INTRODUCTION
Ball State University's Internal Grants Program was created in 1965 to provide funding to faculty and students to support and develop projects in the areas of research and creative endeavors.

As the primary purpose of this program is to provide seed money for research findings that will lead to further support from external funding agencies, all awardees are expected to prepare and submit a proposal to an external funding agency that is related to their ASPiRE grant at or exceeding the ASPiRE award amount within two years of receiving the ASPiRE grant.

ELIGIBILITY / DEFINITION OF JUNIOR FACULTY
For the purposes of this program, Junior Faculty are defined as:

Faculty members in their first five years of receiving a tenure-track appointment. Faculty not considered Junior Faculty as defined above are not eligible to be co-applicants on a proposal submitted to the Junior Faculty competition; however, non-Junior Faculty can be used as mentors and advisors during the proposed project.

It is recommended that alpha year faculty members wait until years 2-5 to apply, unless he/she has experience as a lead PI on grants.

A Junior Faculty award will be granted only once during the five year period. Junior Faculty serving as a co-applicant should consider this award their only opportunity to receive this award. Junior Faculty are eligible for some other ASPiRE programs (not concurrently with Start-up or Advance/Create) and are not limited to submitting proposals only to the Junior Faculty competition.

RESEARCH PROGRAM DESCRIPTION
In general, projects submitted to the research competition involve a process of study or discovery that will produce new insights, theories, or applications within the discipline and/or society. Project outcomes will result in the submission of an external grant proposal that will sustain and further advance the research endeavors supported through this program. Results of the research should also be worthy of submission for publication in refereed journals and foster opportunities for commercialization where applicable.
Projects directed toward strengthening undergraduate university curricula, courses, or teaching skills, should be submitted to the Creative Teaching Program, which is administered through the Office of Educational Excellence (OEE).

**AWARD PERIOD:**
The Project Period is up to twelve months, will begin May 1 and will conclude April 30th the following year. Awarded funds cannot be used outside of the Project Period. Any remaining funds will be returned to the program.

**EXTERNAL FUNDING REQUIREMENTS**
The intended impact of an ASPiRE grant is to generate external proposals that will sustain, and further advance research endeavors initially funded through the program. As such, recipients of ASPIRE Faculty Research Grants are expected to submit an external grant proposal no later than 12 months after the end of their Aspire award period. Please note: External grants submitted prior to or concurrent to receipt of the ASPIRE award will not count towards satisfying the external funding requirement. Awardees will also be asked to meet with their respective Proposal Manager towards the end of their award period.

Applicants are advised to carefully select external funding sources whose funding priorities are similar to their own research interests. Ball State offers many resources to aid in the search for external funding opportunities. Applicants are encouraged to utilize these resources and to contact their Proposal Manager in the Sponsored Projects Administration for additional assistance in locating appropriate external grant opportunities.

**PRE-SUBMISSION REVIEW**
ASPiRE funding can be the first encounter with grantsmanship for many junior faculty members; as such, we require a pre-submission review with the Sponsored Projects Administration. The purpose of this is twofold: first, a one-time pre-submission review will ensure that your proposal adheres to the guidelines and will allow you to garner feedback from your Proposal Manager in order to improve your proposal before it is presented for committee review; second, this process will acquaint you with our office and our proposal development services for subsequent external grants.

Please send an email containing your comprehensive draft proposal including all documents as described on pages 3-5 of this document to your Proposal Manager no later than the pre-submission deadline listed on the website. This will provide the time needed for a thorough review and allow you to make the suggested changes to improve the proposal prior to submission to the ASPIRE program deadline.

In addition, if the proposal is a revised version of a previously unfunded application, please also provide a copy of the previous proposal and the reviewers’ critiques to your Proposal Manager.

Draft proposals are due, by email, to your PM no later than 11:59 pm of the pre-submission deadline date listed on the website. Late applications for the pre-submission deadline will disqualify the faculty member from applying during the current round.
GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPOSALS

Proposals are due no later than 11:59 pm on the submission deadline date listed on the website. Proposals must be submitted via Submittable. PLEASE NOTE: Late applications, those missing information, or not adhering to the guidelines, will be returned without review, no exceptions.

A complete submission includes Submittable application, proposal narrative (completed according to program guidelines), budget and budget narrative, plus the required appendices.

PROPOSAL COMPONENTS

Because the University Research Committee is comprised of members from a variety of disciplines, all proposals should be written in clear, non-technical language readily understood by an educated layperson.

- PROPOSAL NARRATIVE (limited to 5 double-spaced pages) Double-space the text using no smaller than a size 11 font with one inch margins, New Times Roman or Arial, suggested type font. Label the required sections as stated below and address each topic completely but concisely.

  1. Executive summary - Provide a brief summary of the project, not exceeding 300 words. The summary should be a self-contained description of the activities that will result if the proposal is funded. As such, the summary should include a statement of objectives, a description of the methods that will be employed and an explanation of how the project will impact the applicant, the discipline, and society. The summary should be written in language understandable to non-experts; jargon and overly specialized technical language should be avoided.

  2. Background information - History and the current status of research in this area in the form of a literature review.

  3. Goals, objectives, and significance - A discussion of the scope of the project, focusing on the overall goals and specific objectives of the research. This should include a discussion on the anticipated impact in the field, anticipated scholarly outputs that will result from funding, as well as the impact on one’s own research agenda. Material should be organized in such a way that a clear outcome of the project is readily discernable.

  4. External funding plans - Identification of external sponsor(s) and specific grant program(s) (including links to program guidelines) targeted for future submission. It is essential to explain how internal funding from this project will lead to improved chances of obtaining external funding. Furthermore, applicants are highly encouraged to contact the Program Officer affiliated with the external grant program and initiate a conversation to determine if the targeted program is a suitable match for the faculty member’s proposed research. Please note: applicants who include such correspondences from their program officers will receive higher consideration than those without such documentation.

  5. Research Methods & Timeline - An identification of research questions and a detailed description of the proposed project. Describe in detail the methods, procedures, steps or activities to be undertaken, and a timetable for completing the work. Within the project timeline applicants should also address the proposal development timeline for external proposal
submission(s) that will be pursued as a result of this internal funding. Overall, the goal of the research methods section is to outline what will take place during the course of the research and how the project will lead to an outcome. The research methodology description should provide a reader with a clear mental picture of the proposed work. *It is often advisable for a colleague in another field to review the description of research methods for clarity, feasibility, and viability.*

Regardless of whether the research involves quantitative or qualitative methodology, a good description contains the following information:

- What research question(s) will the data propose to answer, or how will the defined inquiry be described?
- How will the data be collected and analyzed?
- If human subjects are to be involved, how will they be selected and why?
- What is the expected outcome or what further research questions may be prompted by the results?

6. **Means of dissemination or expected outcome** - Plans for disseminating the expected results or the information generated by the project. Please also list any potential Intellectual Property and/or Commercialization opportunities that will result from this proposal.

- **BUDGET**
  
  The goal of the budget section of the proposal is to identify the type and amount of funds required to carry out the project. Total proposal requests *cannot exceed $15,000*, and can include any of the following categories:

  **Summer Stipend**: Provides a stipend of up to $6,000 for a period of 10 weeks. Applicants also have the option of selecting a ½ summer stipend, equivalent to $3,000 for a period of 5 weeks. For a project with multiple recipients, the salary award amount for each awardee is calculated by dividing $6,000 (or $3,000 for a single summer session) by the number of award recipients.

  **Graduate Assistantship**: Supports faculty in research and scholarly studies for which the appointment of a graduate assistant will advance the outcome of the project. This award normally provides 15% of the student’s previous academic year stipend and is awarded summer term only (either first or second summer session). *Submissions should not identify an individual student by name at the time of application. This information will be requested upon the granting of an award.*

  **Student Requirements:**
  - The student must be an active partner in the project and must work a minimum of 20 hours per week. The award is not meant for routine technical, secretarial or administrative support.
  - The student must be an enrolled graduate student in good academic standing and registered for graduate credit during the assistantship period.

  **Supplemental Assigned Time**: Provides between $3,500 - $5,000 to the applicant's department for **one-course buy-out** to support research or a project of interest to a department. These awards will not exceed one award per department, per semester and will not be granted outside of the project period. It is the **PI's responsibility** to secure course release approval from the department chair prior to submitting an ASPIRE application.
Applicants may not request both a full summer stipend ($6,000) and a course release.

Supplies, Equipment, Expenses and Travel (S.E.E.T.): Costs need to be itemized and justified and must follow accepted university accounting policies and procedures.

Category delineation of S.E.E.T. funds are:

- **Hourly Student Personnel** – hourly wages for undergraduate or graduate student assistants throughout the project period.
- **Contractual**—Non-BSU personnel wages or consultant fees; external agreements (including software licenses)
- **Supplies, Materials, Minor Equipment**—Any supplies needed to complete the project, including office supplies, postage, software, laboratory supplies, books, etc.
- **Travel**—Expenses incurred during travelling or those directly related to travel: Airfare, lodging, mileage, per diem, etc.
- **Participant Stipend**—Stipend to pay research subjects or project participants. **PLEASE NOTE:** Participant Incentives need to be in accord with the Controller's Office policy on awards, prizes, and stipends. Per this policy, Ball State faculty and staff are not eligible to serve as paid participants on Aspire-funded projects.

**BUDGET NARRATIVE**
Limited to **1 Double-space page**, serves as a text description of items denoted in the Budget prepared in *Submittable*. Do not include a table within the budget narrative. Use the budget narrative to:

- Give a detailed explanation of the amounts listed in the Budget.
- Relate budget categories to project objectives.
- Name the source of the contribution for the "Other" column (e.g. Department, College, External Grant, out of pocket costs)
- Discuss how the provision of time for faculty or graduate students will further the successful outcome of the project.

In addition:
- All budget items that are requested must conform to University accounting policies and procedures.
- **ASPiRE funds may not be used to pay non-PI/Co-PI faculty salaries or stipends. This includes the use of internal consultants or other university staff.** Students are paid based upon current University hourly wages, e.g. undergraduates are restricted to $7.25/hour.
- All equipment, tangible materials, and books purchased on a grant are property of the University.
- The University nepotism policy is applicable to all employees on a grant.

**PROPOSAL ATTACHMENTS**
Please include the following required and optional materials as attachments to your proposal.
• Required:
  o Citation References (1 page maximum; use the format that is standard for publishing in your field.).
  o Letter of support from your department chair (preferably submitted as a pdf document on department letterhead and signed by chair).
  o Short Curriculum Vitae for applicants and co-applicants (limited to three pages per applicant) detailing applicant qualifications, relevant publications, and external funding submitted during the prior three years, including: title of project, awarding agency, submission date, funding status, and amount.

• Optional:
  o If available at the time of application, include approved IRB or IACUC letter.
  o Additional letter(s) of support from faculty collaborators or other agencies. (It is recommended that a letter of support be obtained if an external institution is involved in any capacity.)
  o Glossary of Terms (1 page maximum). It is recommended that even though your proposal should be written for the educated lay person, it may be beneficial to the reviewer to refer to a glossary of terms used in the narrative or methodology.
  o Correspondences from external program officers discussing the appropriateness of the proposed proposal (highly recommended).
  o Appendix of related materials (e.g. survey questions, graphs, photographs, etc.).
  o Examples of previously published material (only if relevant to the proposed project).

SUBMISSION
A complete proposal submission includes:

✓ Submittable Portal use only
✓ Proposal narrative
✓ Budget form (part of Submittable procedure)
✓ Budget narrative
✓ Required appendices (curriculum vitae, literature references, letter of support) and optional appendices. These attachments should be clearly labeled.

The submission deadline is noted for each grant on the SPA website; all materials are due by 11:59 p.m. that day.

REVIEW PROCESS
The University Research Committee reviews the proposals submitted to the research program. The University Research Committee is divided into three subcommittees according to discipline:

  Subcommittee #1: Humanities, Arts, Music, and Architecture
  Subcommittee #2: Education, Business, and Social Sciences
  Subcommittee #3: Mathematical, Biological, Physical, Health & Applied Sciences

All proposals submitted will undergo the same review process, which includes:
• Pre-Submission review by SPA Proposal Manager for:
Adherence to proposal submission guidelines (Proposals that do not adhere to the directions as stipulated by these guidelines will not be eligible to go forward for committee review).

- Proposal Narrative Review
- Budget and Budget Narrative Review

Administrative review by SPA during final submission, for:

- Adherence to guidelines, eligibility, including previous internal and external awards documentation, compliance, etc.

Subcommittee Review by the subcommittee selected by the applicant

Funding Recommendation – Subcommittees make suggestions for funding to the Director of SPA, who then makes the final funding decisions based on availability of funds.

REVIEW CRITERIA FOR RESEARCH COMPETITIONS

All proposals are reviewed by the appropriate university research subcommittee. Proposals are scored out of a possible 40 points (see below for exact criteria and point weighting).

**External Funding (maximum of 10 points)**

Applicants are advised to spend significant detail outlining their external funding plans to warrant receipt of the ten points allocated to this section of their proposal. In particular, applicants are expected to identify funding agencies and specific grant programs targeted for future submission, including links to program guidelines. It is essential to explain how internal funding from this project will lead to improved chances of obtaining external funding. Furthermore, applicants are encouraged to contact the Program Officer affiliated with the external grant program and initiate a conversation to determine if the targeted program is a suitable match for the faculty member’s proposed research. Please note: applicants who include such correspondences from their program officers will receive higher consideration than those without such documentation.

**Proposal Background and Significance of Project (maximum of 10 points)**

- Literature review
- Goal of proposal clearly stated
- Benefits to discipline and/or society
- Anticipated Impact on scholarship, teaching or learning

**Research Methods (maximum of 10 points)**

- Project plan (e.g., development of creative design, or data collection and analytical procedure)
- Feasibility of project within time frame

**Budget Justification (maximum of 5 points)**

- Clear justification of resources and budget
- Adherence to budgeting practices listed in guidelines

**Dissemination (maximum of 5 points)**

- Clear and specific plans for dissemination, publication, commercialization, or presentation
- Appropriate to the field, applicant and/or project
**FINAL REPORT**

A final report detailing the outcomes of the award should be submitted using the Final Report Form, no later than the date indicated on the award letter. Grant recipients failing to submit acceptable final reports will be declared ineligible for further support under programs supervised by the ASpiRE Program. If reports cannot be submitted by the date specified in the program guidelines, the ASpiRE Program Manager will consider written requests for an extension by email to aspire@bsu.edu.