

**Idaho State University – Office for Research
Support Program for Advancing Research and Creativity (SPARC)
Faculty Guidelines - Fall 2026**

I. Overview and Purpose

The Support Program for Advancing Research and Creativity (SPARC) is intended to provide monetary support for faculty aiming to advance their research or creative activities at ISU. Full-time ISU faculty may request \$1,000 to \$8,000 for project-related expenses.

The purpose of the SPARC is to support advancement of creative activities and research at ISU. The Office for Research (OR) makes funding available for this program and supports all areas, types, and disciplines of research and creative activity by all full-time ISU faculty. Proposals are evaluated by the ISU Research Council (RC), which then makes funding recommendations to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development. Funding for SPARC comes from Facilities and Administrative (F&A) Costs resulting from external grant and contract funding from across the university.

The RC places equal emphasis on recommending faculty projects that either lead to applications for external funding or provide other significant benefits to the researcher, artist, and/or university. **The key requirement is that the support helps the applicant advance to the “next level” in their research or creative activity** (e.g., publications, presentations, performances).

The RC also encourages and accepts collaborative proposals that clearly show how they advance research and creative activity at ISU. Collaborative projects must be submitted as a single proposal for all collaborators and should make clear the distinct and different contributions of each participant to the project, and the nature of the scholarly or artistic merit underlying the collaboration. In the case of collaborative projects, please make sure each faculty applicant, as well as their department chairs and deans, signs the required internal grant routing form.

The Committee **does not** tend to recommend funding specific projects for which an applicant has already been successful in obtaining external funding or other sources of funding. SPARC is not intended to provide supplemental funding to existing projects.

The submission deadline for FULL PROPOSALS is November 1, 2026 at 11:59 pm (MDT). Please note that all required signatures from your department chair and dean must be secured before your proposal can be submitted. Plan ahead to allow adequate time for these approvals.

Awards will be announced as soon as possible following the submission deadline and all funds must be expended and proposed activities completed by January 31, 2028. Funded research and creative activities must be in compliance with university and government health and safety guidelines.

II. Eligibility

All ISU full-time faculty who have at least the rank of Assistant Professor are eligible to apply, including Research and Clinical faculty. Other faculty may be eligible including in some cases instructors or lecturers with research responsibilities whose eligibility is recommended by their department chair (with concurrence by the review committee). Potential applicants should contact the Office of Sponsored Programs and Support (OSPS) if they have questions about eligibility.

III. Format Requirements

Proposals should have one-inch margins and use 12-point font size (Times New Roman recommended). Page limits are indicated for each section and have been established to make the task of reviewing proposals manageable. **Applicants must adhere to the length limits** so no one is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged in the presentation of their ideas. Please include page numbers in the bottom center of each page and name the PDF file **SPARC [your last name] full proposal**.

All information requested must be supplied in the format specified. Failure to do so will result in disqualification of an application. Technical assistance in preparing an application for SPARC funding is available through the OSPS and from the RC chair. Applicants may schedule an appointment with the OSPS to review examples of funded proposals or view example proposals on the [OSPS SPARC website](#).

When preparing a proposal, applicants should keep in mind the review committee is interdisciplinary and not all members will be experts in the applicant's field. **Avoid jargon, and convey technical terms and procedures in a way that is accessible to a lay audience.**

IV. Submission Instructions

All proposal materials must be submitted electronically in a single PDF document in [Cayuse SP](#). Please name your file using the following format: SPARC your last name fullproposal.pdf. The SPARC website has detailed Cayuse SP submission instructions. Once the proposal has been submitted in Cayuse for routing, no revisions will be allowed.

On the routing form (in Cayuse), the applicant should indicate whether human or animal subjects or biohazards are involved in the proposed research and should note the approval status of the project. Titles of approved SPARC applications must match the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) protocol. SPARC proposals may be submitted prior to IRB, IACUC, or Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) approval, but award funds will not be released until the Office for Research receives a copy of the project's approval letter including the applicant's name and with the protocol title that matches the SPARC application project title.

Late submissions or submissions that do not follow the guidelines will not be considered.

V. Award Information

1. Funding Categories: The RC considers projects for funding in the categories listed below. Faculty proposals may target a single category or may incorporate some mix of these categories; however, the total funds received by an individual investigator through the SPARC during the academic year may not exceed **\$8,000**, and a faculty member is limited to a maximum of \$16,000 in awards through the SPARC within a rolling four-year period. For collaborative proposals, the maximum request is \$8,000 per faculty applicant, but the total maximum amount for any award is capped at \$16,000.

- **Grant-in-Aid.** Grant-in-aid funds can be used for a wide range of project expenses, including supplies, operating costs, library materials, and incentives for research participants. You may also use the funds for personnel, such as hourly workers and graduate student support. If you plan to hire additional people for your project, please outline their specific duties. SPARC does not support ISU Staff salaries, journal subscriptions, or membership dues. All grant funds must be used in compliance with university policies.
- **Release Time.** This category provides an applicant with time to pursue research or creative activities (instead of teaching or administrative duties) during the academic year. When budgeting for course releases, applicants must consult their Department Chair, University Business Officer, and Dean to ensure correct compensation rates. The applicant's department will be required to file a copy of the resulting Electronic Personnel Action Form (EPAF) with the OSPS. The applicant may apply for no more than .40 FTE (up to 6 workload credit hours) assigned time for work on such projects.
- **Summer Fellowships.** Summer Fellowships provide summer salary to pursue research or creative activities. Requests for travel or grant-in-aid expenses to be used during the summer should be requested separately in the Travel or Grant-in-Aid categories. Recipients may teach no more than one summer course for the summer during which this support is provided.
- **Travel.** Travel for research or creative activity purposes is allowed, particularly when necessary to access project-related materials, learn new techniques, or collect data. Travel funding will only be considered if it is clear how the trip will significantly impact research, scholarship, the creative program, and/or discipline, and align with the purpose of the proposal. Travel expenses include transportation and a per diem allotment for food and lodging up to but not to exceed federal per diem rates (according to university guidelines). All travel costs must be itemized in the budget justification for each person traveling, including per diem, lodging, and for example, airfare. If other funding sources are used for travel cost sharing, they must be included in the budget justification. Every effort should be made to minimize travel costs.

Note that all travel must strictly follow university and government guidelines and must be completed by the end of the project period (January 31, 2028)

2. **Final Report and Follow-Up:** All SPARC grant recipients must submit an electronic copy of their final report in PDF format to the Office for Research at research@isu.edu by **April 30, 2028**. The final report form is available on the SPARC website. Along with your report, please submit copies of any manuscripts, publications, or other relevant documentation resulting from your funded project. Additionally, please be aware that you may be asked to participate in a poster session or other presentation events after your funding period ends.

Please note: The SPARC Committee will not review new proposals from applicants who have outstanding final reports from previous SPARC awards.

3. **Integrity and Compliance:** All research projects using human participants must conform to the policies and procedures of the ISU IRB for the Protection of Human Subjects. All research projects using animal subjects must conform to the policies and procedures of the ISU IACUC. All research using biohazards must conform to the policies and procedures of the ISU IBC. If you're not sure if this pertains to your project, contact the Office for Research – Research Outreach & Compliance for more information. Funds will not be released until the appropriate approvals are obtained.

All personnel engaged in human subjects research must undergo training in the protection of human subjects. The IRB will not approve an application until all key personnel are trained and certified, including for both non-exempt and exempt human subjects research. Information about the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI), a web-based training course available through the IRB, is available from the ISU Research Integrity and Compliance at this [webpage](#).

VI. Proposal Components

Required sections:

1. **Project Title and Abstract (single cover page):** Include your first and last name, department, college, and amount of funds requested. Include an abstract, not to exceed 100 words, that summarizes the proposal, followed by the exact word count in parentheses at the end. Include this cover page at the beginning of your submitted proposal document PDF. Please note: If funded, the abstract will be published on the SPARC Internal Grant Opportunities website.
2. **Project Description (6 page limit for sections 2a. through 2e.):**
 - a. **Purpose (or Objectives):** Clearly state the purpose(s) of the project (i.e., the questions/issues/ hypotheses/creative activity to be addressed by the project). If submitting a collaborative proposal, address the nature of the scholarly or artistic merit underlying the collaboration.

- b. Significance/Importance/Impact:** In this section, please describe the significance of your project and its potential impact on your field of study or creative area. Explain to an educated lay audience how your work advances existing theories, practices, or creative endeavors. This may include a brief literature review. Please also describe how this funding will help you or the university advance research or creative activity. Explain how this project fits into your long-term research or creative agenda and how this grant will help you get to the "next level." If submitting a collaborative proposal, make clear the distinct and different contributions of each participant to the project. SPARC is not intended to fund teaching/classroom or instruction-related projects unless there is significant research or creative activity associated with the project.

This grant is intended to support projects that have the potential for significant future benefits. Please describe how this project will lead to one or more of the following:

- **External Funding:** If your project is a step toward securing external funding, describe how it will strengthen future grant applications. For example, it could be a pilot study, a demonstration project, or an opportunity to generate key preliminary data. Please identify specific funding sources (e.g., federal agencies, private foundations) and provide a realistic timeline for future proposals. If you have already made contact with these sources, please note that.
 - **Other Significant Benefits:** Describe other benefits of the project that will advance your research or creative work and/or the university's mission. Examples include professional development, opportunities for institutional recognition, increased departmental resources, student benefits, or anticipated publications and creative works.
- c. Methodology/Process:** This section should contain a description of the project design and methods or creative process to be used in completing the project. The applicant needs to provide sufficient detail so reviewers will be able to understand how the project will be conducted. Consider that the Committee is interdisciplinary, so please provide information that is understandable to a lay audience and avoid excessive jargon.
- NOTE:** All research projects using human participants, animal subjects, or biohazards must follow the Integrity and Compliance guidelines in section **V.3**.
- d. Timeline and milestones:** Provide a timetable for completing the work entailed in the project. Note that the SPARC does not fund projects retroactively and funding must be expended and all proposed activities completed, including any travel or conferences, by the end of the project period (January 31, 2028). To help organize the project goals, activities, persons responsible, and timeline, an optional workflow table template is provided on the SPARC webpage.
- e. Product and Dissemination Plan:** Describe what the outcome(s) of the project will be and how the results or products will be shared. The applicant should identify the forum(s)

in which products will be shared (e.g., presentations at conferences, articles in refereed journals, juried exhibitions, performances, etc.) and target audiences.

3. Budget and Budget Justification: The applicant should include a detailed budget and justification for the requested funding for the project. Use the [Budget Template](#) on the OSPS SPARC web page to indicate the full costs for the project. Total project costs consist of allowable direct costs plus applicable Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs. For this internal grant, F&A costs are included within the maximum total requested budget and are calculated at 4% of Total Direct Costs (TDC). The maximum award including the F&A costs is \$8k for single PIs and \$16k for collaborative applications. The budget justification explaining each item is limited to a maximum of two-pages. All travel requests must address per diem, lodging, and transportation expenses in the budget justification.

PLEASE NOTE: Because of its focus on advancing research and creative activity at ISU, the Committee expects that applicants will consider other already-available resources on campus before submitting an application to SPARC. If seeking funds for technology-related materials such as laptops, video cameras, or software, the applicant should first check with the department, college, library, etc., before making a request to SPARC to see if these materials are already available or can be funded through technology fees or some other source. Please indicate in your budget justification that you have researched these opportunities before requesting funds from the SPARC.

If applying for funding for this project from other sources in addition to SPARC, the applicant should indicate the plan for managing any overlap in funding from all sources.

4. References or Works Cited: Include a brief list of references cited. Applicants may use their citation style of choice.

5. Prior and Current Support Qualifications of Applicant(s): Provide a complete listing of current and previously funded (last 5 years) internal and external sources of research support for each PI on the proposal, including awards from Office for Research funding programs. The following information should be provided for each source of support: title, major goals, status of support, source of support, name of PI/co-PIs, total award amount, start and end dates, and person months worked per year. PI's can refer to the [NSF](#) or [NIH](#) webpages for additional information. A template for providing this information for each funding source can be found [here](#), however any format is acceptable.

6. Abbreviated Vita or Biosketch (limited to a maximum of 3 pages). See recommended [guidelines](#) linked through the [OSPS SPARC website](#))

7. Appendices: Appendices are not to be used to provide additional information that should be in the Description of the Proposed Project. Appendices are ordinarily not necessary; however, applicants may want to append a book contract or reviews/ratings from a funding agency, photos, sketches or lay-outs, etc. If collaborative work is being proposed or special access to sources is needed, a letter of support is recommended to be included.

PLEASE NOTE: If a proposal is not recommended for funding, the proposer may request feedback from the RC chair so they may understand the committee's decision. If a proposal is being resubmitted to SPARC after being declined for funding, the applicant should include comments regarding how the proposal has been strengthened, including addressing previous RC feedback if applicable.

VII. Review Criteria

Proposals are evaluated and ranked for funding recommendation based on the following criteria:

- **Research and Creativity Advancement:** The proposed project has a high probability of increasing research or creativity for the individual and/or the university.
- **Significance:** The proposed project will provide a high potential impact on the field of study or creative activity. The products associated with the proposed project are of relative significant creative or scholarly value.
- **Feasibility:** The proposed project is feasible in terms of the proposed methodology, time frame, budget, and investigator skills and experience.
- **Clarity and Importance:** The proposed project is clear and understandable and has a compelling explanation for why it is important.
- **Dissemination Plan:** The proposed project has a meaningful dissemination plan with a clear product and identified forums where the product will be shared.