**Level 2 Proposal Requirements**

The SSRI provides seed grant funding to increase the quantity and quality of interdisciplinary research by Penn State faculty members. Our proposal review process is evaluative (we provide consultation to prepare proposals that align with extramural standards such as NIH and NSF) and developmental (we are invested in supporting faculty members to facilitate research projects that can attract external funding). Our faculty’s success at securing external funding provides the resource foundation for a sustainable pilot grant program. Toward this end, we offer consultation as faculty develop a proposal, prior to its submission. We strongly encourage you to access this opportunity if you are new to SSRI's seed funding programs or have not been funded by SSRI in recent years. You can do so by sending an email to [ssri-seed-grant@psu.edu](mailto:ssri-seed-grant@psu.edu).

The Level 2 mechanism is primarily designed to assist Penn State social science faculty to advance their research by securing extramural funding. Although research teams can include students, post docs, faculty from other institutions and other external collaborators, our goal is to support interdisciplinary teams from Penn State's faculty. For this reason, team leaders should be tenure track or research faculty with continuing appointments. Awarded PI's will be asked to register as an Affiliated Faculty member of SSRI if they are not already designated as one.

SSRI prioritizes topics that align with the Institute’s [Strategic Foci](https://ssri.psu.edu/about#ssri-strategic-foci) including causes and consequences of inequality, human development and behavior, social and environmental determinants of health, innovative and data intensive research methods, and individual and community impact. We especially encourage submissions with a focus on health and the environment.

We also encourage research projects that facilitate engagement with our Interdisciplinary Research Institutes and research resources that can be utilized for your project.  These services include, for example, access to confidential census data ([Federal Statistical Research Data Center](https://psurdc.psu.edu/)), statistical methodology and analytics ([Quantitative Developmental Systems Methodology](https://quantdev.ssri.psu.edu/)), instrumentation e.g., fMRI and EEG ([Social, Life, and Engineering Sciences Imaging Center (SLEIC)](https://www.imaging.psu.edu/)), data collection and survey management ([Survey Research Center](https://survey.psu.edu/)), data acquisition, compliance, and selective storage solutions ([Data Resources Hub](https://socialdatahub.ssri.psu.edu/)), and increasing the impact, use, dissemination of research, and facilitated use of sensitive human health data ([Evidence to Impact Collaborative](https://evidence2impact.psu.edu/)) If you plan to use any of these units, please include their use in your activity plan, timeline and budget.  We also strongly encourage that you do a pre-consultation with the SSRI Unit prior to your submission**.**

Level 2 proposals may be submitted at any time during the year

* Level 2 funding is designed to support research projects with specific research questions, a well-conceived theoretical basis, an identified team of Penn State faculty collaborators, and the potential to gain external funding
* Level 2 proposals are between $5,000 and $20,000. Requests for projects > $20,000 need pre-approval from the SSRI Director or an Associate Director. Requests for a course release for the PI only during the semester in which the external grant is prepared/submitted will be considered under special circumstances. This request requires pre-approval from the SSRI Director or an Associate Director and the PIs Department Head/School Director of the PI as well as appropriate justification in the budget. Please note that internal Penn State seed funds do not support faculty salaries because time for research is already accounted for in their institution-based salary
* The SSRI Director, Associate Directors, relevant college Associate Deans, and 2-3 external reviewers with expertise on the topic review Level 2 proposals
* Feedback on funding is typically given within 4-6 weeks from the date of submission (please note that proposals receiving a revise and resubmit may take longer for a final decision on funding)
* Funds are allocated by fiscal year for the approved period of performance

**Level 2 funding support will be provided for:**

* Innovative interdisciplinary research, training, and integrated research-outreach projects that involve collaborations involving Penn State faculty
* Innovative workgroups or conferences that might include outside speakers and consultants
  + Note: SSRI supports conferences only when they are specifically designed to enhance faculty expertise, thereby leading to new research projects. Proposals for conferences must indicate the expected date and specify that other sources of conference funding have already been explored
* Travel, consultants, graduate student time (but not tuition), or hourly support of activities
  + Note: Special guidelines for international travel:
    - Funds will be provided for only one investigator
    - Funds will not be provided for graduate students
    - Proposals must include a letter of support from the international collaborator(s) outlining his/her role in the project

**Level 2 funds are NOT intended to support:**

* Student (masters, dissertation research) or post-doctoral projects
* New or ongoing projects of individual faculty or any on-going programs or research activities
* Delivery of outreach programs or services
* Funding for the kinds of activities supported by departments and colleges (travel to conferences, seed money for an individual's project, software purchase, etc.)
* Summer salaries
* Projects involving a Penn State faculty member and external collaborators only; our goal is to build and support Penn State teams
* Publication costs

**Criteria for Review**

* Priority is placed on new ideas for projects that involve cross-department and/or cross-college (interdisciplinary) connections among Penn State faculty
* A well-articulated plan of activities to include appropriate literature review, clear objectives and detailed methodology
* Teams comprised of investigators who range in discipline, seniority, and experience
* Proposals must include a specific product (e.g., external grant proposal; workshop and conference; or training activities) and a timeline for its attainment
* Proposals must make a clear contribution to social science
* Proposals must provide strong evidence for access to the population of interest

**Structure and Submission of Proposals**

Proposals must be submitted as one document via email to [ssri-seed-grant@psu.edu](mailto:ssri-seed-grant@psu.edu). To complete your proposal submission, you must download, complete, and email the forms below:

[Proposal Submission Form](https://ssri.psu.edu/sites/ssri/files/2021-06/Revised%20Level%202%20Proposal%20Form%20Jun2021.doc) (doc)

For research that involves primary data collection or the use of secondary data, investigators are expected to prepare and submit the appropriate requests for IRB approval.

Other Ideas to Consider as You Construct Your Level 2

* Consult with the SSRI Director or Associate Director about your project. The SSRI Director and Associate Director are happy to review an early draft of your proposal before you submit it formally
* SSRI has research resources that can be utilized for your project.  These services include, for example, access to confidential census data ([Federal Statistical Research Data Center](https://psurdc.psu.edu/)), statistical methodology and analytics ([Quantitative Developmental Systems Methodology](https://quantdev.ssri.psu.edu/)), instrumentation e.g., fMRI and EEG ([Social, Life, and Engineering Sciences Imaging Center (SLEIC)](https://www.imaging.psu.edu/)), data collection and survey management ([Survey Research Center](https://survey.psu.edu/)), data acquisition, compliance, and selective storage solutions ([Data Resources Hub](https://socialdatahub.ssri.psu.edu/)), and increasing the impact, use, dissemination of research, and facilitated use of sensitive human health data ([Evidence to Impact Collaborative](https://evidence2impact.psu.edu/)) If you plan to use any of these units, please include their use in your activity plan, timeline and budget.  We also strongly encourage that you do a pre-consultation with the SSRI Unit prior to your submission.
* If you need time and funding to network, organize your team, or further develop your research ideas, consider applying for an [SSRI Level 1](https://ssri.psu.edu/funding/ssri-level-1-funding)

**Project Progress Reports**

Investigators are expected 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.

If you need to make changes to the project team, description, design, or budget during the course of your projects, please send a request to [ssri-seed-grant@psu.edu](mailto:ssri-seed-grant@psu.edu) with the specific details of these changes.