

4-VA at JMU Collaborative Research Award Program

4-VA proposals for the 2026 RFP are due by 11:59pm Tuesday, Feb 17, 2026 and can be submitted [here](#). See below for more details about this RFP.

Background Information

4-VA is a collaborative partnership between ten Virginia universities. The mission of 4-VA is to promote collaborations that leverage the strengths of each partner university and improve efficiencies in higher education across the Commonwealth of Virginia. We carry out this mission by advocating partnerships between faculty, departments, and colleges to generate significant, innovative solutions to educational and real-world problems.

4-VA is comprised of the following eight universities:

- James Madison University
- George Mason University
- Old Dominion University
- University of Virginia
- Virginia Military Institute
- Virginia Tech
- William & Mary
- Christopher Newport University
- Radford University

The function of 4-VA is to put ideas into action—inviting innovative collaboration across disciplinary boundaries, among the Virginia system of universities, and between educational and business. The 4-VA at James Madison University's collaborative research award program is intended to increase research collaborations among partner universities and enhance competitiveness for extramural funding.

Collaborative Research Initiative – Award Proposal Information

Aims of 4-VA Collaborative Research Awards

To strengthen Virginia's competitive edge, 4-VA provides small-scale awards to pilot research teams collaborating across 4-VA universities. With access to funding, teams can build evidence to demonstrate that their projects will make valuable, impactful contributions to their fields and enhance the potential for external funding. The collaborative nature of these awards maximizes university resources at the 4-VA institutions and leverages faculty expertise all while increasing competitiveness and capacity.

Potential outcomes of awards include the following:

- Original research
- New research partnerships and collaborations
- Events/conferences that convene researchers around common subjects and emerging opportunities
- Extramural funding applications and advancement of competitive research

Types of Awards

For the 2026 4-VA at JMU proposal cycle, three types of collaborative research awards will be offered to fund research activities during the 2027 Fiscal Year (From July 2026– June 2027):

- **Research initiation awards**, with budget requests of up to \$7,000, are intended to seed original research collaborations.

- **Research scale-up awards**, of up to \$25,000, are intended to build additional capacity for promising research collaborations. To be considered for a scale-up award, applicants must have previously received a 4-VA research initiation award **or** must provide compelling evidence of their capacity to take existing research to the next level with intentions of pursuing significant external funding upon project completion.
- **Research conference support** awards of up to \$20,000 are intended to support the convening of researchers that align with 4VA initiatives. To be considered for the research conference award, applicants must provide a compelling case for how the conference will advance the field and what research outcomes (such as white paper, submission to peer-reviewed publication or juried exhibition, or multi-institution research proposal).

Due to the nature of the 4-VA funds, all proposed research activities must be designed to expend all requested funds during the 2027 Fiscal Year. Unspent funding will not “roll-over” to subsequent fiscal years.

Guidelines for proposal and budget preparation are found below. In addition to the research initiation and scale-up awards, 4-VA at JMU offers **complementary fund awards** for collaborative projects with researchers at other 4-VA institutions.

Complementary Funds for JMU collaborators on proposals from other institutions:

To encourage and reward research collaboration among 4-VA institutions, **complementary funds** of up to \$5,000 may be requested by JMU collaborators or co-Principal Investigators who are named on 4-VA awards issued by *other participating 4-VA institutions*. To request complementary funds from 4-VA at JMU, please provide the following information to the 4-VA at JMU campus coordinator to authorize the complementary award funds:

- The original proposal that was submitted to the partner’s university that includes the JMU investigator listed as a collaborator
- A copy of the 4-VA research award notice that was issued by the partner’s university (e.g., 4-VA at VT, or 4-VA at GMU)
- A brief (1-2 page) description of the work to be completed by the JMU collaborator, including milestones and expected deliverables
- A budget that details how the requested complementary funds will be allocated. Requested complementary funds must be expended by the end of the current fiscal year and will not be eligible for “roll-over” to a subsequent fiscal year.

Complementary Funds for collaborators from other institutions on a JMU proposal:

Complementary funds (up to \$5,000) may be requested from other 4-VA institutions to support collaborators on 4-VA at JMU research initiation or scale-up awards in some cases. Not all 4-VA institutions offer complementary funds. Please [check here](#) before identifying or requesting complementary funds for a Co-PI. If you have questions about complementary fund availability for collaborators associated with your proposal, please contact the 4-VA at JMU campus coordinator, Dr. Patrice Ludwig at ludwigpm@jmu.edu or (540) 568-4132. Indicate your intent to request complementary funds from other 4-VA institutions by designating the institution and requested amount on the proposal submission form. The proposal narrative and budget must clearly distinguish between the requested award funds and the requested complementary funds. Please consider the following when incorporating complementary funds into project proposals:

- Complementary funds are not guaranteed, so proposed projects must not be dependent on them to be approved.
- Complementary funds are awarded after the original award has been approved. The 4-VA campus coordinator will communicate with you after the original award is made to explain the approval process.

- Complementary funds may only be used for expenses at the collaborator's institution. For example, if you request complementary funds from Virginia Tech, those funds must pay for activities at Virginia Tech.
- Complementary funds are contingent upon the participating school having available 4-VA funds. Not all 4-VA schools can provide complementary funds each award cycle. For questions about which schools are participating, please contact the campus coordinator.

Research Initiation Proposal Format

Collaborative Research Initiation proposals to 4-VA at JMU should include a cover page, a narrative not to exceed 5 pages, and an appendix containing budget details and supporting documents (as described below). Proposals should be single-spaced, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. Proposals must be uploaded as a single PDF file (not scanned).

- Cover page (not part of the 5-page narrative) that includes
 - The title of the proposed research project
 - The name, department and college affiliation, and contact information of the JMU investigator
 - Name and contact information of the departmental fiscal administrator who will assist the applicant in administering awarded funds
 - A list of internal and external collaborators and their respective institutions
- Project Narrative (maximum of 5-pages), to include
 - Project Summary/Executive Summary
 - A brief (250 word) summary of the proposed project that addresses how this award helps to improve Virginia's research competitiveness through collaboration
 - **Background** section that describes the context for the proposed research
 - **Research Questions** section that describes the proposed inquiry and the intellectual merit of the proposed project
 - **Research Plan** that describes the frameworks, methods, approaches, and stages of inquiry that be used to address the research questions
 - **Research Activities Timeline** describing the plan for conducting the proposed research
 - **Outcomes and Deliverables** section that describes the work product(s) resulting from the proposed work.
 - **Future Work** section that describes how the research initiation funding will lead to future extramural funding and enhanced partnerships.
- Appendix (in addition to the 5-page narrative)
 - Budget and Budget Justification
 - Provide a line-item budget for the proposed work. For each line item, indicate the expected timeline of the expenditure.
 - Provide a brief narrative (1 – 2 pages) that describes how each requested item in the budget is aligned with the research and activities plan proposed in the narrative.
 - If bridge funds are included, clearly distinguish between requested bridge funds (to be expensed in the current fiscal year) and requested project funds to be expensed the following fiscal year.
 - If complementary funds are requested from another 4-VA institution, clearly distinguish between the uses of the requested complementary funds and the research initiation award funds.
 - Proposals that involve JMU departmental resources or release time require approval from the appropriate academic unit head. When proposal submission is submitted, an email will be sent to your Dean and AUH requesting their acknowledgement of it.
 - Personnel
 - Include a 2-page (max) CV or biosketch for the investigators involved with this proposal that highlight experiences, publications, and activities most closely aligned with the proposed research

Research Scale-up Proposal Format

Collaborative Research Scale-up proposals to 4-VA at JMU should include a cover page, a narrative not to exceed 7 pages, and an appendix containing budget details and supporting documents (as described below). Proposals should be single-spaced, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. Proposals must be uploaded as a single PDF file (not scanned).

- Cover page (not part of the 7-page narrative) that includes
 - The title of the proposed research project
 - The name, department, and college affiliation, and contact information of the JMU investigator
 - Name and contact information of the departmental fiscal administrator who will assist the applicant in administering awarded funds
 - A list of internal and external collaborators and their respective institutions
- Project Narrative (maximum of 7-pages), to include
 - Project Summary/Executive Summary
 - A brief (250 word) summary of the proposed project that addresses how this award helps to improve Virginia's research competitiveness through collaboration
 - **Background** section that describes the context for the proposed research
 - **Prior Work** section that describes the investigator(s) prior research efforts upon which this scale-up proposal is founded
 - **Research Questions** section that describes the proposed inquiry and intellectual merit of the proposed project
 - **Research Plan** that describes the frameworks, methods, approaches, and stages of inquiry that be used to address the research questions
 - **Research Activities Timeline** describing the plan for conducting the proposed research
 - **Outcomes and Deliverables** section that describes the work product(s) resulting from the proposed work.
 - **Future Work** section that describes how the research initiation funding will lead to future extramural funding and enhanced partnerships.
- Appendix (in addition to the 5-page narrative)
 - Budget and Budget Justification
 - Provide a line-item budget for the proposed work. For each line item, indicate the expected timeline of the expenditure.
 - If bridge funds are included, clearly distinguish between requested bridge funds (to be expensed in the current fiscal year) and requested project funds to be expensed the following fiscal year
 - If complementary funds are requested from another 4-VA institution, clearly distinguish between the uses of the requested complementary funds and the research initiation award funds.
 - Provide a brief narrative (1 – 2 pages) that describes how each requested item in the budget is aligned with the research and activities plan proposed in the narrative.
 - Proposals that involve JMU departmental resources or release time require approval from the appropriate academic unit head. When proposal submission is submitted, an email will be sent to your Dean and AUH requesting their acknowledgement of it.
 - Personnel
 - Include a 1–2-page CV or biosketch for the investigators involved with this proposal

4-VA at JMU Research Conference Support Proposal Format

Proposals must be submitted as a **single PDF file** (not scanned), using **12-point font, single spacing, and 1-inch margins**. The proposal should include the following sections:

Cover Page (not included in page count)

- Title of the proposed conference
- Name, department, college affiliation, and contact information of the JMU investigator (PI)
- Name and contact information of the departmental fiscal administrator
- List of internal and external collaborators and their respective institutions

Project Narrative (maximum of 5 pages)

Executive Summary:

A 250-word summary describing the purpose of the conference, its alignment with 4-VA goals, and how it will improve Virginia's research competitiveness through collaboration.

Background and Rationale

- Description of the research area or emerging opportunity the conference addresses.
- Justification for the need and timing of the conference.

Conference Objectives

- Clear articulation of the goals and intended outcomes of the conference.
- Explanation of how the conference will advance the field and foster collaboration.

Conference Plan

- Description of the format (e.g., in-person, hybrid, virtual), agenda, and key activities.
- Identification of target participants and institutions.
- Description of how the conference will be organized and managed.

Expected Outcomes

- Description of anticipated deliverables such as:
 - White paper
 - Submission to peer-reviewed publication or juried exhibition
 - Multi-institution research proposal
- Explanation of how these outcomes will be tracked and assessed.

Future Work

- Description of how the conference will lead to future research collaborations or extramural funding opportunities.

Appendix

Budget and Budget Justification

- Line-item budget with timeline for expenditures.
- 1–2 page narrative explaining how each budget item supports the conference goals.
- If complementary funds are requested from another 4-VA institution, clearly distinguish their use from the main award funds.

Personnel

- 1–2 page CV or biosketch for the PI and key collaborators.

Additional Notes

- All funds must be expended during the FY2027 fiscal year (July 2026–June 2027).
- Proposals involving departmental resources or release time require approval from the appropriate academic unit head.
- Complementary funds are not guaranteed and must be requested separately.

Resources

A budget template and example budget justification are available here:

- Budget template: [4-VA RFP Budget Template.xls.url](#)
- Budget justification template: [4-VA Budget Justification Example.docx](#)

Funding Priorities

4-VA at JMU encourages projects to focus on the following funding priorities of the program:

- Creating and/or strengthening research partnerships across the Commonwealth of Virginia
- Incorporating undergraduate and graduate student researchers into the project
- Developing capacity and a strong plan for securing future extramural funding

Screening Criteria for all 4-VA at JMU Collaborative Research Award Proposals

1. Awards are open to JMU faculty. Faculty may name staff as Co-PIs.
2. The applicant must obtain support from their unit head and dean (or equivalent supervisors) for the proposed award activities. Following proposal submission, unit heads and deans will be contacted to verify support for the proposal.
3. Projects must contain an aspect of collaboration. Collaboration outside of your home institution is strongly encouraged. Interinstitutional collaboration may be included, but the strongest proposals include an external partner. External partners may be from other 4-VA member institutions, although this is not required. Other examples of acceptable institutions may include other state institutions (e.g., schools or government agencies) or other Virginia organizations (e.g., Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries), etc. Priority is given to collaborations that directly impact the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals submitted to 4-VA at JMU will be evaluated by an internal panel of research advocates (including associate deans and research liaisons) representing all the colleges at JMU. Reviewers will evaluate how well each proposal addresses the following criteria:

1. The proposed work is aligned with JMU 4-VA funding priorities and is compliant with screening criteria, including supervisor approval.
2. The proposed research exhibits collaboration with 4-VA institutions or other partners in the Commonwealth of Virginia

3. The proposed research has potential for strategic impact to the unit, college, university, and/or the Commonwealth of Virginia
4. The proposed research plan, outcomes, deliverables, and assessment are aligned with the budget request
5. (For Research Scale-Up Proposals) The proposal builds upon a body of prior research efforts. Prior research outcomes and products indicate the potential for success of the proposed scale-up effort.
6. The proposal indicates how this award will increase potential to secure extramural funding and the continuation of collaborative research beyond the 4-VA award. Identification of specific funding opportunities and how the proposed research will advance competitiveness is highly encouraged.
7. The proposed research is aligned with departmental, college, institutional, and/or Commonwealth of Virginia goals

Submission Deadlines and Instructions

- 4-VA at JMU offers one proposal cycle per year. Requested funds must be expended in the following fiscal year (FY2027). **Awarded funds will not “roll-over” to the next fiscal year.**
- Proposals requesting funding in the Spring 2026 cycle are due by Tuesday, February 17, 2026.
- [Click here to submit your proposal.](#)
- Only proposals submitted through the procedure listed above will be considered for funding.
- Submit questions to 4-VA at JMU Campus Coordinator, Dr. Patrice Ludwig, ludwigpm@jmu.edu.

Expectations

1. Awardees are required to complete a 4-VA follow-up survey at least once every year, for up to five years following the award. Additional assessment information will be provided upon award.
2. Faculty are expected to acknowledge 4-VA support as a part of publications by using the official 4-VA logo on printed materials and by using language provided by 4-VA.
3. Additional expectations regarding expenditure processes and policies will be provided upon award.
4. Funds will be used according to the budget provided in the original proposal. The 4-VA campus coordinator must approve any changes or additions to the budget. Should there be unused funds, those funds will return to 4-VA unless an updated or adapted proposal is submitted and approved by the 4-VA coordinator in advance.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

Federal, state, and university policies, procedures and rules apply to all awards. For further information regarding these rules, please contact Procurement, the Financial Procedures Manual, and Accounts Payable. If you believe your project will result in patentable work, you should discuss requirements and policies with Director of Research to Impact, Leigh Evans, evanslf@jmu.edu.

Several ethical practice review protocols are required for research involving human subjects, animal subjects, biohazardous materials, etc. If you have questions about the requirements that may apply to your project, contact Carolyn Strong (strongcd@jmu.edu, x8-6872), Director of the Office of Research Integrity.