Association of Research Libraries Venture Fund

The ARL Venture Fund supports prototypes or proofs of concept that scale so as to advance the [Association priorities](#) set by the members and the Board. Proposals for Venture Fund investments may come from a member representative, a group of member representatives, an Association committee, or staff persons at member libraries with the explicit approval of their library dean or director. **Proposals for the 2020 funding cycle are due February 28, 2020.**

Project Types and Funding Levels

There are two levels of funding for Research and Development projects.

1. Research and development one-time grants capped at $15,000 for a significant enhancement or expansion of a prototype.

   - Example: Extending a local innovation to multiple ARL libraries or research and learning organizations

2. Research and development pilots lasting 1–3 years, capped at $10,000 per year, dependent on an annual review by the Program Strategy Committee and a decision by the Board to continue to fund.

   - Example: Extending a collaborative initiative to a larger community, such as TOME

There is one level of funding for small-scale proofs of concept or prototypes.

1. Mini grants capped at $1,500 for small-scale proofs of concept or prototypes (post–idea formulation)

   - Example: Local prototype pilots

Proposal Selection Criteria

- Advances achievement of the ARL Action Plan 2019–2021
- Anticipated outcomes have clear and compelling value to research libraries, the research and learning community, and society at large, that is, they have value at a scale greater than a specific library, campus, or organization
- Project and its anticipated outcomes demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and cultural competence
- Clarity and conciseness of application
- Realistic budget request
- Achievable timeline to accomplish the goals outlined in the request with the available funding
- Team has the relevant background, experience, and training

- Effective methodology that demonstrates a willingness to be creative, take risks, and share all learning (including unexpected outcomes) with the ARL community
- Includes an evaluation and/or assessment component
- Demonstrates the potential for longer-term sustainability

Application Process

Applicants should submit the following documents to the ARL Program Strategy Committee via the webform, no later than **February 28, 2020:**

1. Cover letter (2 pages maximum), including a brief summary of the proposed project and an explanation of:

- How the project advances the ARL 2019–2021 Action Plan (Member Resources login required)
- How the outcomes of the project will benefit the research library and research and learning communities
- How you plan to engage others in broader adoption

2. **(For research and development projects only)** Explanation of the funds use, expected project outcomes based on previous research, development, and/or prototyping of the proposed project

3. Project design and methodology

4. Budget, including any funds being sought or already secured through other funding sources

5. Plan for sustainability

6. Team expertise/qualifications

7. Milestones and timetable for completion

Please note that projects that are duplicative of ARL libraries' day-to-day work, or of other existing projects in the research libraries and higher education space, will not be funded. One-time meetings, speaker fees, conference posters or presentations, travel, registration fees, food and beverage, office supplies, and hardware, software, or other infrastructure requests are also ineligible for funding.

Proposal Reporting and Reviews

All recipients of Venture Fund awards are required to submit a final report of no more than five pages within six months of completion of the project to the Program Strategy Committee covering the following:

- How the project advanced the ARL 2019–2021 Action Plan
- The results per the evaluation plan and the timeline

- Whether or not the prototype is scalable and under what conditions
- Proof or not of ongoing sustainability
- Plans to further enhance or promote adoption at scale

For Research and Development projects ONLY

Project review will include selected milestone reviews based on the agreed project plan. These may include:

- A Program Strategy Committee and/or Board discussion or presentation
- A midway point check-in by ARL program staff or an Association Committee to discuss challenges, successes, and lessons learned to date
- A conversation, presentation, or poster at a future Association meeting or Fall Forum
- Highlighting the project via ARL Communications (Twitter, web: Impact Story, Stats that Matter, RLI, etc.)

For Mini grant projects ONLY

Project review will be lightweight and include the opportunity to:

- Discuss challenges, successes, and lessons learned with ARL program staff or an Association Committee, the ARL Program Strategy Committee and/or the ARL Board
- Highlight the project via ARL Communications (Twitter, web: Impact Story, Stats that Matter, RLI, etc.)

Venture Fund Process and Selection Criteria Review and Assessment

Every three years, the Program Strategy Committee will review the results and assess the effectiveness of the Venture Fund and make recommendations to the Board for adjustments to the criteria.

For questions about the Venture Fund or the 2020 application process, email Mary Lee Kennedy, ARL executive director, mkennedy@arl.org.