



Academic Venture Fund Request for Proposals (RFP) 2018

The David R. Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future invites proposals for the [Academic Venture Fund](#) (AVF) program. This fund stimulates innovative and interdisciplinary sustainability research, working groups, convenings, or programmatic development in sustainability at Cornell. The AVF is intended to support research that would not be funded by traditional granting organizations because the proposed activity is interdisciplinary, still early in development, high risk, too applied, or some combination of these factors. The fund supports teams of Cornell scholars and, where appropriate, connection of these teams with external partners.

The proposal **must show a clear means of effecting real-world impact**, such as through the promise of securing future external funding and/or a sustained future through adoption and implementation. Successful proposals will advance sustainability locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally.

Proposal Themes

The Atkinson Center continues to welcome proposals from interdisciplinary teams of faculty across campus, spanning the entire range of sustainability themes.

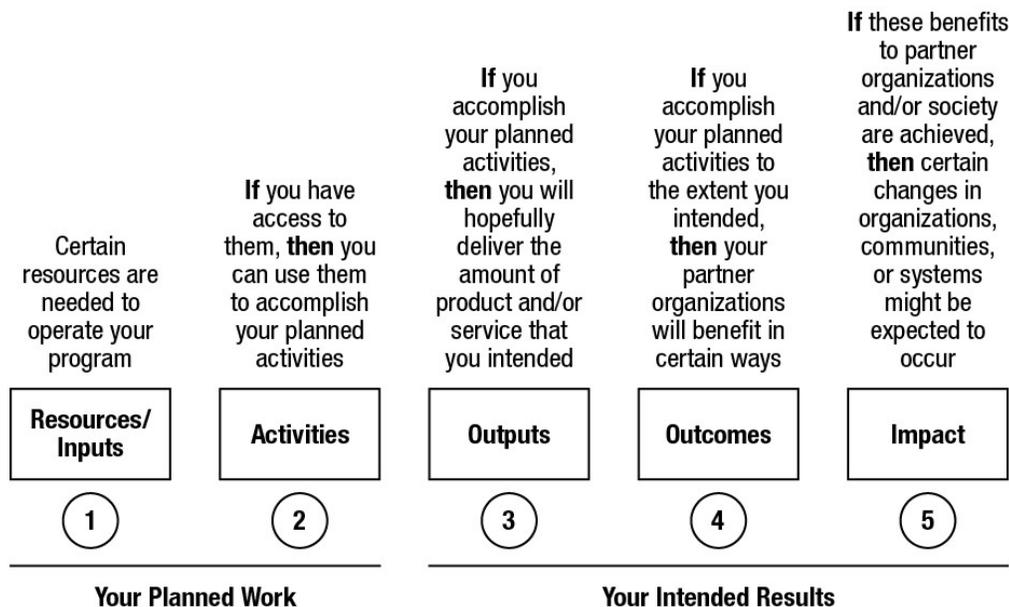
In addition we encourage and seek to support proposals that emphasize the importance of **resilient rural-urban systems**. Knowledge of the integrated systems that connect rural and urban communities—including food, water, health, economic, and energy systems—is vital to the creation of a sustainable future as the global population is expected to reach nine billion by 2050. With 70% of people estimated to be living in cities by that time, over the next five years the Atkinson Center, in concert with the [Provost's Sustainability Task Force's](#) recommendations, will be exploring the role of **resilient rural-urban systems** in developing a holistic systems approach to sustainability. Areas of focus include:

- **Increasing Food Security:** Improving the systems of agriculture, aquaculture, and wild food harvest to meet the nutritional needs of all those living today and in the future while maintaining other ecosystem services.
- **Reducing Climate Risks:** Innovating technology, financial instruments, and policy to reduce greenhouse gas concentrations and adapt infrastructure, agriculture, and health systems to equitably protect health, safety, and prosperity from the impact of increasing droughts, floods, storms, and fires.
- **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.
- **Advancing One Health:** Enhancing our understanding and implementation in urban and rural settings of the inextricable dependence of human health and happiness on the health of nature.

Projects on One Health (whether connected to rural-urban systems or not) that have *explicit connections to human health* may be supported in part by joint Atkinson-Cornell Master of Public Health funds (MPH).

All AVF proposals **must**:

- Describe a clear **path to impact**—theory of change—beyond Cornell (see diagram below). Describe how this impact will be scaled through partnerships or potential partnerships with external organizations.
- Demonstrate a strong interdisciplinary team approach to the project, or clearly explain why a single disciplinary approach is sufficient to achieve a sustainability outcome (e.g., a next step in product development).



Review Criteria

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

- **Intellectual Merit:** Will the proposal advance understanding and address important sustainability issues?
- **Impact:** Will the proposed research project have enough impact to implement sustainable solutions to world needs? Are the critical steps on the path to impact clearly articulated? Does the research seem likely to attract follow-on funding after seed funding has expired?
- **Collaborations:** Does the proposal establish or convincingly outline new, important, lasting collaborations within Cornell and/or with external organizations?
- **Interdisciplinary Reach:** Does the research team reach across disciplines and/or campus units? If not, does the proposal clearly explain and justify why this approach is not needed.
- **Risk:** 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?
- **Metrics:** 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 connected to human health will also be evaluated by the leadership of the MPH program.

Applicants are encouraged to contact members of the [Atkinson Center Leadership Team](#) to discuss their ideas prior to submission in order to help strengthen proposals by addressing AVF goals and identifying potential collaborators or partnerships. [Examples of successful past proposals](#) are available online.

The center is also offering **information sessions** to help prospective applicants on Thursday, Feb. 8 from 2-3 pm and on Friday, March 9 from 10-11 am in 300 Rice Hall. Faculty members considering submitting proposals are *strongly encouraged* to attend. Please contact [Gladys Brangman](#) to register.

Principal Investigators and Eligibility

We continue to encourage interdisciplinary, multiple-investigator research projects addressing real-world, complex problems that require a range of perspectives and expertise to solve. We encourage teams of faculty investigators from different Cornell departments and colleges to apply, but collaborators from within a single department can be considered with sufficient breadth of expertise and perspective. We will consider single investigator proposals if there is a clear and compelling justification that explains why a multi-investigator approach is not appropriate.

All PIs must meet Cornell's principal investigator (PI) eligibility criteria; see <http://www.research.cornell.edu/VPR/Policies/PI-policy.html>. Cornell tenure-track faculty, research- and clinical-track professorial faculty, principal research scientists, and senior scientists meet these criteria. Other Cornell employees or students may participate, but can serve as PI only if granted permission by the appropriate unit with a fully executed and submitted Form 5 waiver.

Funding

Research grants will be made for projects of up to 24 months duration. The center is unlikely to support projects for longer than 24 months. Recent awards granted ranged from \$60,000 to \$155,000.

AVF Program Timetable

Feb 8	AVF Information Session (2-3pm, 300 Rice Hall)
Feb 26	Letter of Intent due (optional)
Mar 9	AVF Information Session (10-11am, 300 Rice Hall)
Mar 26	Full proposals due
Late May	Applicants notified
Jul 1	Projects can start as of 7/1/18

Letters of Intent (due 11:59 p.m. EST on February 26, 2018)

We encourage applicants 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 of the pathway to impact of the proposed research*. All LOIs will be posted on the Atkinson website in a directory accessible

only to those with Cornell NetID's. LOIs are published in this way to encourage feedback and assist with creating effective full proposals. LOIs must be submitted via online form: <https://data.acsf.cornell.edu/Program-Stage/1398/38/2018-Letter-of-Intent-LOI>.

Proposals (due 11:59 p.m. EST on March 26, 2018)

Proposals will be accepted through a link from www.acsf.cornell.edu/avf. The complete proposal must consist of a cover sheet, narrative with supporting information, and budget.

Proposal Instructions

1. Fill in the **cover sheet** form available on the site. Provide a 100-word **abstract in non-technical language** (strict limit) 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 potential impact of the proposed research. Explain clearly how the 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:** For multi-investigator proposals include a plan that describes how new, substantive connections will be established to form an interdisciplinary team. All proposals must 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. **Metrics of success:** 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).
 - e. **Follow-on:** A follow-on funding plan that explains how the research launched by the AVF award will be implemented or 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).
 - f. **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.
 - g. **Current and pending:** Information on 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.).

