



Small Research Grant Program Guidelines

Introduction

The mission of the Puerto Rico Science Technology and Research Trust (the Trust) is to invest, facilitate and build capacity to continually advance Puerto Rico's economy and its citizens' well-being through innovation-driven enterprises, science and technology and its industrial base. To fulfill its objectives, the Trust shall perform the following tasks, among others:

- i) Increase the financing available for science and technology development activities in Puerto Rico;*
- ii) Support the commercialization of products and services based on science, technology or research;*
- iii) Foster private investments in science and technology research or development activities and projects, and in burgeoning high technology and multinational companies highly active in Puerto Rico;*
- iv) Increase the investment in innovations through the alliance of public and private institutions.*

In light of its mission, and to further the objectives as described above, the Trust has created the **Small Research Grant Program (SRGP)**. The SRGP aims to help local researchers increase their probabilities of success in securing federal/private funding for their research and development activities. It is well acknowledged by scientists that R&D funding in Puerto Rico could be significantly increased if local researchers are provided with adequate resources that enabled them to arrive at critical milestones in their research endeavors. In particular, the SRGP will provide bridge funding to help researchers accomplish the following to enhance the proposal competitiveness:

- Obtain reproducible and robust preliminary results
- Address any recommendations from previous grant reviewers to improve the R&D project to strengthen its position to obtain the grant
- Secure reagents, laboratory materials, collaborations or additional technical training necessary for the proposed goals

By strengthening local researcher's position for the submission of highly competitive R&D grants (within the 15-18 months after receiving the SRGP), the Program's expectations will be proposals successfully awarded from private and/or federal agencies (e.g. National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, among others) in order to stimulate the development of Puerto Rico's knowledge-based economy.



Points of Contact

For questions about this SRGP process, you might contact the Grants Advisory Team, **only** through grants@prsciencetrust.org. Answers will be provided in 48-72 hours.

Eligibility

Entities:

Proposals will be received from the following entities duly incorporated in Puerto Rico according to the laws of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico:

- Private Academic Institutions
- State Academic Institutions
- Other Non-Profit Research Institutions

Individuals are not eligible to submit proposals. Applicants must be affiliated to one of the above types of entities.

Although collaborations with entities outside of Puerto Rico and abroad are allowable, funding will be awarded to entities duly established in Puerto Rico for work done primarily and for the benefit of Puerto Rico.

Applicants:

Ideal candidates fall into one of the following categories:

- Junior faculty (within their first five years of their faculty appointment) with a competitive publication record, seeking to secure their first grants*
- PI's with a successful track record of securing funding in their primary research topic, but now embarking in a new research topic and seeking to secure a grant*
- PI's that applied for highly competitive federal funding*, that had their proposal favorably reviewed, but fell short of being funded. The applicant plans to submit the proposal to the same or a different agency and/or program*. In this case, the PI should provide a copy of the evaluated proposal and the evaluations.

**The types of grants the SRGPs seek to bridge are those grants that qualify for tax exemptions under Law 101(<http://prsciencetrust.org/law-101/>). Proposals targeting grants that do not qualify for Law 101 will be automatically disqualified.*



Strategic Sectors

To be eligible for funding, projects must be presented in one of the following strategic fields:

- Biotechnology and Natural Sciences
- Information and communication technologies
- Aerospace
- Medical Devices
- Electronics
- Clean Technologies and/or Renewable Energy
- Agriculture
- Environmental Sciences
- Other areas that the Trust, in its discretion, determines will result in the growth of research, development and commercialization of science and technology in Puerto Rico.

Funding Information

- Funding Mechanism: Awards will be made in the form of Cooperative Agreements. This funding instrument enables the Trust to exert, as necessary, programmatic involvement before and after the award is made, including the successful monitoring of the awardees' accomplishment of mutually-agreed milestones.
- Estimated Number of Awards: 5-10. Note, however, that the Trust reserves the right to fund any or none of the proposals submitted under this SRGP process.
- Funding per Award: Under this solicitation, proposals may be submitted for funding up to \$70,000.
- Project Period: Project duration must be a minimum of six months but not greater than twelve months.
- Matching Requirements: Matching is not required but is highly encouraged. Matching may be in the form of cash and/or relevant in-kind contributions.

Award Terms

Applicants must specify in their applications the intended use of the grant funds in their research activity and explain how these efforts can enhance their success probabilities in obtaining federal R&D funding.



Applicants that receive funds should submit their proposals to a private or federal R&D program within the next 15-18 months of the award date. SRGPs are not renewable. Other SRGPs applications from the same PI will not be considered until evidence of submission of the improved proposal, resulting from the original SRGP, is submitted to the Trust.

These funds will be considered discretionary funds, to be used by the researchers for their work as the researchers deems appropriate. The funds are not renewable, but they also do not expire (if the researcher does not use the funds immediately, they can be allocated for later use). An official no cost extension request should be submitted to the Grants Program Director at least one month prior the expiration date of the award. Construction of research facilities and similar capital expenditures are not allowable uses of funds under this Program.

Allowable Costs

The following costs are eligible under this program:

- Personnel Costs: salaries of key personnel to conduct the work as presented in the proposal. Could include salaries, stipends and/or tuition costs for a maximum of twelve (12) months. **PI's salary must be limited to summer compensation and only if well justified.**
- Fringe benefits: must not exceed 30% of the assigned salary.
- Consultant/Professional Services Fees: Fees for consulting services or any other type of remuneration paid to technical advisors consulted with regard to research and development.
- Materials and supplies
- Equipment, item of property that has an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or less and an expected service life of more than one year. Equipment purchase must be essential for project and must be fully justified.
- Out-of-Jurisdiction-Travel: *Travel for purposes of collaborations and/or meetings with program officers.* Travel must be fully justified and itemized by destination and cost. Can include travel-related costs for transportation, lodging, and meals. Allowance for air travel normally will not exceed the cost of round-trip, economy airfares. All travel must be pre-approved by the Trust. Travel should not exceed \$5,000 per award. Travel in Puerto Rico (including mileage, meals, lodging) is not allowed.
- Peer-reviewed publication costs

The following costs are not eligible:



- Unreasonable costs based on the proposed scope of work. All costs must be fully justified.
- Indirect costs
- Subawards
- Acquisition of real property;
- Costs incurred pre-award, including proposal preparation costs;
- Maternity or sick leave expenses;
- Redundancy or other terminations costs;
- Contingency costs;
- Hospitality and entertainment costs;
- Journal subscription costs; and
- Relocation expenses.
- Travel in Puerto Rico, including mileage, meals and lodging.
- Direct or indirect support for any lobbying effort or for contribution to the political campaign of any candidate or for contribution to any political party or similar organization.

Bidders Briefings

After the release of this SRGP, the Trust will be holding a series of briefings for those interested in submitting a proposal. These briefings will provide an overview of the submission and evaluation process as well as a forum for getting bidders' questions answered. Specific briefings dates will be announced through www.prsciencetrust.org.

Application Process

The SRGP application process consists of two phases: A Partial Application and a Full Application. The Partial Application includes the PI information and Project Summary and should be completed by the date specified in the online application (which is earlier than the Full Application deadline). *Applicants that do not complete this partial application by the specified deadline will not be allowed to submit a full application.* The Full Application consists of a detailed description of the proposed project.

To see the full SRGP application form please visit our online application platform (powered by Wizehive) available at www.prsciencetrust.org under Grants Program. Applications for the SRGP will only be received through this online platform.

Application Review Process

Applications will be reviewed for completeness and for responsiveness to this program. Incomplete or non-responsive applications will be rejected without further consideration.



An external peer review group of highly qualified individuals with the appropriate scientific expertise will be convened by the Trust to evaluate applications that are complete and responsive to the award program*. The Scientific Peer Reviewer will be responsible for evaluating application's scientific and technical merit and provide a final score to be considered by the Trust's Board of Director's Grants Committee when making funding decisions.

** At least 2 Peer Reviewers will be assigned per application*

Evaluation Criteria

Unless specified differently by the SRGP, review criteria will be as detailed below.

- **Innovation and Relevance.** Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches, instrumentation, or interventions? Are they novel to one field or novel in a broad sense? Will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved? Is the innovation and significance of this project strong enough to compete for the targeted federal/private funding?
- **Project Status and Feasibility.** Is the application contingent upon the researcher submitting a plan to secure federal funding? Is the current status of the project suitable to secure federal funding within the next 15-18 months? Does the preliminary data support the feasibility of the proposed project?
- **Approach and Technical Merit.** Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Does the plan identify key milestone(s) to be reached during the funding period? Would the current project plan significantly improve the chances of the applicant to secure federal funding? In the case that the PI had applied for competitive federal funding, does the statement of work addresses the main concerns of the previous reviews?
- **Investigator (s) and Environment.** Are the applicant's capability and experience commensurate and relevant to the proposed work? Do they have sufficient expertise to execute the proposed project and show meaningful results? Do they established adequate collaborations (if specified)? In the case of a PI/Team entering a new research topic, do they have a strong track record that would support their lack of experience in the new area? Is the institutional support, equipment, facilities, or other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the project proposed? Is the applicants' publication and funding record strong enough to compete for federal/private funding?
- **Budget Justification.** Are the budget, project duration, and level of effort proposed appropriate for the SRGP (15-18 months to submission or re-submission)? Is clearly stated how the award will benefit the project and



enhance the proposal to obtain a highly competitive federal award? **Reviewers will comment on this criterion, but no numerical score will be awarded.*

Application Scoring and Critique

Reviewers assign a score for each review criterion for each application.

- **Criteria Scores.** Each criterion is rated on a 9-point scale from 1 (best) to 9 (worst), where intermediate values are treated as equal steps along the scale. Decimal scores are not allowed.
- **Final Scores.** The final score for each proposal will be determined by adding the individual criteria scores. This total score will range from 4 (best) to 36 (worst).
- **Average Final Scores.** The average final score will be calculated from the final scores of each individual reviewer. This score will be used to rank the proposals received.

Final Ranking and Decision

The Grants Advisory Team will compile the total scores from all reviewers, determine the final ranking and complete a final report to the Board of Trustee's Grants Committee that will make a final decision regarding awards.

Feedback to Applicants

All applicants will receive a copy of the SRGP Review and Critique form. Copies will not include the reviewer's names or any other identifying information. These materials will be sent directly to the principal investigator.

Procedures for Responding to Applicant Inquiries

Applicants who have questions regarding the review of their application are directed first to the Grants Program Coordinator. If an applicant questions whether his or her proposal received appropriate treatment and is not satisfied with the Grants Program Coordinator's feedback, the inquiry is directed to the Trust's CEO. The Trust's CEO reviews the process under which the proposal was handled to determine if there was anything irregular or inappropriate in the handling of the application, which is the only basis on which the results of a grant competition review can be put aside. A re-review of an application is the only remedy available for an application that the Trust's CEO judges to have been mis-reviewed. A re-review consists of a review of the same application, not a revised version, during the next review cycle.