THE 2024-2025 RESEARCH SUPPORT PROGRAM (RSP)

The Research Support Program is a strategically focused investment strategy that provides seed funding to promote promising and impactful new lines of research for early-stage investigators, faculty needing to strengthen their funding portfolios or faculty pivoting to a new research area. The program emphasizes the growth of interdisciplinary teams to build the foundations of science, to overcome scientific and societal challenges, and to promote and enhance the quality of life and well-being of individuals, groups, and communities. The RSP places a strong emphasis on building capacity for research efforts with the potential to attract and sustain extramural funding.

The RSP builds on faculty expertise, stimulates interdisciplinary collaborations, and strengthens seed research activities. Research activities supported by the RSP will enhance the visibility and recognition of Auburn University as well as have a strong potential to attract extramural funding for sustained research efforts. Investing in the RSP supports the university's strategic plan by elevating impactful research, investing in outstanding people who advance the university's mission, and providing an exceptional student experience.

Program Priorities:
This program is intended to foster the development and growth of innovative, transformational, and sustainable research activities. Priority will be given to -

- Faculty with limited current and cumulative funding or faculty pivoting to a new research area
- Projects with the ability to attract extramural funding for sustained research efforts (*The researcher should be prepared to provide a detailed plan for pursuing an external funding opportunity related to this work*.)
- Faculty working collaboratively in cross-disciplinary projects

Disciplines:
The RSP funding opportunity includes the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines as well as the medical, life, health, and social sciences. However, collaborative roles with creative work and social impact scholarship disciplines are also strongly encouraged and will take priority in funding decisions.

RSP Return on Investment (ROI):
The primary ROI for projects under the RSP is the submission and award of extramurally funded research proposals. It is anticipated that the extramural funding ROI will be reasonably proportional to the RSP funding provided for projects. It is understood that the extramural funding ROI may not be fully realized within the performance period of funded projects.

Establishing Auburn University as a prominent research institution with faculty who are recognized leaders in various research fields is a significant ROI.

Other ROI elements might include, but are not limited to:
- Publications and significant presentations
- Technology transfer/patents
- Publicity/visibility of Auburn University in the field of research
- Awards and fellowships related to program of scholarship
- Industry relationships, e.g., sponsored research agreements and collaborative proposals (SBIRs/STTRs)

The impact of the RSP will primarily be measured against key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to extramural funding activity, prominent outcomes (e.g., peer-review publications), and increased visibility and recognition of Auburn as a research institution.

Funded proposals have a performance period of no more than two years. It is the responsibility of the PI to provide an annual report (form-based), and a final project report.

It is understood that evidence of an ROI is likely to occur within the latter stages of the performance period of the RSP project; however, an ROI seen in the early stages of the performance period is a positive indicator in all project reporting. Awardees will be asked to submit ROI information (i.e., list of publications and extramural grants related to the RSP project) for two years after the final report is submitted, and any future RSP proposal submitted by past awardees will require ROI documentation. This information will help measure ROI and substantiate continued program support.

Principal Investigator Eligibility:

Eligibility follows the [University's Statement of Principal Investigator Eligibility](#).

Each eligible faculty member may serve as a PI on only one grant (CWSIS or RSP) per year but can serve as a Co-I on an unlimited number of grants.

Past-Awarded PIs

A PI cannot submit an additional proposal while leading an ongoing CWSIS or RSP project (e.g., if a PI is leading a two-year CWSIS or RSP grant, the PI cannot apply for another CWSIS or RSP grant in the second year of the existing grant, even if all other requirements are met).

A PI is eligible to apply for an RSP grant during the upcoming funding cycle if:

- The PI has not received a CWSIS or RSP grant within the last three years or
- The PI has received a CWSIS or RSP grant within the last three years, but that project will be concluded by the start of the upcoming funding cycle, and
- The PI has submitted one or more grant proposals to an extramural source(s), developed valuable partnerships, and/or has clear evidence of other forms of ROI resulting from the most recent CWSIS or RSP funded project. Past Awardees should be prepared to submit a detailed description of the ROI activities related to the funded project.

Exceptions or modifications to PI eligibility for a specific project will be determined by reviewing ADRs.

Funding:

The OSVPRED may fund external reviews for up to five (5) proposals from each constituent college that participates in the intramural funding programs (i.e., across RSP and CWSIS combined). In addition, the OSVPRED may fund up to ten (10) proposals from both the RSP Program and the CWSIS Program *in toto*, not per program.

Proposers may request up to $25,000 from the OSVPRED with a 1:1 required matching contribution between the OSVPRED and the College(s)/Department(s). For example, if $25,000 is requested from the OSVPRED, a $25,000 match is required for a proposed total project cost of $50,000.
The requested period of performance may be for up to two years. (Limited no-cost extensions are approved on a case-by-case basis.)

Proposal Preparation:

Auburn University Competition Space (InfoReady) Online Instructions

To apply, go to the Auburn University Competition Space (InfoReady), scroll down, and click on the 2024-2025 RSP Letter of Intent. In the top right column of the page click on "Apply". You will be taken to the Auburn University login screen. First-time users will need to click on "Register" in the lower right corner of the login screen using their Auburn University Login. Once you have set up your account, the application will open. Follow the instructions for completing your application. Using the Save as Draft feature at the bottom of the application allows you to save your application and return to complete it as needed. You must check the Applicant Acknowledgment box at the end of the application every time you save for future input and when you submit. When you are ready to submit, click on "Submit Application" and the routing process will begin. **Please note that once you click submit, no further edits can be made**.

Step One:

Mandatory, non-binding 2024-2025 RSP Letter of Intent (LOI):

- The PI should submit the LOI through the Auburn University Competition Space (InfoReady), no later than 4:45 pm on November 20, 2024
- Scroll down and click on 2024-2025 RSP Letter of Intent
- The LOI information requested is limited to two pages and includes the PI's department, a short description of the proposed project, personnel and college of personnel, and a budget if available.
- The LOI is for informational purposes and is not part of a selection process. PIs will not receive a response to the LOI. Continue in the process of working on the full proposal.

Step Two:

Proposal Requirements

To apply, go to the Auburn University Competition Space (InfoReady), scroll down, and click on the 2024-2025 RSP Funding Program. In the top right column of the page click on "Apply".

Format Requirements

- All Margins – 1 inch
- Font Size – 12 point, Times New Roman
- Single-spaced, 8.5 x 11-inch pages

Proposal Title
A descriptive project title, suitable for publication on our public website

Applicant Details
Name, position, college, and department of all key personnel

Past Awardee Acknowledgement
Are you a past CWSIS/RSP awarded PI? If yes, please indicate the year of your award and project title. Please include details of the Return-on-Investment activities related to the awarded project. List any funding agencies, funding amounts, any prestigious activities associated with the awarded project and any other relevant details you'd like to share.

Cumulative Funding
Please provide a list of your cumulative funding as PI or Co-PI over the past five-year period. List the funding source, project, & project dates for each award.

Compliance
Does your proposal require Compliance Approvals? You will select none or all that apply. (All research must be conducted in compliance with Federal and University Regulations.) Compliance letters and protocols are not needed at the time of proposal submission. However, **funds will not be released for awarded projects until a notice of compliance approval is received** from the Office of Research Compliance.

Previous Submission
Have you previously submitted this proposal (or any portion of this proposal) for Intramural Funding? If "yes", please list the 1.) PI name, 2.) year submitted, 3.) competition name and 4.) year awarded (if applicable). Please provide any relevant details distinguishing this project from the original submission.

Project Abstract
Please provide a 250-word maximum description of the project for a sophisticated lay audience, suitable for publication on our website. The abstract should describe the project's broad significance, the proposed activities, and the project's intended outcomes. If selected for phase two of the competition, the initial abstract will be provided to the external company to initiate their expert reviewer search. External companies will be told that the initial abstract may change during the revision period.

File Upload Requirements:

The following must be uploaded to the online system as a single pdf document with clearly labeled sections. Note: The file must be a flattened pdf, not a pdf portfolio (multi-layered) document since InfoReady cannot read that format.

- **Proposal Narrative:** (6 pages maximum) A descriptive narrative that enables cognizant reviewers to judge the merits of the project using the review criteria listed under the Review Criteria tab. The project narrative page limitation does not include biosketches, budget worksheet, budget justification, current and pending proposals, and references/citations. While these additional items are included in the single pdf along with the project narrative, they may not be used to expand the project narrative page limitations. Proposals should avoid using weblinks or any other external references that expand the project narrative page limits.

- **References/Citations:** (no page limit) Include any relevant citations to published work. It is especially helpful to reference published works of key personnel as related to the proposed project.

- **Detailed Plans/ Capacity for Return on Investment (ROI):** (as appropriate; no page limit) Please describe your plan to pursue external funding opportunities related to this work. This should include one to five examples of the funding agency, solicitation or type of opportunity, amount of funding, etc. Please include other relevant details you'd like to share about your plans and how the RSP program funding would be helpful.

- **The Budget:** (use form provided) A PI may request a maximum of $25,000 with a 1:1 match for a proposed maximum project budget of $50,000. The intent of the program is to allow for budget freedom within regulatory requirements to enable applicants to accomplish their work.
  Allowable Costs: salary, personnel, travel, supplies/activities, equipment, publications, and items normally covered under indirect costs participant costs.
  Unallowable Costs: subawards, the salary of a collaborator at another institution *except as a consultant fee. A consultant fee should be thoroughly justified*.

  - **Budget Justification: (**two-page limit) The budget justification should address, as appropriate, elements such as personnel (inclusive of fringe costs), travel (clearly identifying domestic and/or international), supplies, equipment and/or other allowable costs. Proposals should clearly justify how requested funds will be used to best align the project for success and lead to identified ROIs.
  - **Cost Share:** <u>Applicants who advance to the second phase of the competition (external review) will also need to complete the Cost Share FOP Table requiring ADR Signature(s) of each contributing unit.</u> The form can be sent via email to collect the appropriate information and signatures. Please also provide the ORG #; if awarded, this will be used to create the FOP #.

- **Biosketches/CVs:** (page limit – three pages per key personnel) Each key personnel member of a proposal should submit a three-page Biosketch/CV (SciENcv generated versions allowed). You may use the format prescribed by any federal agency or a listing, not to exceed three pages of educational preparation, positions held, research activity and relevant publications, presentations, etc.

- **Current and Pending Grants/Contracts:** (no page limit) List of all current and pending internal and external grants/contracts and other sources of major support of all key personnel involved in the project, including title, award amount, funding agency, period of performance, and effort allocation. Indicate any grants/contracts related to the proposed project and briefly describe the relationship.

- **Extramural Proposal Reviews:** (as appropriate; no page limit) Proposals requesting support of efforts to strengthen recently submitted, but unfunded, extramural proposals that have received high ranking should provide the official reviews and/or ranking from the extramural program to which it was submitted. The proposal narrative should clearly describe how the identified weaknesses of the unfunded extramural proposal will be addressed.

- **Conflict of Interest:** (use form provided) Each PI (and Co-I) should provide a separate alphabetical list of Conflicts of Interest (internal and external). This information is needed for proper review of your proposal. In lieu of filling out the COI tables on the provided form, a list created from an Excel file or Word document may be used. The respondent's name, role on the project and all the information that is requested on the original COI form should be provided.

Proposal Review and Selection Process:

A two-tiered review and selection mechanism will be used to advance proposals for competition in the RSP. Each college ADR will form a review and selection advisory group (recommended minimum of three members) that will only put forward those proposals that are most likely to be competitive and impactful. This will allow the ADRs to appropriately budget for matching contributions while also minimizing the reviewer burden at the upper (OSVPRED) competition level.

A mix of internal and external cognizant reviewers will be utilized in the RSP proposal selection process. All reviews will be submitted via Auburn University Competition Space (also known as InfoReady). External reviews will only be solicited for proposals down-selected to advance to the upper competition level. Both internal and external reviewers will assess proposals using the Review Criteria (below).

If a collaborative/interdisciplinary proposal spans multiple colleges, the primary college will be determined by the identified corresponding principal investigator of the proposal. The primary ADR may choose to involve ADRs from each represented college of a collaborative/interdisciplinary proposal in the initial review, down-selection process and budgeting of matching contributions. _Please note:_ Proposal reviews will be made available to proposers to aid in enhancing the quality of proposals that will undergo a review(s) from an external reviewer(s), extramural proposal development or subsequent proposals to the RSP if not selected during a given program cycle.

Once a proposal is selected for funding, a single funding account will be established based on the project correspondent's college. All matching funds and OSVPRED funds will be loaded into this account for project activity. All compliance requirements must be met before any project activities may proceed.

The OSVPRED will fund external reviews for up to five (5) proposals from each constituent college that participates in the intramural funding programs (i.e., across RSP and CWSIS combined). In addition, the OSVPRED may fund up to ten (10) proposals from both the RSP Program and the CWSIS Program in toto, not per program.

Review Criteria:

The following review areas will be used by all review teams to evaluate proposals; reviewers are asked to keep the following program goals in mind when reviewing proposals for RSP:

- The Research Support Program (RSP) fosters the development and growth of innovative and transformational research activities.
- The RSP is a strategically focused Auburn University investment strategy that promotes promising and impactful new lines of research as well as the growth of collaborative and/or interdisciplinary teams that are built upon the foundations of science.
- Research activities supported by the RSP will have a strong potential to attract extramural funding for sustained research efforts.

- Investing in the RSP supports the University's strategic plan by elevating research and scholarly impact to address society's critical issues and promote economic development in Alabama and beyond.

Scoring system: 1 is 'poor' or 'very weak' and 5 is 'excellent' or 'very strong'. In general, those with higher aggregate scores (based on the number of items rated) will make it farther in the process.

1. **Scientific / Technical / Creative Merit and/or Social Impact Value of the Project**
Are the project's goals, hypothesis(es), intellectual question(s) or problem the proposer is trying to solve clearly articulated? (i.e., does the proposal clearly describe what is intended by the PI, how the PI intends to reach objectives, and anticipated implications of the project's findings/contributions?) Does the proposed project logically lead to future expanded projects supported by external funding opportunities or valuable partnerships? Is it clear and specific who could benefit and what the impact will be if the project is successful? Is the audience for the proposal clearly identified? Does the audience include professional practitioners in relevant disciplines? Include specific comments on the strengths or weaknesses of the stated project goals.

2. **Appropriateness of the Proposed Method or Approach**
Does the project incorporate methods/an approach appropriate to the goals, objectives, or proposed contribution? Does the proposal suggest modified procedures in response to changing circumstances? Does the project effectively apply its stated methods/approach? Is the proposed analytic strategy appropriate for the aims of the project? Is the proposed solution relevant to/applicable in real-world situations? Will the project fill a potential need or function that is currently unfilled? Include any comments that could help the PI improve the proposal.

3. **Competency of Applicant's Personnel and Appropriateness of the Budget**
Is the budget realistic and commensurate with both the project needs and time frame? Are project team member(s) clearly identified, along with work experience, in the proposal? Does the project's team possess the skills uniquely qualifying them to complete the proposed scope of work?

4. **Detailed Plans/Capacity for Return on Investment (ROI):**
Is the project clearly presented as one that would potentially attract extramural funding and/or a prominent outcome? Is any anticipated extramural funding reasonably proportional to the RSP funding provided for projects? Is the expected outcome one that could raise the visibility of Auburn University as a prominent research university?

5. **Overall Recommendation**
Provide a brief summary of your overall impressions of this proposal. Please comment on the overall competitiveness/relevance of the work and how the work may contribute to the broader field of study.

6. **Should this project be advanced to the next level of review? Yes / No**

Interdisciplinary/Collaborative Proposals that span RSP and Creative Work/Social Impact Disciplines:
Interdisciplinary Research Proposals that connect the Creative Work/Social Impact disciplines with STEM disciplines may fit with either the CWSIS or RSP program areas. Teams developing these types of submissions should determine whether the ROI fits more with CWSIS or with the RSP and submit to the best fitting program area. Interdisciplinary research proposals submitted to the RSP may have funding/resource needs outside of typical RSP proposals. Collaborative teams should consult with the ADRs associated with their colleges for input and guidance.

Step Three:
Applicant Revision Period (2-25-25 – 3-7-25)

Applicants approved for external review will have a one-and-a-half-week window to make any revisions to applications before resubmission and subsequent external review. Applicants will be given a link through InfoReady to Phase Two of the competition; fill out and upload revised documents into InfoReady. **Even if no revisions are made, applicants are still required to re-upload documents into InfoReady**.

Applicants will also provide a one-page summary statement of the revisions made and email to PSFS, ldc0020@auburn.edu, (to be provided to ADR's and OSVPRED, not external reviewers).

Post Award/Follow up:
To provide flexibility, all RSP grants for the approved dollar amount (including cost share) will be fully funded when the account is established and are two years in duration. The PI has the flexibility within the two years to spend the approved funding as appropriate. No cost extensions will only be allowed under extenuating circumstances. It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to provide an annual report (form based), and a final project report.

It is understood that evidence of an ROI is likely to occur within the latter stages of the performance period of the RSP project; however, an ROI seen in the early stages of the performance period is a positive indicator to include in all project reporting. Awardees will be asked to submit ROI information (i.e., list of publications and extramural grants related to the RSP project) for two years after the final report is submitted, and any RSP proposal submitted by past awardees will require ROI documentation. This information will help measure ROI and substantiate continued program support.