



Atkinson Postdoctoral Fellowships in Sustainability

Request for Proposals

The Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future seeks outstanding, creative, and highly motivated individuals to work with Cornell faculty in collaboration with *external partners* to discover and implement sustainable solutions to world needs.

Overview

Founded by a generous gift from David and Pat Atkinson, the David R. Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future empowers faculty to think outside of their departments and across disciplines when it comes to tackling the world's greatest challenge – creating a vital and resilient future for the global community. By providing funding for cross-college collaborations, urgent research, and partnerships with non-profits, government, and industry, the Atkinson Center supports the pioneering risk-takers at the very heart of radical collaborations for knowledge-to-action programs and projects.

The center's emerging strategic plan will focus resources on programs and projects that are consistent with our overarching theme of **building resilient rural-urban systems** – including the food, water, energy, and economic systems – that connect the lives of rural and city dwellers.

Increasing Food Security

Improving the systems of agriculture, aquaculture, and wild food harvest to meet the nutritional needs of all people while enhancing the quality of life of those who produce the food – and the land and aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems on which they depend.

Reducing Climate Risks

Innovating technology, financial instruments, and policy to reduce greenhouse gas concentrations and adapt infrastructure, agriculture, and health systems to equitably protect human health, safety, and prosperity from the impact of increasingly catastrophic droughts, floods, storms, and wildfires.

Accelerating Energy Transitions

Connecting research with for-profit corporations, non-profit organizations, and government to enhance the generation, distribution, and storage of clean energy for heating and cooling, electricity, and transportation.

Achieving One Health

Incorporating our understanding of the inextricable dependence of human health and happiness on the health of nature into the development of agriculture and infrastructure systems.

The Atkinson Center connects nonprofit, government, and industry partners with the research capacity at Cornell in order to jointly develop and test evidence-based solutions. [Current collaborators](#) include CARE, The Nature Conservancy, Environmental Defense Fund, Avangrid, OXFAM, and the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute.

Program Objectives

Atkinson Postdoctoral Fellowships are intended to strengthen and expand the center's work with external organizations, by:

- Stimulating original cross-disciplinary research and development of sustainable solutions that address the world's most pressing sustainability challenges;
- Developing and deepening connections with external parties in order to speed the creation and implementation of viable sustainability solutions;
- Developing a cohort of postdoctoral fellows on campus working in sustainability and related fields; and,
- Building a core group of leaders capable of creating effective, workable solutions to the most serious sustainability questions.

Requirements

The postdoctoral candidate must have completed a PhD in a relevant field by the start of the fellowship. We welcome applications from any scholarly field, including life and physical sciences, social sciences, engineering, business, and the humanities.

Selection Criteria

The primary factors in making selections will be intellectual merit, creativity, originality, the feasibility of the project, the significance of the challenge being addressed, and expected outcomes of the work, including engagement with external parties to achieve impact, and how scalable any impacts might be. The center will also consider the qualifications and accomplishments of the applicant and the potential for the applicant's intellectual and professional growth.

- **Intellectual Merit:** Evaluate the originality, coherence, and clarity of the proposed project. Will the proposal advance understanding and address important sustainability issues?
- **Impact:** Will the proposed research project have significant impact or the potential to implement sustainable solutions to world needs? Are the critical steps on the path to impact clearly articulated? What is the likelihood of impact beyond Cornell, scalability, and real world applications?
- **Metrics:** Does the proposal include clear and appropriate measures of success and explicit milestones with a realistic timeline?
- **Probability for Success:** Is the experience, engagement, and commitment of the assembled team appropriate to achieve success?
- **Partner Organization:** Is the partner organization appropriate for the proposed project? Are the mutual goals and the contribution to the project clearly explained in the proposal?
- **Qualifications and Accomplishments of the Candidate:** To what degree does the fellowship candidate have the required background and experience for the proposed project?

Program Structure

- Up to four fellows will be chosen each year, so that at any given time, there will be four to eight fellows in the program.
- The start date for new fellows will ideally be between January and August 2019. This is flexible and based on agreement between the candidate's adviser and the Atkinson Center.

- The fellowships carry a salary of \$60,000 per year, full Cornell University employee benefits, and \$15,000 per year for research-related expenses.
- The fellowship term is two years. The second year is contingent on performance and on mutual agreement between the fellow, the adviser, and the Atkinson Center.
- Fellows are expected to spend time at the Atkinson Center in Rice Hall. They are also expected to participate in communications, policy training, and related Atkinson Center activities during the fellowship.
- Postdoctoral fellows can spend variable portions of their fellowship period at Cornell, with external collaborators, in other relevant facilities, or in the field as dictated by their research.
- All fellows will have access to [Cornell's Office of Postdoctoral Studies](#), which provides career services, including CV and resume writing, interview preparation, workshops designed specifically for postdocs including a postdoc leadership program, and social activities.
- The postdoc's "home" will be in the department of the Cornell adviser (more on that below). The postdoctoral appointment and related financial transactions will be handled by the adviser's department.

Role and Selection of Advisers

Each fellow will have two advisers, a lead adviser from Cornell and a collaborating adviser from an external *non-university* organization. The Cornell adviser must be an [Atkinson Center Faculty Fellow](#) with a tenure-track or tenured position at Cornell. The Cornell adviser has primary responsibility for the postdoc's programmatic and professional progress and for communications with the Atkinson Center and with the external adviser.

- Applicants may identify a potential Cornell adviser by searching the [fellows list](#) on our website for faculty engaged in relevant focus areas.
- If applicant is currently at Cornell the postdoc fellowship adviser **cannot** be the applicant's current adviser.

The collaborating adviser must be from an external *non-university* organization that will add value to the proposed research and leverage the project for impact. External advisers can be from business, industry, nongovernment or civil society organizations (NGOs and CSOs), foundations, or government. The collaborating adviser shares responsibility for the postdoc's programmatic and professional progress and for communications with the Cornell adviser.

The applicant and the Cornell adviser should discuss potential external advisers before inviting them to participate.

- Applicants and advisers are encouraged to explore opportunities to work with external organizations with which the Atkinson Center has existing connections, including:
- [EDF](#), [TNC](#), [Oxfam](#), [CARE](#), [Smithsonian](#) and [RFF](#).

Application Process and Timeline

Program Timeline

August 20, 2018	Letter of Intent due
September 21, 2018	Start full application process
October 8, 2018	Full application due
November, 2018	Applicants notified
January 2019	Fellowship can begin

Letter of Intent

A letter of intent (LOI) coauthored by the applicant and the Cornell lead adviser is *strongly recommended*. The LOI process allows time for submitting teams to develop their ideas and work with external partners on the full proposal. The LOIs also assist the Atkinson Center in planning the proposal review process.

The letter should outline the project, identify a potential Cornell advisor, and if possible preliminarily identify one or more potential external advisors. The letter must include contact details for the applicant, the Cornell adviser, and the applicant's current university or other affiliation and position. *Please note: Final choice of an external partner and adviser is not expected until the full proposal.*

The LOI should be submitted online no later than

11:59 pm ET on Monday, August 20, 2018

Details will be available in early July at: atkinson.cornell.edu/grants/postdoc/

Full Application

The full application process should be started no later than *Monday September 21, 2018*. This allows time for letters of recommendation to be submitted by the proposal deadline. Applications and all letters of recommendation must be submitted online no later than

11:59 pm ET on Monday, October 8, 2018

Details will be available at: atkinson.cornell.edu/grants/postdoc/

A full application includes the following:

1. Single PDF file of no more than 10 pages:

1. **Introduction** (maximum 1 page)
This should give a short summary of the applicant's PhD research and career goals, explaining how the postdoctoral fellowship will enhance his or her career in sustainability research.
2. **Proposal** (maximum 4 pages, including bibliography and references)
The proposal must show a **clear means of effecting real-world impact**, such as potential paths to scaling up results, securing future external funding, or a real-world impact through adoption and implementation. Successful proposals will advance sustainability locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally. The proposal should include a clear statement of objectives and the context and significance of the proposed research. The proposal must also include a summary of the approach, methods, and metrics by which progress of the research will be evaluated.
3. **Impact** (maximum 1 page)
A summary of the impact or potential impact of the proposed research. Explain clearly how the proposed project will change or influence behavior, practice, procedures, or policy at significant scale to help implement sustainable solutions to world needs. Consider using a diagram to clarify the intended flow of information and advice among all project participants and other stakeholders. A co-creation model of engagement with the external partner is *strongly encouraged*.

4. **Applicant's Curriculum Vita** (maximum 2 pages)

5. **Two Letters of Support** (maximum 1 page per letter)

A letter of support from the Cornell adviser and one from the collaborating external adviser are required. The letters should discuss the nature and purpose of the external collaboration, **'the potential for growth of the scope of – and/or participants in – the collaboration**, the degree of interaction with the applicant in developing the proposal, and comments on the expected impacts of the project if successful, including potential paths to developing follow-on funding.

2. Letters of Recommendation (submitted online separately)

Applicants should arrange for up to three confidential letters of recommendation. These letters must be submitted online in order to ensure confidentiality. Applicants must submit contact emails for recommenders in enough time for letters to be submitted by the October 8 deadline. A link will be provided to recommenders via email.