

Guidelines for SRF Research Proposals

Your proposal should:

- Be no more than **two pages**, single-spaced, using a readable 12-point font.
- Be written in clear, accessible language for readers outside your discipline.
- Reflect your own ideas and writing.
- Demonstrate thoughtful collaboration with your proposed mentor.
- Explain both the research you plan to conduct and why it matters.
- Be signed by the faculty who will supervise the summer research to confirm their approval of the proposed project.

Recommended Proposal Structure

1. Project Overview and Research Question

Begin by introducing your topic and providing sufficient context for a non-specialist reader. Clearly state:

- The topic or issue you will investigate.
- The central research question, creative problem, or area of inquiry that will guide your work.
- Why this question is meaningful and worthy of investigation.

2. Significance and Potential Impact

Explain the importance of the project.

Discuss:

- The intellectual significance of the question within your field.
- How the project contributes to expanding understanding, generating new knowledge, or advancing creative inquiry.
- How the research could help address real-world challenges, inform practice, influence future work, or contribute to the well-being of individuals, communities, organizations, or society.

3. Research Plan and Methods

Describe how you will conduct the project during the ten-week fellowship.

Include:

- The activities you will undertake.
- The sources, materials, data, participants, archives, texts, artworks, laboratory techniques, or other resources you will use.
- The methods you will use to collect, analyze, interpret, or create knowledge.
- The role your faculty mentor will play in supporting the project.

4. Expected Outcomes

Identify the products or outcomes you expect to complete. Ten weeks is a fairly short time, especially if the applicant lacks significant experience with the topic. Applicants are highly encouraged to discuss with their research mentor what they can realistically hope to

accomplish and explain the significance of this product in the proposal. Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- A research paper or thesis chapter.
- Conference presentation or poster.
- Creative work or exhibition.
- An inventory of data collected with descriptions and metadata.
- An extensive literature review with the objective of continued research.
- An extensive proposal for continued research based on the initial findings.
- Performance, prototype, design, dataset, report, or other scholarly product.

5. Connection to Your Future Goals

Conclude by explaining how the project aligns with your broader aspirations. This is a significant aspect of the application. Even if the research topic does not directly relate to the applicants envisioned area of impact, they should address how the research experience will build capacity for impact.

Discuss:

- How the project relates to your academic interests and future plans.
- How the experience will contribute to your professional, intellectual, ethical, or leadership development.
- How the knowledge, skills, or insights gained may help you make a positive difference in the lives of others or contribute to issues that matter to you.

Writing Tips

Successful proposals typically:

- Present a focused and feasible project that can be meaningfully advanced during the ten-week fellowship.
- Demonstrate intellectual curiosity and independent thinking.
- Explain ideas clearly without excessive technical jargon.
- Show enthusiasm for the topic.
- Help reviewers understand both the value of the research and the applicant's motivation for pursuing it.
- Connect the proposed work to larger questions, communities, or forms of impact beyond the project itself.

Additional Considerations for Applicants Working on Faculty-Led Research Projects

Proposals for students applying to participate in an existing faculty member's research project should emphasize the applicant's specific role, contribution, and learning rather than the faculty member's overall research agenda. Applicants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged for proposing work within a faculty-led project. Independent and faculty-led proposals will be evaluated using the same criteria, with emphasis on the quality of the applicant's contribution, learning, and potential impact.

1. Briefly Describe the Larger Project

This section should provide context only and demonstrate the applicant's understanding of the broader project. Provide enough information for reviewers to understand:

- The goals of the broader research project.
- The question, problem, or topic being addressed.
- Why the project is important.

2. Clearly Define Your Role

Reviewers should be able to distinguish your contribution from the work of the faculty mentor and other team members. Explain:

- The responsibilities you will undertake.
- The specific activities, methods, or research tasks you will perform.
- Any aspect of the project for which you will take primary responsibility.
- How your work contributes to the success of the larger project.

3. Demonstrate Your Intellectual Engagement

Describe:

- The questions, ideas, or issues that you personally hope to explore through the experience.
- What you expect to learn from participating in the project.
- How the experience will advance your understanding of the field, topic, or research process.

4. Propose an Individual Deliverable

Identify a scholarly, creative, or professional product that represents your own work and learning. Your deliverable should reflect your individual contribution to the project, even if the research itself is collaborative. Examples might include:

- A conference poster or presentation.
- A research paper or literature review.
- A policy brief or public-facing article.
- A data analysis report.
- A creative work or exhibition component.
- Another product developed in consultation with your mentor.

5. Connect the Experience to Your Future Goals

Explain how participation in the project will:

- Support your academic and professional development.
- Help you develop skills, knowledge, or perspectives relevant to your future plans.
- Advance your ability to create positive impact through research, scholarship, creative work, leadership, or service.

What Reviewers Will Evaluate

For proposals based on faculty-led projects, reviewers will place particular emphasis on:

- The clarity of the applicant's role.

- Evidence of intellectual curiosity and engagement.
- The applicant's level of ownership and initiative.
- The quality of the proposed individual deliverable.
- The anticipated educational and developmental value of the experience.