Dow Sustainability Fellows Program
Distinguished Awards for Interdisciplinary Sustainability

2015 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Overview
To foster high-impact sustainability collaborations across the University of Michigan (U-M), the Dow Sustainability Fellows Program includes a university-wide competition for applied sustainability projects that cut across disciplines, and involve U-M students at all academic levels. The Dow Distinguished Awards for Interdisciplinary Sustainability competition (Dow Awards competition) seeks project proposals that describe a compelling and practicable effort to foster sustainability at the local, national or global level.

Proposals should be student-led, faculty advised, and action oriented, outlining a new product, service, or project that seeks to protect the environment and enhance quality of life for present and future generations. The Dow Awards competition encourages proposals spanning the full breadth of sustainability topics, including but not limited to: energy, water, communities, food, built environment, transportation, etc. Project proposals in partnership with external entities are also welcome. Since other programs provide competitive funding to support student-led projects focused on the sustainability of the U-M campus (e.g. Planet Blue Student Innovation Fund), the Dow Awards competition focuses on projects external to the University and does not support campus-focused projects.

The 2015 Dow Awards competition provides seed funding to nurture a wide range of project ideas, and all project teams receiving funding must submit a progress report by September 15, 2015 summarizing their accomplishments. A small number of the most impressive projects will then be selected to receive additional funding to drive further progress.

Eligibility
- The Dow Awards competition is intended to engage the broader U-M community, extending beyond the select students who are awarded Dow Sustainability Fellowships. **Project teams must be led by students from U-M Ann Arbor**, but may include staff and faculty and should have a faculty advisor. **Each project team must include substantive contributions from students in at least 3 different Schools/Colleges to be eligible to receive seed funding.** Teams that span academic levels are also strongly encouraged. At all stages of the Dow Awards competition, all participants must abide by all applicable U-M policies (e.g., Academic Integrity, Conflict of Interest/Commitment) including any non-academic codes and polices of their respective units.
**Project Proposals**

- Should clearly articulate a new and innovative concept (e.g., process, policy, program, service, technology, product, etc.) and have the potential for significant societal benefits and sustainability impact.
- Can be submitted by teams that meet the eligibility criteria as defined above.
- Can be submitted anytime from the date of issuance of this RFP until May 28, 2015 or until the first 15 have been funded, whichever occurs first.
- Must be no more than 2 pages in length
- Must include a brief description of the project scope, including expected outcomes/impacts
- Must include a preliminary project timeline and budget
- Must list team members and their U-M School/College affiliations, including the faculty advisor and the team point of contact (who must be a student).

**Seed Funding**

- Program staff will conduct a rapid review of proposals to ensure they meet the minimum criteria with the expectation that all valid proposals will receive an immediate award of $5,000 to begin implementing their proposals.
- Receipt of seed funding will be subject to terms and conditions as outlined in the Appendix below.
- All project teams that receive seed funding must submit a written progress report to the Program by September 15, 2015 summarizing their accomplishments.

**Awards**

- It is envisioned that 2 or more projects will be chosen to receive additional funding, which will not exceed $50,000 per project to facilitate further progress.
- The total of all seed funding and awards in a given year will not exceed $150,000
- All funds awarded through the Dow Awards competition must be used only for direct expenses incurred in the implementation of the projects, including student hourly wages, purchase of equipment necessary to execute the project, and travel-related expenses incurred in project implementation.
- Funds may not be used for expenses unrelated to project execution, to offset faculty or staff salaries, for graduate student assistantships, or for travel to conferences.
- Disbursement of funds will be staged to the units of the faculty advisor and will be contingent upon satisfactory progress and achievement of pre-identified project milestones.
- The Dow Sustainability Fellows Program is administered by the Graham Sustainability Institute. Any unused funds shall be returned to the Graham Sustainability Institute.

**Awards Review Process**

The project progress reports received by September 15, 2015 will be first screened by Program staff with the most promising proposals provided for evaluation by an independent committee of U-M faculty/staff and external practitioners from business, government, and civil society – all of whom possess extensive knowledge and experience related to sustainability. This is expected to include a final in person evaluation by a panel of experts. All projects will be reviewed using the following selection criteria.
Winning proposals will:

- Prominently feature interdisciplinary work, blending natural science, engineering, business, behavior, social sciences, and policy considerations as appropriate.
- Clearly articulate a new and innovative concept (e.g., process, program, service, product, etc.).
- Have the potential for significant societal benefits and sustainability impact.
- Demonstrate a well-crafted premise with convincing supporting data and/or analysis.
- Have scalable and/or replicable attributes and a strong likelihood of success.
- Require a firm commitment to implement the project with demonstrable results delivered within one year of funding.

Guidelines for Progress Reports

Project teams that have received seed funding must deliver a written progress report summarizing their achievements and outlining any additional work planned for which they would like to receive a funding award. The written progress report should:

- Be 10 pages or less, including references and appendices.
- Fully describe the project scope and associated outcomes/impacts.
- Describe the progress and achievements accomplished to date.
- Describe remaining project plans.
- Include an implementation plan, timeline, major milestones and detailed proposed budget.
- Include a CV for each team member (2 pages max per member) outlining relevant experience and skills (not included in the 10 page limit). Large teams should include the CVs for the most relevant team members with a max of 10 CVs.
- Identify any skill gaps in the existing team and a plan for how they will be filled.
- Address how project success will be measured and over what timeframe.
- Address what could be accomplished with funding at 50% of the proposed level.

Overall Timeline

- **Beginning from the date of issuance of the RFP:** Eligible project teams may submit 2 page project proposals. [http://graham.umich.edu/application-request/31853](http://graham.umich.edu/application-request/31853). Once 15 project proposals have been funded with seed money, no further proposals will be accepted.
- **May 28, 2015:** Deadline for 2 page project proposals unless 15 proposals have already been funded.
- **September 15, 2015:** Project progress reports are due from teams who received seed funding. [http://graham.umich.edu/application-request/31853](http://graham.umich.edu/application-request/31853)
- **Mid November, 2015:** Projects receiving additional award funding will be publicly announced and are required to give a short oral presentation at a Symposium on UM’s Ann Arbor campus.
- **April 2016:** Winning project teams are required to make an oral presentation of their project at a session of the Graham Sustainability Institute External Advisory Board.
Appendix – Terms and Conditions of Dow Distinguished Seed Funding and Awards

Funding Research Team Requirements:

- Submit written progress report to the Program by September 15, 2015. This Report must abide by all applicable U-M policies (e.g., Academic Integrity, Conflict of Interest/Commitment) including any non-academic codes and policies of the team members respective units.
- Projects selected to receive additional funding must present a summary of their work to date at the Program Symposium in November 2015 and at the Graham Institute External Advisory Board meeting in Spring 2016.
- Mention support from the University of Michigan Dow Sustainability Fellows Program in any publications or presentations of project results and provide information to Program staff on any publications generated through this project.

No Cost Extension of Time: Not allowed.

Change in Scope: A change in scope is considered an action that constitutes a significant change in direction, type of research, aims, objectives, methodology, delays or events of unusual interest that will materially affect the ability to attain the objectives of the project or meet time schedules as provided in the approved proposal. If such a situation occurs during your award period, please contact the Program staff to discuss your change of scope. If your request is approved, you will be notified of the acceptance of the request and your research/project may continue. If your request is denied, all activity for this research/project must cease immediately and any remaining funding will be returned to the Program which is administered by the Graham Institute.

Budget Revisions: With the understanding that the budget submitted with the proposal is a guide of expected expenditures, we do understand that situations may occur that the budget may need to be revised. In the event that line item expenditures will exceed 20% of the total award amount in the approved proposal budget, a budget revision request will need to be processed. If such a situation occurs during your award period, please contact the Program staff to discuss your budget revisions. If your request is approved, you will be notified of the acceptance of the request and your research/project may continue. If your request is denied, all activity for this research/project must cease immediately and any remaining funding will be returned to the Program which is administered by the Graham Institute.

Over expenditures: Any over expenditure of the awarded amount on the project is the responsibility of the PI and the PI's department to cover.

PI leaves University: In the event that the PI terminates their appointment with the University during the award period, any remaining funds will be returned to the Graham Institute and the project will be considered closed.

I have read the above terms and conditions and agree to them as written.

_________________________________________  ______________________________
PI Signature                                      Date

Please return one signed copy of this page to: Karen Houghtaling, Business Manager
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