



Ignite Interdisciplinary Grant

Here and Next
FY 2026 Call for Proposals

Dates and Deadlines

Informational Webinars	September 10 th at 11:00 AM – Register Here January 30 th at 10:00 AM – Register Here
Proposal Deadlines	Fall: September 30, 2025 at 11:59 PM Spring: February 18, 2026 at 11:59 PM
Award Period	Fall: January 1 st until December 31 st 2026 Spring: June 1 st , 2026 until May 31 st , 2027
Award Ceiling	Up to \$50,000 over one year
Number of Awards	Up to 15 awards over both cycles

Program Scope

The Ignite Interdisciplinary Grant provides project support to catalyze innovative interdisciplinary research projects that address key areas of interest to the Here and Next Strategic plan. Particularly, projects should address issues of **Public** and **Global Health**, and that have an impact on **Environmental Research**, **Digital Transformation**, or the **St. Louis Community**.

Please see the attached Appendix for information about the FY 26 priorities to ensure your proposal is competitive within this years' cycles.

Successful proposals will address complex, transformative problems that require a novel interdisciplinary approach. These projects should be currently **unfunded**, and they must have the potential for increased funding either through federal, foundation, or philanthropic support. Projects can range from proof-of-concept/feasibility studies to the development of new interdisciplinary teams that lead to the formation of large, collaborative research proposal submissions. These funds can be used to gather pilot data with the goal of successfully competing for future sponsored research opportunities. **This program is particularly interested in funding imaginative and innovative research proposals, especially those that are particularly novel in their interdisciplinary collaboration.**

Eligibility

- Co-Principal Investigators (co-PIs) must be full-time faculty at WashU at the time of application and remain so for the award's duration.
- There must be a tangible collaboration from at least two schools within WashU (a minimum of two co-PIs must have primary appointments from different schools). Preference will be given to

teams with an investigator with a primary or secondary appointment in the School for Public Health.

- Each co-PI may only submit one proposal per program per academic year. If a proposal is unawarded in the Fall cycle, applicants may reapply in the Spring cycle. However, the proposal will not be given special consideration in subsequent review.
- All co-PIs must be current on their reporting from any previously received Here and Next Research Grants to be eligible for subsequent awards.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to justify their proposal's alignment within the Here and Next Research Excellence areas of interest.

Application Information

General Tips & Guidelines

- All proposals must be submitted via InfoReady. Applicants can assign other individuals, such as a lab manager, etc., to submit for them via proxy.
- Applicants should address each element discussed in the Evaluation criteria in the body of their proposal.
- All responses should be written to be understandable to non-specialists.
- It is strongly recommended that applicants do not repurpose previously submitted grants but concentrate on responding to the criteria articulated below.

Part I: Team Information & Project Summary

- Enter the names, appointments, schools, departments, and emails of the project's co-PIs
- Enter the name of the staff who will be the post-award administrator, if awarded. This person will be responsible for providing OVCR/RDO with the Cost Center and Project Code for the award.
- Project Title
- Project Abstract—150 words free of jargon, for a general academic audience
- Amount Requested
- Here and Next Priority Area Alignment
- Is the research proposed community-engaged? Yes/No

Part II: Project Description

Applicants should consider the evaluation criteria when composing their proposal materials.

Proposal Narrative: In no more than three pages, single spaced, please describe the following:

- What is the research proposed? How is it new and innovative? Why is it critical to address this issue now?
- Who are the researchers involved and what are the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team? How is this team interdisciplinary and what does each member bring to the table? How is interdisciplinarity critical to this proposal's success?
- How does this project represent a new line of inquiry for the team? (Keep in mind that this is seed funding and the Ignite Interdisciplinary Grants will not be made to already funded work.)
- What activities does the team propose to undertake during the award period? How do the activities proposed connect to the requested budget items? Similarly, how will the team ensure that the activities take place within the period of performance. For example, if requesting funds

for a postdoc—is that individual already identified? If not, how will you ensure that the postdoc will be hired and execute the work within the period of performance?

- What are the team’s plans for obtaining external funding after this seed funding? What sponsors and programs does the team plan on targeting? Please highlight how Ignite Interdisciplinary Grant support would increase the chances of success with external sponsors. These funds are meant to *seed* subsequent research funding, so be specific in articulating your plan and timeline to acquire external funding—federal, foundation, or philanthropic.
- How does the proposed work fit within the Here and Next Research Excellence priorities? We are particularly interested in proposals that sit at the intersection of public and global health, environmental research, digital transformation, and that make an impact in St. Louis.
- Applicants may wish to include at least one figure or illustration to convey the significance of the issue and the impact of their proposed research, but please keep in mind that this counts towards your page limit.

Budget and Budget Justification: If there are any questions about allowable costs, please reach out to researchseedfunding@wustl.edu to confirm.

- Up to \$50,000 over one year
- Allowable costs are:
 - Non-faculty personnel (postdoctoral fellows, students, and staff)
 - Research materials (such as data sets, lab supplies, etc.)
- Non-allowable costs are:
 - Faculty salary
 - Course relief
 - Equipment or capital expenses
 - Indirect costs
- Except for projects with a global and/or community-engaged focus, the following costs are unallowable
 - Travel
 - Research costs outside of Washington University

Part III: Additional Information & Uploads

- **Upload CVs for each co-PI**, combined into a single .pdf file. Include only the most relevant and recent publications and research, no more than 4 pages per co-PI.
- **Upload Other Sources of Research Support** for each co-PI combined into a single .pdf file. This should include all research funding: active and pending, external and internal.

Evaluation Criteria

1. Qualifications/Expertise of the investigators

The co-Principal investigators should have the expertise and experience needed to accomplish the proposed project. **Please note:** while the project should be a new project and not yet been funded, this does not need to be the first collaboration between co-PIs.

2. Interdisciplinary Nature of the Investigative Team

At a minimum, two (2) schools must be represented by the co-PIs’ primary appointments. Otherwise, proposals should clearly delineate the interdisciplinary, team-based approach that will be incorporated into the project. Pay close attention to explaining how your work—not just your team—is interdisciplinary. Each PI should bring something unique to the table. Draw attention to

innovative, novel, and atypical collaborations that will break down previously siloed groups. Such collaborations will be given preference.

- **Significance of the problem and the originality/innovativeness of the proposed research**
What is the significance of the problem? What makes the project unique and innovative? The focus should be on new, emerging areas of research or they should provide new interdisciplinary ways of looking at old research questions. What is the likelihood that the collaboration will yield novel insights that would not be achievable by either discipline alone? Convincing evidence must be presented to demonstrate that the proposed project is a new line of research or significant departure from the investigators' previous work. The proposal should address how the research focus area aligns with one or more of the Here and Next priority areas.
- 3. **Likelihood of Future Funding and Alignment with Non-Traditional Funding Opportunities**
This proposal should show likelihood of providing leverage in the submission of future funding proposals. Preference will be given to projects pursuing funding beyond traditional funding mechanisms (like R01s) in favor of larger complex proposals such as center proposals, interdisciplinary proposals, high-risk/high-reward calls. Proposals should explain how this proposed project may lead to new and varied opportunities for the research team and the University. **An explicit strategy for securing external funding, including a plan for responding to specific solicitations, is stronger than broad statements that teams plan to seek external funds.**

Review Process & Timeline

The Ignite Interdisciplinary Grant uses a peer-reviewed process with a panel composed of WashU researchers in disciplines aligning with the Here and Next Research Excellence priority areas. The names of the reviewers are confidential. Please note that the reviewers are senior researchers that are not necessarily experts in your field of research. Therefore, it is in your best interest to define all acronyms, to keep your research plans and impact statements free of jargon, and to ensure that it is understandable and compelling to a non-specialist.

Feedback will be shared with applicants, whether awarded or declined. We hope to make award notifications by the end of the semester of the corresponding Ignite Interdisciplinary Grant cycle.

Reporting Requirements

A report detailing project activities, outcomes, and financial expenses will be due 30 days after the award period's end. There will be another follow-up one year after award period end. All reports will be in the InfoReady system. No-cost extensions *may* be granted in the event of a legitimate extenuating circumstance; to be eligible, at least 60% of the funds (~\$30,000) must be spent prior to the request. Regardless of the status of the NCE, investigators must submit a report detailing their progress at the end of the period of performance.

Questions and More Information

For questions about this or other Here and Next Research Grants or InfoReady, please reach out to researchseedfunding@wustl.edu.

Addendum: Funding Priorities for FY2026

The Here and Next Seed Grant program is pleased to announce the FY26 focus areas supporting innovative and interdisciplinary research projects and initiatives focused on Public Health. To celebrate the launch of the new School of Public Health, we aim to catalyze collaborations across disciplines to drive population health research efforts to solve society's deepest challenges by capitalizing upon WashU's pre-existing strengths across schools.

Public Health is what society does collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy.

Population health science is the study of the conditions that shape distributions of health within and across populations and of the mechanisms through which these conditions manifest in an individual's health. Essentially, population health science is the basic science of public health.

Public health is then the applied practice of the **science of population health**. For instance, the science may study distribution of asthma in populations, public health then implements the programs and policies that address this distribution. Population health science may document the policies that effectively reduce pollutants, while public health then works with local partners to develop and implement policy change.

Thus, proposals should bring together researchers from multiple schools to develop adaptive solutions, transform health systems and policies, and explore multi-level influences on human health at a fundamentally interdisciplinary level.

2026 Research Focus:

We invite proposals from projects, teams, and initiatives in the following areas of interest:

- **Anticipating Global Health Changes:** Work that anticipates changes in the global health landscape and develops adaptive solutions grounded in WashU research strengths.
- **Digital Transformation:** Work that leverages digital technologies, data analytics, and emerging innovations to enhance public health outcomes and to address complex health challenges through interdisciplinary collaboration.
- **In St. Louis, for St. Louis:** Work dedicated to improving health outcomes and to addressing public health challenges specific to the St. Louis community, through locally-focused, community-engaged, and evidence-based interdisciplinary approaches.
- **Policy, Systems, and Solutions:** Work designed to improve public health through innovative policy and systems change at local, state, and federal levels.

- **Implementation Science:** Work that accelerates the adoption and implementation of evidence-based and sustainable solutions to diverse public health challenges.
- **Planetary Health:** Work that explores the intersections of environmental changes and human health, aiming to address public health challenges through sustainable and interdisciplinary approaches focused on environmental and planetary health.