**The University of Texas at Austin**
**College of Natural Sciences**

**CNS CATALYST GRANT PROGRAM**
**2023 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

Submission Deadline: March 6, 2023 5:00 PM CST

## DESCRIPTION

The CNS Catalyst Grant program is a College of Natural Sciences (CNS) internal funding mechanism meant to foster interdisciplinary research collaborations that will seed new external funding. It is not a bridge-funding program. Proposals for interdisciplinary projects with collaborators from different research fields, CNS departments, or other UT schools and colleges are requested. Principal investigators who accept a CNS Catalyst Grant are expected to pursue external funding for the collaborative effort within two years of receiving Catalyst Grant funding.

## AWARD INFORMATION

Up to **four** CNS Catalyst Grants **($50,000 maximum each**) will be awarded to teams of two or more members to begin new interdisciplinary research collaborations. Projects should be proposed with a performance period of one year. Awarded funds will be available for two years. No-cost extensions will not be considered, and remaining funds will be swept after the expiration of the award.

CNS Catalyst Grant funding should develop new interdisciplinary research areas and teams, and enhance competitiveness of applications to external agencies.

**<u>Allowed Expenses</u>**

- Graduate student support including fringe and tuition (UT-Austin only)
- Postdoc and Research Scientist support including fringe (UT-Austin only)
- Materials/supplies/consumables
- Equipment
- Travel or conference hosting for team building in advance of external sponsor proposal submission

**<u>Unallowed Expenses</u>**

- Faculty salary (summer or otherwise)
- Administrative support
- Indirect costs

## ELIGIBILITY

CNS Catalyst Grant funding is meant to catalyze *new* research collaborations in high-impact, emerging fields that have potential for external funding. With this goal in mind, we expect that a successful Catalyst Grant proposal will possess the following characteristics:

- Project teams must include at least two members, one with a primary appointment in CNS and the other member(s) with primary appointments at UT. Team members must be tenure-track faculty, professional faculty, or research-track scientists with PI status. Team members must not have received external funding on a collaborative project together. Previously published collaborations are not disqualifying as long as the work was not funded by a shared grant. Adjunct faculty, visiting researchers, and postdocs are not eligible to serve as Co-PIs but may be named as investigators in proposals.
- Eligible individuals may only participate in one application per cycle.
- Cross-college collaborations are allowed.
- Project teams must identify viable external funding mechanisms at the time of proposal submission to be targeted within two years of project completion.
- Previous Catalyst Grant winners may apply no sooner than two calendar years from their winning competition cycle (e.g., a winner from Spring 2022 would not be eligible to submit another application until Spring 2024).
- Previously awarded investigator teams are not eligible to submit a new Catalyst proposal as a team.
- Non-awarded applicants from previous cycles may submit their proposal twice (i.e., original submission and one resubmission).

**APPLICATION COMPONENTS**

All application documents should be formatted using 1-inch margins and no smaller than 11-point font. Recommended fonts are Arial, Georgia, Helvetica, and Times New Roman. The documents listed below are required, unless otherwise noted, and must be submitted by the application deadline.

1. **Lay Summary with Keywords**. In 200 words or less, provide a lay summary for your collaboration and proposed project. Describe the potential impact for a general audience. Following the lay summary, include 5 – 10 keywords that categorize the research proposed in this application.

2. **Proposal**. Limit to three (3) pages. Organize the proposal in the specified order using the section headings and instructions provided below.

   a. *Rationale and Vision*

      Explain what makes your team interdisciplinary. Explain the innovative and transformative nature of the proposed interdisciplinary research, describe the potential impact to the scientific field(s), and provide an assessment of how the project team is positioned to develop competitive external proposals in this research area. The Catalyst Grants review panel will not be experts in your field; please write this section accordingly.

   b. *Justification*

      Explain why a Catalyst Grant is required to initiate the collaboration, emphasizing the barriers (technical, procedural, etc.) that currently hinder your proposed project/collaboration and how a Catalyst Grant will impact the team's probability of success in securing external funding.

c. *Participating Faculty*

        List participating faculty members, providing a clear explanation of each team member's role in the collaboration.

3. **Bibliography/References**: No page limit. List citations/references in a document separate from the proposal.

4. **External Funding Landscape**. Limit to one (1) page. Summarize the external funding landscape for which the seed-funding proposal is being prepared and plans to pursue external funding. Include an anticipated timeline with milestones for development of an external proposal, names of potential sponsoring agencies, and relevant deadlines for those agencies.

5. **Budget and Budget Justification**. No page limit. Submit a detailed budget that outlines expenditures in appropriate categories for each year of the proposed project. Provide a justification for expenditures.

6. **Response to Prior Reviews**: Limit to one (1) page. For applications being resubmitted, summarize any changes made to the proposal to address prior reviews.

7. **Biosketch/CV and Current and Pending Support**: For all members of the investigator team, submit a current biosketch or CV and current and pending funding information (direct cost per year and total duration). NIH, NSF, or similar format preferred.

**APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

Applications must be submitted through Competition Space, UT's online submission interface. To apply, visit https://utexas.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1890758. Login using your UT EID and password to create your application. Complete the application form and upload the required application documents described above and click "Submit Application" at the bottom of the page. You will also have the option to save a draft and return to continue your application at a future time. If this is your first time submitting a proposal through Competition Space, refer to the "Note" at the end of this RFP for further instructions. Application components should be combined and uploaded as a single pdf and submitted by the **deadline of 5:00 PM CST on March 6, 2023**.

**REVIEW CRITERIA**

A standing faculty review panel will evaluate CNS Catalyst Grant applications. Proposals should be written in a manner accessible to non-experts. The following evaluation criteria will be used and given equal weight:

1. Demonstrated commitment by the faculty team to establish a new interdisciplinary collaboration.

2. Evidence that Catalyst Grant funding will enable the faculty team to overcome identified barriers that currently prohibit a successful collaboration.

3. The proposed collaboration's potential to enhance their competitiveness in securing external funding.

4. The project is in a high-impact, emerging interdisciplinary field and has the potential for innovation.

5. The scientific merit and rationale of the proposed project are sound, and the scope of the proposal is feasible for the Catalyst performance period.

**POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS**

In addition to submitting a proposal for external funding, awardees will be required to submit a final report upon completion of the project and within one month of the end of the award. Awardees may be asked to serve on a standing review committee for future Catalyst Grant competitions. Awardees may also be asked to describe results of Catalyst Grant-funded work at a future CNS event, such as an Advisory Council meeting, or in a CNS communication.

**TIMELINE**

Submission window opens: January 23, 2023
Submission deadline: March 6, 2023
Announcement of awardees: May 2023
Anticipated award start date: September 1, 2023
Award end date: Two (2) years after award start date
Anticipated date unexpended funds swept: September 1, 2025

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Program website: https://cns.utexas.edu/strategic-research-initiatives/find-funding/catalyst-grant-program

Application website: https://utexas.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1890758

Program questions and application submission interface questions should be directed to CNS Strategic Research Initiatives: CNS_SRI@austin.utexas.edu

*The form and timing of Catalyst Grants are subject to change in subsequent years.*

*The content of this announcement is relevant only for the 2023 competition cycle.*

***Note:*** *If this is your first time submitting a proposal through the proposal submission website, you will first need to affiliate yourself with the College before you can submit. To do this, login with your EID and password, then click on the "Hello, [Name]" link at the top right of the website. This will take you to your user profile. In your user profile, under "Primary School or Department," select "Natural Sciences, College of" and then scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the Save Changes button. You will now be able to apply.*