



COLLABORATE R-INITIATIVE

2026–2027 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

SUMMARY

COLLABORATE provides seed funding for faculty teams to implement a capacity-building strategy that positions them to pursue complex external research opportunities, including large, multidisciplinary awards and institute or center-type funding of at least \$3 million in direct costs over at least 3 years. Proposals that connect faculty and resources across Clemson University—including Innovation Campuses, Research and Education Centers, Clemson centers and institutes, and Extension—are highly encouraged. Multi-institutional efforts may also be supported when Clemson is the primary or lead institution for the intended external funding effort.

Deliverables include proposal-development products, such as concept papers, preliminary data packages, proposal outlines, and full proposals. Submission of a competitive external proposal during the award period is encouraged when feasible. Priority consideration will be given to teams who target an external proposal submission.

Funding amount: Up to \$35,000
Deadline: Friday, November 13, 2026 at 4:30 PM
Funding period: One year beginning in January 2027

Allowable Activities

- Developing cross-disciplinary research agendas
- Generating pilot data
- Building and/or strengthening partnerships
- Identifying shared equipment, facilities, or other research resources
- Developing proposal teams, leadership, and project management structures
- Developing proposal components

R-Initiative Eligibility

Tenured or tenure-track faculty and research faculty are eligible to serve as PIs on proposals. Postdocs, staff, and emeritus, adjunct, or visiting faculty are not eligible to serve as PIs on proposals but may be included in research teams.

Collaborations must involve multiple faculty with primary appointments in three or more departments across two or more colleges. Secondary/joint appointments will not be considered.

Past recipients of R-Initiative funding who did not comply with the terms of funding are ineligible.

An individual may apply as PI or Co-PI on one SEED, COLLABORATE, CREATE, or IMPACT proposal each fiscal year. A proposal must have a single PI. Other team members may be listed as Co-PI, Co-I, Collaborator, etc.



BUDGETARY INFORMATION

Allowable Costs

- PI course release
- Workshops, facilitated planning, or other activities to build the research team and external partnerships
- Travel to meet with agency program managers, collaborators, and community or industry partners or to conduct field work needed for pilot data or proposal development
- Materials and supplies, participant incentives, transcription services, and limited specialty analyses or testing by external parties
- Fees for purchasing data or software and/or gaining access to equipment needed to help facilitate development of the proposal
- Costs associated with securing proposal development staff, consultants, firms, or evaluators; project managers or coordinators; and other specialized support tied to the targeted external funding pathway
- Hourly undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral wages or stipends for project activities. Use the appropriate Clemson classification and payment process for each role.

Unallowable Costs

- Faculty salary, except PI course release
- Funding requests for graduate research assistants (GRAD)
- Attending, organizing, hosting, or participating in traditional disciplinary conferences
- Office furniture or equipment
- Office supplies
- Computers or printers
- Laboratory renovations or upgrades
- Tuition remission (GAD)
- Facilities and administrative (F&A) costs

Cost Share

Cost sharing is encouraged but not required. Fund 18, Fund 20, Fund 22, and Fund 25 cannot be used for sharing costs. The cost-share funds must be available during the project period.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

PIs must submit their applications to the Clemson InfoReady Research Portal (<https://clemson.infoready4.com/>) by 4:30 PM on Friday, November 13, 2026.



PROPOSAL PREPARATION

InfoReady Intake Information

Enter the following information into the InfoReady text fields:

- Project title beginning with **COLLABORATE: [Proposal Title]**
- Name, email, % credit allocation and college/department/school affiliations of the PI, co-PIs, and any other senior personnel or key collaborators
- Center affiliations, if applicable
- PI CUID
- Name and email address of departmental fiscal officer
- Total Division of Research (DoR) budget request amount
- Total cost share
- Total overall budget amount (DoR + cost share)
- Prior R-Initiative funding. If the PI has prior R-I funding awards, provide the year of funding and the initiative (e.g., 2020 CU Fellows).
- Anticipated deliverables
- Incentive account balance and obligations
- Start-up package information (for PIs within their first three years of employment at Clemson; if the PI does not have start-up funds, please state this)
 - Total amount
 - Duration
 - Current balance
 - Number of graduate assistantship(s)
 - Travel funds
 - Supplies
 - Equipment
 - Other/discretionary funds provided as part of the hiring agreement
- Current and pending support information
 - Project title
 - Funding agency
 - Project duration (mm/dd/yyyy–mm/dd/yyyy)
 - Total direct costs, total indirect costs, and total amount of the award
 - Role in project

Proposal Format and Components

Submit the proposal documents in InfoReady as PDFs. The project description should be formatted using 12-point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, single line spacing, and 8½ x 11-inch paper size. The proposal includes the following components:

Project Description [4 pages max; please use the headings below]

- **Capacity-Building Strategy.** Identify gaps in Clemson research capacity that the project will address. Specify how the capacity-building project aligns with federal research priorities.



- **Planned Activities.** Describe capacity-building activities such as generating pilot data, establishing or strengthening partnerships, developing shared research resources, or building team and project-management expertise. Discuss milestones and provide a timeline in the form of a Gantt chart.
- **External Funding Pathway.** Identify an external funding opportunity the team intends to pursue, including title, solicitation number, URL, and anticipated submission date. Explain how the proposed capacity-building activities support this funding pathway. If an opportunity requires internal or external preselection before a full proposal may be submitted, identify alternative opportunities the team would pursue if it were not selected. A full proposal submission by the end of the reporting period is encouraged when timing and team readiness permit; it is not the sole measure of project success.
- **Anticipated Extramural Proposal.** Describe the proposed project's goals and objectives, significance, and innovativeness, along with its anticipated scope and fit with the targeted sponsor or program. If known, include the expected project period and funding scale.
- **Rationale for the Team and Its Partnerships.** Explain why the proposed expertise and partners are needed to achieve the project's goals and pursue the identified external funding pathway. Describe each team member's role and how the collaboration adds value. Proposals that connect Clemson University resources—including Innovation Campuses, Research and Education Centers, Clemson centers and institutes, and Extension—are encouraged. For multi-institutional teams, explain Clemson's role as the primary or lead institution for the intended external effort.
- **Need for COLLABORATE Funding.** Explain why Collaborate funds are necessary to build the proposed capacity and why the work cannot be completed with existing resources alone.
- **Sustainability.** Identify who will lead the next steps and how the team will advance toward external funding after the award period.
- **References** [not included in page limit]

Budget and Budget Justification [No page limit]

- Provide a budget using the internal budget form template. This budget will include cost share, if applicable. If cost share is included, provide a clear breakdown of the cost-share funds and sources. Specify each cost-share source/chart string.
- Provide a line-item budget justification for requested expenses using the budget justification template. If students or postdocs will be funded, describe what they will be expected to achieve and why the proposed project cannot be completed without the requested student or postdoc funding. Explain the current funding source(s) of the students or postdocs, if applicable.
- Each requested cost must be reasonable, directly tied to a stated capacity-building activity or milestone, and justified in the budget narrative. Requests should explain how the cost will strengthen the team's readiness, partnerships, preliminary evidence, or research resources for the identified external funding pathway. All expenses remain subject to applicable Clemson policies and award terms.

Documentation of Cost Share [No page limit]

Provide commitment emails or letters for the cost-share funds, if included.



Biosketch [Page limit determined by format]

Submit a biosketch for each PI, Co-PI, and senior personnel. Allowable formats include the R-Initiative Biosketch Template, NSF, or NIH.

Letters of Support [No page limit]

Only letters of support from external collaborators or consultants may be included.

REVIEW PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Proposals that do not comply with the solicitation guidelines will be returned without review.

A review committee of faculty peers and staff will evaluate compliant proposals using the following criteria:

- Strength of the capacity-building strategy, including the extent to which it aligns with federal priorities
- Potential for significant impact on the Clemson research ecosystem
- Appropriateness and feasibility of the external funding pathway; identification of alternative submission opportunities if the targeted solicitation is not issued or the proposal is not selected for funding [note: merely mentioning a particular agency that is targeted for funding is not sufficient].
- Innovativeness of the proposal to be submitted to external agencies.
- Demonstrated need for COLLABORATE funding.

Funding decisions will be announced within six weeks of proposal submission.

AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Initiation and Close-Out

Funds will be available to PIs as individual project accounts and will be maintained and managed by the Division of Research and the PI's college business office. The PI will work with his/her department/school/college to transfer the cost-share funds (if applicable) to the individual project accounts at the beginning of the project. Funds will be available once cost-share funds (if applicable) are transferred.

Any residual funds at the end of the project will be returned to the original source (either those providing cost-share funds or the Division of Research). In the event the PI leaves Clemson during the life of the project, unspent funds will be returned to the Division of Research, and the project will be closed.

Expenditure of Funds

Expenditure of R-Initiative award funds must follow state procurement guidelines. State money cannot be used for personal gain (i.e., books, recordings [CDs, DVDs, etc.]) by which the author receives ANY portion of funds directly.



Research Compliance Requirements

All applications selected for an award must receive the required approvals from the Office of Research Compliance before the award can be activated.

Reviewer Requirement

Awardees will be called upon to serve as reviewers for future R-Initiative competitions.

Project Income Policy

All income received from sales is considered Clemson University revenue, unless assignment of rights to the faculty member is granted by the Senior Vice President for Research, Scholarship, and Creative Endeavors, and the Clemson University Research Foundation (CURF). Guidelines surrounding royalties can be found in the Clemson University Intellectual Property Policy and should be followed accordingly.

No-Cost Extensions

No-cost extensions will only be considered in extraordinary circumstances.

DELIVERABLES AND FINAL REPORT

A final report must be submitted via the Clemson InfoReady Research Portal (<https://clemson.infoready4.com/>) within one year of the funding end date. The final report will be assigned to PIs via InfoReady two months prior to the end of the award period. A copy of all deliverables will be required to be submitted with the final report.

Teams who fail to submit final reports will be ineligible for future R-Initiative funding.

If the PI leaves Clemson during the award period, the team must request a change of PI before the PI's departure. In the event that the PI leaves Clemson during the reporting period, the project team will assume responsibility for the reporting requirements.

Should R-Initiative funding result in publication(s), PIs must acknowledge that the project was funded in part by Clemson University's R-Initiatives.

QUESTIONS

Questions about this opportunity may be directed to rifunds@clemson.edu.