

CLAS Spark Grants Program – 2026 Competition

Summary of important dates

Call for Applications	October 15, 2025
Application Deadline	November 20, 2025
Notice of Awards	December 18, 2025
Funding Period	January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026
Preliminary Report Due	January 31, 2027
Final Report Due	January 31, 2028

Summary: The Spark Grants Program is an annual competition awarding seed funding to investigate a new research area, expand existing research in a different direction, or complete a transformative project. The scope is broader than that of the CLAS Humanities Scholarship Enhancement Fund (designed to recognize individual faculty scholarship) and the UF Research Opportunity Seed Fund (focused on interdisciplinary work with potential for substantial extramural support). The 2025 Spark competition resulted in five awards totaling about \$46,000. A similar outcome is anticipated for the 2026 competition.

Merit criteria: Spark applications will be ranked based on multiple criteria: (1) the likely ability to generate preliminary results that will lead to new external sponsorship (e.g., a fellowship, grant, or contract) or successfully conclude an important ongoing project (e.g., finish research for, or the writing of, a ground-breaking publication); (2) the effective use of existing resources such as state-funded academic-year research time; (3) the established need for resources otherwise unavailable to the researcher(s) to meet the project's goals.

Eligibility: Every state-funded CLAS faculty member is eligible to apply for a Spark Grant, with the exception of anyone (1) whose position title includes Adjunct, Courtesy, or Visiting, and/or (2) who has served as Principal Investigator (PI) on a Spark grant within the preceding two years, and/or (3) who has at least \$10,000 in remaining start-up funds and/or PI returned overhead.¹ An individual can serve as PI on only one Spark application per competition. A Spark application may optionally have one co-PI, who must also meet the same eligibility criteria.

Timeline: Applications are due as a single PDF submitted by the PI through the InfoReady portal on or before November 20, 2025. The goal will be to communicate awards by December 18, 2025. Funding must be spent by December 31, 2026. Any unspent funds will be returned to CLAS after this date.

¹ The \$10,000 limit is the sum of (1) funds currently in a faculty member's start-up accounts, (2) future start-up amounts that will become available before December 31, 2026, and (3) the balance of the PI's individual returned overhead (or IDC/F&A) account. Amounts already committed to other projects will not count toward the \$10,000 limit provided that the Spark application documents all such prior commitments.

Application: It should not be necessary for the PI to work with unit staff and/or the CLAS Research Office when preparing a Spark application. Submission does not require prior approval from the unit chair/director or the college. A complete application will take the form of a single PDF document containing all the following components:

- *Name and contact information* for the PI and (if applicable) co-PI.
- *Preferred review panel* (see “Review process” below): one of Humanities (Hum), Natural and Mathematical Sciences (NMS), or Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS).
- *Project narrative* (up to 3 pages, including any references). Describe the project’s goals, activities, and outcomes, and the role it plays in the research trajectory of the PI and (if applicable) co-PI. Also, explain how a new project will continue after Spark funding ends or how the results of a project completed with Spark funding will be disseminated.
- *Budget* (up to 1 page). Itemize how Spark funds will be used (see details below).
- If the PI (and/or co-PI) has partial funding for the proposed project or has a proposal submitted that would overlap with the Spark project, provide up to *1 additional budget page* making clear what will be accomplished with receipt of the Spark grant that cannot be achieved under the alternative funding alone.

A persuasive application will be written in non-specialist terms accessible to potential reviewers and will explicitly establish its responsiveness to the Spark merit criteria (see above).

Budget: The project budget should total no more than \$10,000 in direct costs only. Spark Grants will not be charged or pay indirect costs.² Funds may be used for any combination of the following expenses, provided each expense is both (1) consistent with university and college policies and (2) clearly necessary to meet the project’s goals:

- Travel, e.g., for field work, to archives or conferences/workshops
- Research supplies and equipment, including computers or computer time
- Research services and fees, e.g., editing and indexing of books/data for public repositories, publication subventions, costs of archival material, permissions, and purchasing of images for books
- Undergraduate student salary and fringe benefits
- Graduate student salary, fringe benefits, and tuition
- Faculty summer salary and fringe benefits.

Other important considerations:

- Fringe benefits, budgeted at current rates,³ must accompany any salary. Faculty can choose to receive summer salary support either (1) as regular faculty, paid through biweekly payroll (incurring fringe at 33.5% for FY 2025-26) or as Temporary (OPS) Faculty

² Facilities & administrative (F&A) costs, also known as “indirect costs” (IDC) or “overhead”, are research costs—e.g., accounting and purchasing staff salaries, building construction and maintenance—that cannot be readily assigned to an individual project or program. The UF F&A policy can be found here: <https://research.ufl.edu/dsp/proposals/budgeting/fa-rates-idc.html>

³ See <https://research.ufl.edu/dsp/proposals/budgeting/fringe-benefits.html>

paid as a lump-sum payment at the end of the summer (incurring fringe at 5.6% for FY 2025-26). It is the PI's responsibility to work with UF Benefits to understand the different benefits associated with Faculty and Temporary (OPS) Faculty appointments.

- Graduate-student salary must also be accompanied by proportionate UF tuition at the resident or non-resident rate applicable to the individual.
- The PI of a Spark Grant will need to revise spending in light of any post-submission cost changes so as to stay within the awarded total budget amount.
- A tool that may be helpful in building a Spark budget is the Excel spreadsheet located in the UF InfoReady portal listed below. However, the final budget should be a compact listing of budgeted items, the associated dollar amounts, and any justification that will help reviewers understand the importance of this item for attaining project goals.

Submission: The PI should submit through the UF InfoReady portal using the following instructions:

1. Click on the following link: <https://ufresearch.infoready4.com/secure/7/1165864>.
2. If you are prompted to log in with your Gatorlink credentials, do so. If you are not prompted to log in, this means you are already logged in.
3. Click on the following link:
<https://ufresearch.infoready4.com/#manageCompetitionsDetail/1996799>.
4. Click "Apply".
5. Complete the required fields, then upload the application PDF file.
6. Click "Preview".
7. Click "Edit" to make changes. Once everything looks OK, click "Submit".

Review process: Each application will be reviewed and ranked according to the merit criteria above by a panel of faculty from the college division (Hum, NMS, or SBS) selected by the PI. Reviewers will be nominated by the divisional Associate Dean and be approved by the CLAS Research Advisory Committee. Final funding decisions will be made by the CLAS Associate Dean for Research, with advice from the Research Advisory Committee.

Note: Spark Grants are not intended to be another form of faculty fellowship. During the 2025 competition, reviewers tended not to rank highly applications in which the majority of funds would be spent on salary and fringe for the PI and/or co-PI.

Grant reporting: The PI of a 2026 Spark Grant commits to submitting to clasadr@clas.ufl.edu:

- By January 31, 2027, a preliminary report containing
 - a reconciliation of how all funds were spent

- a summary of research findings (up to 1 page) including specific details about where and when the research results will be disseminated and/or the PI will apply for external funding to continue the project
- By January 31, 2028, a final report (up to 1 page) detailing how and where the research results have been disseminated and/or details about where the PI applied for external funding to continue the project as well as the outcome of that application.

Questions about PI eligibility, allowed budget items, and other matters related to Spark Grants should be sent to clasadr@clas.ufl.edu.