SC EPSCoR

SPARK Program FAQs

Q: Who is eligible to apply for SPARK funding?

A: Proposals may be submitted by investigators from any South Carolina college or university. However, former SC EPSCoR Program Seed Funding PIs (e.g., GEAR, GEAR-CRP, SPARK, Phase-0) who have not submitted final reports to the SC EPSCoR State Office are not eligible.

Q: What is the award amount and duration?

A: The maximum award amount is $25,000. Projects may last up to 18 months. Anticipated project start dates may be as early as May 1, 2026.

Q: What program priorities/activities can proposals address?

A: Proposals may focus on:

- Projects that engaging undergraduate students in STEM research activities.
- Projects that support scientific conferences, symposia, and meetings that aim to increase students' interest in STEM.
- Projects that use other creative approaches for engaging students in STEM, such as high school research experiences, STEM camps, or STEM on the Move outreach programs.

Q: Do proposals have to align with the ADAPT in SC project?

A: No. Proposals must align with **either** ADAPT in SC research themes (Biomedical AI, XAI-enabled biomedical devices, DL-imaging model-enabled devices, or DT-enabled devices) or the *Vision 2030 SC Science & Technology Plan* priorities (AI/Data Science, Advanced Materials, Systems Engineering, Precision Biology; and industries such as Advanced Manufacturing, Human Health & Life Sciences, IT, and Clean Tech).

Q: Are undergraduate students required to participate?

A: Yes. Proposals that engage at least three undergraduate students in meaningful research are strongly encouraged under the student research track.

Q: What are allowable expenses?

A: Allowable expenses include salary for senior personnel, postdocs, graduate/undergraduate researchers, technical staff; student stipends; travel; materials and supplies; and other direct costs. Indirect costs and tuition are not allowed.

Q: How much salary is allowed for the PI?

A: Senior personnel salary must not exceed 20% of the award total.

Q: Is PI salary only allowed for the summer?

A: No, salary support is not limited to summer only.

Q: How do we submit proposals?
A: All proposals must be submitted through the SC EPSCoR InfoReady portal:
https://scepscor.infoready4.com/

Q: How will proposals be reviewed?
A: External reviewers (outside SC) will evaluate proposals based on: Merit, Broader Impact, Ability to increase STEM participation, Qualifications of the PI/team, Mentoring plans, Budget reasonableness, and Dissemination potential.

Q: If I receive a SPARK award, do I need to submit reports?
A: Yes. Progress reports are due every six months, and a final report within 60 days after the award end.