May 9, 2022

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Graham Sustainability Institute
Carbon Neutrality Acceleration Program
FY23 Faculty Research Grants - Level 1 & Level 2
Frequently Asked Questions
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Proposal process

Is the Level 1 letter of intent (LOI) mandatory? Is it binding? Will I hear from Graham staff after submitting an LOI?

> A letter of intent is required for Level 1 grants. 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 are permitted in the proposal. 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

Can a person other than the PI submit the application materials (LOI, pre-proposal, proposal) on behalf of the PI?

> The person that logs into our system and creates the application is considered the "applicant" and they may do so on behalf of the primary investigator (PI). (The applicant may be an assistant, another team member, etc.) The PI must be listed as a team member and identified as the PI in the online application form. Note that the login credentials used to create the initial application at the time of LOI (Level 1) or pre-proposal (Level) submission must be used to return to that application and submit the full proposal.

If aspects of our Level 1 project have changed since the initial LOI (e.g. title, additional team members), should we upload an updated LOI during proposal submission?

> We don't need an updated LOI, but when you log in and access your application page, please do update all the fields in that online form and then upload your proposal PDF. You'll be able to access and edit the application page up until the deadline. If you have made a significant change in your scope or topic, please reach out to Maggie Allan (maallan@umich.edu or graham-cnap@umich.edu) to alert us to the change.

Do we need to complete a UM PAF eResearch form?

> A UM PAF in eResearch is not needed. At the proposal stage (not LOI or pre-proposal) applicants should complete the CNAP Graham PAF available on the application website and include it in the final proposal package submitted through the Graham online system. Note that signatures are required, so plan accordingly.

I plan to have an external collaborator, but I will not have the partnership solidified by the time the proposal is due. How do I address this on the budget form when I enter the subcontract information?

You should include the subcontract as a line item in your overall budget using your best estimate of what those costs will be. You will also need to include a separate budget, using the template, and budget justification explaining the basis of the costs just for the subaward. If your project is selected for funding, we'll likely include some special award conditions around the subcontract. Budgets are required at the full proposal stage (not LOI or pre-proposal).

Our project will require IRB approval but we have yet to apply for it. Should we still check "Yes" on the "use of human subjects" on the PAF form?

Yes, but also indicate that "IRB pending". We will follow-up if the project is selected.

There appears to be a typo in the Level 1 RFP regarding the project timeline. Page 6 states projects should "start no earlier than September 1, 2023 and be completed no later than August 31, 2024."Should it be September 1, 2022 - August 31, 2023 instead?

Yes! Level 1 projects should start no earlier than September 1, 2022 and end no later than August 31, 2023. We corrected the error, but old/cached versions of the RFP still show the typo.

Eligibility

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

Faculty and researchers from the Flint, Dearborn, and Ann Arbor campuses who are eligible to serve as a U-M Principal Investigator are eligible to serve as a PI on CNAP Grants.

Tell me more about the eligibility requirements.

The two-unit minimum requirement for Level 2 grants can be fulfilled by a PI and Co-I both within the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA) provided there is representation from at least two of the three LSA Divisions (i.e., Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences). While other U-M units also have disciplinary diversity, this exception to the two-unit minimum is available solely for LSA based on the school's breadth and size.

If an investigator (PI or Co-I) has a joint appointment (e.g., active appointments in multiple units), the primary home unit (i.e., the unit that pays at least 50% of salary) will serve as the unit that counts toward the two-unit minimum requirement.

These requirements do not limit the number of investigators on a team. The team may include multiple investigators from the same unit or same discipline so long as the team

also meets both the unit and disciplinary requirements. Co-Is and team members from other institutions and organizations are allowed.

Can postdocs be co-investigators?

Yes. The Graham CNAP 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](). Co-investigators (Co-Is) and partners from other institutions and organizations may be included on the project team.

Can I submit a proposal as a single PI without collaborators?

Yes for Level 1 proposals, but not for Level 2 proposals. Among the strongest Level 1 proposals emerging from the reviews, we'll be looking for opportunities to prioritize projects based on additional program goals (supporting interdisciplinary teams and teams with junior faculty among the PI leadership, as well as total available funding, fostering collaborations among U-M faculty and stakeholders, seeking diversity in myriad forms, providing meaningful opportunities for U-M students, etc.). We added a Level 1 sole-PI opportunity this round because we know this work is important, and we anticipate funding projects that vary in terms of degree of collaboration.

Level 2 proposals must have a team that is both interdisciplinary and cross-campus (i.e., including representation from multiple U-M academic units ([U-M faculty handbook](), [U-M Dearborn colleges](), [U-M Flint academic units]()) or research units ([OVPR research units]() and [Office of the Provost institutes and centers]()). The disciplinary and unit requirements are distinct.

Is there a disadvantage to serving as a PI and Co-I on multiple applications?

No. Please note, however, that a faculty member or researcher can be listed as a PI on only one proposal. She or he or may be listed as a PI on one proposal and a Co-I on another proposal or a Co-I on up to two proposals.

I would like to submit a Level 1 proposal as a PI, but was also asked by a colleague about collaborating on another Level 2 proposal. Is submitting both allowed if my colleague would be the PI on the Level 2 project?

Yes. An individual may be listed as a PI on only one proposal, but may be listed as a Co-I on other proposals of either type.

I have multiple project ideas. Can I submit a Level 1 LOI and then submit a Level 2 pre-proposal if my Level 1 proposal does not advance?

No. The timelines and process do not allow for that. We are not providing feedback on Level 1 LOIs, and the Level 1 decisions will not be made until August 2022 after the June 3 Level 2 pre-proposal deadline. We encourage you to pick the opportunity that is best for you and submit the strongest application you can.

Project focus

May the funds be used to supplement ongoing projects?
> No. This funding may not be used as additional support for an ongoing project. The proposed scope of work must be distinct from prior or existing research projects.

Are there preferences or limits regarding the geography or scale of a project? Are outcomes specific to Michigan or the Midwest prioritized?
> No. Projects can be U.S.-based or international. Projects can focus on any geographic scale, level of governance, or sector.

Should projects be specific to accelerating carbon neutrality for UM, or is this opportunity much broader?
> It is broader. Projects may focus on accelerating the University of Michigan's transition to carbon neutrality, but it is not required.

Do certain topics or themes receive preference?
> No preference is given to projects on a particular topic or theme. However, while incremental reductions in net emissions are important, we are most interested in funding "big ideas"—projects with potential for significant research and real world impact, whether early-stage or an extension of existing work. This is addressed explicitly in the proposal evaluation criteria.

The term "carbon neutrality" can be interpreted narrowly to cover only carbon dioxide emissions or more broadly to include all greenhouse gases. Does this program consider the carbon dioxide equivalence of other greenhouse gases?
> Yes. Carbon neutrality, or net zero carbon emissions, refers to achieving zero net anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions through a balancing of carbon emissions and carbon removal. The concept can be extended to include all anthropogenic greenhouse gases, which is referred to as climate neutrality or net-zero emissions. We use these terms interchangeably in the RFP, and we welcome proposals addressing non-carbon-dioxide, high impact emissions.

What would you say is the optimal number of U-M faculty participants on a project?
> You'll want enough investigators to ensure that you have the expertise needed for the proposed scope of work. As prompted in the narrative, you'll want to explain how the project will integrate the insights from the team members, why their different areas of expertise are necessary, and how the team will work together. It becomes increasingly important to demonstrate this as the team size and complexity increases.

How would you suggest weighing the benefits, with respect to the review & selection process, of pitching a more aggressive (and expensive) action plan against a more modest (and frugal) approach?

It's most important that you pick the grant level that most appropriately matches the scope of work and degree of project readiness and budget accordingly. We want to see a scope of work that is ambitious but feasible, so do not scale back your goals thinking a smaller project will be reviewed more favorably. At the same time, proposals requesting less than the maximum budget are welcome and can be just as competitive.

Would you accept a CNAP proposal that does not directly promote carbon neutrality but would help us understand which carbon neutrality pathways are better suited to different conditions than others?

Yes, if you can make a compelling argument that this addresses a critical opportunity/barrier for achieving carbon neutrality and articulate the research significance and potential real-world impact of that knowledge.

Collaborators and I have multiple related project ideas. Can one of us submit a Level 1 proposal as a PI and another submit a Level 2 proposal (different PIs on each)?

Yes. Level 1 proposals and Level 2 proposal will be reviewed separately and each considered on its own merits. They should have distinct scopes of work, and each should have a scope of work and timeline appropriate for the funding level being sought.

Proposal outcomes

Must all proposals aim to secure future, additional funding?

No. We recognize that funding patterns vary across disciplines and securing external funding will be of greater significance to certain fields than others. While we anticipate that many Level 1 and Level 2 proposals will include as an anticipated outcome a proposal for external funding, or a clear plan for pursuing external funding, it is not required. Please keep in mind that we are interested in funding projects with potential for significant research impact that elevates U-M's leadership in carbon neutrality research, and proposals should explain how the work will advance scholarship.

In my area of research, companies are key funders and usually contract groups that they know are experts in the field, and unlike NSF and DoE, they don't put out requests for proposals for the public. How do I meet the requirements of a "positioning" grant?

There is no restriction on the types of external funding (federal/state, foundation/non-profit, corporate sponsored research) teams aim to pursue following a CNAP "positioning" project. You should explain the funding sources relevant to your work so that reviewers outside your field understand the landscape in which you're operating and how the work supported by CNAP would better position you to be competitive.

External Partners

What do you mean by an "external partner" when you state that teams are "encouraged to engage with external non-academic partners"?

> An external partner is an individual or organization outside the university system 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, furthering project objectives, etc.
>
> While researchers from other academic institutions are not considered external partners for the purpose of this opportunity, they may be collaborators on a project team.

For projects that include engagement with external partners, do we need to provide an official letter of support/collaboration?

> Letters of support are required at the proposal stage (not LOI or pre-proposal) for: a) team members or partners providing in-kind contribution of personnel time that is not funded in the budget, b) individuals, groups, and/or institutions providing data/access to data or other resources necessary for the project not otherwise accounted for in the budget, and c) primary external partners in engagement projects.

Can grant funds be used to support external partner participation?

> Yes. External partners could be subcontractors on a proposal if they are conducting a specific part of the proposed work, or partners could receive honoraria or travel support to enable their participation. Note that no more than 10% of the project budget may be directed to other *academic or research institutions*.

A potential future sponsor agreed to take an advisory role on my Level 1 project and submit a letter of support. Should they be listed as a "planned team member" in the LOI, or is this section only for internal, UM team members?

> You should list them in whatever way best characterizes their involvement in the project. If you consider them a member of the team, you can include them, as there is no limit on team members being internal to U-M. But if they are less involved in the project work in their advisory role, you can describe that in the LOI and proposal. One way isn't inherently better than the other.

Funding

Can funding be used to support post-docs?

> Yes.

Do projects require a match or co-funding?
>CNAP grants do not require a match.

Can funding be used to support a graduate student / graduate student instructor?
>Yes. We recognize the role that graduate students play in research, and we include providing meaningful opportunities for students among our program aims. However, this opportunity should <u>not be</u> used primarily as a source of student support. It should be clear in the proposal how using the funds in the way proposed will contribute to the overall goals of the program.

Is tuition an eligible expense?
>Yes. We recognize that graduate students are critical to advancing research, particularly in certain disciplines. However, this RFP should not be viewed primarily as a source of student funding. This grant is intended to catalyze faculty research, and proposers should keep in mind the overall goals of the funding opportunity--advancing UM's research leadership in this area and advancing real-world impact--and it should be clear in the proposal how using the funds in this way will contribute to those goals.

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

Can funding be used to support non-UM academic partners?
>Collaborators from other academic institutions are permitted on projects, but no more than 10% of the project budget may be directed to other academic or research institutions.

Grant period

Are no-cost extensions allowed?
>Typically, a single no-cost extension is allowed. Details will be provided in the award letter. CNAP 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 date listed in the RFP provided the project starts within the same fiscal year (FY23) as the funding opportunity. Also, projects can be completed faster than the duration listed in the RFP. 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. We recommend you reach out to program staff in advance to discuss divergent timelines.

Review & Selection Process

What feedback will I receive on my proposal?
>Decision letters include a brief summary of reviewer feedback.

How will issues of diversity be taken into consideration during the review process?
>Reviewers will be looking to see that the teams have the expertise needed to achieve the proposed scope of work and final funding decisions will be made based on the review panel's ranking of program goals, which include diversity. Reviewers will also be considering the equity impact of the work itself. A central program goal is to support research teams that bring together a broad range of perspectives, backgrounds, expertise and experience to foster high-impact projects.

Resources

Can I speak with Graham/CNAP staff in advance about whether my proposed project would be a good fit for this grant 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 Maggie Allan (maallan@umich.edu or graham-cnap@umich.edu)

I have a project idea, but I'm not sure whether to pursue a C-NAP grant . Any suggestions?
>We encourage you to reach out directly to Maggie Allan (maallan@umich.edu or graham-canp@umich.edu)