The College of Agricultural, Consumer and Economic Sciences (ACES) Office of Research (OR) is issuing a call for Future Interdisciplinary Research Explorations (FIRE) grant applications. This grant encourages creativity and collaboration between ACES faculty and research partners (internal and external to UIUC). Accordingly, the OR solicits outstanding interdisciplinary team research proposals to initiate new and enhance existing collaborations among faculty. The aims of FIRE proposals are for faculty to:

- Develop exploratory research ideas that require the involvement of multiple disciplines
- Identify a research theme or question that gives coherence to the project and relates to the scope of programs within ACES
- Collect preliminary data or other relevant information to address research questions
- Prepare, develop, and submit research proposals for external funding

The expected product of the FIRE seed grant program is a fundable interdisciplinary research proposal.

Applicants can request a maximum of $60,000 over 2 years (no more than $35,000 in 1 year) during federal fiscal years (FFY) 2020 and 2021. Principal Investigators (PIs) can also request funding for a single year (up to $35,000) for FFY 2020. Additionally, the OR will provide logistical support to each successful team during the development of the research proposal for external funding, including organizing team meetings, reviewing and editing proposals, and other relevant support.

The lead PI must be a faculty member within the College of ACES and should have an active Hatch project related to the proposed activities. The OR encourages active participation of researchers from the social sciences and humanities and the incorporation of both junior and senior faculty into teams. Proposals should include a description of the innovative nature of the research and the team’s capabilities; the contribution of each collaborator’s expertise should be made evident.

Proposals should be no more than 3 pages single-spaced in Times New Roman 11-point font with a 1-inch margin page layout. The proposal must include:

- Online form information (does not count towards the 3-page limit):
  - Title
  - Co-investigator information (names, titles, affiliations and emails)
  - Project summary (150 words maximum)
- Problem statement and potential impact (0.5 page maximum)
- Approach (including a description of the innovation of the research and alignment with current areas of strength) (1-1.5 pages maximum)
- Need for collaboration (including how this team is suited to tackle the problem at hand) (0.5 page max)
- Plans for execution and continuation (including description of developing and submitting proposals for external funding). This section is critical for accountability. Provide specific identifiable funding opportunities and a clear description for how the project will evolve (150 words max)
- References (does not count towards the 3-page limit)
Each FIRE proposal should include a supplementary section that includes:

- a budget and budget justification (1 page max)
- 1 paragraph of professional information for each of the team members indicating number of publications and external grants received during last 5 years only (unlimited page length).

FIRE grant funds can be used for research assistant support, travel support, and other support necessary in developing an outstanding research proposal for external funding. FIRE funds cannot be used for faculty summer salary support. Applicants have discretion and flexibility to use the funds accordingly. However, evaluators will assess the likelihood that the proposal has an appropriate proposed budget to generate an outstanding interdisciplinary grant proposal.

The Research Policy Committee, the ACES OR, and other ACES faculty with relevant expertise will evaluate and rank FIRE proposals on merit using the following criteria:

1. Problem and Impact Statement (10%)
   a. Does the study address a well-defined problem? Is the problem important?
   b. Are the potential impacts meaningful? Are there potential benefits of the proposed activity to the scientific community? Stakeholders? Society?

2. Approach (20%)
   a. Is the approach well-developed, well-reasoned, and appropriate to the aims of the project?
   b. Is the project original and innovative? Does it build on current strengths or add new directions to previous research? Is the approach feasible?

3. Collaboration and Suitability of Team Members (20%)
   a. Does the team have complementary and integrated expertise in distinct disciplines?
   b. Do the collaborative efforts enable the team to achieve collective results that would not be possible with a single disciplinary perspective or approach?
   c. Is the team leader capable of leading the team and accomplishing the proposed task(s)? Does the assembled team have the right composition to complete the proposed task(s)?

4. Plans for Execution and Continuation (15%)
   a. Will the plans improve the team’s chances of obtaining external funding in the future?
   b. Have specific funding opportunities been identified? Are the opportunities well-suited to the team’s objectives and visions?

5. Budget and Budget Justification (10%)
   a. Is the budget realistic? Will the use of funds help lead to the development of a grant proposal?

6. Overall Assessment (25%)
   a. What is the overall assessment of the proposal? Does the proposal and team have a high probability of success?
   b. Does the project align with the goals of the FIRE grant program? Will the funds enhance collaboration and address important interdisciplinary questions? Will the proposed tasks make the team more competitive in obtaining external funding? Will funding this proposal lead to the development of an outstanding interdisciplinary research proposal?
Call for Future Interdisciplinary Research Explorations (FIRE)
College of ACES Office of Research – Seed Grants

The deadline for submission of FIRE proposals is March 27, 2019. The OR anticipates notifying successful applicants by May 15, 2019 with the funding to begin on October 1, 2019. Proposals should be submitted online through the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (OVCR) Special Programs site March 27, 2019 by 5 PM CT. Questions? Please contact Barbara Godlew at godlew2@illinois.edu.