

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The **Connecting through Research Partnerships (Connect)** program, sponsored by the Office of Research 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 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:

- Support the completion of an inter-institutional project, and
- 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 government or 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).

Targeted Research: UTSA and SwRI have agreed on the targeted areas listed below. The proposal must have direct application to solving industrial, governmental, or societal problems.

Biomedicine and Biotechnology	Smart and Secure Manufacturing
Artificial Intelligence / Data Sciences / Analytics	Space Sciences and Technology

II. COLLABORATION REQUIREMENT

Proposals must include at least one UTSA PI and one SwRI PI (minimum 2 team members) as defined by the UTSA and SwRI requirement pages. Both UTSA and SwRI PIs will have equal PI status; however, UTSA PIs will be identified as lead and are responsible for:

- Adhering to the Office of Sponsored Projects 15/5 rule
- Notice of Intent Submissions (InfoReady and UTSA OSP)
- Full Proposal Submission (InfoReady and UTSA OSP)
- Abiding by all UTSA Institutional Policies

Throughout this guidance, items marked with **[UTSA ONLY]** are UTSA-specific and should be completed by the UTSA PI only. Items marked with **[SwRI ONLY]** are SwRI-specific and should be reviewed and completed by the SwRI PI.

Projects may also include (but not fund) other scientific/educational/industrial partners from the south Texas region.

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.

III. 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. There is no co-mingling of funds – UTSA funds the UTSA scope; SwRI funds the SwRI scope. Roll over to the next funding period 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.

IV. PROGRAM TIMELINE

December 4, 2024	Request for Proposals (RFP) Released
January 17, 2025	Seed Grant Workshop and Teaming Lunch (Information Linked Here)
March 12, 2025	Notice of Intent due to InfoReady (by 5:00pm CST)
April 9, 2025	UTSA 15/5 Deadline for Routing Submission
April 16, 2025	Proposals Due through UTSA’s InfoReady system (by 5:00 pm CST)
June 2025	Awards Announced
October 6, 2025	Performance Period Begins (Funds Available)
March 2026	Project Update Meeting
July 1, 2026	UTSA Funds Must Be Spent (Unspent Funds Will Be Swept)
September 30, 2026	Performance Period Ends / Final Project Report Due
September 30, 2027	Deadline for Extramural Funding Submission

V. NOTICE OF INTENT (NOI) INSTRUCTIONS [UTSA ONLY]

The Notice of Intent (NOI) is required to be submitted to the [InfoReady](#) portal by the deadline indicated in the program timeline. Information provided in NOIs will not be considered final and can be revised for full application submission; however, information provided will be used to prepare for review. *Note – This is a notification process that is separate and distinct from a notification to the College Research Administrators for application development and approval prior to submission (described below).*

Submit the NOI through InfoReady ([linked here](#)) by **5pm CST on March 12, 2025.**

NOI – Connect Program requests the following information:

- UTSA PI name, appointment title, email, college, and department
- UTSA Co-PIs name, appointment title, college, and department
- SwRI PI name, email, and division
- SwRI Co-PIs name, email, and division
- Proposed project title
- 3-5 sentence project overview
- 5 keywords related to the scope of the project

VI. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION [UTSA ONLY]

UTSA will be the lead institution for the collection and administration of proposals for this grant program. PIs must submit one combined proposal through the UTSA InfoReady system. The **UTSA PI** (primary applicant) should contact their respective [College Research Administration Team](#) to complete a [Notice to the College Research Concierge Team](#) (first page of Routing Form) at least 15 business days prior to the proposal deadline.

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.

Preferred Upload Method to Minimize Download Errors:

Applications should be uploaded in one standard Adobe PDF binder. Adobe Portfolios should not be used for final submission.

Formatting requirements for items with an asterisk (*) below: single-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font, 1” margins all around. Text in figures, graphs, tables, diagrams, and charts should be no smaller than 10pt Times New Roman font.

Required Proposal Elements	
1. Proposal Information & Abstract	Enter in InfoReady
2. Project Description*	3 pages, including graphics
3. Joint Work Plan*	2 pages, including graphics
4. Plan for Extramural Support*	1 page, including graphics
5. Biographical Sketch	Page limit based on biographical sketch format
6. Budget Summary	Use Attachment A
7. Budget Justification*	2 pages

1. PROPOSAL INFORMATION & ABSTRACT (400 WORD LIMIT)

InfoReady will prompt you to enter proposal information (i.e., PI names, proposal title, priority targeted research area, etc.). All PIs and Co-PIs must be listed in the proposal information section on InfoReady.

InfoReady will prompt you to include a clear executive summary (abstract) that summarizes the essential content of the proposal research effort, including the objectives, benefits, and significance.

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/intellectual 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

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.

This section is expected to contain a mixture of narrative and graphical information. Schedule preferably in a Gantt Chart to aid the evaluators' assessment of the proposed scope, roles, and responsibilities within the team, and collaboration environment.

4. PLAN FOR EXTRAMURAL SUPPORT

Attach a specific plan for pursuit of extramural funding after completion of this project. Submission of at least one extramural proposal is required as part of the grant award terms and must be completed within one year of the completion of the award term.

Your plan for extramural support must include the following:

- *Sponsor/Program*: What extramural funding program(s) do you plan to pursue? List specific program(s), deadlines you will target, and how you will leverage results of this project for external support.
- *Objectives*: What will the extramural proposal seek to accomplish and how is it specifically supported by this project? Describe how this work represents a new area for you and what the potential societal impact is.
- *Reasonable Expectation for Extramural Funding*: What program(s) have you previously received funding from the identified sponsor(s)? List or describe previous experience and/or list any Co-PIs or other mentors with experience that you can leverage.

5. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

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

6. BUDGET SUMMARY

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

7. BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Details for all proposed expenditures must be described in one 2-page budget justification section covering both institutions. For each institution, the budget justification must address each budget line item on Attachment A 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.

VII. PROPOSAL AND AWARDEE REQUIREMENTS [UTSA ONLY]

1. PROPOSAL ROUTING & SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

- Route the application through a [College Research Administration Team](#) using the standard process. Contact your respective [College Research Administration Team](#) to complete a [Notice to the College Research Administration Team](#) (first page of Routing Form) at least 15 business days prior to the proposal deadline.
- Submit application through InfoReady site, as instructed in email notification of advancement, by **5pm CST on April 16, 2025**. *InfoReady applicant guide with video available [here](#).*

2. PI ELIGIBILITY & APPLICATION LIMITS

- PIs (primary applicant) and Co-PIs (co-applicants) must be full-time, tenure track or tenured faculty at UTSA in residence at the time of application and award.
- 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 (co-applicant) 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 identified as PI (primary applicant) or Co-PIs (co-applicants) that have any outstanding reports under previously funded the Office of Research 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.

3. BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

Funds **can** be used for the following:

- Salaries and/or wages for faculty, postdoctoral fellows, graduate, and undergraduate students. Faculty are not required to request funding for their effort. 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)
- Office equipment, including computers or laptops.
- 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

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. Note: While additional resources can be listed, no formal cost-sharing is allowed.

4. 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), and/or summer (June – July).

***NOTE** – If awarded, applicants are unable to reallocate funds without prior approval from the Office of Research. Please contact seedgrants@utsa.edu prior to working with your departmental financial lead to allocate funds differently from that described in your approved application. The Office of Research will review costs to ensure it is an allowable expense. When budgeting for participant support, estimate with most accuracy as possible. Reallocation to and from this spending category is not permissible.*

5. UTSA AWARDEE REQUIREMENTS (ATTACHMENT B)

At award, each UTSA PI (primary applicant) and UTSA Co-PI (co-applicant) must have this document signed by their direct supervisor (i.e., Department Chair or School Director), acknowledging that they have also read all responsibilities and obligations of the applicant and their department or school.

VIII. PROPOSAL AND AWARDEE REQUIREMENTS [SwRI ONLY]

SwRI staff are instructed to visit the i2net for more information on SwRI-specific guidelines.

Please contact Cynthia Hokanson at ird@swri.org for more information.

IX. 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 up to three (3) experts from UTSA. Committee members will be chosen by the UTSA Office of Research and SwRI’s EVP & COO. Substitutions will be allowed depending upon the project topic/focus. The committee will make a recommendation; however, the UTSA Office of Research 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 criterion.

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?	15
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
Did the proposal outline a reasonable spending plan and thoroughly address each expenditure with a clear justification and calculations? Do proposed costs align with proposed scope of work?	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
Total Points Possible	100

XI. GRANT ADMINISTRATION

Each PI 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.

XII. INTERIM & FINAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

A Project Update Meeting will be requested by the UTSA Office of Research and SwRI EVP & COO. Each PI 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 Office of Research 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 or Co-PIs 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, 2027.**

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Cynthia Hokanson
Group Leader
Southwest Research Institute
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Email: ird@swri.org

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, school director, or dean) must notify the Office of Research 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 Research 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 6, 2025** – UTSA Grant Performance Period Begins (Funds Available)
- March 2026** – Project Update Meeting Requested by UTSA and SwRI
- July 1, 2026** – All UTSA Funds Must Be Spent or Encumbered
- September 30, 2026**– Final Project Report Due
- September 30, 2027** – Extramural Proposal Submission Due and year 2 project report due

6. Respond to all inquiries and communications from the Office of Research 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 the PI’s obligation and responsibilities for this funding opportunity.”	
Approved By:	
Signature:	
Date:	