STRATEGIC PRIORITIES PLAN

VCU Breakthroughs Fund FY 2024 Request for Applications

**Purpose:** The VCU Breakthroughs Fund (Breakthroughs) supports transdisciplinary teams to design unique, creative, and innovative large-scale approaches to confront humanity’s grand challenges as identified in the One VCU Strategic Research Priorities Plan (SRPP). Successful projects are designed to reach very specific outcomes or establish the capability to compete for external funding upon award completion.

**VCU Breakthroughs Fund At-A-Glance (additional details below)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intent to Submit Deadline</th>
<th>November 29, 2023</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Proposal Deadline</td>
<td>February 1, 2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award Start Date and Project Period</td>
<td>July 1, 2024, 18 – 24 months</td>
</tr>
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<td>Award Ceiling</td>
<td>Up to $200,000, no unit cost share</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funds Release</td>
<td>Funds are released in annual increments in accordance with the proposed budget. Year 2 funds are released following a successful mid-term report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Category</td>
<td>Large-scale program funding</td>
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**Eligibility**

- Transdisciplinary research, defined as research that combines two or more areas of study into a seamless project, required.
- Multiple PIs, from at least two different schools/colleges, required.
- PIs may be any full-time, primary appointment VCU faculty, research faculty or clinician researcher regardless of rank or tenure status, whose appointments are approved by the dean of their college or school. Clinician researchers must have a university faculty appointment to serve as a PI.
- Staff without affiliate college/school faculty appointments are **not eligible** to be a PI.
- Inclusive research teams encompassing meaningful participation of all members are strongly encouraged, including URM and/or minoritized faculty, early-stage investigators, trainees, and students.
- Projects must demonstrate alignment with a research strategic plan initiative, along with specific goal(s) and objective(s) identified in the [One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan](#).
- PIs and Co-PIs with active Breakthroughs awards at the time of proposal submission are **ineligible** to apply as a PI or Co-PI on an additional Breakthroughs proposal during this funding cycle.
- Upon award for the 2024 Breakthroughs funding cycle, PIs and Co-PIs are ineligible to serve as PI or Co-PI on other Breakthroughs grants for the lifecycle of the grant +2 years.

**Intent to Submit:** To facilitate the review process, the corresponding investigator must complete this [Intent to Submit form](#) by 5 p.m. (ET), November 29, 2023. The preliminary information about the project provided in the Intent to Submit process supports early identification of qualified peer reviewers.
Full proposal deadline: Application packages should be submitted via RAMS-SPOT Internal Opportunities here: VCU Breakthroughs Grant OP00000585 no later than 5pm (EST) on February 1, 2024. You will receive a confirmation email upon receipt. Applications cannot be accepted after the deadline for any reason.

Format: Applications must use this template. Text must be single spaced, Arial, 11-point (minimum) font. The template margins should not be altered. Proposals not following the format requirements will be returned without review. Once complete, the template and any supporting documents must be converted to a single PDF file for upload.

Forms for submission:
- Intent to Submit
- VCU Breakthroughs Application
- Biosketch Form

Budget guidelines: All requested costs directly related to the project should be listed and justified in the budget section of the Breakthroughs Application Template. Facilities and administrative (F&A or indirect) costs are not allowed. Budgets require approval from applicable chairs (or their designees) and deans before submission in RAMS-SPOT. Please allow adequate time for approval routing. See the Budgeting Guide below for additional information about eligible and ineligible costs.

### VCU Breakthroughs Fund Budgeting Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>ELIGIBLE COSTS</th>
<th>INELIGIBLE COSTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary support</td>
<td>● Salary support, including fringe benefits, for PI(s) and co-investigators, collectively not to exceed 20% of total project costs (i.e., if the total project budget is $200,000, the collective PI/co-I salaries and fringe cannot exceed $40,000 total). ● Salary support, including fringe benefits, for project staff.</td>
<td>● Salary support for administrative personnel or 12-month UAP or executive personnel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment and supplies</td>
<td>● Research/project supplies.</td>
<td>● Office equipment and supplies (including faculty computers, laptops, and tablets unless strictly related to project).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student costs</td>
<td>● Undergraduate, graduate student, and postdoctoral stipends, if relevant to the project, with a detailed justification.</td>
<td>● Tuition other than graduate student tuition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>● Essential travel related to the project.</td>
<td>● Travel not strictly related to the project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Other costs            | ● Participant fees.  
                         | ● Other expenses (i.e., laboratory and shared core facilities/resource fees).  
                         | ● Consultant costs.  
                         | ● Equipment/technology critical to the project. (Requests over $5,000 must include a detailed justification.) | ● Professional organization dues or membership fees.  
                         | | ● Sub-contracts to institutions or salary support for individuals external to VCU.  
                         | | ● Pre-award costs. |

Review process: The submission, review, and funding process are coordinated by the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation. Applications will be reviewed and scored by faculty members from
across the University. Subject matter experts will be selected whenever possible. Reviews and scores will then be submitted to the SRPP Advisory Council. Recommendations from the Council will be forwarded to the VPRI for final approval. Review feedback will be sent to those applicants not awarded. Review criteria include:

- Merit, including scholarly merit, impact on the field of study, and feasibility (budget and timeline)
- Broader impacts, including translational potential and potential for high return on investment.
- Relation to Strategic Research Priorities Plan, including specific potential for a project to further the goals and objectives identified.
- Team, including PI(s) preparedness, transdisciplinary qualities, and diversity (meaningful participation of trainees, students, URM and/or minoritized faculty and early-stage investigators as well as cross-campus collaboration).

**Award and reporting process:** The project start date is July 1, 2024 and the award period is 18-24 months. Funds will be released in annual increments in accordance with the proposed budget. Year 2 funds will be released following a successful one-year report documenting meaningful progress toward fulfillment of the project aims/goals. Progress should include evidence that the applicants have met with a relevant program officer/director from the planned funding agency if such a meeting is allowed by the agency. The Vice President for Research and Innovation (VPRI) and members of the Advisory Council will review progress in comparison to budget utilization and project milestones based on the initial project proposal. The remaining funds will only be released following approval from the VPRI. A final project report including an accounting of all funds expended, a summary of work completed, and progress on sustainability plans will be required 30 days after the project end date.

**Additional requirements for all Breakthroughs Fund awards:**

- Projects must have documented compliance approvals (e.g., IRB, IACUC), as applicable and appropriate, secured before work may begin.
- The principal investigator(s) will be required to participate in an annual survey of results and outcomes (e.g., external grants submissions and awards, publications, creative work, intellectual property, etc.) associated with their fund-sponsored research. Participation will begin one year after the project end date and continue annually for a total of three years.
- All publications, presentations, etc., resulting from the project must acknowledge financial support from the VCU Breakthroughs Fund. Please provide DOIs or other standard identifiers in project progress reports.
- Projects are expected to be completed within the specific budget period. If an extenuating circumstance should be considered for a no-cost extension, the PI(s) will be expected to fully justify the request in writing. Extensions are at the sole discretion of the VPRI and there is no guarantee that the extension will be approved.

**Questions:** Please direct all questions to ovprifunds@vcu.edu.