



**Academic Venture Fund  
Request for Proposals (RFP)  
2017**

The David R. Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future invites proposals for the [Academic Venture Fund](#) (AVF) program. This fund stimulates innovative, impactful, interdisciplinary research in sustainability at Cornell. The Academic Venture Fund helps form interdisciplinary teams of Cornell scholars and where appropriate, connect these teams with external partners. The proposed research **must show promise for securing future external funding and/or sustained future activity through adoption and implementation**. Successful proposals will advance sustainability locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally. The AVF is intended to support proposals that would not be funded by traditional granting organizations because the proposed activity is interdisciplinary, still early in development, high risk, or some combination of these factors.

We seek proposals in the following areas:

- Across the entire range of our sustainability themes and focus areas, as in previous calls.
- In public health, with a One Health/Planetary Health theme. As a supplement to the traditional AVF program, and in conjunction with Cornell's [new Master of Public Health program](#), we have received funding to support additional select proposals in our One Health/Planetary Health (OH/PH) focus area that have an explicit connection with human health. OH/PH describes the various linkages between the health of humans, animals, and the environment. Human behaviors, demographic dynamics, and economic conditions are often important drivers of OH/PH relationships. A OH/PH approach is inherently multidisciplinary, improving our ability to understand and design interventions that incorporate these linkages.

All AVF proposals **must**:

- Demonstrate clear **impact or paths to impact** beyond Cornell
- Demonstrate a **strong interdisciplinary** team approach to the project

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

<b>Intellectual Merit:</b> Will the proposal advance understanding and address important sustainability issues?
<b>Impact:</b> Will the proposed research project have significant impact or potential impact to implement sustainable solutions to world needs? Are the critical steps on the path to impact clearly articulated?
<b>Collaborations:</b> Does the proposal establish new, important, lasting collaborations within Cornell and, if appropriate, with external organizations?

<b>Interdisciplinary Reach:</b> Does the research team reach across disciplines and/or campus units?
<b>Risk:</b> Is the proposed project early in development, high risk, potentially game changing, or some combination of these factors, so that funding through traditional sources (NSF, NIH, DOE, etc.) would be unlikely?
<b>Follow-on:</b> Does the research seem likely to attract follow-on funding after seed funding has expired?
<b>Metrics:</b> Does the proposal include clear and appropriate measures of success and explicit milestones with a realistic timeline?

All proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by Atkinson Center faculty fellows working with our leadership team. Applications self-identifying as having a One Health theme with applications to human health will also be evaluated by the leadership of the MPH program.

New this year, applicants will also have the option to have their proposals reviewed by members of our [Alumni Advisory Board](#). This opportunity helps provide an external perspective on proposals and may help to identify potential external collaborators or paths to impact. Final rankings and recommendations for funding will continue to be made by faculty fellows and the center’s leadership team.

We *strongly encourage* proposers to contact members of the [Atkinson Center Leadership Team](#) to discuss their ideas prior to submitting an AVF proposal. We can help to strengthen proposals by addressing AVF program goals and identifying additional potential collaborators or partnerships. [Examples of successful past proposals](#) are available online.

### **Principal Investigators and Eligibility**

Proposals must include two or more principal investigators. We encourage PIs from different Cornell departments and colleges, but PIs from within a single department can be considered with sufficient breadth of expertise and perspective. All PIs must meet Cornell’s principal investigator eligibility criteria; see [www.research.cornell.edu/VPR/Policies/PI-policy.html](http://www.research.cornell.edu/VPR/Policies/PI-policy.html). Cornell tenure-track faculty, principal research scientists, and senior scientists meet these criteria. Other Cornell employees or students may participate, but may not serve as PIs unless the Office of the Vice Provost for Research provides a waiver.

### **Funding**

Research grants will be made for projects of up to 24 months duration. The Center will not support projects for longer than 24 months. Recent total awards have ranged from \$40,000 to \$145,000 (average: \$114,000). There is no overhead associated with these grants. Last year’s proposal success rate was 30 percent.

### **Letters of Intent (due 11:59 p.m. EST on February 20, 2017)**

Applicants are *strongly encouraged* to submit a letter of intent (LOI). This LOI should include a title, one-paragraph description of the proposed research, and contact information (names, departments, and NetID's of the project contact and other key participants). The LOI *must include a clear statement explaining the impact of the proposed research*. All LOIs will be posted on the ACSF website in a directory accessible only to those with Cornell NetID's. LOIs are published in this way to encourage feedback and promote an improved full proposal. LOIs must be submitted online at [www.acsf.cornell.edu/avf](http://www.acsf.cornell.edu/avf).

### **Proposals (due 11:59 p.m. EST on March 20, 2017)**

Proposals will be accepted at [www.acsf.cornell.edu/avf](http://www.acsf.cornell.edu/avf). The complete proposal must consist of a cover sheet, narrative with supporting information, and budget.

### **Instructions**

1. Fill in the **cover sheet** form available on the site. Provide a 100-word **abstract in non-technical language** (strict 100 words maximum) of the proposed activity. This abstract will be used in AVF announcements and publicity material.
2. The proposal narrative with supporting information must be a **single pdf file**, with text in 12-point font, single-spaced, with at least one-inch margins. Begin each section listed below on a new page. The narrative with supporting information **must** include the following sections:
  - a. **Proposal:** A proposal summary that explains the motivation for and risks associated with the project, what is novel about the proposed research, what research methods will be used, and how the project will advance sustainability. This section must articulate a clear set of objectives, a compelling vision of what the project might achieve, and what differentiates it from standard disciplinary research (three pages maximum for narrative, plus one page of references).
  - b. **Impact:** 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 (one page maximum).
  - c. **Collaborations:** A plan for internal collaborations that describes how new, substantive connections will be established to form an interdisciplinary team. As appropriate, describe actual or prospective external partners that can apply, scale, or otherwise further the research discoveries of the project. If known, identify the external partners and their level of committed engagement as precisely as possible (one page maximum, plus up to three letters of support from external partners).
  - d. **Milestones:** List project milestones that include a specific timeline of well-defined activities and measurable outcomes from the project (one page maximum).

- e. **Metrics of success** with specific, measurable indicators that are appropriate and can be used to evaluate the team’s progress in advancing sustainability locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally (half page maximum).
  - f. **Follow-on:** A follow-on funding plan that explains how the research launched by the AVF award will be continued. Include information on potential sources of funding and the level and timing of follow-on funding necessary to continue the research (half page maximum).
  - g. **Curriculum vitae:** A brief CV for the lead author and each co-PI. CVs for senior investigators are optional. Strict two-page maximum per investigator. Excess CV pages will be deleted from the final review package.
  - h. **Current and pending:** Information on related current and pending support from other sources. Provide this information **ONLY** if the support is relevant to the activity proposed for AVF funding. Provide this information for the lead author and all co-PIs. Use any format that includes the following information: project/proposal title, funding source, award amount, award period, and relationship to AVF project (e.g., co-financing of materials or personnel, overlapping objectives, use of data or equipment, similar partnerships, etc.).
  - i. **Budget justification:** Provide sufficient information for reviewers to understand the funding request. AVF funding may be used for any legitimate research expense, but cannot be used to support tenure-track faculty or senior researcher salaries, summer or academic year (one page maximum).
3. Fill in the **project budget** template provided. Note that AVF funds carry no indirect cost. Upload the budget to complete your proposal.

**Deadline: Proposals must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. EST on Monday, March 20, 2017**

Please email [acsfavf@cornell.edu](mailto:acsfavf@cornell.edu) if you have questions.

The Atkinson Center is offering **information sessions** to help prospective applicants address this call for proposals on **Wednesday, February 15, 2017, and Wednesday, March 8, 2017, at 2:00 p.m.** in 300 Rice Hall. Faculty members considering submitting proposals are *strongly encouraged* to attend. Please contact [Paula Euvrard](#) to register.

### **Responsibilities**

Proposers awarded AVF funds will:

1. **Meet** regularly with the Center Director and others in the leadership team to discuss the progress of their efforts in research, intended application(s), desired impacts, development of Cornell and external partnerships, follow-on funding, and milestones met or missed.
2. **Respond** to an annual survey about the impact of Atkinson Center funding, engagement, and project details.

3. **Submit** a final—and in the case of projects of more than one year’s duration, also an annual—written report that describes results and progress relating to each specific metric of success presented in the original proposal.
4. **Have the opportunity** to apply for supplemental funding of up to \$10,000 from the [Office of Engagement Initiatives](#) (Engaged Cornell) to provide opportunities for students to participate in community-engaged sustainability research projects. For additional details, please contact [engagedcornell@cornell.edu](mailto:engagedcornell@cornell.edu).

Thank you for your interest in the Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future and the Academic Venture Fund program. Please email [acsfavf@cornell.edu](mailto:acsfavf@cornell.edu) for a prompt response to your questions.