation, including in the form of new courses for the Grand Challenges curriculum. These grants, however, are expressly to support research collaborations, and so should not focus primarily on curricular development.

**Criteria for awarding grants**

***Who will review proposals, who will make the final selection, and when will funded grants be announced?***

Proposals will be reviewed by a panel of faculty drawn from disciplines across the University, assuring that each proposal will be read and evaluated by scholars who understand the proposed topic, the proposed research approach(es), and the institutional commitment to fostering new mechanisms to enhance interdisciplinary research. Collegiate deans will also provide general review of proposals selected by the faculty review panels. These reviews will inform recommendations for funding of selected proposals, which will be forwarded for final review by Provost Hanson. The funded grants will be announced later this summer, and funds will be available immediately thereafter.

***What is the process for feedback on submitted proposals?***

Written comments will be provided to all co-PIs, including those whose proposals are not selected for funding. Ideally, written comments will be helpful to those who wish to modify and resubmit in response to future calls for proposals.

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**What is the interface between review of the Grand Challenges research proposals and review of the separate form for projects with an internationalization component?**

Proposals that include a request for an **International Enhancement Grant** as a supplement to a Grand Challenges Exploratory Research Grant will be evaluated in the same manner as those proposals that do not seek the international enhancement supplement, except that representatives from the Global Programs and Strategy Alliance will separately review and evaluate the international contribution. It is possible that a proposal seeking both forms of support will receive only one or the other of the two grants, although the process of review and evaluation will be integrated.

**How will the Grand Challenges process integrate research and creative work in the arts and humanities?**

The Grand Challenges Research initiative is an attempt to bring the full array of scholarly strengths of this university to bear in innovative, interdisciplinary collaborations that address some of society’s most complex and vexing problems. A premise is that this objective cannot be realized if we do not adequately incorporate the perspectives and research approaches of the humanities and arts, any more than it could be accomplished without the inclusion of scientific perspectives and approaches. Contributions of humanistic scholars and creative artists are essential to critical engagement and success in addressing Grand Challenges: enhanced understanding through new frameworks applied to long-standing problems, turning the issues and posing the questions from varying perspectives, and grounding contributions in an historical context, among other components of artistic and humanistic approaches.

**How will the Grand Challenges Research process make room for faculty scholarship and creative work focused more on thinking about Grand Challenges in ways that cut across the five interrelated areas (that is, the “center circle” on the Grand Challenges Research diagram), rather than the Grand Challenges as individually defined by the University?**

We seek—indeed, we strongly encourage—proposals that approach thinking about Grand Challenges in innovative ways, including especially ways that do not separate them as well-defined concerns. Work of that kind is precisely in the spirit of what the strategic plan envisioned when setting us on the path of Grand Challenges Research.

