

Emerging Research Opportunities in Cannabis (EROC) Internal Seed Grants 2024 Request for Proposals

The Center for Cannabis Policy, Research, and Outreach (CCPRO) is issuing a call for research proposals related to topics of Emerging Research Opportunities in Cannabis (EROC). This is a request for research proposals focusing on a wide range of topics that include, but are not limited to: impact of changes in state and national policy related to the cannabis industry and consumption, healthcare provider practice and scope; trends in the use of “novel” cannabinoids (e.g., delta-8-THC, HHC, THCO, etc.); mechanisms of cannabinoid impact on the body (human and model organisms); the causes and short- and long-term effects of cannabis and cannabinoid use; outcomes of use; questions regarding youth access and societal impact; the interaction of hemp production and the hemp industry with the cannabis industry; novel opportunities afforded by the hemp industry; and other critical issues that are faced by Washington State and its residents related to cannabis and hemp.

The EROC internal seed grant program is focused on increasing the capacity and ability of WSU researchers to be successful in obtaining competitive funds from federal agencies and industry that will address emerging issues facing Washington’s cannabis industry and the state’s citizens and communities as a result of cannabis being legal within the state. **It is intended to provide seed money to generate preliminary data that will ultimately be used to leverage new support from competitive funding programs and/or from corporations that will bring the best science to bear on Washington’s problems.** Thus, proposals that bring together a novel research team or work toward establishing a proof of concept are encouraged. It is also intended to provide funding for new research directions to fill fundamental knowledge gaps and enhance our capacity to address significant issues connected to cannabis in Washington State. The EROC program is not designed for supplementing currently funded projects or as a substitute for other funding (or to provide gap funding). A proposal should not overlap with currently funded grants. Instead, proposals focusing on emerging research areas of relevance to Washington State are highly encouraged. WSU researchers may submit proposals if they have received funding before from this program or the previously run DMAc grant program (either as PI or as Co-PI, either in the past or currently). However, a final report outlining research outcomes from all prior DMAc and EROC grants will be required in order to be considered for funding again. Second year funding will not be released until an annual report for the first year time period is submitted and approved. Details of these reporting requirements are outlined below.

We will give priority to proposals that clearly articulate an alignment with the CCPRO strategic research goals. These goals seek to: **(1)** catalyze transformative discoveries to address health, societal and industry challenges in alignment with WSU cannabis research aspirations [**be strategic**], **(2)** encourage collaborations [**be collaborative**], and **(3)** advance CCPRO's reach both nationally and internationally in emerging areas of achievement [**be visible**]. CCPRO strives to support the highest quality training opportunities within the research programs that it supports, and the use of these funds to support graduate and undergraduate students is encouraged, but not required.

TIMELINE FOR THE 2025 CALENDAR YEAR GRANT PROGRAM

Sept. 13, 2024	Request for Proposals issued
Oct. 4, 2024	Q&A Session at the WSU Cannabis Symposium
Oct. 18, 2024	Q&A Session over zoom, 12 PM–1 PM, send request for Zoom link to taklein@wsu.edu

Oct. 30, 2024	Deadline for submission of annual and final project reports for current and previous DMAc and EROC grants (send to taklein@wsu.edu ; cc gangd@wsu.edu)
Nov. 15, 2024	New proposals due to CCPRO (electronic submission, see page 5)
Jan. 15, 2025	Anticipated announcement of awards

WHAT IS AN EMERGING RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY?

- An emerging research opportunity is a topic where research-based information is needed and where WSU research activity is currently under-invested.
- Priority will be given to opportunities that have significant potential to impact the health of Washington citizens or the economy of the state (in either a negative or positive direction).
- The research should position WSU to take a leading regional and national position as the topic is recognized as being of regional or national importance. Research approaches to be undertaken and opportunities to be addressed are not limited to traditional clinical or lab-based research topic areas (although both are certainly encouraged), but may address social and economic issues, and industries related to cannabis and its impact within the state, region and nation. Projects will be judged based on how well they meet the two criteria below.
 1. A description of the emerging opportunity in Washington and the knowledge gaps that will be filled by the subsequent competitively funded research.
 2. A description of how this seed money will be used to generate data that will enhance the competitiveness of efforts to obtain additional external support. Thus, a strategy for how this data is critical to enhance the competitiveness of subsequent research proposals is essential.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

The lead PI must be a faculty member within a WSU System college. Research professor track faculty members are eligible to be lead PIs but associates in research, post-doctoral associates, adjunct faculty, and courtesy faculty members are not. Each faculty member may only submit a single proposal as the lead PI. However, they are welcome to participate on additional proposals in other roles (e.g., co-PI, collaborator, etc.).

WHAT IS THE DURATION OF THE GRANT?

The maximum project duration is 2 years, starting **July 1, 2025**. Proposals can, however, be written for 1-year if appropriate for the scope of work. For 2-year grants, the first-year budget may run through **June 30, 2026**.

WHAT FUNDING AMOUNTS WILL BE PERMITTED?

Awards are limited to **\$40,000**. The budget can include equipment that stays at WSU, supplies, pre-paid services, conference travel, consultation fees, and non-PI salary support.

Awards will be made for a maximum of **24 months**. The budget may be composed of two parts. *Budget Part A* must be expended between the award date and June 30, 2026. *Budget Part B* must be expended between July 1, 2026, and June 30, 2027. Expenditure dates are non-negotiable, and carryovers are not allowed for this funding source. There will be special expenditure and reporting requirements.

*Efficiency in using resources will be an important element of the review – the minimum amount essential to accomplish the objectives of the project should be requested. Partial funding may occur, depending on review and funds available. Matching funds are not required. *PIs who have had previous DMac or EROC funding must include a brief summary of their accomplishments as a result of the previously funded project(s), in addition to having submitted progress/final reports on those projects.**

WHAT ARE THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS?

All recipients of EROC grant funds are expected to submit a **final project report** at the conclusion of the funded project (by September 30 of the project termination year, or 90 days after termination of the project if the project end date is not on June 30th). This report should outline:

- The impact of the work completed, such as stakeholder needs met, preliminary data/results required for large-scale proposal generated and how those are/will support larger proposal submission, any societal impact, etc. Note: A list of specific project activities carried out (what you did when, a list of specific experimental treatments applied, etc., items typically listed in the methods section of a scientific paper) is not requested nor desired—actual or potential **impact** is what is being asked for here;
- List of publications, outreach activities, website URLs, etc., resulting or anticipated to result from the EROC grant;
- List of follow-on proposal(s) submitted or being drafted, including listing of the funding source(s) and program(s), overall goal(s) of the proposed follow-on project(s), timeframe for proposal submission, and any results/news about proposal status with the funding. Within 6 months of the completion of the proposal, the project leader must provide a copy of a proposal submitted to a competitive funding source or to a corporate sponsor;
- Involvement of students (grad, undergrad, high school) in the project and impact on their degree progression/career plans;
- Involvement of post-doctoral scholars in the project and impact on their career plans; and
- Involvement of underrepresented groups in the project.

In addition, to receive the second year of funding for a two-year proposal, an **annual progress report** must be submitted by April 30, 2026. This report (of up to 4 pages in length) will be approved, if:

- Satisfactory progress toward the originally proposed objectives is documented (use format outlined above for final project report as a guide);
- A detailed plan for application(s) for significant sources of competitive non-university funds to be submitted is included. This funding application plan should list targeted funding source, amount anticipated to be requested, overall goal of the proposed research, and how the results from the EROC grant will support the anticipated proposal; and
- A (revised) budget for the remainder of the project period is included, along with a budget justification (updated as needed), including identification of the first-year funds that remain and how they would be spent in addition to the second year's funding request.

Release of second year funds (if adequate funds are available) will be granted upon approval of the report or will be held back until the annual project report is submitted and approved.

WHAT CRITERIA WILL BE USED TO EVALUATE PROPOSALS?

Have the researchers (PI or any Co-PI included in the proposal) submitted final reports for any previous DMAc or EROC grants that have expired or have they submitted annual reports for any currently active DMAc or EROC grants and have those reports been approved by CCPRO? (yes/no) This is a simple check-off. A “Yes” answer means that the proposal can be considered by the review panel. A “No” means that it will be held until such a time that any outstanding reports have been received and approved. Details regarding these annual/final reports are outlined above. Failure to submit by March 31 will likely lead to lack of approval in time for new proposal review.

Ability of the project to define and address an emerging research opportunity in cannabis (25 points).

The proposal should clearly describe why the subject of the proposal should be considered to be an Emerging Research Opportunity. The rationale and significance of the problem must be clearly articulated, including how stakeholders might ultimately benefit from completion of the competitively funded research, the information gaps to be filled (the researchable questions) and how the research will contribute to an overall solution. The intended output of research conducted under the EROC is to enhance the competitiveness of subsequent proposals.

Ability of Project to catalyze future extramural support (25 points). A primary objective of this grant program is to encourage faculty to develop preliminary data that will enhance the competitiveness of future competitive grant proposals. This anticipated outcome(s) must be clearly delineated. Potential funding sources and the project leaders’ strategy for developing a competitive proposal for those sources are required elements of the proposal. Anticipated competitive extramural grant applications that will be facilitated by the use of these funds must be explicitly described in the grant proposal (agency, program, application deadline). Requests for second-year funding must be accompanied by documentation that competitive extramural grant application(s) have been submitted or are being developed.

Appropriate research methodologies and approaches (20 points). The proposals will be reviewed to evaluate whether the approach and methodology, as articulated, are sufficient to accomplish the stated objectives. This should also include extension and outreach activities as appropriate.

Interdisciplinary, team-based approach to address the issue(s) (10 points). Not all emerging research opportunities in cannabis are interdisciplinary in nature; but for the many that are, it is important to describe the multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary components of the project. The formation of teams to address the emerging research opportunities is strongly recommended.

Faculty capacity to successfully complete the project (10 points). The researchers listed for the project should be actively involved in the project and have a documented history of research productivity that is appropriate for the research being proposed. The specific role of each faculty member listed on the proposal must be explicitly and clearly described and the component of the project that depends on each faculty member’s effort must be stated. Is the budget appropriate?

Extension/Outreach/Stakeholder Involvement plan (10 points). Addressing emerging research opportunities that face Washington in the cannabis space is not only limited to research but must be accompanied by appropriate action to extend the findings to stakeholders, the public, and legislators. This activity may take several forms and be tailored to research programs that span from basic to applied sciences: a few examples include presentations at outreach activities/meetings, inclusion of stakeholders in project execution, etc.

Separation from currently funded projects. If the project appears to be a component, routine continuation, expansion, or supplementation of significant currently funded (or recently funded) research, it is not eligible for EROC funding. The purpose of the EROC program is to support new research directions that have not been pursued at WSU before.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

The proposal must be submitted using the web form available at the program web page (orap.wsu.edu/funding/internal/eroc). The proposal must contain the following elements:

1. Title, lead PI name, department, and contact information; cooperating PI(s) name(s), department(s) and contact information
2. Requested duration
3. Project Abstract, including brief description of Emerging Research Opportunity (s) being addressed and the research strategy that is proposed (250 words)
4. Amount requested for the first year and estimate of the funding to be requested in the second year, if applicable.
5. **Proposal Narrative** not to exceed 2,500 words, addressing each of the evaluation criteria, and including the following:
 - Rationale & Significance of the problem from the perspective of Washington stakeholders. It should be made clear how the research conducted in this project will close existing gaps in our ability to conduct research that addresses an Emerging Research Opportunity for Washington's stakeholders
 - Description of ability of work/findings to apply across communities and/or industries
 - Objectives
 - Research Methodology. Intended Outputs must be clearly stated as well as Outreach/Extension/Stakeholder involvement activities
 - A description of how these results will position the group to successfully obtain competitive extramural funding, including information about the intended source of those funds (agency, program, deadlines, etc.)
 - Description of the Team, along with individual roles and responsibilities
 - If applicable, graduate, undergraduate and high school student participation in the project, including identification of the degree program in which the student(s) are or will enroll.
 - Timeline/Gantt chart (may be attached as a figure, if needed)
6. Reference citations from the Proposal Narrative
7. If applicable, an Annual Progress Report (for Year-2 applicants – up to 4 pages) and Summary of Results from previous DMAC- or EROC-funded project(s) (1 page)
8. List of proposals submitted to external funding sources as a result of current/prior DMAC or EROC funding
9. Up to a two-page CV for each PI or co- PI (attachment)
10. Detailed budget in [WSU Budget Workbook](#) (Excel) format and budget justification not exceeding 500 words, including a description of any matching or leveraged dollars (if applicable, although not required). Do not include any F&A. All salaries and wages must be included but not benefits. Do not include graduate student tuition. Graduate Students should be paid at the Graduate Research Assistantship levels. *Salary and benefits for permanent faculty and staff cannot be paid from the requested funds.* Resource use efficiency should be clear in the Research Methodology and Approach
11. Current & Pending Support (attachment)
12. Discussion of overlap of the proposal with currently funded research (250 words)

13. [WSU Research Assurances](#) information

Submit the proposal electronically through the ORAP portal (orap.wsu.edu/funding/internal/eroc/) by 5 PM, November 15, 2024.

REVIEW PROCESS

All proposals will be reviewed by a panel consisting of the CCPRO External Advisory Committee and additional *ad hoc* reviewers as needed.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions about this RFP, please contact the CCPRO by email at taklein@wsu.edu or gangd@wsu.edu.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

All publications, posters, websites, field day presentations, etc. resulting from this internal competitive grant program must include the following information: "This activity was funded, in part, with an Emerging Research Opportunities in Cannabis Internal Seed Grant from the Washington State University Center for Cannabis Policy, Research and Outreach, Project EROC-xxxxxxx."

WSU programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported to the WSU Office of Compliance and Civil Rights (CCR) at ccr@wsu.edu and 509-335-8288.