

Future Interdisciplinary Research Explorations (FIRE) Grant: Request for Proposal 2021

The College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) Future Interdisciplinary Research Explorations (FIRE) award program receives generous funding support from the ACES Office of the Dean and Office of Research. This grant encourages creativity and collaboration between ACES faculty and research partners (internal and external to the university). **This year's call is open to all tenure-track and nontenure-track faculty of all ranks.**

The aims of FIRE proposals are for faculty to:

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

The expected product of the FIRE seed grant program is a fundable extramural interdisciplinary research proposal. Projects will be expected to achieve milestones and to actively seek significant external support in the form of a multi-PI research proposal to NIFA, NIH, NSF, DOD, DOE, or other federal agency, industry, or foundation. Progress reports will be required at key time points, which may affect continual funding.

Teams that have previously submitted to an extramural funding agency but ultimately did not receive funding should consider applying for a FIRE award. Through a competitive FIRE application, the program could provide funds for the remaining research needed to create a competitive resubmission to the extramural funding agency (critical piece of equipment, personnel [i.e., graduate student or postdoctoral researcher] or supplies).

Applicants can request a maximum of \$60,000 over 2 years (no more than \$35,000 in one year) during federal fiscal years (FFY) 2022 and 2023. Investigators can also request funding for a single year (up to \$35,000) for FFY 2022. Additionally, the ACES Office of Research 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 as needed.

The lead PI must be a faculty member within ACES. To streamline the funding process, the lead PI should have an active Hatch project related to the proposed activities.

Proposals should include a description of the innovative nature of the research and the team's capabilities, where the contribution of each collaborator's expertise is evident.

Proposals should be no more than 3 pages, single-space, Times New Roman 11-point font, 8.5" x 11", 1-inch margins, consisting of:

- Online form information (does not count against the 3-page limit):
- Title
- Co-investigator information (names, titles, affiliations and email addresses)
- Project summary (**150 words maximum**; does not count against the 3-page limit)
- Problem statement and potential impact (**0.5 page max**)
- Approach (including a description of the innovation of the research and alignment with current areas of strength) (suggested length: **1.5 pages max**)
- Need for collaboration (including how this team is well suited to tackle the problem at hand) (**0.5 page max**)
- Plans for execution and continuation (e.g., develop and submit proposals for external funding). This section is critical for accountability. Be as specific as possible when identifying funding opportunities. Provide a clear path for how the project will evolve (**150 words max**)
- References (**does not count against the 3-page limit**)

Additionally, each FIRE proposal should include a supplementary section that includes:

- Budget and budget justification (**1 page maximum each**; does not count against the 3-page limit)
- PI descriptions for each of the team members indicating publications and external grants received during last five years only (**no page limit**; does not count against the 3-page limit).

FIRE funds can be used for research assistant support, limited travel support, and other support necessary for generating outstanding research. The applicant has the discretion and flexibility to use the funds according to research needs.

FIRE proposals will be evaluated and ranked based on merit by the ACES OR staff and the Research Policy Committee or other ACES faculty with relevant expertise using the criteria outlined below.

Evaluation Criteria

1. *Problem and Impact Statement (10%)*
Does the study address a well-defined problem?
Is the problem important?
Are the potential impacts meaningful?

Are there potential benefits of the proposed activity to the scientific community, stakeholders, and/or society?

2. *Approach (20%)*

Is the approach well-developed, well-reasoned, and appropriate to the aims of the project?

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%)*

Does the team have complementary and integrated expertise in distinct disciplines?

Do the collaborative efforts enable the team to achieve collective results that would not be possible with a single disciplinary perspective or approach?

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%)*

Will the plans improve the team's chances of obtaining external funding?

Have specific funding opportunities been identified?

Are the opportunities well-suited to the team's objectives and visions?

5. *Budget and Budget Justification (10%)*

Is the budget realistic?

Will the use of funds help lead to the development of an extramural grant proposal?

6. *Overall Assessment (25%)*

What is the overall assessment of the proposal?

Does the proposal and team have a high probability of success?

Does the project align with the goals of the FIRE seed 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 project?

The deadline for submission of FIRE proposals is April 9, 2021 by 5 PM CT. **Proposals should be submitted online at <https://go.aces.illinois.edu/FIRESubmissions> as a combined .pdf file.**

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& Environmental Sciences

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For more information please go to our website at <https://aces.illinois.edu/research/for-researchers/FIRE-seed-grant>.

Questions? Contact Barbara Godlew: godlew2@illinois.edu.