

# GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY SMALL RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND APPLICATION PROCEDURES

[Revised August, 2004]

## The Small Research Grants Program at a Glance\*

**Eligible Applicants:** The Small Grants Program fosters the research activity of full-time Gallaudet University and Clerc Center faculty and staff, as well as University students, by supporting studies with relatively small funding requirements and durations of a year or less.

**Research Focus:** Research is defined as any investigation likely to add to the knowledge in an academic field. This can include replications and pilot studies.

**Typical Eligible Expenditures:** Testing materials, travel and lodging for data collection, payment to subjects. Expenditures *not* eligible include salary or stipend for investigators, costs of travel to present research findings, and costs of preparing the research report.

### **Funding Limits per Project:**

Students (projects fulfilling degree or course requirements)

Regular Small Grant: \$2,500

Mini-Grant (Streamlined application and review process): \$750

Faculty/Staff

Regular Small Grant: \$5,000

Mini-Grant: \$1,000

**When to Apply:** Applications are accepted throughout the year as long as funds remain, but preferably prior to May 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Application Process:**

Applicants must submit the **Application Form** (next page), a **Project Proposal** (two-page limit for Mini-Grants, six-page limit for others), a **Project Summary** (100 words or fewer), a **Budget Statement**, and, if human subjects are involved in the research, **one** copy of an **Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter**. The Project Proposal, Summary, and Budget Statement should be submitted electronically, as described on the Application Form. The completed Application Form and IRB Approval Letter should be sent or delivered to the Gallaudet Research Institute, 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the HMB. The Small Grants review may take place prior to IRB approval; however, funds may not be made available until the applicant provides a copy of the IRB Approval Letter. Allow one month for processing of regular applications, less for Mini-Grant applications.

### **Review Process:**

Proposals are reviewed by persons knowledgeable in the pertinent field of study, and, if necessary, feedback is given in order to strengthen the chances of funding. The Project Proposal must address the following three criteria:

**Criterion 1: Clearly defined research purpose or question.** What is the research question that guides the project? What will the project test, determine, learn, describe, document, etc? The statement of the project's research purpose remains the same throughout the proposal. In addressing this criterion, the proposal introduces concepts and defines terminology needed to understand the research purpose of the project.

**Criterion 2: Significant research question/purpose.** The proposal describes the contribution that the study will make to the field. What is the uncertainty or information gap in the academic field that justifies the investigation? Again, replications and pilot studies are welcome.

**Criterion 3: Effective research methods.** The proposal identifies, defines, *and* justifies the procedures that will be used to accomplish the research purpose or answer the research question of the study.

\*Detailed descriptions of these and other program policies may be found on the later pages of this brochure. Prospective applicants are particularly encouraged to study the detailed description of the criteria used to review proposals. Examples of previous successful proposals will be made available on request.



## Summary of the Program

The Small Grants Program fosters the research activity of full-time Gallaudet University and Clerc Center faculty and staff, as well as University students, by supporting studies with relatively small funding requirements and durations of a year or less. Support is in the form of funds to underwrite project costs and, when necessary, technical advice to improve the quality of the research. Up to \$2,500 may be requested to support Student projects, meaning those intended to satisfy degree or course requirements. Up to \$5,000 may be requested by faculty and staff for all other kinds of research. When student projects require less than \$750 and when all others require less than \$1,000, they may be funded through the Mini-Grant option, which has a streamlined application and review process. Funds may be used for such purposes as compensating research volunteers, paying for travel to data collection sites, and buying disposable supplies. Proposals for projects in all content areas and disciplines are welcome, regardless of whether the research focuses on one of the University's deafness-related research priorities, and new investigators are particularly encouraged to apply. Project proposals are judged largely according to three criteria related to (1) articulation of a specific research purpose that can be accomplished within one year, (2) demonstration that the project promises to add worthwhile knowledge to its field, and (3) presentation of research methods that have a high likelihood of accomplishing the specified purpose. Rather than summarily rejecting a proposal that initially does not meet funding criteria, Program staff routinely encourage applicants to revise their proposals based on review results and to resubmit them at earliest convenience. Faculty and staff from across the University assist in the review of proposals, and applications normally take one month to process. Less time is required to process applications for Mini-Grants. Questions related to the Small Grants Program may be addressed to Dr. Leonard Kelly, [Leonard.Kelly@Gallaudet.edu](mailto:Leonard.Kelly@Gallaudet.edu), Room S-429 HMB, (202) 651-5949 (Voice/TDD).

## Scope of the Program

The specific focus of the funding program is research. Research is defined as any investigation likely to add to the knowledge base in an academic field. This can include replications and pilot studies. Training and curriculum development projects are normally not considered research, *per se*. Thus, they are not supported by this funding program unless they contribute to a research purpose, for example, testing the effectiveness of one training technique compared to another. The Program spans all academic disciplines and areas whether in the liberal arts, fine arts, or the social, physical, or behavioral sciences. Dissertation and thesis studies are welcome from students enrolled in Gallaudet graduate programs, as well as from Gallaudet faculty or staff enrolled in graduate programs elsewhere. Undergraduate students are also eligible to participate.

## Project Funding Limits

Projects completed to satisfy degree or course requirements, whether or not by a Gallaudet employee, are normally considered "Student" projects and can be funded to a maximum amount of \$2,500 per project. The Program also funds other projects that are completed by full-time faculty and staff. These are considered "Faculty/Staff" projects and can be funded to a maximum amount of \$5,000 per project. For both Student and Faculty/Staff projects, funds may underwrite either all or part of the project costs. The Mini-Grant is a special category of Small Grant intended to streamline the application and review process, when funding requirements are especially modest. The funding limit for a Mini-Grant is \$750 for student applications and \$1,000 for all other applications. The proposals that accompany Mini-Grant applications are limited to two double-spaced pages, instead of the six-page limit for conventional Small Grants proposals. A flexible review process at the discretion of the Small Grants Program Officer will expedite review of Mini-Grant applications. Any revisions requested in the two-page proposal will normally be for the purpose of clarifying the research question and methodology of the project in order to complete the records of the Small Grants Program.

## Timing of Applications

Applications can be received and funded any time throughout the Gallaudet University fiscal year (beginning October 1<sup>st</sup> and continuing until the following September 30<sup>th</sup>) until funds are exhausted. Because spending must occur before the end of the fiscal year, applications ought to be submitted no later than May 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Preparation of the Application

An application consists of the following elements:

1. a completed **Application Form** (the previous brochure page)
2. a **Project Summary** no longer than 100 words
3. a **Project Proposal** of six double-spaced pages or fewer, two pages for Mini-Grants
4. a **Budget Statement** of two pages or fewer
5. if human subjects are involved, an **Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter**. IRB approval is not required before submitting a project for Small Grants funding; however, funds cannot be made available until the applicant provides a copy of the IRB letter of approval.

The following are important considerations in preparing each element of the application:

*Application Form.* The Application Form of a student must include the signature of the faculty member who is supervising the project. The signature indicates that the faculty member has read the student proposal and considered it in relation to the Small Grants review criteria. The signature of the Budget Unit Head is required of all proposals submitted by Gallaudet faculty and staff members, including those proposals in the Student category.

*Project Summary.* In 100 words or fewer, the Project Summary should state the explicit purpose or question of the project, explain the significance of that question, and describe the methods and activities that will respond to the research question.

*Project Proposal.* The maximum length of the project proposal is six double-spaced pages (two pages for Mini-Grants), and this page limitation places a premium on the applicant's succinct presentation of all pertinent aspects of the project. Reviewers of a proposal may include specialists in the academic area of the project, as well as scholars who are not specialists. The level of detail provided in a proposal should therefore accommodate the information needs of both kinds of audiences. The written proposal is the sole basis used by reviewers to decide the merits of the project, and they use just three criteria to focus their attention during the proposal review process. The applicant should address each of these criteria in the narrative. The three criteria ought to be used as tools for self-evaluation prior to submission of the application.

Criterion 1: Clearly defined research purpose or question. What is the research question that guides the project? What will the project test, determine, learn, describe, document, etc? An effective proposal articulates a specific and narrowed research question or purpose that can be accomplished within the Program funding limits and within the time limit of one year. Careful articulation of the research question or purpose is crucial, because it is the reviewer's primary basis for appraising the effectiveness of the research methods presented in the proposal. The statement of the project's research purpose remains the same throughout the proposal. The proposal presents concepts and defines terminology needed for the reviewer to understand the study's purpose. A proposal that does not respond well to this criterion leaves the reviewer with appreciable uncertainty about the precise focus of the investigation; key terminology may be undefined. An inadequate proposal also may state a purpose or multiple purposes that are beyond the scope of what can be accomplished within the limitations of time and funding.

Criterion 2: Significant research question/purpose. This section should emphasize the contribution that the study will make to the field. What is the uncertainty or information gap in the academic field that justifies the investigation? An effective proposal makes a persuasive case that the findings from the research will constitute a worthwhile contribution to the field, justifying the investment of effort and/or resources. The significance may be based, for example, on potential contributions to improved professional practice, resolution of an arguable gap or inconsistency in the literature of the field, or the addition of authentic new knowledge to the field, including by extension or replication of existing knowledge. When appropriate, the proposal grounds the study in a larger theoretical context in a manner that is selective given the page limits of the proposal. When the application is by a student, there are indications that the project is likely to foster a productive educational experience. If the project is a pilot study, the proposal makes a case for the need for such preliminary work prior to a more complete future study. An inadequate proposal fails to state a rationale for consuming time and resources in order to address its research question.

Criterion 3: Effective research methods. The proposal should identify, define, *and justify* the procedures that will be used to accomplish the research purpose or answer the research question of the study. The methods of the project can include such components as site selection, choice of archives, sample characteristics, data collection methods, experimental design, and data analysis. When judging the merit of project methods, proposal reviewers must evaluate whether each component of the methodology addresses the project's stated purpose. Thus, a well articulated purpose or question is crucial to a determination of whether the project's methods are effective. An inadequate proposal fails to describe the methods with sufficient detail for the reviewer to judge whether they respond effectively to the research question/purpose. A proposal also may be inadequate either because a component of the methodology is inappropriate for responding to the research question, or because a necessary component is missing.

*Budget Statement.* The Budget Statement of the application should identify specific costs associated with completion of all project tasks. Proposed expenditures should be (1) allowable according to Gallaudet and Program policies, (2) cost-effective, and (3) within the specified funding limit. When the requested funds are intended to support only a portion of the tasks and resources of a project, the Budget Statement should indicate how the requested amount fits into the entire project budget. The basis for cost estimates should be spelled out, e.g., \$400 for payment to research volunteers: 20 volunteers, two hours each @ \$10/hour. The budget is not used as a basis for deciding whether a project merits funding. Rather, once a proposal is judged to merit funding, the budget is examined and modified, as necessary.

*Submission of Materials.* Electronically submit a Project Summary, a Project Proposal, and a Budget Statement by sending a Microsoft Word file to [Leonard.Kelly@Gallaudet.edu](mailto:Leonard.Kelly@Gallaudet.edu). The completed Application Form and **one** copy of the IRB Approval Letter (if

human subjects are involved) should be sent to GRI, 4<sup>th</sup> floor HMB. As an alternative, submit five copies each of the Application Form, Project Summary, Project Proposal, and Budget Statement and one copy of the IRB Approval Letter to GRI, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor HMB.

### **Proposal Review and Use of Feedback from Reviewers**

A principal goal of the Small Grants Program is to improve the quality of the research that is submitted, and the purpose of feedback from reviewers is either to verify scholarship that is of high quality or to guide revisions that will lead to re-submission and funding of an improved proposal. Again, reviewers of a proposal may include specialists in the academic area of the project, as well as scholars who are not specialists in the particular domain of the project. In combination, the feedback may reflect on the logic and completeness of the proposal's exposition of the project's purpose, significance, and methods. The feedback may also take the form of precise and in-depth substantive observations that draw directly on the current state of knowledge in the particular field. Reviewers may be members of the University community, or they may be recruited from off campus. For Student projects, substantial weight in the review process is given to the endorsement by the faculty member supervising the project. A committee made up of University faculty members may contribute to a proposal review before it is synthesized and forwarded to the applicant. Applicants are asked to write a response to reviewer feedback, normally in the form of a revised proposal, and an award of funding customarily depends on a complete response. In general, applicants can expect a response to their applications (notification of an award and/or feedback on the proposal) within one month of a submission. For Mini-Grant applications, the process requires less time.

### **Other Related Policies**

*Priority to Developing Investigators.* One goal of the Small Grants Program is to encourage research by new investigators, and funding priority is given to the proposals of applicants who are at the developing stage of their research program compared to applicants with more extensive research experience.

*Priority to Less Recent Users.* A goal of the Small Grants Program is to enlarge the pool of active investigators. Thus, funding priority is given to proposals from less recent recipients of Program funds as opposed to investigators who have recently been awarded funding from the Program.

*Prior Feedback.* Applicants may request feedback from the Small Grants Program staff before they submit a formal proposal.

*Submission of Expenditures.* Projects funded by the Small Grants Program normally should expend approved funds within a single fiscal year. **By prior arrangement**, certain other projects may expend funds in two separate fiscal years. Regardless of whether a project's work is completed in a single fiscal year or in two, the investigator agrees to submit all documentation of expenditures during the fiscal year in which the funds are expended. As a practical matter, that means that all expenditure documentation must be submitted by August 31<sup>st</sup> of the fiscal year in question.

*University Accounting Policies.* Applicants agree to expend funds and document expenditures in a manner that is consistent with existing University accounting policies and procedures. Researchers who receive awards are responsible for learning the relevant policies pertaining to the cost categories of their projects, and Research Institute personnel will be available to advise and assist them in this process.

*Allowable Program Expenditures.* Under normal circumstances, Program funds can be used for the following: subject remuneration, payment to specialists or technicians to complete tasks not customarily expected of the investigator, disposable supplies, and travel for data collection (transportation, lodging, meals). Durable equipment and specialized software for data collection or analysis are sometimes purchased with Program funds and lent to the investigator until completion of the project, but only if it is determined that they are not available elsewhere on the Gallaudet campus. Expenditures expressly prohibited by Program policies include the following: salary payments to the proposing investigator(s), costs for publishing the research results, costs for typing the manuscript of the research report, costs for travel to present the results of the research, and payment to specialists for completion of work customarily expected of the investigator, such as statistical analysis.

*Submission of a Final Report.* The applicant agrees to submit a brief final report that describes the activities of the project and explains how those activities have responded to the research question or purpose of the project. Applicants also agree to timely entry of project information into "The Gallaudet Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity Database" for inclusion in the publication "The Annual Report of Achievements: University, Research, and Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center." Finally, researchers may be asked to present their projects at a University symposium convened for that purpose.

*Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval.* When the project involves human research volunteers, either on the Gallaudet campus or elsewhere, funding of a project is contingent upon approval by the University's IRB. IRB approval is not required before submitting an application for Small Grants funding; however, funds cannot be made available until the applicant provides a copy of the IRB letter of approval. Participation of Clerc Center students as volunteers requires additional approval from officials there.