



2023 Request for Proposals Extension Collaboration Grants (ECGs)

University of Illinois Extension
College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences

University of Illinois Extension announces an opportunity for University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) faculty and Extension professionals to apply for *2024-2025 Extension Collaboration Grants* (ECGs). These grants are designed to fund collaborative work among UIUC campus faculty and Extension specialists, educators, and/or other Extension field staff. Grants will support discovery and translation of university research into applied information and education that will be disseminated through Extension's statewide network with the goal of applied use by the target audience. Approximately seven (7) grants, with total funding of up to \$50,000 per project over two years, will be supported.

Purpose of ECGs

1. To advance innovative, change-oriented projects that solve locally- or statewide-identified problems within Extension's five critical issue areas (community, economy, environment, food, and health) for public benefit;
2. To ignite and strengthen collaborations between UIUC faculty, Extension professionals, and public audiences by fostering the development of public outreach and engagement initiatives through interdisciplinary work;
3. To build a community of practice among UIUC faculty, Extension professionals, and Illinois residents for public impact research, outreach, teaching, and training.

About Extension

University of Illinois Extension is the flagship outreach effort of UIUC, with over 650 staff and thousands of volunteers who offer educational programs and services to residents of all of Illinois' 102 counties, and beyond. Extension provides trusted, practical education to help people, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.

More than 1.5 million Illinois residents take part in Extension programs each year, including nearly 200,000 youth who participate in 4-H youth programs. Each month, Extension web pages draw more than 1.5 million page views, and people in more than 200 countries access Extension's web-based information.

Illinois Extension has identified the following five critical issue areas: *Community; Economy; Environment; Food; and Health* and is a frequent research lead and collaborator on issues of emerging public concern within these areas. Extension educators in local offices and specialists located on the UIUC campus develop and deliver research-based programming locally, in regional venues, and through distance-learning technologies. Extension professionals possess deep knowledge of state and local issues, trusted connections with community partners, and practical expertise in developing and translating research to benefit public stakeholders.

Funding Level and Eligibility

This opportunity will support approximately seven (7) grants, with total funding of up to \$50,000 per project over two years. UIUC faculty and Extension professionals are eligible to apply for ECGs. Principal Investigators (PIs) and Co-PIs must hold appointments at the UIUC campus and be approved by a unit executive office or administrative equivalent. Individuals with titles of Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor, specialized faculty with Extension appointments, Extension specialists, Extension educators, and/or other Extension field staff are encouraged to submit proposals. Extension program coordinators and community outreach workers may be included as team members; however, they may not serve as PIs or Co-PIs. Collaborators may be from non-university units and/or stakeholder groups (e.g., public agencies, professional associations, hospitals, etc.) but may not serve as PIs or Co-PIs.

To find potential collaborators with Extension, please browse through the online directory, filtering by team or selecting keywords (<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/staff>). For further inquiries about Extension personnel in topical areas, please contact Extension Program Leaders.

- Agriculture and Agribusiness, Travis Burke: tbburke@illinois.edu
- Community and Economic Development, Anne Silvis: asilvis@illinois.edu
- Family and Consumer Sciences, Jennifer McCaffrey: jmccaffr@illinois.edu
- Integrated Health Disparities, Margarita Teran-Garcia: teranmd@illinois.edu
- Natural Resources, Environment and Energy: Shibu Kar: shibakar@illinois.edu
- 4-H Youth Development, Lisa Diaz: lbdi@illinois.edu

Awarded teams are expected to track project progress and outcomes through contact with the grant program manager, a year one progress report, a final report, and periodic webinars, showcases, presentations, and press releases as requested. Distribution of Year 2 funds is contingent upon satisfactory progress towards the state project expenditures and research and outreach deliverables. Extension professionals should also report their grant activities through relevant Extension reporting systems.

Critical Issue Areas and Public Benefit

ECG proposals should be targeted to address complex issues in Extension's critical issue areas and deliver public benefits. Extension has identified the following five critical issue areas: *Community; Economy; Environment; Food; and Health*.

"Public" is defined as individuals, groups, or communities who do not currently have a formal relationship with a higher education institution but who may have general or vested interests in the proposed project. Grants that aim to target policy makers or engage business and industry are not eligible. Projects that aim to reach undergraduate students or to increase student applications to UIUC are not eligible.

"Benefit" is defined as positive change at the individual level (knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and/or behaviors) and/or community level (economic, environmental and/or social conditions).

Proposals on discovery or translation are both encouraged. Discovery projects produce and share *new information* needed by public audiences through applied research and/or transdisciplinary

collaborations. Examples might include testing treatment options for a new crop disease, or designing floodwater solutions for a community. Translation projects focus on improving *outreach methods* to ensure public participants receive the intended benefits. Examples might include developing an innovative health intervention to improve dietary choices or social-emotional well-being, or addressing barriers to adapting to climate change.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Positive and sustained interdisciplinary collaboration is a coequal goal of the 2023 ECGs, as teams with diverse knowledge and experience partner and integrate to solve problems in the critical issue areas. Proposals should provide a strong rationale for how the proposed interdisciplinary collaboration builds toward solutions, and clearly identify team member roles and responsibilities. Awarded teams are encouraged to take advantage of Extension support resources including MOU development, meeting space, and training if/as needed.

Application Requirements

6-page limit, single-spaced

Page 1: The cover sheet must provide the following information:

- Project title
- PI(s), Co-PI(s), and/or Collaborator(s) information (names, affiliations, and e-mails)
- Supervisor signature(s) (Department Head, County Director, Program Leader, etc.)
- 300-word Abstract

Pages 2-5: Project narrative, details below.

Page 6: Budget justification. Please be judicious so that as many meritorious proposals as possible may be funded.

Project Narrative

Project Narratives should be no more than 4 pages and include the following sections:

1. *Statement of Purpose:* for the proposed project, include how this work addresses a complex issue within one or more of the five critical issue areas, the public need being addressed, and how your interdisciplinary collaboration enhances a path forward towards a solution.
2. *Research/Project Plan:* for the proposed project, identify the research and outreach goals and objectives of the work and how they support UIUC's Extension and outreach mission. Discuss project methods and expected outcomes. Explain your team's plans for sustainability beyond the terms of the grant, i.e., through continued collaboration, additional funding, sustained program delivery, and/or advancing best practices for public engagement and outreach.
3. *Dissemination and Adoption Plan:* identify outreach methods and modes of delivery to public audiences in as much detail as possible, including the target audience(s) or public participants, expected reach, probability of adoption, and feasibility. Dissemination/adoption plans should provide justification that outreach methods are appropriate for the target audience(s) and outcomes, and demonstrate effective use of the Extension network.
4. *Evaluation Plan:* identify metrics and methods to assess the proposed project's targeted outcomes, process, and/or impact.

5. *Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Action Plan*: identify interdisciplinary knowledge, skills, and abilities of the proposed team and how this collaboration will be impactful towards a solution for the issue(s) presented in the statement of purpose. Include an action plan (chart/tables allowed) that explains team member roles and responsibilities, deliverables, percent time allocation, and project timeline that describes or charts completion of the proposed work.
6. *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA)*: please indicate how your work addresses DEIA principles, underserved audiences, belonging, and/or other aspects of DEIA.
7. *Budget*: within the award limit (\$50,000 over two years), provide a budget that convincingly justifies the request for funds as evidenced by proposed activities, outcomes, and deliverables, and that is consistent with team member roles and responsibilities.

Submission Instructions

Proposals should be submitted as a combined .pdf file to the Director of Extension at nickrich@illinois.edu. Please use: {PILASTNAME}-ECG Grant 2023 in your subject heading. **Proposals must be submitted electronically by 5:00 pm central time on October 16, 2023.** Any proposal submitted after this deadline will neither be accepted nor reviewed. No exceptions will be made.

Questions may be directed to Dr. Shelly Nickols-Richardson at nickrich@illinois.edu.

Proposal Selection Criteria

The following criteria will be used by the review committee, comprised of College of ACES faculty and University of Illinois Extension professionals, to rate each proposal.

- *Statement of purpose* – proposal addresses a complex issue(s) closely aligned with one or more of Extension’s five critical issue areas; compelling justification of public need is provided; establishes a strong rationale for how proposed interdisciplinary collaboration builds towards a solution.
- *Research/project plan* – goal(s) and objective(s) are clearly stated and are compelling to Extension and outreach mission; sound methods are fully explained and applied; expected outcomes are clearly described; project demonstrates innovations for translating, understanding, and/or solving issue(s); project plan demonstrates strong potential for sustainability.
- *Dissemination and adoption plan* – target audience or participants are clearly identified; modes of delivery and outreach methods described; plan demonstrates that outreach methods are appropriate to reach target groups and achieve the public benefit objectives; use of Extension network included; adoption very likely.
- *Evaluation plan* – identifies clear and appropriate metrics to evaluate outcome goals and deliverables; significant public benefit outcomes described and realistic.
- *Interdisciplinary collaboration and action plan* – interdisciplinary team evident with inclusion of Extension staff and campus faculty; proposal describes a collaboration that is highly interdisciplinary; outlines roles for partners; discusses in detail how collaboration will be impactful towards a solution for complex issues; reasonable action plan with timeline / roles and responsibilities provided.
- *Diversity, equity, inclusion, and access* – clearly indicates how DEIA principles, underserved audiences, belonging, and/or other aspects of DEIA are included.
- *Budget* – within limits; proposed use of funds appropriate to scope of project; clearly demonstrates integrated project.

At the discretion of the Director of Extension, top-scoring proposals may be selected to ensure a diversity of collaborations across campus and Extension units and/or to ensure that projects address issues across diverse public stakeholders in Illinois.

Decision and Award Dates

Selection of successful ECGs will be made by November 30, 2023, and all PIs will be notified by December 15, 2023, of the decisions. Funding will be available to awarded ECGs on January 15, 2024, and must be expended by December 31, 2025.

ECG Information Sessions

Two, 45-minute sessions will be held to familiarize prospective applicants with ECGs. Program issue areas and priorities will be discussed, and examples of current ECGs will be provided by team members. Additional announcements will be released regarding these online sessions that will be held on August 21, 2023 (4:00-4:45 pm) and on August 28, 2023 (10:15-11:00 am).