I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The **Connecting through Research Partnerships (Connect)** program, sponsored by the Office for Research and Innovation at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UT San Antonio) and the Executive Office at Southwest Research Institute (SwRI), is a grant opportunity offered to enhance greater scientific collaboration between the two institutions and to increase the research-funding base across both 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 UT San Antonio and SwRI, and
4. Represent a new direction for the Principal Investigator(s).

Targeted Research: UT San Antonio 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 UT San Antonio PI and one SwRI PI (minimum 2 team members) as defined by the respective requirement pages. Both UT San Antonio and SwRI PI's will have equal PI status; however, UT San Antonio PIs will be identified as lead and are responsible for:

- Notice of Intent Submissions (INFOREADY ONLY)
- Full Proposal Submission (INFOREADY ONLY)
- Abiding by all UT San Antonio Institutional Policies

Throughout this guidance, items marked with **[UT San Antonio ONLY]** are UT San Antonio-specific and should be completed by the UT San Antonio 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: $130,000*

* Due to indirect cost rate variation between the institutions, each project will receive up to $50K to the UT San Antonio PI and up to $80K to the SwRI PI. There is no co-mingling of funds – UT San Antonio funds the UT San Antonio 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 to the originating office.

IV. PROGRAM TIMELINE

February 6, 2026	Request for Proposals (RFP) Released
February 24, 2026	Virtual Networking/Research Exchange Event
March 18, 2026	Notice of Intent due to InfoReady (by 5:00pm CST)
March 20, 2026	Advancement Notifications Sent (by 5:00pm CST)
April 15, 2025	Proposals Due through InfoReady (by 5:00 pm CST)
July 2026	Awards Announced
October 2026	Performance Period Begins (Funds Available)
March 2027	Project Update Meeting
July 1, 2027	UT San Antonio: Funds Must Be Spent (Unspent Funds Will Be Swept)
September 30, 2027	Performance Period Ends / Final Project Report Due
September 30, 2028	Deadline for Extramural Funding Submission

V. LETTER OF INTENT (LOI) INSTRUCTIONS [UT San Antonio ONLY]

The Letter of Intent (LOI) is required to be submitted to the InfoReady portal by the deadline indicated in the program timeline. Information provided in LOIs 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). Submissions to the Office of Sponsored Projects but not the InfoReady portal will not be considered for full submission. NOI submission to the UT San Antonio Office of Sponsored Projects is **not** required.*

Submit LOI through InfoReady (linked here) by **5pm CST on March 18, 2026**.

The Letter of Intent will request the following information:

- UT San Antonio PI name, appointment title, email, college, and department
- UT San Antonio 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 [UT San Antonio ONLY]

UT San Antonio will be the lead institution for the collection and administration of proposals for this grant program. PIs must submit one combined proposal through the UT San Antonio InfoReady system. *Submission of full proposal to the UT San Antonio Office of Sponsored Projects is **not** required.*

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. InfoReady Questionnaire	250-500 words each (*see below)*
2. Joint Work Plan*	2-page max.
3. Plan for Extramural Support*	2-page max.
4. Biographical Sketch from PI/Co-PIs	*Dependent on template in use (NSF, NIH, SwRI).*
5. Budget	Attachment A
6. Budget Justification	2-page max.

1. INFOREADY QUESTIONNAIRE (250-500 WORD LIMIT)

The InfoReady Questionnaire requests the following information, apart from the budget justification, budget template, and current, pending, and recent support uploads:

1. Project Abstract/Executive Summary (400 words)
2. Clearly Articulated Objectives and Outcomes (500 words)
3. Current Limitations of Research in the Field (350 words)
4. Novelty of Proposed Work (350 words)
5. How Approach Differs from Current Work (300 words)
6. Explanation of any risks or potential challenges the project may face (300 words)
7. Societal impact of proposal (300 words)

Each of these components, unless otherwise stated, have a 250-500 word limit.

2. JOINT WORK PLAN (2-PAGE MAX.)

Attach a summary of task-level activities to be performed by UT San Antonio and SwRI as they relate to theoverall 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.

3. PLAN FOR EXTRAMURAL SUPPORT (2-PAGE MAX.)

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.

4. 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.

5. BUDGET (ATTACHMENT A)

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

6. BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (2-PAGE MAX.)

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. ELIGIBILITY & AWARDEE REQUIREMENTS [UT San Antonio ONLY]

1. PI ELIGIBILITY & APPLICATION LIMITS

- PIs must be full-time and tenure-track or tenured faculty at UT San Antonio in one of the following academic colleges at the time of application and award*: CAICC, KCEID, COLFA, COEHD, ACOB, HCAP, COS, and UC.

  * *Other personnel or students, including individuals outside UT San Antonio's (Academic Campus), may be incorporated into a project team as co-PI; however, only those who are UT San Antonio (Academic Campus) employees or students can be funded through this program.*

- 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 for Research and Innovation 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.

2. 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 UT San Antonio (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* UT San Antonio 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-UT San Antonio employee travel
- Stipends, scholarships and/or tuition
- Indirect costs (F&A) costs
- Payment of salaries to non-UT San Antonio 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.

3. 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 for Research and Innovation. Please contact seedgrants@UT San Antonio.edu prior to working with your departmental financial lead to allocate funds differently from that described in your approved application. The Office for Research and Innovation 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.*

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 UT San Antonio. Committee members will be chosen by the UT San Antonio Office for Research and Innovation and from members of SwRI's Advisory Committee for Research (ACR). Substitutions will be allowed depending upon the project topic/focus. The committee will make a recommendation; however, the UT San Antonio Office for Research and Innovation and SwRI Executive Office 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.

Scoring Criteria

The following criteria will be the basis for evaluating applications and for assigning a single score for each proposal. The score should reflect the overall impact that the project could have on the advancement of engineering or science.

1. Scientific Merit & Novelty (30%)
   Does the proposal clearly articulate objectives and outcomes, demonstrate novelty, and differentiate from current work?

2. Feasibility & Risk Management (20%)
   Are risks identified and mitigated? Is the joint work plan realistic and well-coordinated?

3. Impact & Innovation (20%)
   Does the proposal demonstrate meaningful societal impact and provide a clear, actionable plan for pursuing extramural funding after the project ends?

4. Budget & Justification (20%)
   Is the budget complete, reasonable, and aligned with project scope, especially considering the time provided to complete the project?

5. Team Qualification & Work Plan (10%)
   Does the team have the expertise and collaborative structure to achieve project objectives, including a clear and feasible joint work plan?

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 UT San Antonio Office for Research and Innovation and SwRI Executive Office. 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 UT San Antonio Office for Research and Innovation and SwRI Executive Office. 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, 2028.**

CONTACT INFORMATION

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UT San Antonio
The University of Texas at San Antonio

SwRI
SOUTHWEST RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Connect Program

Attachment A:
Budget Summary

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

UT San Antonio 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 UT San Antonio 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 SwRI Request:	**$**