

**Request for Proposals  
2026-2027 Signature Research Initiatives  
Research Informed Civic Engagement**

**Preliminary Proposals Due** (required): September 26, 2025 (due by 12 noon Eastern)

*Preliminary Proposal Submission Form:*

[https://american.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_5uWkBsmRjbhA46O](https://american.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uWkBsmRjbhA46O)

**Full Proposals Due** (by invitation): November 7, 2025 (due by 12 noon Eastern)

**Finalist Presentations** (by invitation): January 8, 2026 (in-person time TBC)

Questions? See the below FAQs or contact [TRAC@american.edu](mailto:TRAC@american.edu).

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## Background & Purpose

Society’s grand challenges require grand action. As a community of changemakers, American University is committed to addressing society’s challenges through civic engagement that is informed by research and scholarly inquiry. At American University, we have a long history of producing and applying research to advance positive impact in our civic life by working together to contribute to the broader health of our society. **Our zone of clear distinction is enabling research that supports evidence-driven policies and practices in both public and private sectors for positive societal and economic impact.**

This request for proposals launches the [Signature Research Initiative \(SRI\) Program](#) 2026-2027 Cohort selection process. These SRI projects will align with President Alger’s commitment to advancing Research Informed Civic Engagement (RICE) through **research translation for societal and economic impact**, the focus of our National Science

Foundation (NSF)-funded Translating [Research into Action Center \(TRAC\)](#), housed in the AU Office of Research as the newest university-wide center. **Proposals for this SRI Cohort** are welcomed from **all disciplines** and the projects selected will further university efforts to mobilize institution-wide research activity with specific emphasis on strengthening AU's position as **a leader in translating research into action for societal and economic impact**.

### ***What is Research Translation?***

The NSF Accelerating Research Translation (ART) program defines research translation as a process of “advancing discoveries made while conducting academic research into tangible solutions that benefit the public. This could shape research processes, such as answering decision-makers’ questions, or the communication of findings, such as collaboration on problem solving using existing evidence” ([NSF ART](#)). Research translation activities range from those that involve potential end-users in the initial research design and throughout the research process, to those that focus primarily on translating research that has already been completed. The end users of the research can include policymakers at multiple levels of government, non-governmental actors, community associations, private companies, or other actors whose engagement will benefit society and the economy.

## Summary of Program Requirements

**Projects selected for the 2026-2027 SRI Cohort** will further university efforts to mobilize institution-wide research activity with specific emphasis on strengthening AU's position as a leader in translating research into action for societal and economic impact. **Successful applications** will describe how the seed funding will support translation efforts in at least one of three ways: expanding current translation activities, enabling planned translation activities, or supporting researchers with completed basic research projects who are interested in translating their research into practice but need support.

### **Deliverables**

A final report will be required of all awardees and must be submitted to TRAC within thirty (30) days of the project end date. In addition, periodic tangible deliverables are also required, such as quarterly reports (presentations) to TRAC, a public interest article on projects activities or impact, data reports, demonstration of outcomes, etc. Final reports should clearly address specific aims/objectives, timeline, and deliverables achieved.

### **Award Information**

- **Estimated Number of Awards:** 3
- **Duration:** Up to 24 months (depending on project goals and planned activity)

- **Anticipated funding for each project:** \$15,000 - \$75,000.

The number of awards and average award size/duration are subject to the availability of funds.

## Eligibility and Research Requirements

**Who May Serve as PI:** Lead applicants must be a full-time faculty member (term, tenure track, continuing appointment, library continuing appointment) at the time of application and the time of project launch.

**Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or co-PI:** A faculty member may serve on the leadership team of, at most, two applications.

**Foundational Research Requirement:** The project must be based around foundational research (*content to be translated*).

- If the aim is to translate completed foundational research, then this research must be completed before the project start date of February 1, 2026. The research must have been conducted by a member of the research team.
- If the aim of the project is to support a [research-policy-partnership](#) that will co-produce research, then the project plan must include an indication of how the initial research will be conducted **and** translated during the project time period.

## Proposal Preparation Instructions

- [Preliminary Proposals](#): Submission of a preliminary proposal is required.
- Full Proposals: Full proposals will be by invitation.

### **Submission Format Instructions for all proposals (preliminary and full)**

- Use 12-point font, single-spacing, and 1-inch margins for all written documents.
- Submit a single pdf document that includes narrative and appendices as one combined document, file name named “**2025 SRI RICE Proposal-[Lead Applicant first and last name]**”
- Submit applications via [Qualtrics](#) in advance of the deadline (Preliminary Proposals: September 26, 2025 12 noon Eastern. Full Proposals: November 7, 2025 by 12 noon Eastern).
- **No late applications will be accepted.**

### **Budgetary Information**

- Projects will receive seed funding to enable faculty efforts to translate research into broader impact.
- Proposed budgets will range between \$15,000-\$75,000.
- Budget requests may only include translation-related activities. These activities may include workshops, training, services, process implementation, project monitoring and evaluation, community engagement, patents, sustainable partnerships, and related efforts (this is not an exhaustive list of activities). Preliminary proposals must include a summary budget with justification. Full proposals must include the AU budget template along with budget justification.

## Submission Process

The SRI RICE cohort submission and selection process includes three phases: preliminary proposal (open call), full proposal (by invitation), and finalist presentations (by invitation).

### Phase 1 – Preliminary Proposal

Preliminary proposals will consist of a brief [Qualtrics form](#) and a 2-3-page white paper. ([Preview the Qualtrics form here.](#)) The white paper should include the following:

- Research Overview:** Provide a brief overview of the foundational research to be translated (background with support literature, research question(s), methods, results (if applicable), status (completed with date, in-progress), sponsor (if applicable), and collaborators (if applicable).
- Research Translation:** Describe the **intended community** for your proposed research translation. Indicate who they are and what evidence exists that they need and are interested in engaging with the proposed research. Describe the research team's prior relationship with this community (if applicable). Describe the **proposed translation activities** and discuss why these activities have the potential to generate significant **societal and/or economic impact**. Briefly describe how you will **define and measure the impact and success** of your research translation. Briefly share how your research translation aligns with AU's vision for inclusive excellence.
- Capacity:** Discuss the lead AU participants – who will lead the research translation effort and their qualifications? If this is a team, do you have a history or plan for collaboration? Will any students be involved? Discuss any partners or collaborators outside the university (if applicable). Summarize any existing resources (financial or other) for supporting the research translation (if applicable).
- Timeline and Budget:** Summarize proposed project timeline of key milestones and a brief budget justification. (a completed budget template is not required in the preliminary proposal phase).

## Phase 2 – Full Proposal (*By Invitation*)

Applicants invited to submit a full proposal will be notified via email to the lead applicant.

Full proposals will include a proposal summary, an expanded treatment of the sections briefly outlined in the preliminary proposal, and the appendices described below. Please note the page length recommendations:

**Proposal Summary (1 page maximum)**

**Project Description (5 page maximum)**

- A) **Research Overview:** Provide a brief overview of the foundational research to be translated (background with support literature, research question(s), methods, results (if applicable), status (completed with date, in-progress), sponsor (if applicable), and collaborators (if applicable).
- E) **Research Translation:** Describe the **intended community** for your proposed research translation. Indicate who they are and what evidence exists that they need and are interested in engaging with the proposed research. Describe the research team's prior relationship with this community (if applicable). Describe the **proposed translation activities** and discuss why these activities have the potential to generate significant **societal and/or economic impact**. Describe your plan to assess the efficacy of the research translation activities. How will you define success? How will you collect information on the relationship between your activities and outcomes? How will you know when your proposed translation is complete? Share how your research translation aligns with AU's vision for inclusive excellence.
- F) **Capacity:** Discuss the lead AU participants – who will lead the research translation effort and their qualifications? If this is a team, do you have a history or plan for collaboration? Will any students be involved? Discuss any partners or collaborators outside the university (if applicable). Summarize any existing resources (financial or other) for supporting the research translation (if applicable).
- G) **Budget:** Provide a detailed budget narrative justification supporting all line-item budget requests on the AU budget template (attach a completed AU budget template as an appendix).

## Phase 3 – Finalist Presentations (*By Invitation*)

Projects selected as SRI RICE Cohort finalists will be invited to brief their proposed project to the TRAC leadership team and the SRI RICE selection committee. Each 1-hour briefing will be held in-person (on campus) and will be open to the public. Finalists will receive a briefing template and specific instructions upon notification of their selection. Final slides will be due to the committee on January 7, 2026, at 5pm Eastern. Presentations will be scheduled in-person on January 8, 2026. Time and specific location TBD.

## Selection of Full Proposals

Members of the TRAC leadership team will review the preliminary proposals and select the

projects invited to submit full proposals. The TRAC leadership team includes Rachel Borchardt, Raychelle Burks, Diana Burley, Susanna Campbell, Jordan Tama, and Bei Xiao. The number of proposals advanced to the full proposal round will be determined based on the pool of applicants, proposed project duration and funding requests, and the availability of funds.

### **Selection of Finalists**

The TRAC leadership team will seat the SRI RICE selection advisory committee to support the review of full proposals and recommend finalists to the TRAC leadership team. The selection advisory committee will include representatives from each academic unit who have expertise and experience in research translation and the TRAC leadership team will augment the committee roster as appropriate should additional expertise or insights be required to make final cohort selections. The committee will offer advice and feedback on finalists to the TRAC leadership team. The TRAC leadership team will collaborate with the Vice Provost for Research and Innovation (VPRI) to make finalist selections. The number of finalists is to be determined based on the applicant pool, proposed project duration, funding requests, and the availability of funds.

### **Selection of SRI RICE Cohort**

The VPRI will make final selections of the SRI RICE Cohort in collaboration with the TRAC leadership team and advisory selection committee. The number of SRI RICE Cohort members is to be determined based on the pool of applicants, proposed project duration and funding requests, and the availability of funds.

## **Important Dates**

### **Information Session (Via Zoom)**

September 3, 2025 1:00-2:00PM. Register here: <https://american.zoom.us/j/97907128105>

### **Office Hours (Via Zoom)**

October 15, 2025 1:00-2:00PM. Join here: : <https://american.zoom.us/j/93829378932>

*Tentative: October 29, 2025 Time TBD. Register here:*

<https://american.zoom.us/j/91759106551>.

**Preliminary proposals due:** September 26, 2025, 12 noon Eastern

**Notifications/Invitations for full proposals:** October 10, 2025

**Full Proposals (by Invitation) due:** November 7, 2025, 12 noon Eastern

**Finalist presentations(in-person):** January 8, 2026

*Slides due 1/7, Live briefings 1/8*

**SRI RICE Cohort Announced:** week of January 19, 2026

**SRI RICE Cohort Start Date:** February 1, 2026

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **How many projects will be supported through this RFP?**

Approximately 3. The final number of projects supported in this cohort will be determined by the pool of finalists, budget and project duration requests.

### **What will happen if the lead PI moves to another institution during the application or project period?**

If the PI moves to another institution during the project period, an alternative lead investigator at the university must be named. Funds must remain within American University for the full project period.

### **Can time (teaching release or summer release) be included in the budget?**

Yes, noting that applicants must specifically outline why that time is necessary to conduct the proposed work. Funds are to go toward translation activity and not general release time.

### **When will the projects be chosen?**

The detailed selection process and important dates are included in the RFP.

### **How many principal participants should be involved in a proposal?**

No set number of participants is required for an SRI RICE proposal. Proposals may include one or more researchers. All proposals should carefully describe why the proposed leadership (individual or team) can lead the effort.

### **Does the competition favor research teams versus solo investigators?**

No. Research teams are not favored over solo investigators. The proposal should address the capacity of the researcher(s) to conduct the proposed project activities.

### **How will the projects be chosen?**

The detailed selection process and important dates are included in the RFP.

### **What is happening to the SRI program, and how does this RFP relate to that program?**

The SRI program is continuing. This RFP for cohort 3 of the SRI program seeks projects that advance Research Informed Civic Engagement (see description in RFP). SRI project cohorts focus on a specific theme based on university priorities and sponsor requirements (when applicable). This cohort is being funded through the NSF-funded Translating Research into Action Center (TRAC), hence the focus on research translation.

**When will SRI program proposals for other project themes be solicited?**

Future RFPs will be released as funding becomes available and the focus of those future opportunities will be driven by university priorities and sponsor requirements (when applicable).

**Where can I find information on the Signature Research Initiative program and the first cohort of SRI projects?**

Information on the first cohort of SRI projects is available on the SRI Program [website](#). Information on research translation cohorts are available on the TRAC website.

**Can I translate research that was not conducted by me or a member of my research team?**

This RFP seeks to support the translation of YOUR research. Future opportunities may be open for the translation of research conducted by others, but not in this round.

**Is cross-disciplinary research required?**

No. Research based on any single discipline or combination of disciplines is allowable.

**I am interested in applying but do not know enough about research translation. How can I learn more about research translation?**

The TRAC team will host training opportunities, seminars, and other learning opportunities throughout the year. Watch the [TRAC website](#) and [subscribe](#) to the TRAC newsletter to stay informed.

**How is civic engagement defined and how tightly should the research be tied to civic engagement?**

The concept of civic engagement is broadly defined and will vary based on the type of research to be translated and the translation activities proposed. While the cohort will place special emphasis on projects with a civic engagement lens, research translation proposals that demonstrate positive societal or economic impact from any discipline are welcome.

**Can a Center apply?**

Yes, as long as the lead investigator meets the eligibility requirements.

**What is the ideal scale of societal and economic impact?**

The scale of societal and economic impact will vary based on the audience and proposed translation activity(ies). The scale of impact should align with the project timeline and budget request.

**How can I get additional questions answered?**

The TRAC team will host several information sessions and open office hours to answer questions. Please review the schedule provided in the RFP list of important dates.