**Interdisciplinary Research Initiatives**

**Request for Proposals**

The Social Science Research Institute (SSRI) is seeking proposals from faculty interested in leading new **Interdisciplinary Research Initiatives**. The principal goal of this new mechanism is to catalyze the development of promising new and interdisciplinary research centers, or center-scale initiatives, that will be sustainably supported by extramural funding such as center grants, training grants, program project grants, and other large institutional awards. **Interdisciplinary Research Initiatives** are expected to be led by mid-career or senior faculty members who will engage faculty in other departments and colleges who share a common substantive interest. Groups led or co-led by Penn State social scientists pursuing new interdisciplinary research on thematic topics of distinct academic and policy importance are encouraged to apply. This mechanism is not intended to fund research that is expected to lead to an individual faculty grant or award (such as an NIH R01 or a single PI NSF grant).

The funding is intended to support faculty members who are engaging interdisciplinary colleagues across colleges, and potentially institutes, and who together create a critical mass of scholars and are ready to work towards the development of large institutional proposal(s) for external funding within the next one to two years. Annual support for up to three years, and continuing support after this period, may be awarded and will be contingent on expectations for adequate annual progress and achievement of milestones. Once external funding has been secured, the new Penn State center or center-scale initiative emerging from this support will be housed within SSRI or other supporting institute.

Although SSRI prioritizes topics that align with the Institute’s [Strategic Foci](https://ssri.psu.edu/about#ssri-strategic-foci), proposals pursuing emerging areas of inquiry are also welcome. There is no deadline. Applications will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis to accommodate groups ready to respond to emerging funding opportunities. We expect to fund up to two new proposals each year contingent on funding availability.

**This call is part of an OSVPR cross institute initiative.** Applications for research topics that fall within the priority areas of the Huck Institutes for the Life Sciences (HUCK), the Institute for Computational and Data Sciences (ICDS), the Institutes for Energy and the Environment (IEE), and the Materials Research Institute (MRI) should refer to future institute specific calls as they become available. All proposals will be reviewed by relevant OSVPR institute directors to identify areas of potential collaborative funding.

Expected Activities

* Development of a team of Penn State investigators that cross relevant fields and lead in the program, supplemented by external collaborators as indicated
* Identification of funding opportunities including discussions with program officers
* Convening of workgroups to develop proposal(s) for center grants, training grants, program project grants, and other large institutional awards
* Proposal development and submission
* Submission of annual project reports to SSRI

Institute Support

Investigators can request funding for up to one month of summer salary or one course release for up to 3 faculty leading proposal development and who are likely to serve as PI/PD. Additional funding for other expenses must be justified by the budget request. The overall budget may include the following:

* Meaningful support for the lead(s) (e.g., funding for course release or summer salary)
* Assistance exploring sources of extramural funding and submitting large proposals
* Support for an external review of large proposals (a “Red Team” review) prior to submission
* Funding and administrative support for organizing meetings/seminars/workshops and other team development events as well as communications platforms such as a webpage

Expectations

* Membership is meaningfully multi-disciplinary
* Membership spans colleges and institutes (when relevant)
* Membership includes a mix of senior and junior scholars
* Ongoing efforts to identify and invite other Penn State researchers with relevant interests
* Demonstrated pursuit of external funding (center grants, training grants, program project grants, and other large institutional awards)
* Steady progress as reflected in required annual progress reports

Application Procedures and Requirements

The proposal to form an **Interdisciplinary Research Initiative** will be led or co-led by a mid-career or senior social or behavioral science faculty with a strong track record of funded work in a relevant field. Initial annual funding will be committed to support the working group for up to three years but will be contingent on adequate annual progress towards achievement of agreed upon milestones.

Priority for funding will be based on the following:

* Significance of the research theme
* Potential innovation of interdisciplinary engagement at Penn State
* Strength of Penn State faculty committed to leading and participating in the initiative
* Opportunities for successful support from center, training, program project or other large institutional grants
* Potential of the new infrastructure to contribute to the support of early career faculty and/or graduate and postdoctoral training
* Robustness and responsiveness of the proposed plan and timeline

The application process will begin with a 1-page *letter of interest* and consultation with the [SSRI Director or an Associate Director](https://ssri.psu.edu/people/directors) about the project before a full proposal is requested. A full proposal will be reviewed by the SSRI Executive Committee and relevant OSVPR institute directors and funding decisions will be guided by the priorities outlined above as well as the availability of funding.

Invited full applications will address the criteria for funding as written above including. Proposals will include:

1. **Title of Proposal and Name of Scientific Lead(s)**
2. **Descriptive Keywords (3-5)**
3. **Abstract:** Provide a succinct overview of the proposal. Avoid or explain technical jargon, field-specific terminology, or acronyms (1 paragraph).
4. **Background:** Research theme and its significance.
5. **Innovation:** Potential innovation that interdisciplinary engagement at Penn State brings to the field.
6. **Approach:**
   * Describe the Penn State faculty committed to leading and participating and their roles
   * Funding for center, training, program project or other large institutional grant opportunities targeted
   * Potential to contribute to the Penn State support of early career faculty and/or graduate and postdoctoral training
   * Proposed activities
   * Timeline
7. **Budget and justification**
8. **NIH or NSF Biosketch for lead(s) and co-investigators**
9. **Letters of support (if relevant)**