Food Systems Good Idea Grants
2025 Call for Proposals

Introduction and Goals

The Food Systems Research Institute (FSRI) funds collaborative research that puts people and the planet first, integrates disciplines and communities, and answers complex questions about our food systems. A key part of FSRI's mission is to catalyze interdisciplinary, stakeholder-responsive research among UVM faculty, postdocs, students, and their external collaborators.

The Good Idea Grants are one way the FSRI initiates research supporting UVM scholars and external collaborators to build collaborative programs with the potential to grow and attract external funding or recognition. Successful programs will combine cutting-edge research and scholarship with real-world engagement and impact. The grant should allow the research team to explore and solidify their research concept with evidence.

Proposals should involve food systems research in an interdisciplinary and stakeholder-responsive approach. The research area must be related to a priority area of the FSRI. The topics are broad; the questions are indicative and not exclusive. A range of methods and disciplines are welcome, including historical, visual or narrative methods, as well as more traditional agronomic, economic, statistical, modelling, laboratory, etc. methods. In 2025, the priority areas are:

1. Building resilience to climate shocks (near- and long-term) across the food system. This can include direct and indirect impacts (e.g. new diseases) of climate shocks on food production, processing, distribution and/or consumption patterns

2. Research on food choices and nutritional outcomes, especially considering barriers to "choosing" and/or having "access" to a "healthy" diet.

3. Food policy for regional food system sustainability and nutritional security. The concept of a regional food system is appealing to increase local economic growth, bind consumers to food producers, and perhaps offer a pathway to sustainability and resilience to future shocks. The FSRI would like to see research on how specific policy interventions can improve sustainability and/or nutritional security across the New England region.

4. Diversification options for New England food production, including novel crops or animals, under-utilized lands, or new markets. These options can range across the food system from production through to consumption, including novel financing ideas.

5. Data analysis and/ or decision support tools for food system actors to improve food system sustainability or nutritional outcomes. This can include novel ways to collect and share evidence of food system outcomes and impacts.

Funding Level and Duration

- **Funding level**: Up to $25,000. There is no overhead. FSRI intends to fund up to $150,000 in up to six awards.
- **Duration**: November 1, 2025 – November 1, 2026 (12 months). No-cost extensions are typically not allowed.

Eligibility

- The PI must be a UVM faculty member conducting food systems research.
- Each proposal may have up to one Co-PI, who must also be a UVM faculty member working in food systems.
- Anyone can participate as a collaborator.
- And individual may only serve as PI or Co-PI on one active Good Idea Grant at a time.

Be sure to follow all relevant procedures within your unit, including the pre-award process. Some colleges require Good Idea Grant proposals to be approved through the pre-award review.

Proposal Requirements
Proposals must:

- Involve two or more UVM faculty from two or more departments, and preferably from two or more colleges or schools.
- Clearly describe how the proposed work will lead to broader, long-term efforts (such as external funding applications), outcomes, and impacts.

Allowable and Non-Allowable Costs
Awards can support:

- Research costs, including materials, equipment, data, and research assistants
- Up to one month of summer salary per summer for UVM faculty on a 9-month contract
- Up to three months of salary per fiscal year for postdocs
- Up to three months of summer stipend per student per summer for graduate students
- Undergraduate hourly wages
- Travel and workshop costs for project participants (subject to UVM and Federal rules and restrictions)

Awards will not support:

- Academic year salaries or stipends for UVM faculty or graduate students
- Salaries or stipends for faculty, postdocs, or students outside UVM
- Tuition of any kind

Reporting Requirements
- Mid-term and final reports will be required as part of the award agreement.
- Failure to comply with reporting requirements will result in the PI and Co-PI being ineligible for future funding.

Evaluation Criteria and Review Process
Proposals must be feasible and aligned with the goals of this call (see Introduction and Goals). Applicants are encouraged to propose projects with policy relevance and real world-impact.

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee of food systems evaluators representing relevant disciplines (see scoring rubric below). Proposals will be scored on six criteria:

- Intellectual merit
- Interdisciplinary reach
- Alignment with food systems research themes

- Strength of the research team
- Potential for impact
- Potential for future growth

Priority will be given to proposals that foster new collaborations among UVM scholars, involve graduate and undergraduate students, and/or include external collaborators. The FSRI Director will make final award decisions.

SCORING RUBRIC

	Exceptional	Good	Needs Improvement	Not sufficient
Intellectual Merit	Highly innovative with promise of significant contribution to Food Systems research literature	Well-articulated research question with a sound premise and moderate potential to contribute to the research literature	Reasonable question with limited potential to contribute to the research literature	Vague question with little promise to contribute to the research literature
Interdisciplinary Reach	Research integrates multiple disciplines with clear contributions from diverse fields, demonstrating broad applicability.	Research incorporates multiple disciplines with good integration and potential for cross-disciplinary impact.	Limited interdisciplinary integration, with only a small influence from other fields.	Lacks interdisciplinary integration, limited to one discipline with no clear cross-disciplinary connection.
Alignment with Food Systems Research Themes	Strong links to one or more priority areas with a compelling explanation of the research's relevance and significance.	Good connection to priority areas, with a reasonable explanation of how the research aligns.	Moderate connection to priority areas, with minimal explanation of its relevance.	Weak or vague connection to priority areas with no clear explanation of relevance.
Strength of the Research Team	The team is highly qualified, with demonstrated expertise and experience in relevant areas, showcasing leadership in their field.	The team has relevant experience and a solid understanding of the research area, with some expertise in food systems.	The team's experience is moderate, and its ability to execute the project is uncertain.	The team lacks relevant experience or expertise to successfully execute the project.

	Clear and significant potential for real-world impact with actionable outcomes that address critical issues in food systems.	Clear potential for impact with moderate relevance to real-world issues in food systems.	Some potential for impact, but relevance to real-world challenges is unclear.	Little to no potential for real-world impact, with limited relevance to food systems challenges.
Potential for Impact				
Potential for Future Growth	Project demonstrates significant potential for future expansion or scaling, contributing to long-term advancements in food systems research.	Project shows potential for growth with moderate opportunities for long-term contribution to food systems.	Project has limited potential for future growth or expansion in the field.	No clear potential for future growth or expansion.

How to apply

Proposals must be submitted through this InfoReady Review Portal by 11:59 pm EDT August 1, 2025.

Anticipated Timeline:

- August 1: Applications due
- September 1: Award notifications
- November 1: Earliest date funds may be expended

Required submission materials include:

- Proposal narrative (described below)
- Budget (use template)
- Collaborators list (use template)
- 2-page CVs for PI, Co-PI (if applicable), and each investigator
- Completed signature page indicating support from the PI's (and co-PI's if applicable) Department Chair and Dean

The proposal narrative should not exceed **3,000 words** (excluding timeline and references) and must include the following sections:

- Abstract (max 250 words)
- Introduction and problem statement
- Objectives
- Approach and work plan
- Significance and novelty of scholarship
- Broader impacts: Describe expected outputs, outcomes, and impacts:
  o Outputs: Research products (e.g., reports, publications, presentations, student training, funding applications).
  o Outcomes: Medium-term changes resulting from outputs (e.g., adoption of new techniques)
  o Impacts: Broader societal, economic, or environmental benefits (e.g., public health improvements, biodiversity protection, greenhouse gas reduction).

- Plan for expanding the work, including follow-on proposals
- Interdisciplinary team: Describe team composition and any mentoring plans for postdocs.
- Timeline of activities
- References (max 20)

Responsibilities of Grantees

Awardees must:

- Acknowledge FSRI funding in all resulting publications, presentations, or reports.
- Submit a final report within two months of the grant's conclusion.
- Submit at least one significant external funding proposal within six months of the award's end date.
- Provide annual updates on publications, funding, and presentations resulting from the award.
- Serve as reviewers for future catalyst Award competitions.

Questions and Contact Information

For additional information, contact:

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