

The IDEA Program – Spring 2026 Application Guidelines

The purpose of the **Incentive for Developing External Awards (IDEA) Program** is to encourage individual faculty to write a competitive grant proposal for external funding. These external proposals should aim to further their research, scholarly and/or creative activity and contribute new knowledge or novel scholarship to their discipline. While projects aiming to advance research on STEM education and pedagogy will be considered, please note that the IDEA program is not intended for proposals in which student success is the primary goal.

Application Requirements

To apply, faculty members must identify one specific grant solicitation or formal request for proposals to which they are interested in submitting a proposal. For this cycle, the submission deadline or target date for a full proposal must be between **July 1, 2026 – January 31, 2027**.

Applicants must submit an internal application via [InfoReady Review](#) describing their selected external grant program. They should demonstrate that the proposed project:

1) is in alignment with the funding opportunity's goals and guidelines. Because fit with the funder's goals and guidelines is critical for any successful grant proposal, applicants should carefully select only one proposed funding source, considering program goals, eligibility, funding limits and other requirements detailed in the guidelines. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to connect with the Program Officer at the external funding agency well in advance of submitting an IDEA application to confirm if the project fits with funder goals.**

and

2) will have a substantial impact on their research, scholarly and/or creative agenda. Applicants should also consider their readiness to complete the proposal, including: completion of preliminary research, workload and timeline for submission, and qualifications in terms of project scope and size.

Applications may be submitted for individual or collaborative projects in which a faculty from Sacramento State is the project lead.

Deadline to Apply: Friday, April 3, 2026, by 5:00 pm.

Applicant Eligibility

Open to all tenured and tenure-track faculty, and lecturers with multi-year appointments of at least 0.5 time base. The selection process will prioritize applicants with less experience serving as a faculty principal investigator (PI/Co-PI) on an externally funded research project, according to the following criteria:

1. Probationary faculty who *do not* have previous experience
2. Tenured faculty who *do not* have previous experience
3. Probationary faculty who have previous experience
4. Tenured faculty who have previous experience
5. Lecturers with multi-year appointments of at least 0.5 time base.

Applicants who have already received more than two IDEA (or previously, FRIG) awards will be considered as funding is available.

Past IDEA recipients may not reapply until after they have received notification from the funder on the outcome of that submission.

External Proposal Eligibility

Eligible external proposals for the IDEA program include proposals to support a faculty member's academic research, scholarship or creative activity. The IDEA program is not intended for proposals in which institutional capacity building or student success is the primary goal.

For more, see the IDEA FAQ.

Award Information

Amount

For external proposals with a total budget between \$10,000-\$50,000:

\$1,000 toward additional employment salary or professional development funds

For external proposals with a total budget above \$50,000:

\$2,500 toward additional employment salary or professional development funds

External proposals requesting under \$10,000 are not eligible for the IDEA program.

Funds for a collaborative submission involving more than one faculty member from Sacramento State will be divided evenly among the co-applicants.

Funds will be awarded after submission of a full proposal to an external funding agency and are contingent on fulfilling the requirement to work with ORIED throughout the process of developing the narrative and technical aspects of the external proposal, including allowing time for substantive review and incorporation of feedback.

Requirements

Recipients must commit to working with ORIED throughout the development of a competitive proposal for external funding, including the narrative and technical components. This includes a minimum of one full review of the budget and proposal narrative four weeks prior to the funder deadline. **Note:** If a funding opportunity is later determined not to be an appropriate fit for the proposed project, the recipient will need to reapply to the IDEA program with an alternative funding source. Also note that the award is only provided for full proposal submissions. While it is understood that funders often require a pre-proposal or letters of inquiry, their submission alone is not eligible for this award.

Announcements

Awards will be announced near May 1, 2026.

The next anticipated IDEA competition will be held in Fall 2026, for external proposals submitted between February 1, 2027 – July 31, 2027.

Resources

Resources for identifying potential external sources of grant support for research and scholarly activities, including links to the Pivot funding database, are available on the [ORIED website](#). Pivot is a comprehensive database of funding opportunities from federal, non-federal, foundation, and other private sponsors for all disciplines and project types.

[Pivot](#) allows users to search for a funding opportunity while also instantly being able to identify researchers with similar interests and expertise.

Questions? Contact research@csus.edu. Please also see the IDEA FAQs on the next page for more detail.

IDEA Spring 2026 – Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. What is meant by “advance your research, creative or scholarly agenda”?

This application requirement refers to how the proposed project will support the faculty member’s career trajectory in terms of contributing new knowledge or novel scholarship to their discipline, progress toward tenure, ability to compete for future grants, publication record, etc.

Examples of eligible external proposals include:

- NEH Fellowship
- NIH Research Enhancement Award (R15)
- NSF CAREER Award
- Spencer Foundation Small Research Grant

Examples of external proposals not eligible under IDEA:

- NSF Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) grant
- US Dept of ED Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (DHSI) grant
- Student support services and mentoring proposals
- Curriculum development and professional development proposals
- Project proposals that do not have a research component. Evaluation is not considered a research component for the IDEA competition.

For questions please contact ORIED at research@csus.edu.

Q2. When should I contact a program officer?

Applicants should contact a program officer at their targeted external funding agency to determine funding fit as early as possible to better ensure a response before the IDEA program deadline.

Q3. Are IDEA awards only offered for new project proposals or will proposal resubmissions be considered?

An IDEA application may be submitted for a new proposal, a renewal or a resubmission. However, past IDEA award recipients may not reapply until they have received notification from the funder of the outcome of that submission. Additionally, IDEA applications for resubmissions are requested to upload a copy of the reviewer comments/feedback.

Q4. May collaborative projects be submitted?

Yes, although Sacramento State must be the lead applicant and only the Sacramento State faculty PI/Co-PIs will receive IDEA funding.

Q5. May I submit an IDEA application for a subaward?

No, applications must be submitted by PIs from Sacramento State as the project lead.

Q6. What if my external funding program has an open deadline or a deadline yet to be determined?

IDEA applications must have a full proposal submission deadline between **July 1, 2026 – January 31, 2027**. Proposals to programs with open deadlines must target a submission date within this window. For questions related to proposal submissions with a deadline yet to be determined, please contact ORIED at research@csus.edu.

IDEA Spring 2026 – Frequently Asked Questions Continued

Q7. Are FERP faculty eligible to apply?

FERP faculty may submit a joint application with another non-FERP faculty member but are not eligible to be the lead PI. If the joint application is selected, FERP faculty may only select to receive professional development funds and may not receive additional employment per CSU guidelines.

Q8. How do I complete my IDEA application in InfoReady if I am applying for an NSF RUI or a CAREER grant?

NSF's RUI (14-579) and CAREER (22-586) programs ask you to tailor your proposal to a specific NSF program that best aligns with your interests and who will review your proposal. When requested in InfoReady, please provide a description of that program in addition to the RUI or CAREER solicitation. For example, if the PI intends to apply under the RUI solicitation, but they have identified NSF IOS 24-546 as their core program, they will provide the URL for both the RUI and the IOS programs and describe their fit to both programs when requested.

Q9. How is additional employment awarded?

Additional employment is processed by using job code 2403. Payroll taxes and other deductions are withheld and are subject to the limits as outlined in Article 36 of the Unit 3 CSU Bargaining Agreement.