

LEONARD TRANSPORTATION CENTER
California State University San Bernardino
<http://leonard.csusb.edu>

Funds Available for Faculty Research

Request for Seed Grant Research Proposals

Grants up to \$5,000 are available
Due Date: Continuous

Seed Grant Request for Proposals

BACKGROUND

California State University, San Bernardino has been selected as a U.S. Department of Transportation University Transportation Center (UTC) to enhance national efforts in higher education, research on transportation problems, and continuing career development of transportation professionals, with special focus on transportation issues affecting the Inland Empire. The theme of the Center is *Decision-Making and Management of Transportation Systems*, reflecting a commitment to provide local, state, and federal transportation providers with increased capability to make improved transportation decisions and with the information and research resources needed to better manage transportation systems (including public transit) and transportation investments. Priorities of the sponsoring agencies, the U.S. DOT and Caltrans, call for increased research on system performance, operational efficiencies, analysis of costs and benefits, use of information systems, plus institutional and governance issues.

This academic year, about \$210,000 in Center funds will be made available to support faculty research in areas consistent with the Center's research priorities. It is anticipated that these funds will be awarded through two separate requests for proposals (RFP). The current RFP is issued to solicit small seed grants, each funded at the level of about \$5,000, to permit interested faculty members to explore transportation research problems of interest and to develop specialized knowledge as a basis for development of long-term research programs and, if possible, inter-university and university-industry-agency partnerships for future research to be funded by the Center or other suitable funding sources.

Projects are expected to involve students in the research. In addition to publishing the research in public policy and transportation journals, the project team will be expected to work with a user-group (the Center will assist in the selection of such) and document the research findings in a manner that can be adapted to holding workshops or seminars with potential beneficiaries of the research,. The Center will provide additional funding for such dissemination activities upon successful conclusion of the research project.

The following information describes eligibility requirements, research topics, selection criteria, funding guidelines and restrictions, project requirements and proposal instructions. Budget instructions are provided, along with sample budget sheets. Submission instructions and a Leonard Center cover page are provided.

ELIGIBILITY

All full time California State University faculty members are eligible to apply as principal investigators (PI). Eligible PIs are encouraged to form partnerships, especially with, interdisciplinary partnerships, colleagues at partner campuses, state, regional, and local transportation agencies, or with transportation industry.

Seed Grant Request for Proposals

RESEARCH TOPICS

The Center welcomes proposals for any research project or seed research activity consistent with the problem areas listed in the Center's Research Agenda, see Leonard Transportation Center Potential Research Projects. The Potential Research Project is accessible from the Center's website <http://leonard.csusb.edu/research/proposals.html> Scroll down to and select Potential Research Projects (PDF format). As previously noted, this solicitation limits proposals to budget expenditures of \$5,000, and we encourage proposals for seed research leading to the development of long-term capability to contribute to solving the transportation problems in California (with particular focus on the Inland Empire region), and are consistent with the research agenda of USDOT and Caltrans.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be selected on the basis of overall merit. Proposals will compete both within topics and across topics.

Reviewers will evaluate proposals according to the following selection criteria (see Attachment C Needs-Based Evaluation Form).

Yes/No Criteria

- Student involvement in the research project
- Relevant to needs of the US Department Transportation and the California Department of Transportation.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Objectives of the project
- Methods and procedures
- Feasibility
- Relevance and significance
- Reasonableness of budget and cost-effectiveness
- Match-funding participation from outside agencies
- Qualifications of team and likelihood of successful completion

The Leonard Transportation Center Advisory Board will make final project selections, and will take into account recommendations made by the Director. A RFP review committees may be established, though the Advisory Board will make final project selection. Prior to releasing funds all recommended projects will be reviewed with Caltrans.

FUNDING GUIDELINES AND RESTRICTIONS

Budgets should be conservative and cost-effective up to \$5,000. The Center reserves the right to reduce budgets of submitted projects. Funds should be spent in a manner that provides publishable results and which facilitates transferability of research findings to transportation decision-makers.

Seed Grant Request for Proposals

In general, faculty salary (summer or academic year), student support, and tuition/fee reimbursement are allowed expenses. Funding for students is expected in all projects. Overhead and fringe benefits should also be included in the budget. A limited amount of travel for data collection purposes and materials and supplies is allowable, provided that they are a direct expense related to completing the work. International travel is not permitted unless specific justification is provided and approved by both Caltrans and the U.S. Department of Transportation. Faculty support can be in the form of release time, overload salary, or summer salary. Please note: faculty should contact their Sponsored Programs office for appropriate overhead rates (there is a cap of 15% overhead), salaries, wages, and direct costs vary campus to campus.

Projects should be budgeted approximately three months after submitting RFP:

Projects must be completed and all funds expended seven months from the beginning of the agreed contract start date. While proposals should identify specific deliverables and contributions to knowledge to be developed during the initial period of funding, follow-on funding may be available.

Number of projects to be funded:

The intention is to support up to fifteen (15) projects per fiscal year, but the final number will be determined by the quality and relevance of the proposals received.

PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

Each proposal should include a detailed narrative describing the proposed work, a schedule for completion of the work, a description of the expected outcomes and the form in which these outcomes will be provided, and a statement about why the resources requested are appropriate to completing the project. The minimum deliverables should include a final report describing what was accomplished. In writing your proposal, assume that the panel judging the proposal will include generalists as well as experts in your field.

Proposals should be succinct and clearly written for a mixed technical and non-technical audience. Proposals are limited to no more than eight (8) pages in sections 3 – 7. Each proposal must include the following:

1. Cover Page (use form attachment-1, or facsimile).
2. An abstract of the project's objectives, scope, goals and methods written in non-technical language. Summarize the whole project, not just the "significance" section. Describe the problem to be studied, methods to be used, and plan of work, and deliverable(s) of the project.
3. A discussion of the significance of the project. What is the question or problem to be researched or studied? What is the theoretical basis or context for the problem? What studies do you know of that suggest this is the next logical step? What is the importance of the problem or need for the proposed work?

Seed Grant Request for Proposals

4. An explanation of the detailed plan of work, including theoretical justification, methodology, tasks, and time schedule.
5. A description of how findings will be used. Will you seek publication in refereed journals or elsewhere? Will the results be used to apply for support from external sponsors? If so, from whom? Private industry? Federal/state/local agencies? Others? Could the findings lead to the development of patentable intellectual property or other commercial opportunities¹?
6. Tasks, Schedule and Deliverable: steps that will be followed in executing the methodology, and when they will be completed. Description of the research product.
7. Budget Justification: strong justification should be provided for unusual expenses (e.g., equipment. Equipment is eligible if it is determined that such request is appropriate to execute the project.). The extent of student involvement should be clearly stated.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

All funded projects have the following requirements:

1. Mid-term report due on or before the end of the fourth(4) month
2. The Final Report is due no later than seven (7) months from the agreed upon start contract date. The Final Report should document the research project and be complete, original, well organized and accurate. Final Reports are distributed via the Center website, and are submitted to Center sponsors and to various publication data bases.
3. The Report shall identify weaknesses, limitations and potential enhancement in the transportation data bases and information systems which the research team experienced in the course of their research of the funded project to aid in developing improved information for future studies.
4. The Report shall suggest topics and problem areas which merit future research.
5. The Report shall list publications, presentations and inventions resulting from research and the names of students involved in the project.
6. One presentation of research at a conference or event organized or co-sponsored by the Center.

¹ Please note per agreement with the California Department of Transportation that all work product derived by the work performed by the Consultant, its employees or by any of the Consultant's Subcontractor's employees under this Agreement, shall be owned by the Department.

Seed Grant Request for Proposals

7. Timely reporting of all information required for the Center's Annual Report.
8. Copies of all papers submitted to journal or conferences that are based on the project research shall be provided to the Center Director.
9. The Center support shall be acknowledged in all work that results from the Center's funding.
10. The Report should contain the Team's recommendations (or a plan) describing how the research findings can be disseminated. The research team should anticipate the Center's likely intention to provide a venue(s) for transferring the research project findings and recommendations to potential users. Additional funding for this activity would be made available as appropriate after the completion of the research project.

Where can I get more information?

Contact the Center's Director Haw-Jan "John" Wu at jwu@csusb.edu or 909-537-5036 or Rusty Thornton, Program Manager at gthornto@csusb.edu or 909-537-3686.

Submission Deadline

The deadline is Continuous. Please submit an electronic copy of the proposal (by e-mail attachment) to: gthornto@csusb.edu

Also, one follow-up paper copy with original signatures must be submitted to the:

Leonard Transportation Center
Jack Brown Hall, 283
California State University San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, Ca. 92407-2393

Seed Grant Request for Proposals

Attachment 2: CSUSB Budget Form

Category						Budget (\$)		
	Annual Salary	x	Release Time Units Or % Effort	+	Overload Salary or Summer Salary	=	_____	
Faculty Salary	_____	x	_____	+	_____	=	_____	
Faculty Salary ²	_____	x	_____	+	_____	=	_____	
<hr/>								
	Hourly Rate	x	# Hours				=	_____
Student Support	_____	x	_____				=	_____
<hr/>								
Conference Travel							_____	
Other Travel							_____	
Materials and Supplies							_____	
Equipment (list)	_____						_____	
	_____						_____	
Other Direct Expenses (itemize)	_____						_____	
	_____						_____	
Total Direct Cost							_____	
<hr/>								
Indirect Cost including fringe benefits ³							_____	
Total Funds Requested							_____	

² Use additional faculty lines only if more than one professor.

³ Up to a maximum 15% is allowable

Seed Grant Request for Proposals

Attachment 3: Research Evaluation Form

(Provided for information only; form will be used by evaluators; form may be modified at discretion of the Center)

_____ Title: _____

YES/NO CRITERIA:

1. Student involvement in the research project: **Yes / No**
2. Relevant to needs of the California Department of Transportation and US Department of Transportation: **Yes / No**

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

SCORE

1) OBJECTIVES	20 _____	10 _____	0 _____	_____
Fully developed ideas sufficiently supported Desired results are clear			Overgeneralization Unconvincing; questionable Simplistic or undeveloped	

Comments: _____

2) METHODS	10 _____	5 _____	0 _____	_____
Appropriate & relevant tools Strong rationale for use of methodology Accurate/reasonable analyses			Inappropriate method Lack of focus Unconvincing analysis Inadequate research design	

Comments: _____

3) FEASIBILITY	20 _____	10 _____	0 _____	_____
Convincing time frame Well supported needs Appropriate planning			Unrealistic plans Unsubstantiated needs Uncertain access/Unclear planning	

Comments: _____

4) RELEVANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE

	20 _____	10 _____	0 _____	_____
Addresses a Center's Priority Topic Stimulating project Addresses pressing, significant research needs			Not responsive to Priority Topics Unimaginative Not relevant to pressing research needs	

Comments: _____

5) REASONABLENESS OF BUDGET/COST-EFFECTIVENESS/LEVERAGING INSTITUTE FUNDING

	20 _____	10 _____	0 _____	_____
Realistic, tight budget Proposed product can be produced within budget Outside matching funds			Budget overstated Budget understated No matching funds	

Comments: _____

Seed Grant Request for Proposals

6) QUALIFICATIONS OF TEAM AND LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

10 _____	5 _____	0 _____
Research team well-qualified High likelihood of success		Research team not qualified Delivery of high quality project in doubt
Comments: _____		
		TOTAL (MAX 100) _____

In your opinion should this proposal be funded? **Yes / Maybe / No**

Evaluator Name _____

Proposals must clearly demonstrate quality in terms of the following:

- a. **Objectives:** The proposal must describe the objectives of the project and elaborate on the following:
 - 1) the reasons for the applicant's undertaking the project;
 - 2) the purpose of the project;
 - 3) the projected results of the project;
 - 4) how the results fit the applicant's future research plans; and
 - 5) the project's relation to other professional activity being conducted by the faculty member.
- b. **Methods:** The proposal must clearly describe the activities, including methods and procedures, which will be conducted and must clearly show that these are designed to meet the stated objectives.
- c. **Feasibility:** The proposal must present an organized plan of action which demonstrates that the project is feasible within the project timeframe. The proposal should demonstrate high probability of successful completion.
- d. **Relevance and Significance:** A Preferred Proposal should address one of the Center's Priority Topics. Open Category Proposals should fall within the Center's five broad research topic areas and have relevance to pressing transportation information or research needs (see "Recommended Research Projects" at Leonard Transportation Center website: <http://leonard.csusb.edu>)
- e. **Reasonableness of Budget / Cost-Effectiveness / Leveraging Institute Funding:** The proposal should present a realistic but thrifty budget and should demonstrate that the proposal is an efficient and effective expenditure of Center funds. The use of matching or leveraged funds will be looked upon favorably.
- f. **Qualifications of Team and Likelihood of Successful Completion:** The research team should be highly qualified and the likelihood of successful completion should not be doubted.