GRAHAM
SUSTAINABILITY INSTITUTE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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Emerging Opportunities Program
Catalyst Grant Frequently Asked Questions

This document will be updated as additional questions are received. Note that it is a supplement to the information provided in the request for proposals (RFP). Be sure to review the RFP carefully.

Letter of intent & proposal process

Is the letter of intent (LOI) mandatory? Is it binding?
Letters of intent are required. LOIs will be used exclusively to guide recruitment of appropriate reviewers and will not influence the proposal evaluation process. LOIs are not binding, and changes to the scope, team, focus, etc. are permitted in the proposal.

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?
LOIs and proposals must be submitted through the Graham Institute online system.

As described in the RFP, submit an LOI online via the application link on the catalyst 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 – save this link**.

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.

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

Eligibility

Refer to the RFP for additional eligibility information.

Can student team members be used to fulfill the unit and disciplinary breadth 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 requirement for 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 collaborators from other academic institutions be used to fulfill the disciplinary breadth requirement?
No. The requirement for representation of at least two disciplines must be fulfilled by U-M researchers or faculty members listed as investigators (PI or Co-I) on the proposal. However, this requirement is not intended to limit additional collaboration.

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 doctoral students be co-investigators?

Yes, however, as noted above, the requirement for 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.

May researchers or doctoral students from other academic institutions be Co-Is or Co-PIs?

Faculty researchers from other academic institutions may serve as Co-PIs, Co-Is or additional team members. Doctoral students from other academic institutions may serves as Co-Is or additional team members. Note that 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), and there must be at least 2 U-M researchers or faculty members among the investigators. The proposal application form (PAF) is required in part to ensure unit review and support. 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?

A PI already 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.

In addition, an applicant can only be listed as a PI on one proposal for each RFP, but she or he may be listed as a PI on one proposal and a Co-I on another or a Co-I on two proposals.

May the funds be used to supplement ongoing projects?

Yes, however, the proposal should make it clear what the catalyst grant would enable, how that work is distinct from other activities, and how it is aligned with this RFP. To assist reviewers in assessing the feasibility of the work, be sure to indicate whether resources have been secured for other aspects of the work that would not be covered by the catalyst grant but are critical to the success of the catalyst work. To assist in assessing impact, be clear about what additional work and outcomes would be enabled by the catalyst funding and would not be possible otherwise.

Project focus

Are there preferences or limits regarding the geography or scale of a project?

No. Projects can be U.S.-based or international. Project 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.

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.

Are you only funding projects like the ones you've funded previously?

No. You may review previously funded projects, but you should not be limited by them.

Project objectives & activities

Is fieldwork or primary data collection an eligible activity for catalyst 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 aligns with an eligible project objective.

Can the funding be used for implementation projects?

In general, catalyst grants are not intended for implementation projects. Projects may include a proof of concept, however, it should be clear how the focus of the work is supporting decision-making or action.

External partner

What do you mean by an "external partner"?

As explained in the guidance at the end of the RFP, 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. **These are non-academic partners.** 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 utilize project outputs - implementing strategies, influencing decision-making, scaling results, and/or furthering project objectives. Their input should be integrated into the project.

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?

In most cases, no. 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 directly.

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?

It depends. For Objective 2 proposals (enhanced application of sustainability research), the proposal must clearly identify the external partner(s) and their interest in the work.

For Objective 1 proposals (project planning and partnership development), the partner(s) may be clearly identified already. If the purpose of the proposed work is to identify partners and build partnerships, the proposal should still identify specific potential partners and describe their anticipated interest in the proposed work. If the latter case, 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.

Do external partners need to provide an official letter of support/collaboration?

Letters of support are not required, but they may be included as an additional document in the appendix. Regardless, you should demonstrate in your narrative your partner's interest in working on the project (e.g., discussions that informed the proposal, previous collaboration, clear articulation of their interest or needs, etc.) and their role in the work.

What type of resume is needed for external partners?

Resumes for external partners are required if the external partner is a formal member of the project team (anyone receiving project resources or contributing significant resources to the project). 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.

Review criteria & decisions

How are the review criteria applied? Are the review criteria weighted equally?

The review criteria and prompts presented in the RFP are exactly what reviewers will use to rate the proposals. Reviewers will review, score, and comment on a proposal along each criterion individually.

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 the intent of the catalyst grant RFP.

What proportion of proposals are funded?

The following table summarizes the award rates previous cycles.

Request for Proposals	Proposals submitted	Awards
FY17 Fall Catalyst	11	3
FY17 Winter Catalyst	6	3
FY18 Fall Catalyst	6	3
FY18 Winter Catalyst	6	2
FY19 Fall Catalyst	10	4

What feedback will I receive on my proposal?

Decision letters include a brief summary of reviewer feedback.

If my proposal is not funded, may I resubmit?

Yes. Note that the reviewers are different in each cycle.

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?

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. 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.

Are administrative costs allowed?

Yes, but only if they are directly connected to the work of the project.

Do projects require a match or co-funding?

Catalyst grants do not require a match.

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 <u>won't</u> 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.

Are no-cost extensions allowed?

Typically, yes. Details will be provided in the award letter. Catalyst grant 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.

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 website and 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 reports entail? What about final project reports?

Check-ins are verbal and consist of an informal meeting or phone call. The mid-point reports are short written summaries (typically 1-2 pages) that follow templates provided by Graham staff.

Graham staff will also provide a template for final reports (typically 4-5 page) that describe the overall results and progress relating to the objectives and specific measures of success presented in the original proposal. Because these projects are intended to support decision-making and action, it is anticipated that the projects will yield additional outputs (such as, but not limited to, white papers, recommendations, tools, guidance, analyses). These should be shared with Graham, as appropriate. The details of the final reporting will be discussed during the project check-ins.

Resources

Do you have best practice guides regarding project management, collaboration, and other issues?

The Emerging Opportunities resource library 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.

Can I speak with Emerging Opportunities 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 grahaminstitute-emopps@umich.edu.