SEED GRANT PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

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Applicable Department   : Faculty

I.   PURPOSE

To accelerate groundbreaking research at VinUni towards achieving the objectives of Meaningful Impact for the Greater Good, Building Talent and Infrastructure for the Future, and Enhancing the Reputation of VinUniversity and Vingroup, a Seed Grant Program for VinUniversity researchers has been approved. With the Seed Grant Program, VinUni will seek to become a hub of collaborative ground breaking research, forging vital connections among researchers, students, staff, and external partners and bringing bold ideas and powerful innovations that make a real positive impact on people, quality of life and the planet.

II.   GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Seed Grant Program will support VinUni research in meeting the following overarching objectives. Accordingly, the decision to award funding for a proposal will be guided by the extent to which submitted proposals meets these considerations.

1. Initiate research with results that could lead to larger-scale, longer-term programs that are funded externally by local, national or international organizations.

2. Conduct research that has near term measurable positive impact and addresses urgent issues, so as to build the reputation and name recognition of VinUni by accomplishing some quick but notable wins.

3. Build research capability and self-sufficiency by acquiring equipment, databases, and other resources needed to pursue ground-breaking research.

4. Build collaborations with international and national peer institutions to extend the infrastructure for conducting and supporting research available to VinUni faculty, as well as gain exposure to research practices at these institutions.

5. Provide opportunities to build and enhance research skills and expertise of VinUni researchers and students, to grow the next generation of future talent and academic leaders.

6. Partner with companies in the Vingroup eco-system to conduct research with real-world applications and with direct benefit to Vingroup.

7. Build new and lasting interdisciplinary research collaborations across VinUni, Vingroup and other collaborators and partners.

III.   TIMEFRAME

The Seed Grant Program is expected to launch in September 2020. The first round of grants is expected to be issued in October.

Research projects funded through this program are expected to be completed within one year; however longer projects and extensions will be allowed as needed.

IV. BUDGETING

Detailed budgeting requirements will be articulated subsequently, with the intention to keep the process of spending the funds and documentation requirements simple, easy to use and quick, while following the principles and guidelines below.

1. Unallowable costs:

    i. Salaries for VinUni faculty or staff

    ii. Rental rates for VinUni facilities and labs

    iii. Recreational expenses such as food, entertainment, travel that are not directly required for conducting research. For example, if the research involves providing food to certain populations as part of the research activity, or it involves travelling to research destinations, those travel and expenses can be included in the budget.

2. Costs for travel, student hourly rates, consultants, outside experts, vendor services, events etc. will be based on the cost norms established at VinUni.

3. VinUni Overhead Rates: Since a significant amount of university resources are involved in supporting research, it is standard practice to include an overhead expense as a percentage of the direct projects costs. Examples of such indirect costs to be covered in the overhead are: research administration support, facilities, student services, IT services, etc. However, for this internal seed grant program, no overhead costs will be charged to the direct costs. Thus, the overall requested budget for the project will include only direct costs incurred.

V. REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The Office of the Vice-Provost (VP) is responsible for establishing the policies and procedures and for the administration of the Seed Grant Program. The submission, review and approval processes are as follows:

1. The Principal Investigator (PI) will submit an online form and attach the detailed project proposal, the budget template, the CVs of the research team and any supporting documents.

2. The VP office will review the documents and ensure that they are complete and meet the requirements of the Seed Grant program.

3. In the proposal, the PI will have the option to suggest specific reviewers and/or the areas of expertise from which the reviewer should have in order to fully evaluate the merit and quality of the proposed work.

4. The VP office, in consultation with the Research Affairs Committee (RAC) will assign the reviewers for each proposal. Reviewers may be internal to VinUni, from the Vingroup companies, or external experts.

5. Reviewers will rate specific attributes of the proposal and provide written comments supporting their ratings. Reviewers will make specific recommendations to either fund the project, to require substantive changes, or to not fund the proposal.

6. The VP office will collect the reviews and recommendations from the reviewers.

7. The RAC will discuss the recommendations. Note: Even when the recommendation is to approve the proposal with no or minimum changes, the RAC may decide to not

grant funding in order to ensure that the overall portfolio of the funded projects represents the objectives of the Seed Grant Program. The RAC may also decide to grant either the full amount, partial funding or in some cases more than requested funding in case the RAC determines that more funds are needed to ensure the project's success.

8. The VP will make his/her recommendations regarding funding to the Provost who will make the final decision in consultation with the President.

9. The VP office will communicate the final decision to the PI.

10. If the research is funded, the PI is responsible for following the necessary steps, the budgetary guidelines, VinUni policies and requirements and other guidelines to conduct the research.

VI. CHANGES TO THE APPROVED RESEARCH

Should the PI see the need to make significant changes in the scope of work, design, objectives, or approaches of the research, the PI must contact the VP office, describing the changes and the rationale and get approval for the revised scope of work and research approach.

VII. REPORTING

1. The PI will submit the required technical and project update reports on a quarterly basis, using the template provided (TBD).

2. At the conclusion of the project, the PI will provide a complete report of the expenses, research outcomes, publications or manuscripts or working papers, and plans for future work.

3. In addition to written reports, the research team may be invited to present the outcomes in a workshop, symposium or conference organized by VinUni or Vingroup.

VIII. APPENDICES

1. Proposal Application Form & Technical Description Template
2. Bio-Sketch Template of Key Personnel
3. Proposal Budget Template
4. Proposal Review Form
5. Online Proposal Submission Form

The documents are available at this link. Use your VinUni account to view and download.

Developed by: Vice Provost Office, VinUniversity
Reviewed by: Research Affairs Committee, VinUniversity
Approved by: President and Provost, VinUniversity