

# Grants to Enhance and Advance Research (GEAR)

## Proposal Submission Deadlines

Pre-Proposal Submission Deadline: Friday, November 1, 2024, before 5:00 p.m.

- Submit 1 (one) unsigned PDF to your college dean's office.  
*A pre-proposal to the college is required. Do not use the full-proposal guidelines for the pre-proposal. Each college has its own pre-proposal procedures. If your pre-proposal is recommended by your college to move forward as a full proposal, you will be contacted and must follow the Division of Research (DOR) guidelines below to submit the full proposal.*

Full Proposal Submission Deadline: Friday, January 24, 2025 before 5:00 p.m.

- Submit 1 (one) PDF using the application link on the DOR GEAR webpage:  
<https://uh.edu/research/funding-opportunities/internal-awards/gear/>  
*Only for proposals selected by individual colleges.*
- Make sure that your affiliated pre-award personnel who generated the budget signed the budget template, indicating that they prepared and approved the budget. (In lieu of a signature on the budget template, a letter can be included certifying that the signatory prepared and approved the budget.)

**PROPOSALS SUBMITTED LATE WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.**

## Overview

The GEAR program is designed to increase and diversify research funding at the University of Houston (UH). Funds for this program are derived from the indirect costs (IDC) of funded research awards. The GEAR program seeks bold new ideas, showing clear evidence of a high likelihood of securing extramural grant funding in the short term and viability as a research program in the long-term. Only proposals that meet this purpose will be considered and reviewed. The GEAR program is not a supplement to currently funded research projects or to new faculty startup funds. Faculty members with current funding who are developing new areas of research are encouraged to apply provided they can demonstrate a clear distinction between the proposed research and their currently funded research lines. A total of \$240,000 is available for the GEAR program.

## Eligibility

Full-time tenured, tenure-track, or promotion-eligible non-tenure track faculty are eligible to apply for GEAR funds. Individual faculty members or groups of faculty may apply. If you have start-up funding, you must provide additional justifications for the request. A faculty member who received a GEAR award in the previous year may not apply in consecutive years. A faculty member currently holding a GEAR award may not apply, including awards that were extended.

## Award Requirements

A GEAR proposal must supply convincing evidence that the following criteria have been met or will be met.

1. The proposed activities must represent high-quality research of significant benefit to the University and society.
2. A formal proposal must be submitted to an external agency by the end of the project period. The proposal must specify the potential grant source(s) in the proposal and in the timeline. In addition, the proposal should include a statement as to how the GEAR award will improve the chances of securing that specified funding. Applications will be stringently reviewed regarding the likelihood that the applicant will meet this criterion.

The following areas have been established for review:

- Applied Science/Engineering/Technology
- Arts/Humanities
- Biological Sciences/Biomedical Sciences/Bioengineering
- Computational Science/High Performance Computing
- Materials Science
- Medicine
- Health Disparities
- Physical Sciences/Mathematics
- Social and Behavioral Research
- Business
- Law
- Education
- Pharmacy
- Optometry
- For all other categories, please specify on the cover page of the application form.

## Formatting Requirements

All documents must be prepared on US Letter size paper (8.5"x11") with 1-inch margins on all sides, Arial font size 11 pt or greater. The proposal narrative must have exactly 1.5 line spacing; all other documents may be single-spaced. An Arial font size of no less than 8 pt. should be used for the captions to graphics and tables and may be single-spaced. The text in the captions must be legible. Applications that fail to follow the formatting requirements will not be reviewed.

## Proposal Preparation and Submission

The application **MUST** be prepared using the guidelines below and submitted by the PI or the PI's affiliated pre-award research administrator. Combine all files of the completed proposal into a single PDF, name the file LAST\_FIRST\_2024 where the LAST is your last name and the FIRST is your first name, and upload it to the online cover sheet using the "Apply for Internal Awards" link on the DOR webpage: <https://uh.edu/research/funding-opportunities/internal-awards/gear/>.

No prior approval from chairs and deans is required unless the application requires a commitment of space or other resources, in which case a letter of commitment should be included. Emails to you, your department chair (or equivalent), and your associate dean for

research will be sent after you submit the proposal.

**Organize the proposal using the following sections with these headings:**

Abstract/Summary

A 200-word single-spaced abstract must be submitted with the proposal.

Proposal Narrative (Up to 6 pages, includes graphics, tables, equations, and formulas)

The proposal narrative must not exceed six pages with exactly 1.5 line spacing and the font size of Arial should be no smaller than 11 pt. with 1-inch margins. The following sections must be included:

- a. Objectives and Specific Aims
- b. Significance and Impact
- c. Preliminary Results and Applicant Expertise
- d. Approach (How you will go about producing the project; if this is a research proposal this section would involve the methods)
- e. Expected Outcomes and Products
- f. Feasibility: Provide a timeline of all activities

References Cited are in addition to the 6-page Proposal Narrative and must be single-spaced. Only proposals that meet the formatting requirements will be reviewed.

Biosketch(es)

Provide a biosketch for each PI and co-PI. NSF/NEH style is preferred, but not required. The narrative format of an NIH Biosketch is not acceptable. Regardless of the format, the biosketch is limited to no more than three pages.

The biosketch should provide the following:

- Current and Past Positions.
- Education: List degrees and dates awarded.
- Awards and Honors: Include dates.
- Other Relevant Professional Activities and Accomplishments.
- Publications: Include full citations for selected publications and presentations.

Current and Pending Support, including overlap with current funding, pending proposals, and start-up funding.

- Provide a list of current and pending support for each PI and co-PI. Include a clear description of overlap of the proposed research with research on current awards or pending proposals.
- If the proposal is related to a project supported by start-up funding, indicate the overlap.
- Proposals seeking to conduct research to improve a prior submitted external proposal that has received high but not-funded ranking must provide the external proposal reviews and describe the specific steps that will be taken to address the deficiencies stated in the reviews.

Budget

The budget **MUST** be constructed and presented using the standard UH budget template <http://www.uh.edu/research/resources/dor-forms/proposal-processing-forms/>. Please work

with your affiliated pre-award personnel to generate the budget. This person must sign the budget template, indicating that they prepared and approved the budget. (In lieu of a signature on the budget template, a letter can be included certifying that the signatory prepared and approved the budget.) **The project period is 18 months but prepare a single-year budget.**

A GEAR award may be used for virtually any purpose as long as it supports the proposed research program and enhances the ability of the Principal Investigator(s) to obtain external funding. Funding requests may range from \$10,000 to \$40,000 depending upon the type and scope of research.

- If external reviewers for a future grant submission are considered as part of the proposed activities, the PI must acknowledge that they are aware of the potential for a conflict of interest if the identified reviewer is a member of the agency's review panel. Specifically, if the funding opportunity is from an agency that publishes the roster of their review panels (e.g., NIH), the PI must acknowledge that they will check all relevant rosters and refrain from sending any inquiries for an external review to such members. If the PI plans to pay external reviewers for reviews, this must be explicitly included in the budget.
- Support for faculty salaries is limited to \$6,000 per grant (salary + fringe benefits  $\leq$  \$6,000) for all faculty members. Salary requests must be accompanied by a convincing justification. In lieu of faculty salary, a course buyout for a single investigator may be requested (see below).
- Budgets will be critically reviewed. All budget items must have written justifications, and the budget must include fringe benefits for salary requests. If you have start-up funding, you must provide additional justifications for the request.
- Support for instructional development activities will not be considered for this program.
- Unless specifically part of the research program (for example, fieldwork) support for travel is not allowed.
  
- Requests for the following will NOT be funded:
  - a. Purchase of computer hardware (e.g., monitors, keyboards, printers, various peripherals, except for peripherals with specific applications for the project, such as scanners)
  - b. Generic computer software for which the University has a license, except for packages directly related to the project such as mathematical analysis toolboxes.
  - c. Travel to meetings and conferences or travel to training workshops.
  - d. Supplementation of other internal or external support.
  
  - e. Publication costs unless they are related to a book subvention. Journal publication costs are not allowed.
  - f. Graduate student tuition and fees (these costs should be covered by GTF).

In lieu of faculty salary, one course buyout for a single faculty member during the course of the project may be requested as part of the budget. This buyout is permitted only for faculty who have at least a 2+2 teaching load. The buyout must be approved by the department chair prior to submission and the department chair must write a letter indicating approval of the course buyout and the budgeted amount. Faculty with any type of approved course release may not request an additional buyout (e.g., distinguished professorship, startup package,

administrative release). The budget must reflect the cost of hiring a replacement adjunct professor and not the cost charged to a grant for a course release. In many departments, a course release is charged at \$10,000 to a federal grant, while the cost of hiring an adjunct is \$3,000; the latter cost should be budgeted and justified. Total faculty salary including the cost of the buyout may not exceed \$6,000.

#### Budget Justification and Fiscal Accountability

Each budget must justify all aspects of the requested budget, including faculty salaries. The justification must address each item for which funding is requested and explain why it is needed. Faculty salaries must be specified as academic or summer months.

#### Commitments

This program allows cost sharing or matching from non-DOR sources. Any financial or tangible commitments must be formally documented. Written commitments signed by the sponsoring unit authorities (i.e., dean, center director, and/or department chair) must be submitted when cost sharing or matching is proposed. Startup funds and other internal awards are not eligible for cost sharing because it bypasses the need for a discussion with the department chair/dean.

#### Space

Space availability and requirements must be identified.

- a. Location of the unit.
- b. What facilities, renovations, and technology needs are anticipated?

It is the investigators' responsibility to prepare the facility for installation and housing of the product. No funds from this program will be used for renovations.

#### Pre-proposal

Accepted pre-proposals and their reviews must be attached to the proposal as part of the single document.

### **Review Process**

These proposals will be competitively reviewed and acted upon by subcommittees of the Research and Scholarship Committee (RSC) of the Faculty Senate. Winning proposals will be determined based on program criteria, merit, and available funds. Preference will be given to bold new ideas showing clear evidence of high likelihood of producing high quality, high impact products in the short term and viability as a research program in the long-term. Preference will also be given to applications that include investigators from different academic units (e.g., Departments, Colleges, Centers/Institutes, etc.) who emphasize a team-science approach to research. Investigators with current funding must clearly state any overlaps between this and their current project portfolio.

### **Merit Criteria**

All applications will initially be checked against the eligibility criteria outlined above. If eligibility is not fulfilled, applications will be returned without additional review alongside an appropriate explanation by DOR staff. After the initial screening, applications will be submitted to the RSC. Each accepted proposal will be competitively reviewed and acted upon by a subcommittee of the RSC that may include non-RSC members from the campus. The RSC will make recommendations to the VC/VP for Research, who will be responsible for awarding and administering the grant. The DOR reserves the right to review and change budgets and ask for

clarifications from potential awardees. Reviewers will be internal to UH and may not be disciplinary experts. For instance, a colleague from the College of Arts or the College of Education might review an application from the College of Pharmacy. It is important to ensure that reviewers who are not technical experts in the field of inquiry can understand the proposal narrative. Avoid jargon, unexplained abbreviations, and narratives that are highly technical.

Each reviewer will score each of their assigned proposals in five domains on a 1 (highest) – 5 (lowest) scale and provide an overall score on the same scale. The overall score must be based on the likelihood that the proposal will result in a fundable application. Increments of 0.5 are allowed within the 1-5 range (1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5, etc.):

1. Short-term impact and innovation of proposed research:  
Evaluate the short-term impact and novelty of the proposed research.
2. Plan for grant submission:  
Evaluate the plan for grant submission at the end of the funding period. The application should identify the targeted agency, funding mechanism, and program for which the proposal is planned, with a clear timeline for submission and revision.
3. Quality of the approach:  
Evaluate the approach taken to producing the proposed product. For subvention costs associated with publishing a book, work of art, or theater production, a copy of the following documents should be submitted:
  - a. Contract or letter of support from a publisher, curator, or producer showing firm commitment and costs of publication/production
  - b. Short summary of the proposed manuscript, work of art, or theater productionThe applicant should be able to provide sufficient proof that the publisher/curator/producer has a scholarly reputation and is not a vanity operation. If the proposal is a research grant, examine the description of the aims, participants, procedures, and analysis of the data.
4. Investigator expertise and record of accomplishment:  
Evaluate the evidence that the investigators have the relevant expertise to produce product. A strong grant would have a publication record in the identified area or clearly show the capacity to move into a new area. A weak grant would have no demonstrable record of accomplishment. A history of prior funding can be considered but should not disadvantage junior investigators with clear evidence of expertise.
5. Long-term potential for substantive contributions to research area:  
Evaluate the potential long-term impact of the proposal for a sustained and important contribution to the selected area of research and scholarship.

### **Congruency Review**

Congruency review by the Research Integrity and Oversight (RIO) Office is required for all research submitted to this program. Congruency review includes human subjects, animal usage, biological materials (rDNA, human samples, microorganisms, etc.), and radiation (radioactive materials, lasers, and x-rays).

All oversight committee approvals must be secured within three months of the award announcement, or the funds will be forfeited:

- All projects involving human subjects must be reviewed and approved by the

Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the grant cost center will be established.

- All projects involving the use of animals in research must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) before the grant cost center will be established.
- All projects involving biological materials must be reviewed and approved by the Biological Safety Manager and the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) before the grant cost center will be established.
- All projects involving radiation must be reviewed and approved by the Radiation Safety Officer (RSO) & Laser Safety Officer (LSO) and authorized by the Radiation Safety Committee (RSC) before the grant cost center will be established.

### **Intellectual Property**

In accordance with University policy, faculty members and the University share in net income generated from intellectual property. For additional information, refer to the [Faculty Handbook](#) or contact the [Office of Technology Transfer and Innovation \(OTTI\)](#) at 713-743-9294.

### **Schedule**

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Program Announcement                   | September 09, 2024              |
| <i>Pre-Proposal</i> (Due to Colleges)  | November 1, 2024                |
| Announcement of College Selections     | January 6, 2025                 |
| <i>Full-Proposals</i> (Due to the DOR) | January 24, 2025                |
| Initial Review Completed               | March 21, 2025                  |
| Announcement of Awards                 | April 21, 2025 (approximate)    |
| Effective Date of Award for 18 Months  | May 15, 2025- November 15, 2026 |
| Final report                           | November 15, 2026               |

### **Extensions**

Extensions of up to 6 months will be granted only for circumstances that would extend the tenure clock. There is additional flexibility for unanticipated events that affect the entire university, such as a pandemic and the suspension of travel and human participants' research. No requests for extension will be granted if initiated after the expiration date of the project.

### **Reporting and Acknowledgement**

Use the *Internal Grant Reports Form* button on the DOR Internal Awards webpage to submit progress reports that are due on the established dates regardless of progress through the congruency review. Interim reports are required at 6-month intervals. These reports should be narrative summaries of progress made toward achieving the proposed research objectives and not to exceed one page.

The final report should detail the final product(s) and provide documentation of its completion. More specifically, it should provide a summary of data and/or outcomes as it relates to the proposed research objectives. The final report should not exceed 3 pages. Failure to comply with this reporting requirement will disqualify an individual for future consideration in all internal funding programs.

Notice must be given of publications, presentations, exhibitions, or performances resulting from the award. The grantee must acknowledge DOR support in all products and publications resulting from the award and provide one copy of the publication to the DOR.

**Assistance**

All questions related to this program should be submitted to Dr. Claudia Neuhauser ([cmneuhauser@uh.edu](mailto:cmneuhauser@uh.edu)), Vice Chancellor/Vice President for Research. Please do not call or email regarding the review results because the dates depend on the RSC review capacity and are approximate.