

The Institute for Society, Culture, and Environment (ISCE)

Spring 2026: ISCE PREP Program: Foundation Funding

Preparing your Research for an Extramural Proposal

The Institute for Society, Culture, and Environment (ISCE), a Virginia Tech research investment institute, is offering an opportunity for a cohort of faculty members whose work is grounded in the [social sciences](#) or humanities and who are planning to submit a competitive research grant proposal or fellowship application to a non-federally funded foundation (e.g. Spencer Foundation, W.T. Grant Foundation, American Council of Learned Societies) within the next nine months. The program is intended for faculty who are relatively new to foundation funding, or whose prior foundation proposals for which they have served as PI or a co-investigator have not been funded, but who are actively pursuing an externally-funded research/scholarly agenda. Faculty selected for the program will receive ISCE mentoring and assistance to prepare the proposal to be submitted to a foundation of their choice.

Program: This semester-long, structured program consists of didactic and interactive sessions where cohort members learn (a) the grantsmanship process, including how to write a compelling narrative and develop a budget (if necessary); and (b) to craft a competitive grant or fellowship proposal.

Semester activities include:

- Development of a compelling 1 to 2-page concept paper that presents the project idea for communicating with a program officer or foundation official;
- Attendance at mandatory, in-person sessions every 2-3 weeks of approximately 1.5-2 hours each to discuss grant writing basics and review funding agency requirements as well as sessions focused on writing, reviewing, critiquing, and discussing cohort member proposals; and
- Development of a complete draft of a proposal to be refined for submission to the identified foundation by August 2026 (or soon thereafter, dependent on organization deadline).

Cohort members are required to spend time outside of sessions on tailored assignments and preparing their proposals and brief written reviews of their peers' proposals. The ISCE leadership team will provide group and tailored mentoring throughout the semester.

Eligibility: Faculty from any department/program across Virginia Tech's campuses whose research addresses significant societal concerns that impact people and places through a social science or humanist lens on topics of historical, cultural or social importance are eligible to apply. The PI is expected to be a full-time, tenure-track/tenured faculty member or a research faculty member with ORI approved PI status.

Requirements: Award recipients must commit to attending scheduled in-person meetings, contacting program officers as appropriate, providing feedback on proposal ideas and drafts of cohort members in a timely manner, and submitting a grant proposal or fellowship application by August 2026 (or soon thereafter) for which they will serve as PI. In addition, award recipients will provide ISCE with an annual report detailing activities leading up to the submission of the proposal as well as publications, presentations, and any other grant or fellowship submissions for three years after completion of the program.

Timeline: The deadline for applications is **December 4, 2025**. A single pdf file of the application [last name_ISCE_PREP.pdf] should be emailed to Yancey Crawford (yanceyc3@vt.edu). Notification of acceptance will be made by December 16, 2025.

Review Criteria: A committee consisting of the ISCE leadership team and affiliated faculty with diverse expertise in different focus areas will review the proposals. The review criteria will include a brief overview of the faculty's research/scholarly agenda, the scientific merit, impact and feasibility of the proposed idea for which they anticipate pursuing foundation funding, relevance to ISCE's [mission](#) and [thematic areas](#) and/or the [University's Research Frontiers](#). Past recipients of ISCE awards will also be evaluated on outcomes of previous ISCE support.

Selected Applicants: ISCE anticipates selecting 6-10 applicants to participate in the program. Selected participants will:

- Receive group and tailored mentoring from ISCE leadership;
- Participate in in-person proposal writing seminars that will include comprehensive instruction on the details of successful proposal development and resources of the University that support proposal submission;
- Participate in in-person working sessions with other cohort members to share progress and obtain feedback for continuous improvement; and
- Have their proposal reviewed by an internal panel of experts (i.e., mock panel review).

In addition, the internal panel of experts and cohort members will select the top proposal to receive a small amount of funding to jumpstart their proposed project.

Questions: Contact Yancey Crawford (yanceyc3@vt.edu)

Application Guidelines

[Format: single spaced; 12-point font; 1-inch margins]

Cover Page (PREP Cover Sheet required): Include name, rank, department and college, brief statement of why you are interested in being a part of the PREP program, tentative project title and project summary (~150 words). The summary will be used to announce the program participants and will be published on the ISCE website.

Project description (2 pages max): Describe the research project or scholarly work that will be the focus of your proposal and your plans to date for the proposed project. Include the (1) project's goals, approach, anticipated outcomes, and potential impact; and (2) how the project aligns with foundation funding priorities. If not within a traditional social science or humanities discipline or department, explain how your work would be considered within a social science or humanities paradigm.

Plan for submission of an extramural proposal by August 2026 (1 page max): Identify the potential foundation, specific call for proposals or fellowship applications, due date for your planned proposal submission, and the level of funding you anticipate requesting.

Biosketch (1 page max): Includes prior experience (funded or not) in preparing grant proposals, participation in other grant writing programs, and list of key publications relevant to the proposal idea.