

Utah Agricultural Experiment Station Seed Grant Program General Guidelines for 2018

The UAES Seed Grant program is targeted at placing UAES researchers in a stronger leadership position (e.g., building capabilities, collaborations, proof of concept, “blue-sky” concepts, etc.) in the priority areas of USDA/NIFA, specifically:

- Global food security and hunger
- Climate change and natural resources
- Sustainable energy
- Childhood obesity, nutrition and community
- Food safety-production and safety of food products

While research undertaken in the UAES Seed Grant program must fit into one these priority areas, it is understood that targeted funding sources resulting from activities funded by these seed grants can be much broader than just USDA. A key component in the funding decision will be how the successful UAES Seed Grant Program proposal articulates basic and/or applied research which results in improving USU’s leadership in an area of critical need. That is, while it is expected the proposed research activities will generate refereed publications, presentations, and student training, a major part of the funding decision depends on the potential of the project to result either in significant external funding opportunities for UAES researchers and/or addresses an issue of critical importance to the state of Utah. Essentially, we seek activities related to “big ideas” that will help lead us to the next level in our research activities by providing new or broadened avenues of research that enlarge the stature of the UAES. Cross-disciplinary collaboration is expected to play an essential role in most of these activities. Examples could include, but are not limited to, positioning USU for center funding, establishing and implementing collaborations/linkages placing USU in a stronger position to address promising areas or research, etc. Successful proposals must not only fit into NIFA priority areas but also priority areas defined by the UAES for this round. In this round, grant proposals will be considered in the following targeted UAES priority areas:

1. Managing land and water resources in agricultural systems (may include topics related to climate change, livestock and/or plant systems)
2. Building a sustainable and secure food production system
3. Connections between food and health
4. Any area which fits USDA priorities and results in a strengthened leadership position for USU
5. Programs that integrate and launch basic research into outreach applications in an area of critical need to the State, including research into ways to directly impact (improve) Utah’s air quality

Please follow the guidelines below as you develop your proposal. Proposals are limited to no more than \$80,000 in total for the entire grant period, which may not exceed 24 months. Requests for graduate student support will be considered but requires a 50% match, which may come from UAES sources. Requests for undergraduate interns can be made without a match. Tuition and fees are not allowable expenses on these grants. Funds for purchase of capital equipment (equipment costing >\$5,000) that is essential for the proposed project can be included in the budget but equipment requests require a 50% match from a non-UAES source (index number must be provided for the match).

The cover page (PDF form) must include:

1. Title: A concise description of the project.
2. Priority Area(s): At least one of the five USDA/NIFA priority areas should be addressed within the project as well as at least one of this round's five targeted UAES priority areas.
3. Personnel: Specify the project leader and include his/her Banner identification number, as well as any co-project leaders.
4. Project Duration: Proposals are expected to cover no more than 24 months with funding beginning on May 1, 2018. **Seed grant projects must be entered in Digital Measures as a new UAES project and approved by USDA before funding for the UAES Seed Grant begins.**
5. Total Requested Amount: Requests may be for up to \$80,000 for the entire grant period. Faculty salaries and benefits may constitute no more than 25% of the total budget requested and may be applied only to faculty members whose major role (based on their role statement signed and in effect as of December 1, 2017) is not research. Benefits for authorized salaries should be calculated at 46.5% for contract employees, 8.0% for payroll personnel including undergraduate students, and 0.80% plus insurance costs for graduate students. In-state, out-of-state, and international travel may be included in the budget if it can be justified as meeting a critical need for the project.
6. Summary: Maximum 100-word summary in layman's language describing the project.
7. Signatures: The project leader and associated department head.

The proposal must include:

1. An introduction to the project describing in clear, concise language: (1) the critical need or background information that justifies or explains the proposed project; (2) the target audiences for the project; and (3) the scientific hypothesis and objectives addressed by the project. Most importantly, explain how the proposed research activities place USU in a stronger position to lead in this area either now or in the future.
2. A concise review of the relevant literature. This should include a discussion of the emerging research needs in this area, the current state of research (science) in the area and USU's current position in the research area.
3. The procedures and methods that will be used to address the specific objectives. This section should focus on strategies for establishing/building USU's presence and stature in this area. Essentially, how will the monies be expended to get us from where we are, as indicated in the literature review, to where we need to be, or how will the proposed project place us in an even stronger position to excel in this area?
4. Anticipated outcomes. Research activities are, by definition, expected to result in refereed publications, presentations, and student training. More importantly though, also explain how the outcome of the project is expected to make a real difference in USU's efforts in this area or research endeavor. Your proposal must include a plan and timetable for external funding proposals that will be submitted. This should include agency, targeted funding program, etc. Please describe how the proposed project makes us more competitive for this funding than if your proposed project were not funded. There should also be a discussion of the potential broader impacts (beyond the contribution to science) of USU's involvement and leadership in this area (Who will be affected? How much potential impact will be manifested?).
5. Metrics for identifying success. This must include specific outcomes that can measure where USU was at the start of your project and where we are expected to be at the end of the project in terms of our competitive position (how will success be measured?).

6. A management plan that identifies the role of each researcher and any graduate and/or undergraduate students participating in the project. This should include how junior faculty members will gain experience with project management.
7. Appendix A (Budget Form): Provide salaries, benefits and other expenses on this form. Benefits must be calculated at 46.5% for contract employees, 8.0% for payroll personnel, and 0.80% plus insurance costs for graduate students (see <http://rgs.usu.edu/spo/benefit-rates/>). If you receive an award, budget deviations of more than 10% must receive prior written approval from the Associate Director of the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station. **Faculty salaries and benefits may not exceed 25% of the total budget requested and are only authorized for faculty who, based on their role statement, do not have a major research role. Funds may not augment faculty base salaries (also see Item 6 on p. 2).**
8. Budget justification: Provide an explanation of why specific expenses have been included in the budget. Describe source of 50% matching funds for graduate assistantships (match may be from UAES funds) and provide the index number for the match. Likewise, indicate the source of matching funds for capital equipment and provide the index number.
9. **PIs that received a UAES Seed Grant in 2017 are ineligible to be PIs for this round of funding but may be co-PIs on new seed grants. Co-PIs of UAES Seed Grants funded in 2017 are also ineligible to be PIs for this round of funding unless the proposed project can be demonstrated to be substantially unrelated (essentially a different idea and vein of research) to the Seed Grant project that was funded in 2017. The purpose of UAES Seed Grants is not to provide on-going support of research that has received previous support from the UAES Seed Grant program.**

General procedures:

- Proposal length: Please be concise. The Narrative portion of the proposal must not exceed eight single-spaced, typewritten pages (12-point font with one-inch margins on all sides). The cover page, reference list, budget form (Appendix A), and budget narrative/justification which explains how each budget item will be spent are not included in the eight-page limit.
- Notification of awards: Notification of awards will be provided to the applicant and their department head by the UAES Associate Director about one month after the submission deadline.
- All expenditures must be made according to university policies and procedures and within the fiscal year(s) for which funding was approved. All funds must be expended during the grant period and no funds will be carried forward. Any funds remaining in your account at the end of the project will be returned to the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station for reallocation (no-cost extensions are not anticipated to be granted). The proposal must include a budget narrative justifying proposed expenditures.
- Project reports: **Annual** written progress reports for the project must be submitted in Digital Measures for review by the UAES Associate Director and your Department Head. A final report must be submitted in Digital Measures within one month after the completion of the project. No new grants will be awarded until past reports have been received.
- A review panel of experts will make recommendations for funding of projects to the UAES Director. Funding is based on available resources and the scientific merit of the proposals submitted. The Director reserves the right to fund or not fund projects recommended for funding by the panel, to fund projects at full or partial levels depending upon the appropriateness of the budget and budget justification, as well as the right to fund projects in some or all of this round's targeted UAES priority areas.

- These awards provide "seed money" and represent an opportunity to strengthen the position of USU and the UAES in the scientific funding community. The probability of establishing a pathway leading to other "external" funding is a primary goal for making these awards. Research teams are expected to include both senior and junior faculty members. A plan for building the capacity of junior faculty in research capability and project management should be included in the proposal.

Evaluation criteria:

A panel of research experts will evaluate each submitted proposal for its scientific merit and will make recommendations to the Director of the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station based on the criteria and weights provided below:

- a. Quality of research team, collaborations, etc. as they relate to ability to address one of this round's targeted UAES priority areas (15 points)
- b. Quality of the idea/proposed activities in terms of scientific merit, innovation, originality, broader impact, etc. (30 points)
- c. Probability the proposed research activities will result in positioning USU for significant external funding in the future and/or demonstrates its ability to considerably strengthen UAES capabilities in an area of critical need to the state of Utah (30 points)
- d. The quality of the management plan including the contribution of the proposed project to building the capacity of junior faculty in research and project management skills (10 points)
- e. Anticipated outputs related to dissemination (journal articles, presentations, student training, etc.) (10 points)
- f. Appropriateness of proposed budget and explanation of budgeted activities in achieving the goals and objectives of the proposed project (5 points)

Dates, Submission Procedure, and Forms:

Proposals are due before 5:00 p.m. on **Friday March 2, 2018**, and must be submitted electronically at <https://uaes.usu.edu/internal/project-support>. Please submit a single PDF document assembled in the following order: (1) Cover Page, (2) Project Narrative (limited to eight pages), (3) References, (4) Budget Form, and (5) Budget Justification. If you have questions about the UAES Seed Grant Program or how to submit a Seed Grant proposal, please contact Chris Davies, Associate Director of UAES (E-mail: chris.davies@usu.edu; phone: 435-797-1900).