



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS - NSF-STRIVE STaRS GRANT PROGRAM

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NSF-STRIVE STaRS (Science and Technology Research Seed) Grant Program (NSF Award #2438168) is a collaborative initiative supported by Landmark College, Bennington College, the Community College of Vermont and Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation and is funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) through the EPSCoR program.

Program Objective

The STaRS Grant Program supports research that advances Vermont's science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) ecosystem. Funding is intended to provide historically underfunded educational institutions with the necessary resources to pursue preliminary work that enhances their ability to secure external research funding from federal agencies or other major funders. **Applicants are expected to submit a full proposal to a major funding agency upon completion of the proposed activities.**

Eligibility

Researchers, faculty or academic staff members from any Vermont college or university are welcome to apply. Proposals are also welcomed from independent organizations (i.e. STEM-based non-profits or technical centers) conducting research aligned with Vermont's STEM priorities (i.e., expanding research capacity, strengthening educational pathways, and building a skilled workforce), as well as from small businesses seeking to carry out proof-of-concept research. Applicants are limited to **one proposal per cycle**, and all proposed **work must be conducted primarily within Vermont.**

Funding Parameters

- **Maximum Award:** \$15,000
- **Anticipated Awards:** 3–5 per year
- **Funding Period:** Up to 12 months from start date
- **Allowable Costs:**
 - Field or archival research
 - Data collection or compilation
 - Travel to research collaborators or institutions (funding may not be used to support international travel)
 - Laboratory equipment and supplies (cannot total more than \$5,000)
 - Workforce development activities within STEM courses
 - Student research internships

Please note that **only** non-Higher Ed applications may include up to 20% of budget total for indirect costs and/or salary support for grant administrative support. **For Higher Ed applications, indirect costs or faculty time/salary compensation are not allowable costs under STaRS funding.**

Additionally, International students may be employed as student workers on the project in alignment with the applicant organization's processes and procedures; however, they are **not eligible to be supported as project participants**. NSF funds allocated under the participant support cost category cannot be used to provide direct support to international students.

Deadlines

- **Cycle 1 Due Date:** March 15
- **Cycle 2 Due Date:** October 15
- **Project Start Date:** No earlier than two months after the proposal deadline.
- **Project End Date:** No later than 1 year after actual project start date. Final report and budget (proposed vs actual expenditures report) are due within 60 days of Project End Date. **STRIVE does not allow No Cost extensions.**

Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include the following components in a single PDF (See points 1-5 below; max 3 pages, not including references, readable 12 font (aptos, calibri, arial), and a separate Budget in Excel.xls format:

1. Project Cover Sheet with Project Title (See “STaRS Proposal Template”, tab “Cover Sheet”)

2. Abstract (250 words or less)

3. Research Question(s) and Objectives

4. Project Description:

- Context in scholarly or scientific literature
- Planned activities and methodology
- Timeline for completion of work

5. Justification for Seed Funding

- How project is situated with a framework or theory
- Why seed funding is necessary
- Relevance to current STEM debates or workforce needs
- Anticipated submission to external funders and funder types (e.g., NSF, NIH, USDA, DOE, Mellon, SSRC, private foundation, state or local funding, etc.)

Note - STRIVE prioritizes strong research that addresses VT STEM economic priorities, creates student opportunities and/or builds infrastructure across regional partnerships.

6. Budget – must indicate clear line-item descriptions and actual dollar values for each line item (attached separately using STRIVE Excel template)

Submission Instructions

- Submit proposals by email to: admin@strivevt.org
- Attach proposal and budget documents as PDF and Excel files, respectively
- Include subject line: “STRIVE Seed Grant Proposal – [Your Last Name]”
- CC: your Sponsored Programs Office or relevant point of contact at your institution

Review Process

Proposals are reviewed by a panel of researchers, NSF STRIVE administrators from partner institutions, and invited external experts. **Funding decisions will be communicated within six weeks of each deadline.**

Feedback will be provided, and revised submissions are welcome.

Successful proposals describe projects that advance high-quality research addressing Vermont STEM priorities, create meaningful student opportunities, and/or build research infrastructure through regional partnerships.

Reviewers will consider the following:

- Is the proposal clearly written and understandable to a general audience?
- Are the project activities, goals, and anticipated impacts clearly described?
- Do the research questions and objectives address Vermont-based STEM challenges, student opportunities, or workforce priorities?
- Is the project scope, work plan, and timeline reasonable for completion within the 12-month award period?
- Is the need for funding clearly justified and situated within an appropriate theoretical, conceptual, or research framework?
- Does the proposal clearly identify a prospective external funding opportunity, and explain how the proposed work will position the project for a larger-scale submission?
- Is the budget clear, well-justified, reasonable, and aligned with project activities?
- Does the project create student opportunities and/or strengthen research infrastructure, capacity, or partnerships?

Reporting Requirements

All funded projects must submit a brief final narrative report and expenditure spreadsheet within 60 days of project completion. The report should outline project outcomes and indicate the plans for external funding submissions. Awardees and their Authorized Organizational Representative should also expect to attend one brief Project Kick-off Call and one Project Mid-Point meeting with the STRIVE seed funding administrators.

Information Sessions

A virtual information session is available on our website strivevt.org/grants. Additional support is available by contacting the STRIVE team at admin@strivevt.org.

Federal Funding Guidelines

This award is issued under an NSF-funded project and must comply with all applicable requirements of the [NSF Proposal & Award Policies and Procedures Guide \(PAPPG\)](#) and [2 CFR §200](#). Funds are provided on a reimbursement basis for allowable costs incurred. This is an award named to the awardee's organization. However, the awardee is the named Principal Investigator, and is responsible for directing the project, managing the budget, and tracking expenses and reimbursements. The awardee affirms that project activities adhere to NSF project-management requirements, including appropriate oversight of project performance, meeting performance goals and timelines, and ensuring that all work aligns with the approved project scope and methods.

Furthermore, when submitting invoices to NSF-STRIVE for reimbursement, the awardee certifies that their organization is in good standing (i.e. cannot be debarred for any reason) and all costs are accurate, allowable, allocable, reasonable, and incurred within the approved project period in accordance with Federal cost principles, and that adequate documentation is maintained for all charges.