

Future Interdisciplinary Research Explorations (FIRE) Grant FY2023 FAQs

- *What is the timing of the grants?*
The grants follow the federal fiscal year that starts on October 1.
For the current cycle:
FY2023: Oct. 1, 2022-Sept. 30, 2023
FY2024: Oct. 1, 2023-Sept. 30, 2024
- *What is interdisciplinary research?*
We use the National Academies' definition: "Interdisciplinary research is a mode of research by teams or individuals that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice."
- *Can teams include faculty members from the same department?*
Yes, as long as they have expertise in distinct disciplines. Roles, expertise and contribution of each team member must be clearly defined. Inclusion of faculty members from other departments/units/colleges is highly encouraged.
- *Can departments and institutions outside of ACES be included in the team?*
Yes. The Office of Research recognizes the importance of collaborating with colleagues both within and outside the college and university. Inclusion of faculty members from other departments/units/colleges is highly encouraged.
- *What was the reviewer feedback from previous rounds of FIRE proposals?*
In general, reviewers gave preference to proposals that emphasized the interdisciplinary nature of the research, included teams of 3 or more people, listed specific measurable tasks in the approach, and explored new areas rather than extending current research.
- *What is the level of detail that should be provided in the proposal?*
Reviewers may or may not have expertise in the proposed area of research. As such, applicants should write to a broad audience and clearly describe the roles and contribution of team members. Ensure that the proposal is written to a nonspecialist reviewer. Applicants should avoid being overly technical in the description of their approach.
- *Can the team submit this year if they have submitted proposals previously?*
Yes. If referencing a previous submission, make sure to provide additional details (based on previous reviewer comments) to demonstrate the necessity of the proposed data for the resubmission.

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- *Can existing well-established teams apply?*
Yes. Reviewers typically have higher expectations for proposals from established teams. Therefore, it is important to demonstrate to the reviewers how the funds will strengthen your team and/or the scope and direction of your research. Existing teams must describe how the funding will allow them to achieve a new level of success.
- *Who can be considered Co-PIs and collaborators on the project?*
Anyone essential to the project can be listed as a co-investigator. Although this will primarily be other faculty members, postdoctoral and graduate students can also be Co-PIs and collaborators.
- *Can faculty members be involved in more than one FIRE proposal?*
Yes. At this time, we have not limited the number of proposals in which a faculty member can be listed as a collaborator or principal investigator. **Unlike years past, PIs can have more than one active FIRE award at a time.**
- *What is meant by “alignment with current areas of strength” in the RFP?*
This phrase refers to:
 - Identifying a research theme or question that gives coherence to the project and relates to the scope of programs within the College of ACES
 - Ensuring that your proposed activities are a logical progression given each team member's expertise and past research, and that they pertain to the College of ACES scope of research.
- *What should be included in the “Plans for Execution and Continuation” section?*
Provide specific plans and next steps for the continuation of the selected research idea, including a clear path to what the team plans to accomplish, a detailed plan for obtaining future support, and a description of how the project would evolve after receiving future funding.
- *How much detail is needed for the budget? Will a budget template be provided?*
A standard line item budget and budget justification similar to that required by federal funding agencies is appropriate. Categories could include, but are not limited to, personnel, fringe benefits, equipment, travel, materials and supplies, etc. The reviewers need to see a general plan for how you expect to spend the money that relates to your approach.
- *Does FIRE support international collaborators?* No. The spirit of the FIRE program is to promote institutional interdisciplinary collaboration.

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- *How should fringe benefits, tuition remission, and indirect costs be handled?*
The FIRE program is supported by Hatch formula funds. **Tuition remission and indirect costs do not need to be included in the budget.** For salaries, include the fringe benefits within the \$60,000. Hatch funding has different fringe benefit rates depending on the type of position. The current rate does not exceed 6.5%; however, in most cases no fringe benefit rates will need to be applied. Consult your department business manager for details.
- *Can faculty summer salary be included in the budget?*
No. Summer salary is not funded through the FIRE program.
- *Can travel be included in the budget?*
Yes. However, travel for personnel outside of the University of Illinois is restricted due to the source of funding.
- *What should be included in the paragraph of professional information?*
The professional information can include a short description of the team member's research, publication, and grant awards record. This should be given in the context of the proposal. You can indicate just the number of publications and grants in the last five years (i.e., Publications: X, Grants: X) or details of those publications and grants if you wish.
- *Can support letters be included?*
To reduce the burden for proposal preparation, the Office of Research strongly discourages the inclusion of support letters.
- *Can additional materials be provided in the supplementary section?*
All the necessary materials needed to review the proposal are requested in the RFP. Do not include additional supplementary documents such as articles, reprints, posters, methodology, and survey questions.
- *Do you need to have an active Hatch project to apply?*
No. You can apply without having an active Hatch project. If you receive the award, you will need to have a Hatch project that has overlapping objectives with your FIRE proposal in order to receive the funds.
- *Can PIs with previous FIRE awards apply?*
Yes. Principal investigators with an active award can have more than one active award.
- *Will there be another call for FIRE proposals? If so, when?*
Future funding and timing of calls for the FIRE program depend on faculty feedback and fund availability.