

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The **Connecting through Research Partnerships (Connect)** program, sponsored by the Office of the Vice President for Research, Economic Development, and Knowledge Enterprise (VPREDKE) at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) and the Office of the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (EVP & COO) at Southwest Research Institute (SwRI), is a grant opportunity offered to enhance greater scientific collaboration between the two institutions and to increase both UTSA's and SwRI's research-funding base with cross-campus collaborative programs. The program encourages interaction between investigators in support of the acquisitions of established extramural, peer-reviewed research funding. This agreement provides unprecedented opportunities for researchers to work together in addressing issues of mutual interest and need.

The two main objectives of this program are to provide seed funding to:

1. Support the completion of an inter-institutional project, and
2. Enable the development and submission of proposals for extramural funding of research from a competitive granting agency, either domestic or international, ultimately resulting in contracts from industry.

Preference will be given to proposals that:

1. Have a high potential for extramural funding,
2. Have significant scientific merit,
3. Build or strengthen cross-disciplinary research partnerships between UTSA and SwRI, and
4. Represent a new direction for the Principal Investigator(s).

Priority Areas of Funding: UTSA and SwRI have agreed on several priority areas listed below.

The proposal must have direct application to solving industrial, governmental, or societal problems.

Materials Science, including Structures	Biomedicine
Chemistry/Chemical Engineering	Energy, including Alternate and Sustainable Energy
Cloud Computing/Big Data/Cyber Security	Climate Change/Environment

COLLABORATION REQUIREMENT

Proposals must include at least one investigator with PI status from each institution, UTSA and SwRI (min. 2 team members with equal PI status). *Projects may also include (but not fund) other scientific/educational/industrial partners from the south Texas region. There is no co-mingling of funds between UTSA and SwRI. UTSA funds the UTSA scope; SwRI funds the SwRI scope.*

If a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) is required, one should be drafted (by either organization's contract office) and approved by both parties prior to funding distribution.

AWARD INFORMATION

- **Estimated Number of Awards:** 2, subject to availability of funds.
- **Maximum Total Funding Per Project:** \$125,000.

Due to indirect cost rate variation between the institutions, each project will receive up to \$50K to the UTSA PI and up to \$75K to the SwRI PI. Roll over to the next fiscal year and/or project extensions are not allowable. Funding not spent/encumbered by each organization's funding timeline requirements will automatically revert back to the originating office.

PROGRAM TIMELINE

December 15, 2020	Request for Proposals (RFP) Released
March 31, 2021	Proposals Due through UTSA's InfoReady system (by 5:00 pm CST)
June 2, 2021	Awards Announced
October 1, 2021	Performance Period Begins (Funds Available)
March 1-15, 2022	Project Update Meeting
July 1, 2022	UTSA Funds Must Be Spent (Unspent Funds Will Be Swept August 2)
September 30, 2022	Performance Period Ends
September 30, 2022	Final Project Report Due
September 30, 2023	Deadline for Extramural Funding Submission

PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL

UTSA will be the lead institution for collection and administration of this grant program. PIs must submit one combined proposal through the UTSA system. The UTSA PI should complete an [Intake Form](#) at the start of proposal development to initiate Research Service Center coordination.

PROPOSAL ELEMENTS

Application components required at the time of submission are listed below. If components are missing and/or formatting is not compliant, the application will not be reviewed.

Required Proposal Elements	
1. Proposal Cover Page/Abstract	Use Attachment A
2. Project Description*	5 pages, including graphics
3. Joint Work Plan*	2 pages, including graphics
4. Biographical Sketch	2 pages maximum for each PI/Co-PI
5. Budget Summary	Use Attachment B
6. Budget Justification*	2 pages
7. UTSA Awardee Requirements	Use Attachment C
8. SwRI Awardee Requirements	Use Attachment D

**Formatting requirements: single-spaced, no less than 12pt Times New Roman font, 1" margins on all sides*

1. PROPOSAL COVER PAGE & ABSTRACT (limited to 400 words)

Cover page must include a clear abstract (executive summary) summarizing the essential content of the proposal – including objectives, benefits, and significance of proposed research effort.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project description must include, in this order:

- Project overview;
- Summary of collaborative elements (i.e., what each organization brings to the table);
- Scientific/engineering merit and significance of the research;
- Description of how this project is a new direction from the PIs' existing research efforts and the potential impact of this new direction;
- Application areas where this research can or will be applied;
- Specific goals, objectives, and anticipated results;
- Description of methods;

- Anticipated barriers or technical difficulties;
- Resources needed for this project (equipment, materials, etc.) and their availability; and
- Description of the potential for extramural funding to support this research in future years.

Additional information in an appendix is not allowed. A violation of this format will result in your proposal not being reviewed. A list of references/citations, if necessary, should be listed after the Project Description section. This list does not count against page limitations.

3. JOINT WORK PLAN

Attach a summary of task-level activities to be performed by UTSA and SwRI as they relate to the overall project's objectives. Describe areas of interdependence, the coordination and handoff of interim project materials and data, and the timeline of each organization's participation in the overall project effort.

While no specific graphical format or presentation is required, this section is expected to contain a mixture of narrative and graphical information to aid the evaluators' assessment of the proposed scope, roles, and responsibilities within the team, and collaboration environment.

4. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Biographical sketch attachments must be included for the PIs and Co-PIs. Each team member may use their own organization's preferred format ([NSF](#), [NIH](#), or SwRI PDS) and content for their biographical sketch for this Connect proposal.

5. BUDGET SUMMARY

Budget summaries must be submitted per the tables in Attachment B.

6. BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Details for all proposed expenditures must be described in one budget justification section covering both institutions. For each institution, the budget justification must address each budget line item on Attachment B that contains a proposed cost. The budget justification must convey an integrated understanding of the types of resources necessary to complete the proposed effort. The proposed budget for each institution must conform to that institution's requirements for internally funded research or grant activity.

Labor: Describe the labor types and levels of effort being proposed. The PIs from each institution must be identified by name; other labor can be characterized by labor category or type and level of effort. Since each institution may use the term 'level of effort' differently, define the basis for level of effort as presented in the justification.

Non-Labor: Describe the type, amount, and estimated cost of allowable purchased materials, services, or travel for the proposed effort.

7. UTSA AWARDEE REQUIREMENTS (see "UTSA Requirements")

8. SWRI AWARDEE REQUIREMENTS (see "SwRI Requirements")

PEER REVIEW

All Connect seed grant program proposals will be reviewed by a committee consisting of up to three (3) senior representatives from SwRI and three (3) experts from UTSA. Committee members will be chosen by the UTSA VPREDKE and SwRI's EVP & COO. Substitutions will be allowed depending upon the project topic/focus. The committee will make a recommendation; however, the UTSA VPREDKE and SwRI EVP & COO will make the final determination on all funding decisions.

Proposals will be evaluated on the weighted criteria below. Applications are expected to include all required proposal components and fully and clearly address each criteria.

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Criteria	Maximum Point Allocation
Did the proposal address a feasible plan to obtain extramural funding to support the project in future years?	20
Did the proposal describe the scientific/engineering merit and significance of this research?	20
Did the proposal demonstrate enhancement of cross-disciplinary research partnerships between UTSA and SwRI? Do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise?	15
Did the proposal address whether the project is a new direction from the PIs' existing research efforts and the potential impact of this new direction?	10
Did the proposal describe where this research can or will be applied?	5
Are the goals reasonable given the resources to be applied?	5
Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the project objectives?	5
Are potential difficulties, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility and will particularly risky aspects be managed?	5
Did the proposal specify the resources needed for this project (equipment, materials, etc.) and indicate their availability?	5
Is the joint work plan executable and realistic? Does it include approaches to resolving barriers or technical difficulties?	5
Did the investigators convey through their biographical sketches that they have appropriate experience and training; have they demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have advanced their field(s)?	5
Did the proposal address priority areas of funding?	Pass / Fail
Budget (Attachment B)	Pass / Fail
Budget Justification	Pass / Fail
UTSA Awardee Requirements (Attachment C)	Pass / Fail
SwRI Awardee Requirements (Attachment D)	Pass / Fail
Total Points Possible	100

GRANT ADMINISTRATION

Each PI (applicant) is responsible for the administration of grant funds within their respective institutions' rules and regulations. In particular, each PI must be certain that over-expenditures do not occur and that all funds are fully expended according to institutional programmatic deadlines. All work must be completed within the performance period.

INTERIM & FINAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

A Project Update Meeting will be requested by the UTSA VPREDKE and SwRI EVP & COO. Each PI (applicant) is responsible for submitting a Final Grant Report per the program timeline. Awardees will be provided final reporting instructions prior to the end of their project.

Extramural Grant Submission Required

Awardees must produce a new proposal for extramural funding as part of the final reporting requirements within one year of completion of the project. In exceptional cases, where seed funding may prove the project non-competitive, a waiver of the extramural proposal requirement can be requested from the UTSA VPREDKE and SwRI EVP & COO. If neither an extramural proposal nor waiver is submitted, no new Connect research funds will be made available to the PI (applicant) or Co-PIs (co-applicants) from either institution until an extramural proposal or waiver is submitted. **The PIs must submit a report describing the extramural proposal submission details by September 30, 2023.**

CONTACT INFORMATION

Liana Ryan
Director, Strategic Research Initiatives
The University of Texas at San Antonio
Phone: (210) 458-7339
Email: Liana.Ryan@utsa.edu

Janice Dean
Program Director
Southwest Research Institute
Phone: (210) 522-5180
Email: Janice.Dean@swri.org

UTSA REQUIREMENTS

Proposal Submission Instructions

There is a two-part routing and submission process for this opportunity.

1. Route application through a Research Service Center (RSC), utilizing the UTSA Routing and Cayuse systems. This benefits UTSA PIs and Co-PIs, as it allows this activity to be tracked within REDKE proposal and award dashboards. Contact your respective [Research Service Center \(RSC\)](#) to complete [Intake Form](#) at the start of proposal development to initiate RSC Coordination
2. Submit application through REDKE's [InfoReady site](#) by 5pm CST on March 31, 2021. *InfoReady applicant guide with video available [here](#).*

UTSA PI Eligibility & Application Limits

- PIs and Co-PIs must be full-time, tenure track or tenured faculty at UTSA in residence at the time of application.
- A faculty member may be designated as PI (primary applicant) on only one proposal each application cycle. However, an individual may serve in a Co-PI or other collaborative role on more than one application each cycle.
- It is the PI's responsibility to ensure all team members are eligible and not exceeding application limitations.
- Faculty who have any outstanding reports under previously funded REDKE awards are ineligible.
- Applicants submitting a proposal closely related to a project previously funded by the Connect Program must demonstrate that the new application is substantially different from the prior award.

UTSA Budget Considerations

Funds can be used for the following:

- Salaries and/or wages for faculty, postdoctoral fellows, graduate and undergraduate students. This program is exempt from the 1% effort requirement in UTSA's HOP. However, if a faculty member does request funded effort, each faculty member is limited to no more than 1 summer month of effort. This limitation is in place to encourage increased student support. *For most T/TT faculty, 1 summer month is the equivalent of 1/9th of your base annual academic salary contract amount.* [Fringe benefits](#) are paid centrally and should be excluded from the budget worksheet.
- Materials and supplies (any item with a cost of less than \$5,000/unit; must be justified as needed for project success)
- Expenses for field work, data collection, archival research, training, educational purposes and/or presentations on research, creative or scholarly activities directly related to the proposed project
- Consultant fees
- Contracts for activities outside of UTSA (must be clearly and convincingly described as necessary for successful execution of the proposed project)
- Domestic travel (data collection, conference presentation, meeting with a collaborator). Travel must adhere to [UTSA Financial Management Operational Guidelines](#) and [GSA per diem rates](#).

- If faculty summer salary is proposed, identify that separately from the regular labor proposed.

Funds **cannot** be used for the following:

- Fringe benefits
- Equipment (unit cost of \$5,000 and useable life of greater than one year)
- International travel
- Non-UTSA employee travel
- Stipends, scholarships and/or tuition
- Indirect costs (F&A) costs
- Payment of salaries to non-UTSA personnel
- Refreshments. Includes food/refreshments for participants, business meals. Excludes meals while on travel.
- Hosting conferences, workshops or seminars
- Travel to visit program officer

Budget Justification Requirements

- In addition to providing details for each line item, please provide detailed calculations for how you arrived at totals/estimates, and note whether funds will be expensed during the academic year (October – May), summer (June – July), or both.
- Also, if additional resources are available to support this project through other sources, the budget justification should include a list of these resources, noting when the resource will be available and who it will be provided by. Examples include lab or studio time, equipment, computer resources, and research assistantships made available through a department, as well as support obtained from external sources.

UTSA Awardee Requirements (Attachment C)

Each UTSA PI (applicant) and Co-PI (co-applicant) must have this document signed by their Department Chair, acknowledging that they have also read all responsibilities and obligations of the applicant, their Department, and the respective institution.

SwRI REQUIREMENTS

SwRI policies for proposing and executing internal research projects are described in SwRI's internal *OPP* and *IR&D Program Guidelines for Projects*.

Proposal Submission Instructions

UTSA will be the lead institution for collection and administration of this grant program. Their system for receiving the final proposal is called InfoReady; however, this system does not levy any additional requirements on SwRI.

SwRI PI Eligibility

The PI(s) from SwRI must be a full-time employee.

SwRI Budget Considerations

Acceptable expenditures of SwRI's internal research funds are described in the *IR&D Program Descriptions and Guidelines for Applicants*, which is available to SwRI staff.

Directions for generating a formal IR&D cost proposal are in the *SwRI Internal Guidelines for Connect Proposals*.

SwRI Awardee Requirements (Attachment D)

Each SwRI PI must have this document signed per Division or *OPP* approval policies.

Project Information

Project Name:	
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Name of <u>UTSA</u> Principal Investigator (PI):	
Phone Number:	
Email Address:	
PI College, Department, and Department ID:	
Have you previously received an INTRA, GREAT, Connect, or SALSI grant? _____ Yes _____ No	
If yes, Type: _____ Date: _____ Amount: _____	
Project Title: _____	

Name of <u>UTSA</u> Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI):	
Phone Number:	
Email Address:	
Co-PI College and Department:	
Have you previously received an INTRA, GREAT, Connect, T2, or SALSI grant? ____ Yes ____ No	
If yes, Type: _____ Date: _____ Amount: _____	
Project Title: _____	

Name of <u>SwRI</u> Principal Investigator (PI):	
Phone Number:	
Email Address:	
PI Division and Department:	

Does this project require human subjects, vertebrate animals, and/or biohazardous materials?

_____ Yes _____ No



Abstract (400 words or less)

A budget justification (not to exceed two pages) must also be submitted describing each of the proposed line item expenditures for both institutions.

UTSA Budget	
1. Staff Salaries:	\$
2. Wages:	\$
3. Faculty Salaries	\$
4. Equipment:	\$
5. Travel (Domestic only):	\$
6. Participant Support Costs:	\$
7. Material and Supplies:	\$
8. Other Direct Cost:	\$
Total <u>UTSA</u> Request:	\$

SwRI Budget	
1. Total Proposed Labor Cost:	\$
2. Equipment:	\$
3. Travel (Foreign or Domestic):	\$
4. Materials and Supplies:	\$
5. Services and/or Other Direct Costs:	\$
Total <u>SwRI</u> Request:	\$

If this research proposal is funded, I agree that my acceptance obligates me to:

1. Maintain program eligibility throughout the award/performance period, including residence and employment with UTSA. If there is any change in employment or residency status, the PI and/or their direct supervisor (department chair or dean) must notify REDKE staff at seedgrants@utsa.edu.
2. Include the following acknowledgement on all publications resulting from this grant award.

"This project was funded (fully or in-part) by The University of Texas at San Antonio, Office of the Vice President for Research, Economic Development, and Knowledge Enterprise and Southwest Research Institute."

3. If human subjects, animals, or biohazardous materials will be utilized in the research, protocols to the UTSA Institutional Review Board ([IRB](#)), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee ([IACUC](#)), or Institutional Biosafety Committee ([IBC](#)) must be approved prior to funds being released.
4. Submit at least one extramural proposal for funding to support the future progress of the project, within one year of the completion of the **Connect Grant**.
5. Adhere to the assigned **Connect Grant** timeline:
October 1, 2021 – UTSA Grant Performance Period Begins (Funds Available)
March 1-15, 2022 – Project Update Meeting Requested by UTSA and SwRI
August 1, 2022 – All UTSA Funds Must Be Spent or Encumbered
August 31, 2022 – UTSA Grant Performance Period Ends
September 30, 2022 – Final Project Report Due
September 30, 2023 – Extramural Proposal Submission Due
6. Respond to all inquiries and communications from the Office of the Vice President for Research, Economic, and Knowledge Enterprise related to the **Connect** funded project.
7. Participate as a reviewer on the Seed Grant Review Committee(s) during award period.

Principal Investigator (PI)

Signature:	
Project Name:	
Date:	

PI Supervisor – I agree with PI's obligation & responsibilities for this funding opportunity.

Approved By:	
Signature:	
Date:	

If this research proposal is funded, I agree that my acceptance obligates me to:

1. Include the following acknowledgement on all publications resulting from this grant award.

"This project was funded (fully or in-part) by The University of Texas at San Antonio, Office of the Vice President for Research, Economic Development, and Knowledge Enterprise and Southwest Research Institute."

2. Submit at least one extramural proposal for funding to support the future progress of the project, within one year of the completion of the **Connect Grant**.
3. Adhere to the assigned **Connect Grant** timeline:
 - October 1, 2021** – SwRI Grant Performance Period Begins (Funds Available)
 - March 1-15, 2022** – Project Update Meeting Requested by UTSA and SwRI
 - September 30, 2022** – SwRI Grant Performance Period Ends
 - September 30, 2022** – Final Project Report Due
 - September 30, 2023** – Extramural Proposal Submission Due
4. Comply with SwRI policies for proposing and executing internal research projects as described in SwRI's internal *OPP* and *IR&D Program Guidelines for Projects*.

Signature:	
Project Name:	
Date:	

SwRI Proposal Number:	
Approved By:	
<i>(Per Division or OPP approval policies)</i>	
Signature of Approval:	