

**STRATEGIC RESEARCH PRIORITIES PLAN (SRPP)
FY 2026 Request for Applications**



VCU Breakthroughs Fund

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 VCU Strategic Research Priorities Plan. Successful projects are designed to reach specific outcomes or establish the capability to compete for external funding upon award completion.

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

Proposal Deadline	March 27, 2026
Award Start Date and Project Period	October 1, 2026 – September 30, 2028 (24 months)
Award Ceiling	Up to \$200,000, no unit cost share
Funds Release	Funds are released at the time of award.
Program Category	Large-scale program funding
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple PIs, from at least <u>two different schools/colleges</u>, required. • Additional PI and Co-PI eligibility factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transdisciplinary research, defined as research that combines two or more areas of study into a seamless project, required. ○ PIs may be any <u>full-time, primary appointment VCU</u> 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 early-stage investigators, trainees, and students. • Projects must demonstrate alignment with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One or more of the initiatives identified in the VCU Strategic Research Priorities Plan, with specific initiative goal(s) and objective(s) identified. ○ One of VCU's Research Impact Clusters.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Federal and/or Commonwealth of Virginia research priorities • PIs and Co-PIs with <u>active</u> VCU Breakthroughs Fund 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. • Faculty who receive a grant from the VCU Breakthroughs Fund as either PI or Co-PI cannot serve as PI or Co-PI on future submissions to the Breakthroughs fund until three years have elapsed from the end date of their most recent award.
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Proposal deadline: Application packages should be submitted via RAMS-SPOT Internal Opportunities here: [VCU Breakthroughs Fund \(OP00000878\)](#) no later than **5 p.m. (EST) on Friday, March 27, 2026**. 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:

- [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 consult with your department chair ahead of time and allow adequate time for approval routing.** See the Budgeting Guide below for additional information about eligible and ineligible costs.

VCU Breakthroughs Fund Budgeting Guide

CATEGORY	ELIGIBLE COSTS	INELIGIBLE COSTS
Salary support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary support for 9-month faculty PIs and Co-PIs, including fringe benefits, not to exceed <u>20% of the total project costs</u> (i.e., if the total project budget is \$200,000, the collective research personnel salaries and fringe cannot exceed \$40,000 total) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PI and Co-PI salary support, <u>including fringe benefits</u>, is generally not allowable for PI(s) and Co-PIs (with the exception of 9-month faculty appointments - not to exceed 20%) • Salary support for administrative personnel or 12-month UAP or executive personnel. • Salary support for external faculty

Equipment and supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research/project supplies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office equipment and supplies (including faculty computers, laptops, and tablets unless strictly related to project).
Student costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hourly compensation for undergraduate, graduate student, and postdoctoral, for direct project work, with a detailed justification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential travel related to the project to include conference and site related visits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel not strictly related to the project.
Other costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human research participant remuneration • Shared Research Core Fees • Laboratory costs and supplies • Consultant costs • Equipment/technology critical to the project. (Requests over \$5,000 must include a detailed justification.) • Publication fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Research and Innovation. 1) Applications will be reviewed and scored by faculty members from across the University. Subject matter experts will be selected whenever possible. 2) Recommendations from the review panel will then be submitted to the Research Deans Advisory Council (ReDAC) for ranking and recommendation. 3) Recommendations from ReDAC will be forwarded to the VPRI, Provost, and VP for Health Sciences for final selection. Review feedback will be sent to all applicants.

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.
- Responsiveness to (a) one or more Initiatives under the [VCU Strategic Research Priorities Plan initiative\(s\)](#), (b) one of [VCU's Research Impact Clusters](#), and (c) research must align with Federal and/or Commonwealth of Virginia research priorities. Research should demonstrate potential for a project to further the specific initiative goals and objectives identified.
- PI(s) preparedness. Where applicable, team preparedness, transdisciplinary qualities, and diversity (meaningful participation of trainees, students and early-stage investigators as well as cross-campus collaboration).

Award and Reporting Process: The project start date is October 1, 2026 and the award period is 24 months. Funds will be released at the time of award. A final project report including a summary of work completed, and progress on sustainability plans will be required 45 days after the project end date. The final report will be two parts, which will be submitted via RAMS-SPOT. These include an action in RAMS-SPOT and include a PDF attachment. Requests for

final reports will be available within one month of project completion and will allow 45 days for submission.

Additional requirements for all VCU Breakthroughs Fund awards:

- Projects are required to adhere to all VCU research-related policies, procedures, and compliance approvals, including COI, intellectual property, IRB, IACUC, etc.
- 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 the final project report.
- Projects are expected to be completed within the specified budget period. Extension requests may be justifiable under limited circumstances following a request made to the Fund Manager at ovprifunds@vcu.edu.
- In support of VCU's culture of collaboration, PIs and Co-PI who have been awarded funding are expected to serve as subject matter expert peer reviewers for future submission cycles throughout the duration of their project, as needed.

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