

Request for Proposals Emerging Opportunities Program: *Catalyst Grants*

Through its Emerging Opportunities Program, 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 17, 2017	Request for proposals (RFP) released
February 13, 2017 (11:59 PM EDT)	Letters of Intent due
March 20, 2017 (11:59 PM EST)	Proposals due
Mid-April 2017	Funding announcement
May 2017	Anticipated project start date

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

FUNDING

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

ABOUT THE GRAHAM INSTITUTE

The Graham Sustainability Institute engages, empowers, and supports faculty, staff, and students from all U-M units and integrates this talent with external stakeholders to foster sustainability solutions at all scales. We believe that diversity, equity, and inclusion are key to individual empowerment, and the advancement of sustainability knowledge, learning and leadership. The Institute is supported by individuals, corporations, foundations, government agencies, and the University of Michigan. See: www.graham.umich.edu

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 Catalyst Grants, Transformation Grants, and MCubed Sustainability Block Incentives. Learn more about the Emerging Opportunities Program at: <http://graham.umich.edu/emopps>.

In particular, 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. Projects supported through the Emerging Opportunities Program have the following characteristics:

- **Actionable Question** – 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.
- **Sufficient Information** – Sufficient information exists to enable an effective synthesis and analysis or to frame an emerging issue.
- **Advancing Scholarship** – In addition to identifying actionable options, the project also supports scholarly work.
- **Student Opportunities** – The project offers opportunities 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 catalyst grants are likely to be at an earlier stage than transformation grant recipients. Accordingly, catalyst 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. Catalyst grant projects should have an external partner interested in the work. The proposed activities should be appropriate given the actionable question framing the project, 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-I) 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>.

Additionally, there **MUST** be representation of at least two disciplines and at least 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. All proposals should involve investigators from diverse disciplines.

CATALYST GRANT PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Letter of Intent: A letter of intent is required. Letters of intent should be prepared and submitted via the online form (<https://graham.umich.edu/application-request/40000>) by 11:59 PM EST on Monday, February 13, 2017. Include the following information:

1. Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-Investigators (Co-Is) names and contact information
2. Project working title
3. Up to one page summary of proposed activities, including a clear statement of anticipated outputs, outcomes, and impact of the work.

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

Proposal: Proposals submitted in response to this RFP must be submitted via the online form (<https://graham.umich.edu/application-request/40000>) by 11:59 PM EDT on Monday, March 20, 2017. 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 (5 pages maximum)

- a) **Context and background:** Provide relevant context for this work, including the relationship of the proposed work to sustainability, and clearly articulate the actionable question 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 students.
- d) **Project team:** Identify each team member and describe his or her role. Explain how the team and its expertise are well qualified to implement the project approach, and how the integration of insights from the multiple perspectives contributes to the project.

3) Appendices

- a) **Proposal approval form:** Complete the proposal approval form found on the application website (online form: <http://graham.umich.edu/media/files/EmOpp-PAF.docx>). Please allow time to route this form for signatures according to the policies and procedures in your campus unit.
- b) **Budget:** Using the template found on the application website (template: <http://graham.umich.edu/media/files/EmOpp-Catalyst-Budget.xlsx>), 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.
- c) **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).
- d) **Timeline:** Using the timeline found on the application website (template: <http://graham.umich.edu/media/files/EmOpp-Catalyst-Timeline.xlsx>), 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.
- e) **Resumes:** Include two-page resumes for each team member named on the proposal.
- f) **Other supporting documents:** You may include up to five pages of supporting documents as appendices.

REVIEW PROCESS

All proposals will be reviewed internally according to the criteria below, with the Graham Institute's governing committee providing a final review.

- **Project approach:** Does the project address an actionable question? Is the approach appropriate to address the question?
- **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 (<http://provost.umich.edu/faculty/handbook/3/3.1.html>)? 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:** Is an external partner engaged and committed to working with the team to identify actionable options?
- **Feasibility:** Is sufficient information available and accessible? 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 students?

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.
- Respond to requests to review proposals during future funding cycles.
- 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.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS RFP

Please direct all questions related to this RFP to John Callewaert, Emerging Opportunities Program Director (jcallew@umich.edu, 734-615-3752). Program staff will maintain and regularly update an FAQ document.

RESOURCES

All proposal materials and resources will be posted online at <http://graham.umich.edu/emopps>.

GUIDANCE

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

Actionable

- 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

- Outputs 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.

- Outcomes 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
- Impacts 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 both 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.

- Implementation evaluation – 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.
- Outcome evaluation – 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 completed during the project period, 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.