INSTITUTE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Impact Goals
Request for Proposals

Spring 2023

If you have questions that have not been addressed
in this document or by the FAQ, please contact:
ione-grants@umn.edu

Got questions? Visit this [FAQ](), which will be updated with answers to common questions until
the proposal deadline.

Introduction

As increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases and environmental degradation threaten people and ecosystems around the world, sustainability issues have never been more pressing. At the same time, signals are emerging of pathways to a liveable future, including growth in clean energy, greater consideration of natural capital in decision-making, and advocacy for socio-economic equity. To make progress on sustainability challenges – and their solutions – greater collaboration between universities, public and private sector organizations, and communities is required.

IonE's 2019-2023 Impact Goals are designed to drive progress on sustainability challenges – especially in areas where solutions either have been slow to develop or have been prevented. The inaugural multi-year Impact Goal priorities include: building a carbon–neutral Minnesota; envisioning future sustainable land use for Minnesota; and ensuring clean drinking water for all Minnesotans. In 2021, the University made additional investments to help build a fully sustainable future, one of the MPACT25 MNtersection priority areas. In 2022, the Seeding The Future Foundation provided philanthropic support for significant initiatives addressing food system challenges.

These initiatives support projects and activities that have global significance, while seeking to test and to deploy solutions in Minnesota, the home of our University's public service mission. In 2023, IonE is continuing directing its Impact Goal grant funds, with a gift from the Seeding The Future Foundation and MNtersections Innovation funding, toward reaching sustainability and transformational food systems *outcomes.*

We will fund high-impact team projects across the University of Minnesota system working in collaboration with non-university partners and community members that *clearly articulate how they'll move the needle toward a future where people and planet prosper together.* These projects can generate knowledge that develops or assesses specific sustainability solutions, including overcoming knowledge gaps in communications, engagement, or effective sustainability pedagogy at any educational level or for any type of audience. Projects can also result in course development, curricular innovation, or leadership development programming,

grounded in a scholarly approach to development and including rigorous outcome evaluation. (see [previously funded projects](#) as well as [FAQs](#) for examples of acceptable education-focused projects).

Request for Proposals (RFP) Overview

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is part of a multi-year initiative, during which IonE will competitively award grants and professionally support teams of faculty, staff, and non-University partners working on:

- IonE's current Impact Goals – becoming carbon neutral, defining a sustainable land use, and achieving clean drinking water for all;
- Initiatives targeting food system transformations through science based innovations and practices leading to sustainably produced food that is healthy, trusted, affordable, and enabling consumers to make conscious choices benefitting the health of people and planet; or
- Another specific sustainability objective or outcome, including campus sustainability, that is clearly articulated as a sustainability goal and identifies the barriers that must be overcome to achieve it.

Further, we encourage activities that enhance the University's sustainability efforts, including those measured by the [Times Higher Education Impact Ranking](#) and the [Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education Sustainability, Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System](#).

A target of $1,000,000 from IonE, Seeding the Future Foundation, and MPACT25 MNtersections allocations will be awarded. We anticipate awarding a minimum of four medium-size projects ($25-50K) and four large projects ($100-200K), while allocating remaining funds to either medium or large projects that most closely align with priorities and funding sources. Final award decisions will be made to create a portfolio that balances project engagement across UMN campuses, topics, and diversity of partners engaged.

These research funds support interdisciplinary teams conducting engaged scholarship that contributes new research and associated outcomes.

Projects should be conducted with University and community partners[1] and be directly connected to people or issues in Minnesota. The connection to Minnesota flows two ways: It can mean conducting work in the state that could later be applied to a wider geography *or* it can mean applying scholarship developed elsewhere, within Minnesota.

Engaged scholarship is the process of generating new knowledge by combining *academic* and *community* knowledge bases. The work involves establishing a respectful, power-sharing collaboration and mutual learning among academic and community partners. As a public institution, the University of Minnesota has an obligation to serve all Minnesotans, including systematically marginalized communities. If you need support in connecting to community partners, you can contact IonE or the Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (RSDP); see FAQ for more information.

Competitive Call for Proposals

Medium proposals will be funded between $25,000-$50,000; large proposals will be funded between $100,000-$200,000. Awards are non-recurring and are to be expended within two years. The key milestones and deadlines are described below. *Additional questions are addressed in the FAQ.*

Webinar: January 30, 2023, 12-1 pm CT

If you have questions about the RFP, we will be hosting a webinar via Zoom on January 30, 2023, from 12-1 pm CT. During the webinar we will share the goals of the RFP, provide an overview of the proposal logistics, and leave the majority of time for Q&A. You can register for the webinar via this link. It will also be recorded and posted to IonE's YouTube channel.

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[1] Throughout this text, the term 'community partner' is used to refer to an organization not affiliated with the University of Minnesota. It could be a nonprofit; a community organization; a unit of local, district, or state government; a Tribal Government; or a similar type of organization. The community partner is considered a full project team member, who can contribute unique expertise and perspective to advance the goals of the proposal and/or has implementation responsibilities that catalyze the application, evaluation, or scaling of sustainability actions.

Statement of Intent: Due February 13, 2023

To ensure that we have reviewers who are able to fairly evaluate all of the proposals that are submitted, we request that project teams complete a 5-minute form providing some basic information about the proposal idea and its sustainability focus. Completion of the Statement of Intent is not required to submit a full proposal and can be updated or submitted after our preferred submission date. Please submit a [Statement of Intent via this form](#).

Proposal: Due March 14, 2023

The proposal will be submitted [via this submission form](#).

The form includes basic information about the team, proposal title, amount requested, 150-word summary of the idea, topical focus of the proposal, and some information that would allow for the administration of the award, if successful. [You may view the 150-word summaries of IonE's 2022 Impact Goal awardees at this link.](#)

The proposal has 4 parts:

(1) Cover page (1-page)

(2) Proposal description (5-pages)

(3) Project management description (1-page), citations (no page limit), and 2-page biosketches for each team member

(4) Budget documentation (no page limit)

Text must be 11-pt font or larger and the document must have at least 1" margins.

Part 1: Proposal should include a cover page (1 page) with the following information:

- Project title
- Project leader (or principal investigator, PI) and project team members.
  - Include name, title, and departmental/center/organizational affiliation, email address, and phone number for all team members.
  - Team Composition:
    - Team lead must be a UMN tenure-track faculty, contract faculty, or P&A staff.
    - Teams must include at least one non-UMN team member.
    - Teams must include UMN team members from at least two or more disciplinary fields.

■ Postdoc and student names should be included, if known.

Part 2: Proposal description should be no more than 5 pages (including any graphics) and include the following:

- Problem statement and objective:
    - What is the topic(s) your proposal addresses?
    - What is the barrier to sustainable outcomes for this topic? For example, what are the knowledge gaps, leadership or educational gaps, policy strategies, market-based solutions, or other barriers?
    - What is your project goal or objective?
- Project plan and approach:
    - How will you approach your project objective?
    - What evidence and reasoning supports your methods?
    - How is this project new or a significant pivot from your existing work?
- Outcomes and intended impact:
    - What are the anticipated outcomes and impacts of this project?
    - Who would benefit, and how, from this project being funded?
    - After this proposed work is done, what is the plan to continue and grow its impact?
    - What is the potential for this work to catalyze additional opportunities and external funding?
- Note: The role of all team members should be identified within the proposal. Community partners should be fully integrated into the proposal. If there are additional roles for their organizations, these should be clearly defined within the scope of the proposal.

Part 3: Project management description (1 page); citations (no page limit); and biographical sketches (2 pages):

- Project Management (total of 1 page): How will this team work together to achieve the project goals? What is the role of each team member? What existing resources will you be able to draw upon (e.g. knowledge, expertise, equipment, etc.)?

- Citations (no page limit) should be formatted fully and consistently, e.g., APA or MLA, but there is no required citation format.
- Biographical Sketches or Resumes (total of 2 pages for each team member): There is no prescribed format, but this section should include the name, position and title, education, professional appointments, and publications or significant work products or outcomes (broadly defined) for each team member.

Part 4: Budget documentation (no page limit, uploaded separately) should include the following:

- Total Requested Budget: Funds may be used to underwrite salary for the project leaders or other members of the team (including students) and to cover travel or virtual meeting expenses, supplies and materials, or other project expenses. *Note: Funding cannot be used for capital equipment or to purchase computers for staff use. IonE will defer to intra-unit/collegiate policies in regards to allowability of expenditures.*
  - Project start date is July 1, 2023.
  - Budget should follow the format in [this template](#). Make a copy of the template so that you can customize it for your proposal.
    - The template includes example budget items to help clarify how to complete the form; these will not necessarily be relevant or include correct salaries or effort for all proposals.
    - Note that **tab 1** includes the budget and **tab 2** includes the justification. These tabs can be printed to a PDF. To do so, select "landscape orientation" and ["fit to width" or "fit to page"](#) formatting, ensuring that the tabs are no more than 1 page wide each.
  - Funds can be used to support non-University team members. Budgets should be deployed equitably to support the project work.
- Budget Justification: Provide a brief justification (~1-3 sentences) for each budgetary line item (no word limit). If any team members or organizations will be providing formal or informal in-kind support necessary for the success of this project, please include this information in the budget justification. See tab 2 of [this template](#) for the budget justification template.

○ Note: In-kind support is not required or expected, and it will not factor into proposal decisions.

Proposal should be submitted as a single PDF (compiled in the 4-part order listed above) by 11:59 pm CDT on March 14, 2023, to the proposal submission form, which will allow you to submit your proposal as an attachment. Note this form will automatically close and will not accept submissions after the deadline.

Finalist Project Pitches: May 16 and 17, 2023
Finalist teams will be invited for a second-round review on May 16 and 17, 2023. These teams will provide a 10-minute presentation, which will be followed by a 10-15 minute question and answer period (Q&A). All team members, including community partners, should be a part of the presentation. To facilitate participation, the presentations will be held virtually via Zoom.

We will work with the finalist teams to schedule a 30-minute time slot for their second-round review; times are not guaranteed until scheduled, so we encourage all proposal teams to reserve May 16 and 17, 2023 on their calendars. Prior to the second-round review, finalist teams will receive additional instructions about the project pitch process, comments or questions from the first-round reviewers to anticipate, and whether there are any necessary modifications to make to the proposal or to consider as part of your pitch.

Criteria for Evaluation and Review

- Project advances a sustainable future, as defined in this RFP.
- Project is interdisciplinary (i.e., team members from more than one field) and community-engaged (i.e., team members from outside of the University).
- Project is a new endeavor or significant pivot in direction from an existing project. Proposals cannot simply be a continuation of existing projects.
- Proposals should identify at least one specific barrier to achieving a sustainability challenge that the project aims to address or overcome.
- Proposals should use rigorous methods that creatively and thoughtfully address the proposal focus.

- Proposals should clearly identify the outcome that they will achieve with this project and the intended impact of that outcome (for guidance on "impact," see FAQ).
- Projects involving the intersection of sustainability and nutrition in food should also address adoption (e.g., by consumers) and impact on food policy.
- Project team is well equipped to conduct the proposed work and has a clear plan for that work and its impact.
- Budget and budget justification are reasonable given the scope of work.
- Proposed team has the potential to leverage this seed support by attracting and securing additional funding or growing the project in other ways.
- Projects will be particularly competitive if they pursue innovative ways of engaging historically excluded people or marginalized communities and/or new stakeholders, and/or if they explicitly use project approaches intended to address or reduce inequitable sustainability pathways.

Submission Timeline

1. RFP released on January 17, 2023.
2. Submit a Statement of Intent by February 13, 2023 (for purposes of review selection).
3. Full project proposal submissions are due March 14, 2023.
4. Peer review of RFP responses will begin immediately, conducted by an interdisciplinary panel of scholars and community representatives using the evaluation criteria included in this RFP.
5. All teams will be notified of their status by April 14, 2023. Finalist teams will be invited to make a presentation to a panel for the final award decision. Teams may also be asked to clarify or amend their proposals.
6. Finalist team presentations, conducted virtually with a review panel, will take place on May 16 and 17, 2023.
7. Final award selections will be made and officially announced by June 1, 2023, with the period of performance beginning July 1, 2023.

If you have questions about your specific proposal idea or anything that has not been addressed by this document or our FAQ, please contact:

ione-grants@umn.edu

The FAQ will be updated with answers to questions until the proposal deadline.

Summary of important links:

Request for Proposals: https://z.umn.edu/2023ImpactGoalsRFP

Frequently Asked Questions: https://z.umn.edu/2023ImpactGoalsFAQ

Statement of Intent Submission Form: https://z.umn.edu/2023ImpactGoalsStatementofIntent

Proposal Submission Form: https://z.umn.edu/ImpactGoalsSubmissionForm