Ignition Deadline Dates:
Monday, February 22nd, 2016
Monday, May 9th, 2016

Also note: Prior application for a Graduate Research Grant from The Graduate School is required for eligible projects to be considered for an Ignition grant. TGS’s deadline dates are January 19, 2016 and April 11, 2016. (See Eligibility and Timing below).

The School of Communication (SoC) announces the continuation of a competitive grant program for SoC full-time PhD students to provide up to $2000 for research and creative projects that you initiate. The purpose of the program is to help cover costs of scholarly projects that will lead to presentations and publications that you will develop as lead author, costs which are not covered by your advisor’s grants, your doctoral program, or The Graduate School (TGS). You may receive only one grant through this program during your studies in a PhD program in SoC. This grant may be used in combination with other internal funding, such as a Graduate Research Grant from TGS, or with external funding.

An SoC Graduate Research Ignition Grant can provide support for expenses incurred in your research projects including:
  • Research travel (e.g., to a field research site, to an archive or library with a special collection, travel to interview major figures in the history of your research topic)
  • Subject recruitment costs
  • Hiring an assistant to run subjects or code data
  • Direct costs of research (such as specialized supplies, software, laboratory animals, archival copies, copyright fees for use of photographs or screen images) with the exceptions listed below
  • Construction or rental (not purchase) of specialized equipment not available on campus

Ignition grant funds are for reimbursement of approved research expenses described in your budget and must be managed in accordance with standard NU policies, including documentation of expenditures. Project costs incurred prior to the grant award and budget approval will not be reimbursed and funds not expended by the grant end date revert to the School of Communication.

**Expenses not Covered** Some of the expenses that will NOT be covered through this program are: journal, book, or membership expenses, TGS dissertation fees or other expenses of preparing for your dissertation defense, consultant costs, travel for general educational purposes (including attendance or presentation at professional meetings, workshops, short courses, or performance venues), purchase of computers or other equipment, purchase of routine office supplies, or payment of tuition, salary, or stipend costs for yourself or a family member.
Eligibility and Timing  You can be awarded only one Ignition grant. If you are eligible for a TGS Graduate Research Grant (GRG) you must apply to both programs and your application for a GRG must occur prior to your Ignition grant application. See the TGS website to determine your eligibility: http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/fellowships-and-grants/internal-grants/graduate-research-grant.html. If you are eligible for both programs, SoC will consider your proposal for funding if you are not funded by TGS in that round of submissions or if you are proposing more than $3000 in research or creative expenses, the maximum grant available from TGS. You must be a student in good standing with TGS to be considered for an Ignition grant.

According to TGS, only “humanities and social science projects” in SoC are eligible for funding, and biomedically-related projects are not. However, many proposals dealing with speech and hearing disorders have been awarded GRGs. Potential applicants in CSD should not assume that their proposals would not be eligible for a GRG award. If you are a CSD PhD student and concerned about your project’s GRG eligibility, send a brief paragraph describing it to Kate Veraldi (k-veraldi@northwestern.edu). Unless Ms. Veraldi informs you that your proposal is not eligible, apply to both programs.

If you entered the School of Communication with a Bachelor’s degree, you will first be eligible for an SoC Graduate Research Ignition Grant after you’ve completed three quarters of PhD study, so if you entered SoC in fall 2015 with a BA or BS (and no relevant advanced degrees), you are not eligible for 2016 Ignition grants. If you entered the School of Communication with a relevant Master’s degree, you are eligible upon your enrollment.

Avoid waiting too long before applying for an Ignition grant. About one-third of past applicants applied late enough that they had only a few months to use the awarded grant funding. Because eligibility is based on time since initial enrollment, sometimes those grantees ran out of eligibility before they were able to complete the research activities that they planned to use Ignition grants to cover. Students who entered SoC with a relevant Master’s degree are no longer eligible to apply for Ignition funding to support for research activities during their fifth year and beyond. Thus if you entered SoC with a relevant Master’s degree in the fall of 2011 or earlier you are not eligible for an Ignition grant. If you entered with a relevant MA or MS in fall 2012, you would only have until the beginning of fall quarter 2016 to complete your Ignition grant project. Students who entered SoC with a Bachelor’s degree are no longer eligible to apply for Ignition support for research activities during their sixth year or beyond. So if you entered SoC with a Bachelor’s in the fall of 2010 or earlier you would not be eligible for an Ignition grant, if you entered SoC in the fall of 2011 with a Bachelor’s you would only have until the beginning of fall quarter 2016 to complete your Ignition project. The foregoing information assumes no leaves of absences during your graduate study.

You may want to consider that proposals submitted for the February, 2016 deadline are likely to face less competition than those submitted for the May, 2016 deadline.

International Travel? If you propose to use Ignition grant funds to travel abroad you should plan to adhere to the procedures described at The Graduate School’s webpage on international travel: http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/campus-life/health-and-wellness/student-health-
There is also useful information on the Office of Risk Management’s webpage on International Travel Safety and Security: http://www.northwestern.edu/risk/insurance/international-travel-safety-security/index.html. If you plan to visit any country under U.S. Dept. of State Travel Warning you should review this page on the Risk Management website: http://www.northwestern.edu/risk/policies/travel-warning.html.

**Application Procedures** To apply, go to the instructions for applying for a Graduate Research Grant from TGS and prepare the information listed there, with the differences noted below. See this page: http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/fellowships-and-grants/internal-grants/graduate-research-grant.html. As part of your Graduate Research Grant application you list any outside funding that has been requested or granted. If one or more of your requests is funded (including TGS funds) after your Ignition application has been submitted, send Jane Rankin a message with the amount awarded so that the limited Ignition funds can be awarded equitably.

Here are two important differences in proposal procedures between TGS’s Graduate Research Grant program and the SoC’s Ignition Grant program:

1. Prior to submission, combine the items in your Ignition grant proposal, *except your advisor’s recommendation letter*, into one pdf file, keeping them in the order listed under Instructions, and submit them to your academic advisor and DGS, both of whom must approve your proposal before it can be reviewed for possible funding. Plan on giving it to them at least one week before the deadline. Submit your Ignition grant proposal directly to Jane Rankin electronically rather than submitting through the designated TGS nominator for your graduate program. **Please use the subject line ***2016 Ignition grant proposal for [Insert Your Name]***. The letter of recommendation from your advisor should be sent to Jane Rankin directly as an electronic file. The electronic address for both items is j-rankin@northwestern.edu. If you do not receive an acknowledgement of your application within a week of submission, contact Jane Rankin.

2. Research involving human participants must be reviewed by the appropriate IRB office prior to any data collection. If you’ve already obtained IRB approval prior to submitting your Ignition grant proposal, please send it along with your Ignition application. If you haven’t yet submitted it, send your IRB approval to Jane Rankin as soon as you obtain it. A copy of IRB approval or exemption must be submitted before any funding will be released. IRB information is available at http://www.research.northwestern.edu/oprs/irb/

**Deadlines and Notifications** There will be two deadline dates for SoC Ignition proposals in 2015-2016: **Monday, February 22, 2016** and **Monday, May 9, 2016**. Proposals submitted to SoC will be reviewed once TGS has announced its awards from its review cycle, typically at the end of the quarter in which the proposal was submitted. This way the SoC review panel has information about Graduate Research Grant funding for projects and can fund the Ignition grant proposals equitably. Therefore apply for an Ignition grant a few months before you need funding to begin.
Criteria for Selection  The criteria for selection will include the significance of the proposed project. Your explanation of significance may focus on the project’s theoretical or methodological significance and/or its potential contribution to social or public policy. Please keep in mind that the reviewers are communication scholars who may not be expert in your area. Additional review criteria include: evidence that the project is your own creative or research initiative, the clarity and feasibility of your research plan, the adequacy of your preparation for the proposed activities, the rationale for the proposed funds, the appropriateness of the costs (Is there a way to accomplish the goals less expensively? How closely related are the proposed expenses to your research/creative goals?), and your past productivity. If you cut and paste in content from your dissertation proposal, make sure that the resulting text provides crucial information to reviewers and reads coherently.

Final Report  A two-page final report on your project is required. It should include a description of your achievements with the Ignition grant funding and the opportunities that it made possible (e.g., dissertation completion, publications, receipt of awards, etc.) and be submitted electronically to j-rankin@northwestern.edu at the expiration of the project period, before your graduation, and normally no longer than 18 months after the award. If your project will require more time, write this into your proposal or contact Jane Rankin for an extension before the project period expires.

Questions? If you have questions about the Graduate Research Ignition grants contact your Director of Graduate Studies or Associate Dean Jane Rankin at j-rankin@northwestern.edu.