UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLOTTE
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & EARTH AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

CHESS Faculty Research Grants Program 2027-28

Summary
Eligibility
Application Process
Proposal Format
Budget Guidelines
Proposal Review Process and Criteria
Research Compliance
Final Report
Frequently Asked Questions about FRG Proposals

Summary

The College of Humanities & Earth and Social Sciences (CHESS) Faculty Research Grants (FRG) Program provides internal funding to support faculty research and scholarly activities. Funding from this program is generally used to start or advance research projects that will result in new publications, creative productions, and/or proposals for external funding.

The CHESS FRG award period covers a period of 12 months aligning with the University's fiscal year. Funds for the 2027-28 CHESS FRG Program will be available starting on July 1, 2027, and must be expended by May 31, 2028.

- The maximum for an individual faculty member's FRG budget is $8,000, including a stipend of up to $4,000.
- Joint proposals involving two CHESS faculty members may request up to $16,000 ($8,000 per faculty member, with a maximum total stipend of $8,000).

Proposals for funding through the 2027-28 CHESS FRG Program are due by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, December 7, 2026. Proposals must be uploaded as a single PDF file to the proposal submission form linked on the CHESS website. Applicants whose proposals are approved for funding will be notified by January 29, 2026.

Based on the review committee's assessment and at the discretion of the Dean, proposals submitted by new assistant professors within the first three years of their appointments at UNC Charlotte may be recommended for revision. In such cases, resubmissions will be due by February 22, 2026, with final notifications provided by March 19, 2026.

Eligibility

The CHESS FRG program is available to all full-time tenure-track or tenured faculty in the College, as well as faculty with clinical, practical, or research appointments whose job descriptions include expectations for research.

- Faculty members with either 9-month or 12-month appointments are eligible to apply.
- Faculty with 12-month appointments may not receive stipends but may apply for the full $8,000.
- Members of the review committee are eligible to apply; however, they will neither rank nor participate in the discussion of their own proposals.
- Part-time faculty, EHRA staff, lecturers, visiting professors, adjunct professors, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty on phased retirement are NOT eligible to apply.
- Faculty with active FRGs who enter phased retirement must forgo any remaining FRG funds.
- Questions regarding eligibility can be directed to chess-research@charlotte.edu.

A faculty member may submit only one proposal for the CHESS FRG program per application cycle. Any faculty member who receives funding through this program must sit out a cycle before submitting another FRG proposal. In other words, a faculty member who was awarded a FRG for 2026-27 is not eligible to apply for another FRG in 2027-28.

UNC Charlotte's internal funding programs seek to promote research at this institution. An individual who leaves employment at UNC Charlotte before or during the award period, by that action, immediately forfeits any claim to funding under the CHESS FRG program.

Application Process

Proposal guidelines and forms are available on the CHESS website. Follow these steps:

- Complete all sections of the CHESS FRG Application Cover Page.
- Prepare the proposal according to the guidelines in this document. ***Proposals that do not conform to the guidelines or meet the deadline will not be reviewed.***
- Convert your completed application package to PDF format. Use the following file naming convention: Lastname_Firstname_FRG. Joint proposals should use the last names of both faculty members (Lastname1_Lastname2_FRG).
- Check your application package to ensure there were no errors in the conversion process.
- Upload your proposal as a single PDF file to the submission form on the CHESS website by 5:00 p.m. on the date of the deadline.

Proposal Format

The final proposal should be uploaded to the submission form as a SINGLE FILE in PDF format. Unless otherwise specified, all pages should be **double spaced with 1" margins and 12-point font.** Each proposal should include the following components in the order listed:

1. A completed CHESS FRG Application Cover Page.
2. A Project Description (maximum 5 pages): This should include the following sections:
    a. An **Introduction** that is clearly written and understandable to a person outside the applicant's discipline. The review committee will include faculty members elected from across the College. You cannot assume that someone from your exact discipline or subdiscipline will be on the committee.
    b. The **Significance** of the project. Review committee members must be able to understand the context in which your research is situated. You should explain how your project relates to current developments in your field and/or how the project builds on previous work you have done.
    c. The **Objectives** of the proposed activity.
    d. The **Methods** or **Steps** to achieve the objectives.
    e. The **Method of Dissemination** of completed activities.
    f. A detailed **Work Plan** with start and end dates for project milestones.
3. A list of references/works cited (maximum 1 single-spaced page): You may use 11-point font on this page.
4. Justification for Collaboration (**required only for joint proposals;** maximum 1 double-spaced page): This should clearly explain how the expertise of each investigator is needed in order to conduct the proposed research.
5. A budget request and detailed budget justification (maximum 3 single-spaced pages): Use the form in the application package.
6. Biographical Sketch (maximum 2 single-spaced pages per investigator): Use the form in the application package. Joint proposals should include one bio sketch for each investigator. An 11-point type size is acceptable for this section.
7. Previous FRG awards and outcomes (if applicable; maximum 1 single-spaced page per investigator): List all UNC Charlotte Faculty Research Grants received in the last 5 years. For your most recent FRG, provide bibliographic information for all outcomes resulting from that award, including research presentations, journal articles, books or book chapters, external funding proposals/awards, documentaries, exhibits, and other products. Joint proposals should provide this information for each investigator.
8. Alternative sources of funding (if applicable; maximum 1 double-spaced page per investigator): If you have alternative sources of funding, including but not limited to distinguished professor funds, endowment funds, startup funds, PIFA funds, external grants, or analogous sources of funding, explain why those funds cannot be used to support the proposed research.

The items listed above constitute a complete proposal. **Appendices are not permitted**.

Budget Guidelines

UNC Charlotte's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. Given the nature of the funding for this program, all FRG funds must be expended by May 31 in order to reconcile expenses by the end of the fiscal year. **FRG funds cannot be carried over to the following fiscal year**.

- The maximum for an individual faculty member's FRG budget is $8,000, including a stipend of up to $4,000.
- Joint proposals involving two CHESS faculty members may request up to $16,000 ($8,000 per faculty member, with a maximum total stipend of $8,000). Joint proposals must have one budget request and designate one department to receive the funds.

The review committee and the Dean reserve the right to modify any budgetary requests that are considered unreasonable, unexplained, or not in keeping with allowable expenses. They may also reduce allocations to all funded proposals to accommodate funding a greater number of projects.

In the budget justification, you should provide detailed information for items such as travel and equipment. Describe how you arrived at your cost estimates. You should name the vendor you consulted, but do not attach quotations. Round all budget figures to the nearest dollar.

Allowable Expenses include the following:

- **Stipends:** Faculty with 12-month appointments may not receive stipends (but may apply for the entire $8,000). For faculty with 9-month appointments who elect to receive a stipend, the stipend is treated as salary and is subject to state and federal income tax, as well as social security tax and retirement deductions. ***Any stipend must be paid in either the August 31, 2027, OR the May 15, 2028, paycheck.***
- **Graduate Student Salaries:** Graduate student salary amounts should be consistent with those of other research assistants (RAs) in the same program. Consult the Standard Compensation Packages for current rates. Applicants who propose paying more than 50% of the budget to graduate student salaries should explain how the RA's work will advance the faculty member's research agenda.
- **Special Pay to Faculty other than Grantee:** Fees for normal peer consultations will not be paid to UNC Charlotte faculty. Budgets may include resources allocated to UNC Charlotte faculty other than the proposers, but such allocations must be specifically justified in terms of specialized expertise.
- **Student Temporary Wages (Graduate or Undergraduate):** Funding to hire students on an hourly basis is allowed to the extent that student participation is central to the proposed research project. Applicants who propose paying more than 50% of the budget to student temporary wages should explain how the RA's work will advance the faculty member's research agenda. All investigators who propose hiring students should specify what duties the students will carry out and the amount of time required.
    - Graduate students' hourly RA rate is based on their program's compensation package and adjusted based on their set weekly hours. Consult the Standard Compensation Packages for current rates.
    - Undergraduate students should be paid at a rate not less than $11.50 per hour. An investigator who proposes to pay a higher wage rate should justify this.
- **Non-Student Temporary Wages:** If you employ someone who is not currently enrolled

at UNC Charlotte, including a recent graduate, that employment assignment is subject to policies relating to non-student temporary wage employment (PIM-8). Hourly pay rates are determined by the type of work performed and the candidate's experience, based on the current N.C. state grade and salary schedule. Investigators needing assistance on estimating hourly rates for temporary employees should contact the staff employment manager in Human Resources.

- **Honoraria:** Consultants may be included, if justified and if the expertise is not available at UNC Charlotte.
- **Participant Incentives** for payments to human subjects.
- **Travel:** This program will fund foreign and/or domestic travel to libraries, archives, museums, laboratories, computer facilities, natural settings, government agencies, corporations, etc. that are essential to the research. ***The CHESS FRG Program does not fund travel to conferences to disseminate the results of your research*.**
    - You must fully justify the need for travel and explain what materials and/or facilities you will use. You should document travel expenditures as completely as possible with price quotations from specific vendors. Airfares must be tourist class, with every effort made to obtain the most economical rates.
    - Mileage and subsistence expenses are normally allowed up to the state guidelines for in-state and out-of-state or foreign travel; requests for subsistence expenses in excess of these limits must be fully documented.
- **Communication and/or Printing (and photocopying).**
- **Supplies and Materials.**
- **Computing Equipment:** This program funds project-specific software (such as packages needed for data analysis or digital humanities projects), but does not fund computer equipment. If you propose to purchase a software package, you must document that similar software is not already available through the university or in the public domain.
- **Educational Equipment required for the proposed project.** Equipment purchased with FRG funds belongs to the University.
- **Other Contracted Services** include payments to the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute or Conferences, Reservations and Events Services (CRES).
- **Other research-related expenses** that are allowable with state general funds. Consult with your department's business officer to determine if a request is allowable.

Unallowable expenses include the following:

- Academic-year release time or reduced teaching loads.
- Research that informs curriculum, teaching, or retention at the local level. Such proposals should be submitted to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) Program.
- Preparation of textbooks or manuscripts with a primarily pedagogical purpose.
- Projects conducted primarily to produce financial reward for the investigator (e.g., through royalties, consulting fees, or product commercialization).
- Production costs for books or other manuscripts, including manuscript preparation or evaluation, copyediting, page charges, and illustrations. Such requests can be submitted to the CHESS Small Grants Program.
- Travel to conferences for disseminating research results.
- Computers (expected through departmental funds).
- Food.

Proposal Review Process and Criteria

Proposals are evaluated by the elected Faculty Research Grants Committee in the College of Humanities & Earth and Social Sciences. The review process is facilitated by the Associate Dean for Research and Interdisciplinary Collaboration. Each proposal is reviewed by at least three members of the five-member committee.

Review committee members evaluate each proposal based on the criteria in the rubric below. The committee meets to discuss the proposals, after which members finalize their scores. Scores are then standardized and averaged to generate a ranked list that is presented to the Dean with funding recommendations. Final funding decisions are based strictly on the merit of the proposals and the budget available. No effort will be made to distribute awards among departments. The Associate Dean will summarize the evaluations of the committee and provide written feedback to all FRG applicants whose proposals are not selected for funding.

Revise and resubmit opportunity for new faculty: For proposals from faculty members in the first three years of their appointments at UNC Charlotte, the committee has the option of recommending a "revise and resubmit" decision. If the Dean agrees, those faculty members will be given several weeks to revise their proposals based on written feedback from the committee. The committee will then re-evaluate those proposals and make recommendations to the Dean about funding decisions.

CHESS FRG Proposal Evaluation Rubric

Criteria	Description	Range	Scoring Guidance
Significance and context	Importance of the research question and relevance within the field. Familiarity with current scholarship and positioning of the project.	1–5	5 – Strong significance, well-contextualized 3 – Moderate significance, some context 1 – Weak significance, lacks context
Project design and methodology	Clarity and appropriateness of objectives, methods, and work plan. Feasibility and alignment with goals.	1–5	5 – Clear appropriate methods and detailed work plan 3 – Adequate methods and work plan 1 – Vague or inappropriate design
Dissemination plan	Quality and clarity of the plan to share research outcomes (e.g. publications, presentations, public scholarship).	1–5	5 – Compelling, innovative plan with appropriate venues and audiences 3 – Good dissemination plan; some details missing 1 – No clear dissemination strategy
Accessibility and communication	Clarity of writing and ability to communicate to a non-specialist audience. Organization and readability.	1–5	5 – Clear, well-organized, accessible to non-specialists 3 – Some jargon or lack of clarity 1 – Poorly written or difficult to understand
Budget justification and cost-effectiveness	Reasonableness and justification of budget. Alignment with project goals and adherence to allowable expenses.	1–5	5 – Well-justified, cost-effective budget 3 – Mostly justified, some concerns 1 – Unclear or questionable budget

Research Compliance

If your project requires approval from any of the UNC Charlotte compliance committees (Human Subjects, Animal Subjects, Radioactive Materials, Biological Hazards, Chemical Hazards), your funds will not be released until the CHESS Associate Dean for Research and Interdisciplinary Collaboration has received a copy of your approved protocol.

Researchers proposing any type of research involving human subjects, including interviews, surveys, focus groups, etc., should consult the Division of Research Human Subjects in Research Website. If their proposal is funded, they should submit their application to the Institutional Review Board through the Niner Research system with sufficient time to be processed and approved before funds can be released and research can begin.

Final Report

Within two months of the end of the award period (i.e. by August 31, 2028, for the 2027-28 award cycle), FRG recipients must submit a final report summarizing the results of their research and explaining any variations from the proposal. They should send the final report to chess-research@charlotte.edu with copies to the Associate Dean and their department chair.

Any research published that has received support from a UNC Charlotte or CHESS Faculty Research Grant should have an acknowledgment as follows: ***This work was supported, in part, by funds provided by The University of North Carolina at Charlotte.***

Frequently Asked Questions about FRG Proposals

What do I need to know about spending FRG funds?
CHESS Faculty Research Grants are awarded with state funds; therefore, all normal state purchasing procedures apply. Faculty should work with their department administrative staff to understand the UNC Charlotte purchasing regulations. Administrative staff should refer to the purchasing manual for guidance on the regulations governing FRG funds.

The university-wide FRG Program had two 18-month budget options. Why does the CHESS FRG Program only have a single 12-month budget option?
This program is supported with state funding transferred to the College by Academic Affairs each fiscal year. Managing a program that bridges fiscal years is complicated and requires designating some funds each fiscal year for projects that were funded in the previous application cycle, potentially reducing the number of FRGs that can be awarded. It also increases the burden on staff who manage the budgets, especially when researchers want to move funds from one budget year to another. To avoid these challenges, the CHESS FRG program offers a 12-month budget option aligned with the University's fiscal year.

But I want to travel to do field research in the summer and the University's fiscal year makes that complicated. How can I do this?
We recognize that there are no easy options for summer travel when the fiscal year starts on July 1, 2027, and ends on June 30, 2028. For field research in summer 2027 on a 2027-28 FRG, faculty are encouraged to schedule their travel to return to Charlotte after July 1 (or even after

June 15) so that their reimbursements will come from the fiscal year for which their FRG was awarded. They will have to purchase flights in advance using personal funds and seek reimbursement upon their return. For field research in summer 2028 on a 2027-28 FRG, faculty can purchase their flights and prepay for accommodation with FRG funds by May 31, 2028. They can select to receive a (taxable) stipend on May 15, 2028, and use those funds to cover remaining travel expenses. We understand that neither option is perfect, but it has always been difficult to travel in the summer (especially in June) given the need to reconcile expenses by the end of the fiscal year.

The university-wide FRG Program had a special resubmission program and a later deadline for new assistant professors. Does the CHESS FRG Program have these options?
The previous system required the Division of Research to reserve a portion of FRG funds for new assistant professors, and those allocations were not made until late in the spring semester, which delayed planning for summer field research. Instead, the CHESS FRG program has a single deadline for all faculty members in December. Some new assistant professors may be given an opportunity to revise and resubmit their proposals, and funding will be reserved for those. The goal is to allocate all FRG funds for the following fiscal year by mid-March.

When the FRG program was administered by the Division of Research, it offered a workshop series to assist new assistant professors in writing their proposals. What is happening to that program?
The Division of Research continues to offer a New Professor Workshop Series each fall, though it is no longer specifically linked to the FRG program. This series introduces faculty to staff in the Division of Research and many other resources at UNC Charlotte. New professors are strongly encouraged to participate in as many of these workshops as possible.

Do I still have to submit my FRG proposal through Niner Research? I have always found that system confusing and don't like using it.
No, you will not submit your CHESS FRG proposal through Niner Research. You will use the submission form provided by the College in the preceding instructions. Even so, faculty are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with Niner Research, which is required for external grant proposals and various other processes (IRB approvals, for example). There are some helpful resources from past CHESS Research webinars on our website.

When can I start spending my FRG money?
Your approved budget will be transferred to your department's new FRG fund after July 1, 2027. Assuming you have obtained the necessary protocols and completed the necessary paperwork for any personnel (student support, etc.), you can start spending FRG funds right away.

My project involves interviews, surveys, focus groups, or a similar methodology that requires approval for human subjects research. Do I have to get the compliance committee's approval before I can spend my money?
Yes. If your project requires approval from any of the UNC Charlotte compliance committees, your funds will not be released until the CHESS Associate Dean for Research and Interdisciplinary Collaboration has received a copy of your approved protocol.

Once I have compliance approval, how can I pay research participants?
The university encourages email/digital gift cards, but physical gift cards can be ordered. We have had some success recently using tangocard.com to order and track gift cards for participant incentives. For online survey research, we have established an organizational account with CloudResearch Connect. For more information on paying research participants, see University Policy 602.11 on Gifts, Awards, and Prizes and the Business Affairs pages on Human Subjects Payments and Gift Cards/Gift Certificates.

I have money in the travel line that includes purchasing an airline ticket and per diem expenses. How will these funds be handled?
Except for prepaid items, travel funds come out of your budget when the Travel Expense Report is submitted in Concur. So, if you are traveling in June but returning in July, your reimbursement will come from funds in the fiscal year starting July 1.

What do I have to do to get my FRG stipend?
Nothing. Faculty stipends for FRG recipients are automatically included in the August 31, 2027, or May 15, 2028, paycheck depending on which date was selected in the proposal. These are processed by the CHESS Office of Finance and Personnel.

Do I have to include fringe benefits in my budget?
You don't have to list fringe benefits as a line item, but you need to be aware that taxes and fringe benefits will be deducted from your stipend.

Can I move money between budget lines?
Yes. Work with your department administrative staff to make changes in your budget. They can reach out to Beth Whitaker and/or Vanessa Grimaldi in the Dean's Office with any questions.