

HRI Research Clusters

The HRI Research Clusters initiative enables faculty and graduate students in the humanities and arts from the University of Illinois campus to develop questions or subjects of inquiry that require or would be enhanced by collaborative work.

A cluster might come together around a project at the very start of its intellectual life; faculty might organize to test a proposition collectively that they have already begun to explore individually; or a cluster might arise from months or years of collaboration in order to realize an exhibit, a book project, a media platform. HRI Research Cluster funds are designed to allow scholars with shared interests to explore complex subjects and grow ideas together which they might lack the resources to do on their own.

We see the Research Clusters as opportunities not just for faculty leadership but mentorship as well. Faculty involvement should be robust and structured to facilitate the variety of career stages in the cluster.

Though modest, the level of support that the funds provide creates an opportunity for work in common and will ideally serve as seed money for future funding. Research Clusters need not necessarily be composed of scholars from multiple disciplines. Instead, this initiative is intended as a way to nurture collaborative faculty development—to help scholars from any discipline to think alongside colleagues old and new in order to generate new knowledge, experiment with novel forms of expression, or illuminate unlooked-for pathways through an existing problem.

For 2024-25 HRI will award funding to a **maximum of six** Research Clusters on a competitive basis.

Successful applicants will receive grants of \$3,000 to support their cluster's activities. Research Cluster grants may support (but their use is not limited to): costs related to a guest speaker who is necessary to advancing the cluster's central project; travel for the group to a special collection, archives, museum, or similar venue of relevance to the cluster's research focus; costs related to the development of grant proposals for external funding; and/or the purchase of research materials required for the advancement of the cluster's project. A maximum of \$300 may be spent on food/beverages. Research Cluster expenditures must be in keeping with University guidelines related to purchases, procurements, and travel.

Requirements

HRI requires that Research Clusters:

- Have a faculty director or faculty co-directors, and that the Cluster director(s) meet(s) with the HRI Director early in the 2024–25 academic year.
- Meet at least every three weeks throughout the academic year;
- Provide an annual report of their activities to HRI by no later than June 1 of the academic year in question. The report must provide a detailed description of the impact of the group's work and a list of outcomes;
- Provide to HRI an accounting of funds expended, also no later than June 1. All funds must be spent by May 15 of the academic year for which they were granted and any unused funds returned to HRI by June 15.
- Coordinate any planned public events with the HRI calendar to avoid overlapping or conflicting events, and prominently identify HRI as a sponsor for those events.

Research Clusters are also strongly encouraged to create broader communities for their work through the creation of blogs that are linked to the HRI website, or through similar digital means.

Terms

Research Cluster grants will be allocated once each year, will not be made for amounts greater or less than \$3,000. Research Cluster groups may seek additional funds to supplement those provided by HRI to support their activities, but all of their work must be designated as a product of HRI Research Cluster funding. Cluster participants are entirely responsible for the expenditure and accounting of their funds and for any arrangements related to those expenditures. The director or co-directors will serve as the primary contact to HRI regarding reporting and grant-related communications generally, though directors will want to keep close tabs with the business personnel in the department where the grant funds will reside, in order to produce timely and accurate financial reporting and to ensure any requisite return of funds at the end of the grant period. Existing HRI Research Clusters may apply for a renewal, but renewal applications are not guaranteed funding.

Deadline

The application deadline for the 2024–25 academic year is April 5, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.

Application Instructions

1. **An application cover sheet**, including the name of the research cluster and project title (the latter, if appropriate), name, contact information for the director/co-directors, cluster participants' names and affiliations, and a 2–3 sentence description of the project and its purpose;
2. **A Research Cluster Narrative Proposal** (maximum 1000 words—which should include indication of preparation/background that qualifies the cluster members to do this work and clearly outlines the goals of the cluster and its activities);
3. **CV(s) for the cluster's faculty director or co-directors** (please provide a short version—no more than 4 pages outlining key accomplishments);
4. **A schedule/timetable of proposed activities**; and
5. **A detailed budget** that indicates precisely the proposed expenditure of funds.

Please submit all materials (compiled as a single PDF) to HRI at apply-hri@illinois.edu by 5 p.m. on the deadline date. Application materials should be single-spaced, in 12-point Times Roman font with on-inch margins. Materials submitted after the deadline or that do not follow the stated guidelines will not be considered.

Selection

The applications will be read by a selection committee comprised of members of the HRI Advisory Committee and the HRI Director and Deputy Director (both of whom serve on the committee in an ex officio capacity).

Notification

All applications will be acknowledged via email, and all applicants will be notified in May 2024 when the Research Cluster selection process is concluded.

Questions about the HRI Research Cluster Grants can be addressed to Nancy Castro at ncastro@illinois.edu or 217-244-7913.