

College of Agricultural Sciences

Environment and Natural Resources Institute (ENRI)

Centers of Excellence (COE) Grant Program

Due date: February 2, 2018

Description

ENRI is soliciting proposals from College of Agricultural Sciences faculty for interdisciplinary environmental and natural resource research, education, and engagement initiatives. This solicitation is offered in collaboration with the College's Experiment Station as part of the College's Strategic Networks and Initiatives Program (SNIP). This solicitation:

- Will fund initiatives for up to three years;
- Is limited to research addressing the College's strategic priority to enhance and protect managed and natural ecosystems, ecosystem services, and human well-being; and
- Is intended to incubate one or more formal Centers of Excellence.

Goals and Criteria

The fundamental goal is to support the development of innovative, high-impact environmental science research and education communities within the College of Agricultural Sciences.

Through the initiatives we seek suites of activities that will:

- Serve the College of Agricultural Sciences' strategic priority of providing innovative research to enhance and protect managed and natural ecosystems, ecosystem services, and human well-being;
- Promote and facilitate the development of innovative interdisciplinary research and education programs that leverage existing faculty and staff resources for high priority environmental and natural resource management challenges; and
- Seed the development of programmatic activities and collaborations that will lead to extramural funding support, with the intent of turning the seed initiative into a Center under applicable Penn State guidelines.

Funded initiatives will be eligible to receive between \$5000 to \$15,000 per year for up to three years, and access to ENRI facilities and staff support. Centers that emerge from successful initiatives will be eligible for continuing ENRI/Experiment Station support.

Activities supported by funded initiatives should lead to innovation and excellence in interdisciplinary research and engagement, and the development of active and highly visible communities of researchers and educators, in the focal areas. Towards these ends, proposed activities should:

- Build effective collaborations between faculty, students, and staff from multiple disciplines and departments in College of Agricultural Sciences in the focal area;
- Build connections with faculty and staff, and leverage strengths across the University as appropriate for success in the focal area; and
- Foster extramural funding for multi-PI projects in the focal area.

Initiatives and Centers

This solicitation will fund initiatives, defined for the solicitation as a focused set of interdisciplinary research and educational activities by College of Agricultural Sciences faculty. Initiatives selected for funding will provide significant promise of evolving into formal centers. Multi-period funding for the development of a faculty community, an organizational structure, and to seed research and educational activities in the focus area is provided to facilitate this evolution. Centers require a set of programmatic activities and collaborations with clearly identified focus that engage multiple faculty and graduate students, and have on-going funding from multiple grants and contracts. Penn State guidelines for Centers, which must be approved by the Vice President for Research are available at <https://guru.psu.edu/policies/RAG05.html>.

Examples of Penn State Centers formed through an analogous development process include the Center for Climate Risk Management (<https://www.clima.psu.edu/>), Center for Environmental Informatics (<http://www.cei.psu.edu/>), and Center for Landscape Dynamics (<http://cld.psu.edu/>).

Eligibility

Proposals may be submitted by any College of Agricultural Sciences faculty member. Proposals may include collaborators from other Penn State Colleges. Preferences will be given to proposals that include multiple disciplines and multiple departments.

Proposal Contents

Proposals should be submitted by **February 2, 2018** to Anna Marie Nachman, 111 Ferguson Building (amn6@psu.edu). Questions about this solicitation should be addressed to ENRI Director Jim Shortle (jss15@psu.edu). Proposals should provide the following information:

1. Proposal title
2. Abstract (200 words or less)
3. Project Director (must be a faculty member in the College of Agricultural Sciences).
4. List of participants (name, affiliation, email)
5. The proposal narrative should describe the focus of the initiative, why it is needed, and provide a “development plan” that indicates how it will build towards Center eligibility. The narrative must address the following issues (5 page maximum, excluding references and budget):
 - a. Focus area
 - b. Rationale
 - c. Proposed activities

- d. How the initiative will meet the expectations and criteria outlined in the program description presented above
 - a. Benefits to the College and University (What impact will the project have on the stature and visibility of environmental science in the college and university?)
 - b. Identify specific sources to support continuing costs of the activity, including applicable external funding opportunities (agency, request for proposals, submission deadline).
 - c. Project team (Describe the role and responsibilities of each project team member).
6. Budget and Justification
- a. Fringe benefits are not required in personnel costs.
 - b. Funds cannot be used for:
 - i. Faculty salaries (including supplemental) or standing appointment salaries
 - ii. Travel to professional meetings
 - iii. Support of personnel not in the College of Agricultural Sciences
 - c. Budgets can be constructed for a maximum of 3 years
7. Support letters. Included with the proposal should be supporting letters from at least three PSU faculty who will be affiliated with the initiative that describe the need for the initiative, the merit of the proposed activities, and the expected benefits to the College and University.

Proposal Review

Proposals will be evaluated by a peer review committee, which will make funding recommendations to the ENRI. The evaluation will be based on the proposal and on a short presentation of the proposal to the review team.

Evaluation Criteria: Proposals must emphasize and promote interdisciplinary research across multiple departments with the goal of developing research initiatives with high potential for significant external funding from government, corporate, and foundation partners.

- Intellectual Merit
 - Relevance to the thematic area
 - Evidence that the proposal addresses a critical research need and opportunity
 - Innovation and significance of goals and expected results
 - Soundness of the proposed plan and activities
- Impact on Focus Area
 - Relevance of focus area to the strategic priority of research to enhance and protect managed and natural ecosystems, ecosystem services, and human well-being
 - Strategy to leverage this initial support for longer-term funding
 - Plan for building/organizing a core of strength in the thematic area
- Additional or continuing activities to stimulate long-lasting impact
 - Collaboration plan
 - Commitment of the team members
 - Potential for developing new and productive collaborations among participants or strengthening existing ones in the thematic area

Reporting

Interim reports on funded projects will be due at six month intervals depending upon the duration of the proposed project. A final report will be due 90 days after the end of the funding period. Reports are to be submitted to the ENRI Director.