# Social Science Research Institute

# Request for Pilot Grant Proposals up to $75,000

The Social Science Research Institute (SSRI) invites proposals for innovative pilot research projects that contribute to SSRI’s strategic mission of fostering interdisciplinary research that addresses critical human and social problems at the local, national, and international levels.

The goal of this request for proposals is to enable new interdisciplinary teams to pursue novel and potentially high impact basic and applied research. Although proposals aligning with SSRI’s [Strategic Foci](https://ssri.psu.edu/about#ssri-strategic-foci) are welcome, we are especially interested in those that address at least one of the following priorities:

* Expands our understanding of the factors that lead to social disparities and their effects on education, health, or economic outcomes over the life course.
* Informs the development of policies, systems, and/or other strategies that impact education, health, or economic outcomes of populations and reduces inequity across people and places.
* Emphasizes engagement of communities and other stakeholders.

We will prioritize applications with a clear social/behavioral component that:

* Propose highly significant research that articulates a clear plan for how it will lead to external funding.
* Develop collaborations involving interdisciplinary faculty research teams, especially new collaborations and teams that include junior and senior faculty.

To advance our strategic investment in these research areas, this special request for pilot grant proposals can provide a higher level of funding (up to $75,000) and an option for a longer period of work (up to 2 years) than our ongoing preliminary development (level 1) and pilot funding (level 2) seed grants.

Applications may propose a variety of research approaches that include, but are not limited to, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies, primary and/or secondary data collection/analyses, design and delivery of innovative methods and interventions, and dissemination and implementation research.

# Eligibility

# This mechanism is primarily designed to assist Penn State social/behavioral science faculty at University Park and the College of Medicine and SSRI co-funded faculty at the Commonwealth Campuses (non-SSRI co-funded faculty at the Commonwealth Campuses can see the SSRI website at <https://ssri.psu.edu/funding> for eligible seed funding mechanisms) to advance programs of research that can address critical human and social problems by securing extramural funding. Although research teams can include students, post docs, faculty from other institutions and other external collaborators, interdisciplinary teams must be led by, and principally comprised of, Penn State faculty. SSRI funds are not intended to support student research (masters, dissertation proposals) or post-doctoral projects. For these reasons, team leaders should be tenure track or research faculty with continuing faculty appointments. Single investigator proposals will not be considered. Investigators may be PI or MPI on only one proposal. However, investigators may serve as a co-investigator on up to two additional proposals.

**Timeline**

* November 1, 2021: Call for proposals released
* **December 3, 2021: Letter of intent due by 5:00 pm Eastern Time**
* **January 21, 2022: Proposals due by 5:00 pm Eastern Time**
* March 18, 2022: Funding decisions announced
* April 15, 2022: Project start date

# Proposal and Budget Guidelines

Proposals should broadly follow the proposal development guidance provided for the SSRI level 2 award with three notable exceptions: 1) this request for proposal includes a Letter of Intent Form (see below) that is due on December 3, 2021 by 5:00 pm Eastern Time; 2) the requested budget may seek up to $75,000 in total costs with no pre-approval required (we expect proposed budgets to range from $20,000 to $75,000); and 3) the proposed period of work may extend to two years if well-justified. We strongly advise that you review SSRI guidelines on allowable and disallowed budgetary items (<https://ssri.psu.edu/funding/ssri-level-2-funding>).

To complete your proposal submission, please download, complete, and email the **Letter of Intent Form** (due December 3, 2021) and the **Proposal Submission Form** (due January 21, 2022) to ssri-seed-grant@psu.edu. Both documents should be single-spaced, in Times New Roman font size no smaller than 12-point type, left-aligned with one-inch margins (see below for more information). A current NIH or NSF biosketch (including grants record) for each investigator must be submitted with the Proposal Submission Form.

**Criteria for Review**

Proposals will be evaluated by peer review with input from the SSRI Executive Committee and college research deans, broadly following NIH funding criteria. Competitive proposals will clearly articulate how they provide each of the following:

* Clear contribution to social/behavioral science
* Well-articulated aims, high scientific rigor, and clear potential for impact
* Strong interdisciplinary teams with relevant expertise led by Penn State faculty. We will prioritize those teams with faculty who range in seniority
* Plan for how the work will lead to a proposal for external funding and a timeline for its submission, including evidence of interest by potential funding sources
* For human subjects research, proposals must provide strong evidence for access to the population of interest; for secondary analyses, proposals must describe dataset availability and contents
	+ The pandemic may interfere with some human subjects research; please factor potential issues into your proposed timeline
	+ SSRI staff will work with you on altering your timeline in this context of changing health and safety concerns
* Investigators are expected to obtain IRB approval as appropriate

**Other issues to consider as you prepare your proposal:**

* Questions may be directed to Danielle Downs, SSRI Associate Director, at dsd11@psu.edu
	+ If helpful, please feel free to consult with other SSRI Associate Directors who have expertise relevant to your project (<https://ssri.psu.edu/people/directors>)
* Talk with any of the SSRI unit directors (e.g., Survey Research Center, Computational and Spatial Analysis Core) about how you might use the expertise of their units to enhance your research

**Project Reports**

Funded investigators are required to provide an annual project status update and a brief (one page) final report upon completing the project. These materials allow us to track and report outcomes as well as monitor the success of our seed grant program.