The David R. Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future (ACSF) invites proposals for its Academic Venture Fund (AVF) program. This fund has been created to stimulate new, original, cross-disciplinary research in sustainability at Cornell. The Academic Venture Fund aims to form interdisciplinary teams of Cornell scholars and connect these teams with external partners. The proposed research must show promise for securing external funding and advancing 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.

During this funding cycle, we will give preference to proposals focused on basic and applied research. Proposed projects will be evaluated for their scholarly quality; likely contribution to understanding and solving sustainability problems; likelihood of establishing new, significant, and lasting partnerships within and outside Cornell; and durability beyond the period of ACSF seed funding. Proposals will be evaluated by ACSF’s Faculty Advisory Board, assisted by expert peer reviewers as needed. The portfolio of funded proposals will represent ACSF’s three themes of energy, environment, and economic development.

We anticipate that successful proposals will include two or more principal investigators from different Cornell departments and disciplines. We encourage connections between the three themes of sustainability. An AVF award is typically used to generate preliminary results needed to garner external funding; develop a common language, methodology, or theoretical framework; or establish a proof-of-concept. We welcome short-term proposals for study groups, workshops, symposia, or shared GRA/postdoc support necessary to organize a new group to pursue high-return opportunities. For examples of successful proposals, see [http://www.acsf.cornell.edu/AVF/](http://www.acsf.cornell.edu/AVF/).

Most successful proposers discuss their ideas with ACSF leadership prior to submitting an AVF proposal. We can help to strengthen proposals by identifying potential partnerships and further refining the approach. Contact us at [http://www.acsf.cornell.edu/people/](http://www.acsf.cornell.edu/people/).

**Letter of Intent (due February 25, 2013)**

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a letter of intent (LOI) by **February 25, 2013**. The LOI should include a title, one-paragraph description of the proposed research, and contact information (names, departments, and NetIDs of the project contact and other key participants). This information will be posted on the ACSF website in a directory accessible only to those with Cornell NetIDs. LOIs are published in this way to encourage additional partnerships. Submit a LOI at [http://www.acsf.cornell.edu/AVF/](http://www.acsf.cornell.edu/AVF/).

**Funding**

Funding is available for periods up to 24 months with grant awards ranging from about $30,000 to $200,000; the median funding level is $100,000. We expect to fund no more than one 24-month
initiative and distribute about $700,000 in total. Any funds that remain uncommitted after the competition will be held for the next proposal period or used in other ways to further the mission of the Atkinson Center. ACSF will not support AVF projects for longer than 24 months.

**Eligibility**
All principal investigators must meet Cornell’s principal investigator eligibility criteria; see [http://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 principal investigator unless the office of the Vice Provost for Research provides a waiver.

**Proposals (due March 22, 2013)**
Proposals will be accepted at [http://www.acsf.cornell.edu/AVF/](http://www.acsf.cornell.edu/AVF/). The complete proposal will consist of a cover sheet, narrative with supporting information, and budget:

A. Fill in the **cover sheet** form available on the site. A **project contact** must be identified. The project contact provides the communication link between ACSF and the entire project team on all matters administrative and scientific. Typically, the project contact will be one of the principal investigators. Provide a 100-word **abstract in non-technical language** (strictly 100 words maximum) of the proposed activity. This abstract will be used in AVF announcements and publicity material.

B. 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:

1. 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 this 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 (3 pages maximum for narrative, plus 1 page of references).

2. A plan for **new internal and external partnerships** that describes how new, substantive alliances will be established with external partners that can apply or otherwise further the research discoveries of the project. Identify the prospective external partners and their level of committed engagement as precisely as possible (1 page maximum, with up to 5 letters of support from external partners).

3. A **follow-on funding plan** that explains how the research launched by the AVF award will be continued. Include information on potential source(s) of funding and the level and timing of follow-on funding necessary to continue the research launched by the AVF grant (half page maximum).

4. Proposal **milestones** that include a specific timeline of well-defined activities and measurable outcomes from the project (half page maximum).
5. **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).

6. A brief **curriculum vitae** for the lead author and each co-PI. CVs for senior investigators are optional (strict 2-page maximum per investigator). NOTE: Excess CV pages will be dropped from the final review package; please ensure all information fits on 2 pages.

7. **A budget justification** that provides sufficient information for reviewers to understand the funding request. AVF funding may be used for any legitimate research expense, but will not support tenure-track faculty salaries (summer or academic year).

8. Information on related **current and pending support** from other sources. Only provide this information 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.).

C. Fill in the **project budget** template provided. Note that **AVF funds now carry no indirect cost**. Upload the budget to complete your proposal.

**Deadline:** Proposals must be received no later than **Friday, March 22, 2013**.

Email **acsf@cornell.edu** if you have questions.

**Responsibilities:**

Proposers awarded AVF funds will be requested to:

1) **Meet** quarterly with the appropriate ACSF associate director or director 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) **Report** progress at a semiannual AVF event, in either a poster or panel discussion session, to be coordinated by ACSF.

3) **Respond** to annual survey from ACSF Director about Center engagement and project details.

4) **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 toward each specific metric of success presented in the original proposal.

5) **Prepare** an end-of-project press release on results. ACSF staff will be available to help.

ACSF is offering two information sessions, including question-and-answer sections, on **February 20** and **March 15 at 3 p.m. in 300 Rice Hall**. Please contact **Paula Euvrard** to register.

Thank you for your interest in the Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future and its Academic Venture Fund program. Please email **acsf@cornell.edu** for a prompt response to your questions.