



Center for Advancing Research and Solutions for Society

Open Call for Letters of Intent and Proposals

The Center for Advancing Research and Solutions for Society (CARSS) is calling for the submission of Letters of Intent (LoI) leading to proposals consistent with the long-term mission of the Center. Letters may be submitted year round, and will receive preliminary review within two weeks. Full proposals will be requested from selected applicants, for review by the CARSS Steering Committee and outside experts as needed. It is recommended that all potential applicants contact CARSS Director David Featherman prior to submission of a LoI.

Mission

CARSS incubates innovative interdisciplinary projects that develop, implement, and evaluate bold evidence-based solutions to vexing societal problems. To that end, CARSS also invests in boundary-crossing scholarship between disciplines and professional fields that expand the intellectual foundations and methodological capacities of the social and behavioral sciences. CARSS' expert staff work closely with collaborative teams to develop projects, arrange project funding, implementation and assessment, and scale up for widespread adoption.

Two types of applications will be considered:

Field development projects will catalyze potentially emerging disciplinary areas and interdisciplinary scholarship with broad implications for both intellectual and future practical outcomes. LoI should include a brief prospectus of the idea, names of contributors, a proposed set of activities that would assist the exploration over a one to three-year period (e.g. workshops, conferences, exploratory meetings), and a budget.

Problem-based projects will constitute multidisciplinary teams to develop, test, and scale up strategic solutions to real-world social problems. Projects typically will involve two phases; this call for proposals is to elicit Phase I activities. In Phase I, a period of one to three years, a project will clarify its objectives and the initial boundaries of its work, select the core and other key participants for the longer term, and evolve, via face-to-face meetings and virtual collaboratories, (a) effective patterns of collaboration toward its objectives, and (b) a plan of work over a subsequent multi-year period. Projects should be high-risk, potentially high-payoff explorations that will exceed the limits of what is typically submitted to study sections and as requests for proposals. The most promising of the Phase I projects will subsequently be selected for Phase II seed support of pilot work under CARSS aegis, implementing and positioning the project for extramural funding and ultimately a long-term administrative base outside of CARSS, subsequent to the two-phase incubation period.

Two kinds of Phase I projects are envisioned (see www.carss.umich.edu for illustrations of previously funded projects):

- Very early, small-scale and short-term exploratory efforts to brainstorm, define, and develop potential future collaborative projects (one year, \$10,000 to \$25,000)
- Seminars and networking on more highly developed topics, intended to lead to the establishment of longer-term collaborative projects (one-to-three years at \$25,000 to \$100,000 per year).

A given project could begin as the initial, preliminary kind and become the second, or it could advance more quickly from a more substantially formed base.

Letters of Intent Contents

While all CARSS projects place the advancement of the social and behavioral sciences in the foreground, project ideas are invited and welcomed from the full range of academic and professional perspectives at U-M. For both field development and problem-based projects, LoI, not to exceed 5 pages in length, should describe:

- The project's goals and intended outcomes, emphasizing aspects of novelty, innovativeness, and risk-taking that will be entailed;
- The societal problems and/or intellectual dilemmas to be addressed;
- The advances that could accrue to the social and behavioral sciences;
- The rationale behind the project: Why this? Why now? Why Michigan?
- The type of legacy products expected to be produced. Examples include research-based policy briefs or white papers, federally-supported collaborative research programs that consolidate new fields of inquiry, or a curriculum or textbook that synthesizes this new field.
- Who will lead the effort, and who from UM and elsewhere are likely to be invited to participate, addressing the mix of disciplinary (or subdisciplinary) perspectives that are essential to the project (abbreviated CV for the core proposer(s) should be attached);
- A time line of proposed Phase I activities
- A Phase I budget.

Review Process and Selection Criteria

LoI (preferably following an initial e-mail or phone inquiry) will be reviewed for relevance and fit by the Center Director.

LoI's judged to meet these initial standards will be reviewed by the Steering Committee established by the Provost to guide the Center's development and operation.

The criteria below will be used to judge submissions. (Those identified with an asterisk (*) do not apply to Field Development projects.)

Projects selected for support under the aegis of this call for LoI will have demonstrated that:

- The problems and dilemmas being addressed are compelling in terms of their impact on society, communities, and/or individuals.*
- The project has the potential to advance foundational knowledge and to link that advance to policy and practice solutions AND/OR to evolve new fields at the boundaries of existing social science and other disciplines.
- The project draws upon the extraordinary resources and infrastructure of the University of Michigan.
- The project has the potential to attract and retain the interest and active involvement of a diverse range of expertise and talent, often involving others from around the country and the world; some projects may draw principle leadership from elsewhere, but Michigan faculty must comprise the core of each project.
- The project is strong in terms of leadership, participation, and collaborative strategies.
- The project has the potential for attracting external funding over the long term.*

Post Award Procedures

When recommended by the Steering Committee for funding, The Center Director and/or Center staff will work interactively with the proposed project leader to further develop the project idea. Functioning in the manner of an operating foundation, CARSS staff facilitates project leaders interactively and iteratively to convert the concepts described in the LoI into a fully developed project with a diverse interdisciplinary leadership core. Project implementation in Phase II is also expected to be highly interactive with CARSS staff.

Initial funding for projects selected for support will be provided by the Center. Funding levels from CARSS resources preclude buy-outs of faculty time. However, CARSS staff and the project leaders, working together, will seek funding from external sources for projects that evolve into longer-term efforts of greater magnitude.

Progress in implementation of projects supported under the aegis of the Center will be monitored by Center staff and by members of the Steering Committee through regular written reports describing project progress. Investigators should be prepared to make periodic presentations to the CARSS Steering Committee and to interact collegially with investigators from other CARSS projects.

Preliminary inquiries and LoI should be addressed to:
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Additional information about CARSS and its projects is available on the CARSS website at www.carss.umich.edu