Request for Proposals
Emerging Opportunities Program: *Catalyst Grants*

The Graham Sustainability Institute is soliciting **Catalyst Grant** proposals to support a wide range of collaborative activities such as conferences, project planning, white papers, and workshops.

KEY DATES

January 2, 2018	Request for proposals (RFP) released
February 12, 2018 (11:59 PM EDT)	Letters of Intent due
March 19, 2018 (11:59 PM EST)	Proposals due
Late April 2018	Funding announcement
May 2018	Anticipated project start date

This is a recurring funding opportunity, with RFPs released in September and January, as resources allow.

FUNDING

Up to $10,000 over eight months. Approximately three grants per funding cycle (September and January).

ABOUT THE GRAHAM INSTITUTE

The Graham Institute catalyzes and facilitates sustainability-focused collaborations involving faculty, students, and external stakeholders. We work with organizations to understand specific needs and foster connections with relevant expertise throughout the university. We link science to real-world action by supporting the work of collaborative teams spanning multiple disciplines and sectors. We also believe diversity, equity, and inclusion are key to individual empowerment and the advancement of sustainability, see www.graham.umich.edu.

The Graham Institute defines sustainability broadly: "Sustainability encompasses solutions-driven scholarship and practice that seeks to safeguard our planet's life-support systems and enhance well-being for present and future generations. The field is defined by the problems it addresses rather than the disciplines it employs. It draws from multiple disciplines of the natural, social, engineering, design, and health sciences; from the professions and humanities; and from practical field experience in business, government, and civil society." Recognizing that there are many definitions of sustainability, for the purposes of Emerging Opportunities grants, sustainability should include environmental, economic, and social dimensions. For a given project those dimensions need not be equal, but they should all be present. Proposals should clearly articulate the relationship of the proposed work to sustainability.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE'S *EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM*

The Emerging Opportunities Program supports collaborative sustainability research and assessment activities that span multiple disciplines and sectors and connect science to real-world decisions and actions. A number of funding opportunities are available through the Emerging Opportunities Program, including Transformation Grants, Catalyst Grants, and Fast Track Grants. Learn more about the Emerging Opportunities Program at: http://graham.umich.edu/emopps.

The program aims to stimulate and respond to emerging opportunities to bring together the diverse expertise and inclusive engagement needed at key decision points to advance sustainability. Funded projects have the following characteristics:

- **Solutions Orientation** – The project is framed in a way that will yield actionable options for decision makers and practitioners.
- **Faculty Expertise from Multiple Disciplines** – The project brings together a strong team representing multiple disciplines, with preference given to projects that draw on the breadth and depth of expertise of U-M faculty, and researchers from other institutions when appropriate.
- **Engaged Partner** – The project engages a specific external partner (or partners) willing to invest their time, provide input, and work with researchers to identify actionable options.
- **Advances Scholarship** – The project supports scholarly work of faculty researchers and others.
- **Student Opportunities –** The project offers opportunities for U-M students to engage across disciplines, appreciate diversity, think systemically, and pursue action-based learning worldwide.

CATALYST GRANT ANTICIPATED ACTIVITIES

Catalyst Grants are intended to support a range of relatively short-term, small-scale collaborative activities. Projects that receive funding are likely to be at an early stage. These grants are intended to help better define an issue or decision maker needs, gather resources and develop partnerships, and determine next steps. Activities may include, but are not limited to, convening workshops or a conference, preparing white papers, and project planning for larger collaborative projects that would be eligible for transformation grants or other funding opportunities. Projects should have an external partner (or partners) interested in the work. The partner(s) may be clearly defined already, or an objective of a catalyst grant proposal may be to better define the most appropriate partners(s) for the work. The proposed activities should be appropriate given the solutions orientation of the funding opportunity, and they should generate outputs that support decision-making or action.

ELIGIBILITY

All proposed projects must be led by a U-M researcher or faculty member who is eligible to serve as a U-M Principal Investigator (PI). Co-investigators (Co-Is) and partners from other institutions and organizations may be included on the project team. The definition of a U-M PI can be found at: http://orsp.umich.edu/principal-investigator-pi.

All projects should involve investigators from diverse disciplines. At a minimum, there **MUST** be representation of two disciplines and two U-M academic units (U-M faculty handbook) or research units (UMOR and Office of the Provost) among the PIs and Co-Is on the project team. Due to the size and breadth of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA), the two unit requirement can be fulfilled by a PI and Co-I within LSA provided there is representation from at least two of the three LSA Divisions (i.e., Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences). Please note that meeting the two unit requirement may not be sufficient to meet the disciplinary breadth requirement.

A PI currently supported by a Catalyst Grant may not be listed as an investigator (PI or Co-I) on new Catalyst Grant proposals until the first project has finished. Graham Institute staff may not be listed as members of a project team.

CATALYST GRANT WEBPAGE

All proposal materials and resources will be posted online on the Catalyst Grant webpage: http://graham.umich.edu/emopps/funding/catalyst.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Letter of Intent

A letter of intent (LOI) is required. LOIs must be submitted by 11:59 PM EDT on Monday, February 12, 2018 via the application link on the Catalyst Grant webpage (http://graham.umich.edu/emopps/funding/catalyst). Provide the team information requested and include the following information in a single file:
1. Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-Investigators (Co-Is) names and contact information
2. Working project title
3. Up to one page summary of proposed activities, including a clear statement of anticipated outputs, outcomes, and impact of the work.

You will receive an email confirming successful submission of the LOI and providing a unique URL for your application; if you do not receive this email, your application was not submitted properly and you should resubmit or contact us directly at grahaminstitute-emopps@umich.edu.

LOIs will not be used as a screening tool, but will allow program staff to gauge interest in this funding opportunity and identify appropriate reviewers. Staff may also initiate discussions with applicants based on information provided in the letters.

Proposal

Proposals must be submitted by 11:59 PM EST on Monday, March 19, 2018 using the unique application URL emailed to applicants after LOI submittal. The unique URL will prompt you to log in and then direct you to your application in the Graham online system. Update the team information as needed, then scroll down towards the end of the page to the proposal upload field, upload your complete proposal as a single PDF file, and click on the "save" button. Please note that in order to submit the proposal, the login credentials must be the same as those used to submit the LOI.

Please adhere to the format guidelines below and **provide all required elements as a single PDF file**.

Format guidelines

- Font size: 12-point
- Spacing: Single
- Margins: 1-inch

Required elements

1) **Title page (1 page)**
   a) **Project title**
   b) **Principal investigator** (primary contact for project)
      i) Title/position
      ii) U-M Unit
      iii) Telephone number
      iv) Mailing address
      v) Email address
   c) **Additional co-investigators**: Name, institution, telephone, and email address
   d) **Additional team members** (anyone receiving project resources or contributing significant resources to the project): Name, institution, telephone, email address, and nature of contribution, if relevant.
   e) **Date**: Of submission
   f) **Non-technical summary**: Provide a 250-word summary suitable for a non-technical audience. Include the project's objectives, who will use the outputs, and anticipated outcomes.

2) **Project Narrative (3 pages maximum)**
   a) **Problem Statement**: Provide relevant context for this work, and a clear description of the sustainability challenge the project proposes to address. In particular, emphasize how the proposed work exemplifies the characteristics of Emerging Opportunities projects. Introduce the external partner and describe the partner's interest in the proposed work.
   b) **Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts:** List and clearly describe the project outputs and anticipated outcomes, and describe the long-term impacts to which the work would contribute. Refer to the guidance at the end for additional details.
   c) **Project Approach**
      i) Describe how the team will implement the proposed activities.
      ii) Identify required data sources and describe how the team will access them.
      iii) Describe how the team will evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the project, including clear and appropriate measures of success. Refer to the guidance at the end for additional details.
      iv) Explain how the team will advance scholarship for faculty and create opportunities for U-M students.
   d) **Project team:** Identify each team member and briefly describe their (e.g., the activities/outputs to which they will contribute). Explain how the team and its expertise are well qualified to implement the project approach, including how the integration of insights from the multiple perspectives contributes to the project.

3) **Appendices**
   a) **References**
   b) **Proposal approval form:** Complete the proposal approval form found on the Catalyst Grant webpage. Please allow time to route this form for signatures according to the policies and procedures in your campus unit.
   c) **Budget:** Using the budget template found on the Catalyst Grant webpage, include the budget for this project. Awards will be funded at a level of up to $10,000 for eight months. No indirect costs or equipment purchases will be allowed. Matching funds not required.
   d) **Budget justification**: Provide a narrative that fully explains the relationship of costs to accomplish the proposed activities and the basis for cost estimates. If faculty salary support is requested, provide detail (for whom, nature and percent of appointment, period of time, amount).
   e) **Timeline:** Using the timeline template found on the Catalyst Grant webpage, identify anticipated start and end dates for the proposed work. Identify significant tasks and activities. The timeline must include completion of the final project outputs.
   f) **Resumes:** Include two-page resumes for each team member named on the proposal.
   g) **Other supporting documents**: You may include up to five pages of supporting documents as appendices.

REVIEW CRITERIA AND PROCESS

All proposals will be reviewed internally according to the criteria below.
- **Project approach**: Does the project have a solutions orientation? Is the approach appropriate to address the sustainability challenge described?
- **Project team**: Does the project bring together a qualified, collaborative team that spans at least two disciplines and at least two U-M academic units? Is the proposal clear about how each member will contribute and how the integration of insights from the multiple perspectives contributes to the project?
- **External partners**: Has a specific external partner(s), or potential external partner(s), been identified who has interests related to the sustainability challenge described in the proposal?
- **Feasibility**: Is sufficient information available and accessible or able to be gathered? Is the timeline realistic? Is the budget appropriate for the proposed work?
- **Potential impact**: Are the proposed processes and outputs likely to lead to the anticipated outcomes and impacts? Is the significance of the work clear and compelling? Does the proposal describe an evaluation process that includes appropriate and specific measures of success?

- **Scholarship**: Will the project advance understanding? Is there a clear plan for how the work will advance scholarship?
- **Students**: Are there opportunities for U-M students?

Graham Institute staff will review submitted proposals to ensure they meet the requirements as described in this RFP. Proposals meeting the minimum requirements will then be reviewed by a U-M faculty member from the home unit of the PI and/or with similar research area expertise and two additional U-M faculty for breadth. A funding decision letter will be sent to the PI and will include a summary of comments from the reviewers.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CATALYST GRANT RECIPIENTS

Catalyst Grant recipients will be required to:
- Participate in two project check-ins with Graham staff.
- Submit a brief mid-project report that describes progress on activities, outputs, and anticipated outcomes outlined in the proposal and any challenges experienced.
- Submit a final written report that describes the overall results and progress relating to the objectives and specific measures of success presented in the original proposal.
- Share additional project outputs (e.g., articles, guides, graphics, factsheets) with the Graham Institute.
- Participate in an annual Graham-sponsored meeting with U-M sustainability researchers to share findings.
- Respond to Graham Institute surveys about the impact of Emerging Opportunities funding and staff support, and project details.
- Mention Graham Institute support in any publications, presentations of project results, and formal project communications (press releases, social media, etc.) - provide information to Graham Institute staff related to these efforts.
- Respond to requests to review proposals during future funding cycles.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS RFP
Please direct all questions related to this RFP to Maggie Allan (maallan@umich.edu, 734-763-0749). Program staff will maintain and regularly update a Frequently Asked Questions document available on the Catalyst Grant webpage.

GUIDANCE

The following offers detail and clarification regarding key terms used in this RFP and required proposal elements.

Solutions orientation
- Framing that connects science to real-world decisions. Results can be used as a basis for decision-making, work is at the point of implementation.

External partner
- Individual(s) or organization(s) outside the university who are directly involved with the topic of interest either as a practitioner or decision maker. External partners can be from one or several sectors (government, industry, non-governmental, community, etc.) based on the focus of the project. External partners should be in a position to directly utilize project outputs - implementing strategies, influencing decision-making, scaling results, and furthering project objectives.

Stakeholder
- A stakeholder is anyone who is affected by or has an interest or stake in a particular issue. Examples of stakeholders include members of local, state, federal or tribal agencies; business leaders and industry representatives; representatives from non-profit groups or other citizen organizations; and individuals from loosely defined user groups, such as local residents, recreational boaters or farmers. All external partners could also be considered stakeholders, but not all stakeholders are partners.

Scholarly work
- Activities (publications, presentations, creative works) which disseminate project outputs and outcomes, and advance U-M faculty scholarship.

Project Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts
- <u>Outputs</u> are tangible products created or services delivered during or upon project completion. They may include, but are not limited to:
    - Scientifically produced data, analyses, and syntheses
    - An evaluation of existing decision-making information needs
    - Events such as conferences or workshops
    - Translational products that support decision-making or action. Examples include, but are not limited to, white papers, guides, recommendations, factsheets, scenarios, and plans for future initiatives
    - Scholarly work

  While catalyst grant projects may, and are encouraged to, contribute to scholarly work, the main project outputs should be designed to support decision-making or action.

- <u>Outcomes</u> are positive changes resulting directly from outputs. Outcomes can occur over the short- or long-term. They include how the work will change or influence knowledge, behavior, practices, procedures, or policy to advance sustainability. Examples include, but are not limited to:
    - Better understanding of a topic
    - Identification of key issues and experts/decision makers
    - New or strengthened collaborative partnerships
    - New or refined decision-making, management, strategies, or action
    - Leveraged funding and spinoff projects

- <u>Impacts</u> are the societal improvements resulting from an accumulation of future outcomes. They are the real-world changes that make a substantive difference in local, regional or global sustainability. Proposals should describe the long-term impacts to which the work will contribute.

Measures of success
- Measures (indicators or metrics) of success are specific and observable accomplishments or changes that show the effect of the project. They may be quantitative or qualitative, and they may focus on the extent to which an anticipated output/outcome is achieved or the quality of the processes leading to that output/outcome.

Evaluation
- The Graham Institute continually seeks to improve its program and processes in order to better support successful collaborative research efforts and to improve project and program outcomes. The evaluation component of catalyst grants offers the opportunity for the Graham Institute to learn alongside project teams.

  Applicants are encouraged to design their evaluation to be useful by considering who will use the results and for what purpose. For instance, in addition to providing useful information to the Graham Institute, evaluations can help project teams improve the project, communicate results, or inform future work, and they can support external partners' decision-making.

  Proposals should describe initial plans for assessing <u>both</u> project implementation and outcomes, although the balance between the two will depend on the specific project. For instance, catalyst grants are likely to focus more heavily on implementation than transformation grants.
  - <u>Implementation evaluation</u> – focuses on processes to assess the extent to which the project is functioning as planned, measures what and how much was accomplished (e.g., outputs), and identifies major challenges and successful strategies.
  - <u>Outcome evaluation</u> – focuses on outcomes, including unintended effects, to judge the overall effects of a project.

  Specifically, proposals should identify overarching evaluation questions (i.e., which aspects of implementation and outcomes will be assessed), the general method(s) for answering those questions, and clear and appropriate measures of success. Recognizing that project evaluation efforts and reporting will be <u>completed during the project period</u>, a focus on outputs and short-term outcomes is expected; however, applicants should consider how longer-term outcomes and impacts to which the work contributes could be assessed.

  In addition to a summative evaluation at the end of the project, transformation grant applicants should include a formative evaluation component during the project to allow for feedback and adjustments to improve the project design and implementation.