Emerging Opportunities Program
Transformation, Catalyst, and Fast Track Grants
Frequently Asked Questions

Proposal process

Is the letter of intent (LOI) mandatory? Is it binding?

Letters of intent are required for <u>catalyst and transformation grants</u>. LOIs will not be used as a screening tool. Rather, they will be used by Graham staff to prepare for the proposal review process. LOIs are not binding, and changes to the scope, team, focus, etc. are permitted in the proposal. Fast track grants <u>do not</u> require an LOI.

Will I hear from Emerging Opportunities staff after submitting an LOI?

Staff may initiate discussions with applicants based on information provided in an LOI; however, you do not need to be invited to submit a proposal.

How do I submit an LOI or proposal?

For catalyst and transformation grants with a two-step application process (LOI and proposal):

Submit an LOI online via the application link on the grant webpage (the blue "Apply" button). After uploading your LOI, you will receive an email confirming successful submission of the LOI and providing a **unique URL for your application**. Submit the proposal using the unique URL, which will prompt you to log in and then direct you to your application in the Graham system. 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.

For fast track grants with a single application step:

Submit a proposal online via the application link on the Fast Track grant webpage (the blue "Apply" button). Upload your complete proposal as a single PDF file and click on the "save" button.

If you have a problem using the online system, email grahaminstitute-emopps@umich.edu.

Eligibility

Can faculty from UM-Dearborn and UM-Flint apply for these opportunities?

U-M Faculty from the Flint, Dearborn, and Ann Arbor campuses are eligible to serve as a Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-Investigator (Co-I) for Emerging Opportunities Program Grants. Complete PI eligibility information can be found in the Requests for Proposals (RFP).

The catalyst grant and transformation grant RFPs state that two investigators within LS&A could potentially meet the requirement that at least two U-M units be represented on the team. Other U-M units also have disciplinary breadth; might two investigators from another academic or research unit also meet the two-unit minimum?

The unit requirement is in place not only to encourage collaboration across disciplines, but also to encourage broad collaboration across U-M campuses.

While it is possible that two investigators (PI or Co-I) from the same unit could fulfill the requirement that at least two disciplines be represented on the team, two investigators from the same unit would **not** fulfill the requirement that at least two academic or research units be represented. The sole exception for meeting the unit requirement is LS&A when the investigators represent at least two of the three LS&A Divisions

(i.e., Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences). This exception for LS&A is offered based on the school's breadth and size.

For catalyst and transformation grants, can a team include multiple investigators from the same unit or multiple investigators representing the same discipline?

Yes, but the team would also need to include at least one additional investigator to ensure that both the unit and disciplinary breadth requirements are met.

My team has two investigators: one investigator has a dual appointment (e.g., Ross/Engineering), and the other investigator has a single appointment in one of those units (e.g., Engineering). Would our team satisfy the catalyst and transformation grant requirement that at least two units be represented?

Maybe. If the investigator has a dry appointment in one of the units, then this would not qualify. However, if the investigator has a joint appointment (e.g., active appointments in both units), then this would meet the minimum unit requirement, but the team would still need to meet the disciplinary breadth requirement.

Can student team members be used to fulfill the unit and disciplinary breath requirements?

A primary goal for these grants is to support faculty-driven collaborative sustainability research and assessment activities that span multiple disciplines. While projects should also provide opportunities for student involvement and engagement across disciplines, and this may include membership on the project team, the catalyst and transformation grant requirements that there must be representation of at least two disciplines and at least two academic or research units must be fulfilled by U-M researchers or faculty members listed as investigators (PI or Co-I) on the proposal.

Can post-docs be co-investigators?

Yes. The proposal application form (PAF) is required in part to ensure unit review and support. Please note that 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.

Can I apply for multiple grants simultaneously?

If a Principal Investigator is currently supported through a particular funding opportunity, she or he may not be listed as an investigator (PI or Co-I) on new proposals for that same funding opportunity until the first project has finished. For example, a catalyst grant recipient is not eligible to apply for another catalyst grant until after the first grant is completed. A catalyst grant recipient would, however, be eligible to apply for a transformation grant while the catalyst grant is ongoing. In addition, an applicant can only be listed as a PI on one proposal for each RFP but may be listed as a PI on one proposal and a Co-I on another or a CO-I on two proposals.

An individual can receive only one Fast Track grant per academic year.

Is work that was previously funded through another grant from the Graham Sustainability Institute (including the Water Center) eligible for a catalyst or transformation grant?

Yes, so long as it extends or builds upon the work to take it to the next stage and is consistent with the program characteristics in the RFP.

May the funds be used to supplement ongoing projects?

Yes, however, the proposal should make it clear how the work to be conducted with fast track, catalyst or transformation grant support is distinct from the other activities and, in the case of catalyst and transformation grants, how it follows the program characteristics in the RFPs.

The Fast Track grants are available to "early-stage investigators from units with limited research funding support." How do I know if I meet the criteria?

An early-stage investigator is defined as a faculty member with an appointment at the level of Assistant Professor (or the equivalent) and below, and includes: Lecturer, Instructor, Clinical

Instructor, Research Investigator, Assistant Professor, Clinical Assistant Professor, Research Assistant Professor, or Assistant Research Scientist.

The Graham Institute has not predetermined which units have limited research funding support. Instead, applicants should demonstrate in the proposal narrative that they do not have access to other research funding from their unit.

Project focus

The RFPs do not define sustainability. How do I know if my proposed work is sustainability-related?
   The Graham Institute defines sustainability broadly (http://graham.umich.edu/about/sustainability):

   "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.

Many projects on the Emerging Opportunities website or mentioned during the information session have a local focus and/or take place in an international setting. Are those requirements?
   No. Projects can focus on any geographic scale, level of governance, or sector. It is expected that the scope and framing of the project will depend on the sustainability challenge the project proposes to address and the external partner(s) engaged in the effort.

Some projects that have received Emerging Opportunities support appear have a similar topical focus. Do certain topics or themes receive preference?
   No. No preference is given to projects on a particular topic or theme; proposals are reviewed on their individual merit according to the review criteria.

Project activities

Is fieldwork or primary data collection an eligible activity for catalyst grants or transformation grants?
   Given the solutions orientation and the timelines of the grants, typically projects will already have or will be able to access quickly sufficient information for an effective analysis or synthesis. Limited data collection is appropriate provided it fills an important gap in addressing the problem statement guiding the project.

Can the funding be used for implementation projects?
   In general, catalyst and transformation grants are not intended for implementation projects. Projects may include a proof of concept, however, the focus of work (particularly for transformation grants) is to support work which can be used as a basis for decision-making/implementation.

My work will require IRB approval. Must this be obtained prior to proposal submittal?
   No. The signed PAF included in the proposal application should indicate whether the work includes activities that require IRB approval, but you are not required to obtain approval prior to proposal submittal. If your project is funded, we ask that you share a copy of the approval with Graham once obtained.

Catalyst and Transformation Grant External Partners

What do you mean by an "external partner"?

An external partner is an individual or organization outside the university 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/or furthering project objectives.

While both catalyst and transformation grants require an external partner, it is anticipated that the role of the partner will vary between the two types of projects:

External partners for transformation grant projects should intend to use and apply the project results. They should have opportunities to influence the scope, implementation, and outputs of the project to ensure the results are relevant and usable. Letters of support are required.

For catalyst grants, the expected role of the external partner is lessened; the external partner(s) **should be interested in the proposed work**, although they may also intend to use the results. Catalyst grant partner(s) may be clearly defined when the work begins, or an objective of a catalyst grant proposal may be to better define the most appropriate partners(s) for the work. In the latter case, a potential partner (or partners) should still be clearly identified in the proposal.

For both grants external partners may be members of the project team, but that is not required.

Might researchers from other academic institutions satisfy the "external partner" requirement?

Probably not. Given that the work should be oriented toward real-world solutions with outputs that support decision-making or action, external partners are likely to be outside academia. External partners should be decision-makers or practitioners in a position to directly utilize project outputs - implementing strategies, influencing decision-making, scaling results, and furthering project objectives. More likely, researchers from other academic institutions would be considered collaborators.

At the same time, we recognize that an individual could have multiple roles. If you have questions about a potential external partner, feel free to contact Graham staff with questions.

Note also that this does not preclude external partners from being members of the project team or participating in science co-production.

Can we apply for a catalyst grant if we have not yet identified a specific external partner?

Yes, but the proposal should still identify specific potential partners and describe their anticipated interest in the proposed work. In these cases, it would be expected that the proposed work would include activities aimed at identifying an external partner or partners, defining decision maker needs, and/or developing partnerships.

What type of resume is needed for external partners?

Resumes for external partners are required for transformation grant proposals where the external partner is a formal member of the project team. In those instances, if the partner on the team is not from a sector that uses a standard 2-page resume, a profile highlighting their relevant background and expertise would suffice.

Student opportunities

Does involvement of students outside of the University of Michigan (e.g., K-12 students, students from other universities) satisfy the proposal review criterion regarding opportunities for students?
    The student opportunity review criterion is in reference to University of Michigan students (undergraduate through doctoral). Proposed projects involving students from outside the University of Michigan are not ineligible for funding, but should consider ways to involve University of Michigan students.

Reviews

How does the review process take into account the scope of the proposed work and the amount of funding requested?
    The evaluation criteria include the feasibility of the budget for the work proposed. While proposals may cover parts of larger initiatives, it should be clear which components of the larger initiative the requested funding would support, and those components must align with project characteristics and proposal requirements.

Are the review criteria weighted equally?
    Reviewers will review and score a proposal along each criterion individually.

What proportion of proposals are funded?
    The following table summarizes the award rates for FY17.

FY17 Funding Opportunity	Proposals submitted	Awards
Fall Catalyst	11	3
Winter Catalyst	6	3
Transformation	12	1

    There have been changes to the program for FY18. For FY18 we anticipate funding approximately 2 transformation grants per year, 4-6 Fast Track grants per semester (fall and winter), and approximately 3 catalyst grants per semester (fall and winter), as resources allow.

    (Updated 2/7/2018) Based on changes to available funding and the estimated budgets included in the transformation grant LOIs, we anticipate funding only 1 transformation grant for FY18.

Does having been awarded a catalyst grant increase the chance of being awarded a transformation grant?
    There is no requirement to have a catalyst grant before seeking a transformation grant, and previous Emerging Opportunities awards are not considered in the review. However, catalyst grants can be used for project planning purposes.

As requested, I provided suggestions for experts external to U-M to review my transformation grant proposal. I am now developing plans for the external technical review required as a part of a transformation grant project. Would there be a conflict if I recruited the same individuals I named as suggested proposal reviewers?
    We use teams' suggestions for proposal reviewers to guide our reviewer search, but we aim to go at least one-step removed from the suggested reviewers in order to avoid a potential conflict during the proposal review stage. As a result, the people your team listed are unlikely to actually review your proposal, and, therefore, there would be no conflict including them as external technical reviewers for the project.

Funding & grant period

Can funding be used for external partners?
Yes, but proposals must be submitted by U-M PIs with subawards as appropriate.

Can funding be used to support post-docs?
Yes.

Can funding be used to support students?
While projects should provide opportunities for U-M students, it is important to emphasize that a primary goal of these grants is to support faculty-driven collaborative sustainability research and assessment activities. Funding can be used to support students working on the project; however, these grants should not be used primarily as a source of student funding.

Are administrative costs allowed?
Yes, but only if they are directly connected to the work of the project.

Is summary salary for faculty an allowable expense?
Yes. Summary salary is allowable. The signed PAF is required in part to ensure unit review and support.

What won't you fund for catalyst grants? Are travel, student salaries, and honoraria eligible expenses?
Catalyst grants will not cover equipment costs. Eligible expenses include, but are not limited to, travel, student salaries, and honoraria.

Do projects require a match or co-funding?
Fast track and catalyst grants do not require a match. Transformation grants require a 50% match which may be secured from a single source or multiple sources, including an investigator's U-M Department/Unit or other institutional entities.

What do you mean by 50% match? Is a 50% match a 1 to 1 match? In other words, we can ask for $100K from Graham only if we have $100K in matching funds? Or is it that we need only $50K in matching to request $100K?
You would need $50K in matching funds to request $100K—per year. For a 2-year project, teams can request up to $200K from Graham provided they have $100K in match. Note that teams can apply for less than the maximum funding offered. For instance, if a team has a total of $75K available in match, they can apply for up to a total of $150K from Graham. The total amount of funding should be appropriate for the scope of work proposed.

What type(s) of funds can be included toward the transformation grant match requirement?
Matching funds may come from sources internal or external to U-M. They may include, for example, investigator effort, research discretionary funds, department funds, project-specific administrative time, student/GSRA time (not tuition), appropriately-aligned external grants, partner direct support, and in-kind contributions.

Note that federally sponsored match is allowed provided the funds are not included as contributions for any other match requirement.

If you have questions, your unit's grants office may be able to assist you, and you may contact us directly at grahaminstitute-emopps@umich.edu.

Can the revenue lost in a reduced overhead rate for one of our partner academic institutions be counted toward the match?
No. Transformation grants aim to promote collaborative work that draws on the breadth and depth of expertise of U-M faculty, and researchers from other institutions when appropriate. We would not count lost indirect costs (IDC) from UM units on a proposal, and therefore, cannot count lost IDC at other (non-UM) partner institutions.

I am using an external grant for match. Can I use indirect costs from the external grant be used to meet the 50% requirement?

No. Indirect costs on external grants cannot be counted toward the match.

Can partner time/salary be included toward the match

Yes. Partner personnel costs and in-kind contributions of effort can be listed as matching funds.

Can student time or tuition be included toward the match?

Student time, stipend and travel costs can be included in the match. Tuition cannot be included in the match.

Are no-cost extensions allowed?

Typically, yes. Details will be provided in the award letter. Catalyst and transformation project check-ins and interim reporting are opportunities to discuss the potential need for an extension.

Is there flexibility in the start date or duration of the grants?

Generally, yes. The start date can occur after the anticipated start dates listed in the RFP provided the project starts within the same fiscal year as the funding opportunity. Also, projects can be completed faster than the duration listed in the RFP, and no-cost extensions are typically allowed. That said, projects should have timeframes that correspond relatively closely with the duration described in the RFP. Proposals should clearly state the anticipated start date and duration of the project.

I'm confused by the Transformation grant timeline. The template uses 14 months in year 1 and 12 months in year 2, ending 26 months after the start of the award.

Our goal with the timeline was to align the project and fiscal years; however, we probably should have truncated Year 2 in April to more clearly illustrate that the project should last up to 24 months. We are not going to change the template at this point, so teams should feel free to schedule the work over 24 or 26 months—whichever makes most sense for the project. We will provide guidance to the reviewers that either duration is fine.

Requirements for grant recipients

The catalyst and transformation grants require recipients to "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" and "share additional project outputs (e.g., articles, guides, graphics, factsheets) with the Graham Institute." What are the requirements regarding open access data sharing for supported projects? What if there are concerns about releasing final reports in advance of publications?

With regard to open access data sharing, the Graham Institute does not collect or manage data. Rather, the Graham Institute makes final reports and other project outputs publicly available through its online database. If there are conflicts or concerns with publication timelines, the posting of project reports or outputs can be delayed following an approved timeline established by project PIs and Graham staff. Teams should discuss this with Graham staff during check-ins or interim reporting.

Help me understand the reporting requirements. What do check-ins and mid-point or semiannual reports entail? What about final project reports?

Check-ins are verbal and consist of an informal meeting or phone call. The mid-point and semiannual reports required for catalyst and transformation grants, respectively, are short written summaries—typically 1-2 pages—that follow templates to be provided by Graham staff. Final reports will describe the overall results and progress relating to the objectives and specific measures of success presented in the original proposal and will be developed in discussion with Graham staff.

Resources

Do you have best practice guides regarding project management, collaboration, and other issues?
    The Emerging Opportunities resources webpage (http://graham.umich.edu/emopps/resources) provides links to online resources on a variety of topics including: collaboration and engagement, evaluation, data management, and publication. You may also contact Emerging Opportunities staff to discuss specific needs or concerns. Additional resources are currently in development, and we welcome suggestions about what would be useful.

I have a project idea, but I'm not sure whether to pursue a catalyst or transformation grant. Any suggestions?
    One thing to consider is the extent to which the relationship with the external partner(s) is developed. Given the greater degree of external partner engagement expected of transformation grants, if the partnership isn't ready, you may want to consider pursuing a catalyst grant first (see external partner section above). Another factor to consider is the overall project scale. You may have fully engaged external partners, but a smaller scope more appropriate for a catalyst grant.

Can I speak with Emerging Opportunities staff in advance about whether my proposed project would be a good fit for these grants or for additional clarifications?
    Yes. We can discuss potential projects individually via phone or in-person. If you have questions or concerns, we encourage you to contact grahaminstitute-emopps@umich.edu.

Program changes for 2017-2018

U-M faculty and researchers were asked to complete a survey in May 2017 providing input on the Emerging Opportunities Program. How was that input used – what has changed for the 2017-2018 academic year compared to the previous year?
    RFP revisions reflect input we received through a formal first year program evaluation and through numerous conversations with faculty. As resources allow, key revisions include:

- Approximately two transformation grants per year in order to respond to the large number of proposals we received last year. Total program funding level is similar due to shorter project timelines and a new 50% required match.
- Shorter proposal narrative requirements.
- A new small-scale funding opportunity (Fast Track Grants).

Graham is currently exploring new ways to support participation in sustainability-related projects in future rounds of MCubed.

Graham will offer events for U-M faculty and researchers around sustainability. In order to meet information needs, Graham staff will continue to provide email updates on funding, share resources on the website, and be available for one-on-one meetings with faculty and researchers to discuss potential initiatives.

(Updated 2/7/2018) Based on changes to available funding and the estimated budgets included in the transformation grant LOIs, we anticipate funding only 1 transformation grant for FY18.

Learn more

For more information, including requests for proposals, see http://graham.umich.edu/emopps.