

THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
LEAHY INSTITUTE
FOR RURAL PARTNERSHIPS

Seed Grant Program
Request for Proposals
Fall/Winter 2023-2024 Cycle

Please Note: To ensure eligibility to receive grant funds from the Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships, your organization will need to have an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov).

Please make sure your organization has an active SAM.gov Entity Registration *before* the proposal deadline on January 31, 2024.

Please contact the Office of Engagement at engage@uvm.edu with questions on SAM.gov.

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Background

The Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships' objective is to amplify existing partnerships and develop new partnerships between the University of Vermont and Vermont organizations and communities working to implement solutions to rural challenges.

With a total of \$9.7 million in funding from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the Leahy Institute will support partnerships between University of Vermont faculty and facilities and rural and community-driven initiatives, non-profits pursuing rural development, and early-stage startups that are likely to have a significant impact on rural communities through a series of Seed Grants and Capacity Grants.

What We Fund

The Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships will fund project costs associated with engaged partnerships between organizations and the University of Vermont. Project costs include those expenses directly related to the project for which funding is being requested.

Please note that Capacity and Seed Grants have a **federally determined indirect cost rate of 1%** which must be considered in the development of a project budget. Through this funding initiative, UVM will join as partners with Vermont leaders who are working toward impactful solutions to rural challenges in our priority focus areas:

- *Regenerative Agriculture*
- *Community Schools*
- *Transit & Housing Solutions*
- *Remote & Co-Working Practices*
- *Resilient Energy Systems*
- *Healthy Ecosystems*
- *Access to Health Care in Rural Areas*
- *Policy & Governance*

Evaluation Criteria

The Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships is looking to fund proposals which meet the following criteria:

1. Engage in a partnership with the University of Vermont and its students, faculty, and resources.
2. Alignment with Leahy Institute for Rural Partnership priority focus areas.
3. Show a deep understanding of what is challenging Vermont's rural communities and economies and propose impactful solutions.
4. Consider principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in project outcomes and evaluation.
5. Demonstrate feasibility and scalability in project design.

The Leahy Institute Advisory Board, made up of both UVM and community leaders, will vet partnership opportunities, review applications, and provide input to program staff toward awarding and approving funded projects.

Please consult the Application Timeline on page 3 for specific dates around grant submission.

Eligibility

All organizations that work within the State of Vermont and who are working to impact Vermont's rural communities are eligible to apply. This includes nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and government entities.

We also encourage those affiliated with UVM to apply for funding. ~~Please note that there will need to be an existing partnership with an external organization for the project to be eligible for funding.~~ **Update 11/16/2023: Partnerships are not required at the Letter of Intent phase of our application process.**

Award Amounts

The Leahy Institute will award funding for partnership projects at the following levels:

Capacity Grants (Up to \$10,000) will catalyze partnership and project development. This is the entry track for organizations who have a vision for increased rural impact but need support to develop a relationship with UVM partners. Organizations that are awarded Capacity Grants will foster collaborative relationships with the UVM Office of Engagement that will lead to a strong working relationship with an internal UVM unit.

Seed Grants (Up to \$300,000) will fund research projects, stakeholder engagement initiatives, student internships and service-learning experiences, and business plan development for partnerships working to address rural challenges. Organizations interested in applying for a Seed Grant from the Institute should have clearly articulated goals, measures of success, and either an existing partnership with UVM, or a strong potential to create a partnership.

Application Timeline

Events	Date
RFP Posted	November 10, 2023
In-Person Public Information Session Click here to register.	November 15, 2023 at 12 PM, University of Vermont, Waterman 427A
Online Public Information Session Click here to register.	November 16, 2023 at 11 AM
In-Person Public Information Session Click here to register.	November 20, 2023 at 4:30 PM, The Hub CoWorks, Rutland, VT
Online Public Information Session Click here to register.	December 5, 2023 at 11AM

LOI Submission Deadline	December 18, 2023 by 5 PM
Invitations for Proposals	January 11, 2024
Proposal Deadline	February 15, 2024 by 5 PM
Award Notification	February 29, 2024 (estimated)
Period of Performance	March 1, 2024 through February 28, 2025

How to Apply

The University of Vermont uses the InfoReady platform for grant submissions. Applicants will create a user ID and password and will be able to access the Letter of Intent/Proposal from the applicant homepage.

1. **Follow this link to access the Leahy Institute Letter of Intent (LOI):**
<https://uvm.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1922039>
2. Click “Apply” to be redirected to the Log In screen.
3. Organization applicants (non-UVM affiliated):
 - a. Scroll to the “Login for Other Users” box.
 - b. Click Register
 - c. Fill out the registration form, including the email address where you would like to receive notifications.
 - d. Submit the form and confirm your account using the email address you entered.
 - e. You may now log in to InfoReady and begin your Leahy Institute Letter of Intent.
4. UVM-affiliated applicants:
 - a. Log in to InfoReady with your UVM SSO.
 - b. Begin your letter of intent once logged in.
5. Hit “Submit Application” when completed.

For questions about the grant program or application process, please contact Daria Jarani, Program Manager, at engage@uvm.edu, and include “InfoReady” in the subject line of your email.

FAQ

1. *Who is eligible to apply for a grant?*

This grant is open to all organizations that work within the State of Vermont, and particularly those whose work impacts Vermont's rural communities.

We will accept applications from nonprofit and for-profit organizations, start-ups, local governments, and UVM-affiliated applicants working with an external partner.

2. *I am a faculty/staff member at the University of Vermont. Am I eligible to apply?*

You are welcome to apply to this program as an internal UVM faculty or staff member. ~~The only requirement is the involvement of an external partner who is essential for the success of the project and meets the above criteria.~~ **Update 11/16/2023: Partnerships are not required at the Letter of Intent phase of our application process.**

3. *How do I know how much funding to request for the project?*

The best practice for requesting funding is to request the amount that will promote the greatest impact while also considering the organization's current capacity. Project sustainability past the Seed Grant lifespan is a major component of proposal evaluation, so it is important to consider what the immediate needs are but not promise too much that the project's sustainability would come into question.

4. *What project costs are eligible, and which are ineligible?*

All costs directly associated with the project are eligible. This includes personnel time, including graduate student and postdoctoral research support, devoted to the funded project. **Indirect costs of up to 1% are allowed on modified total direct costs.**

For questions on specific costs, please contact Daria Jarani, Program Manager, at engage@uvm.edu.

5. *What is the Leahy Institute Advisory Board?*

The Leahy Institute Advisory Board was created to advise the Institute on its work and to help promote, review, and approve partnership opportunities that will provide nationally scalable economic development solutions. Board membership is comprised of community and business leaders, and key University of Vermont leaders including Dr. Roy Beckford, Director of UVM Extension in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs), Dr. Corine Farewell, Director of UVM Innovations, and Dr. Kirk Dombrowski, V.P. for Research and Economic Development at UVM.

6. *How will UVM students be involved in approved partnerships?*

The Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships prioritizes the cultivation of reciprocal relationships among UVM students and rural communities, in service to Vermont's economy. Community partners can engage with UVM students through (1) Participation in service-learning courses led by UVM faculty, (2) creating internship positions, (3) micro-internships, (4) semester and summer internships, (5) year-long co-ops, and (6) participation in summer intern cohort workshops.

7. *What is service-learning?*

Each year, between 80 to 100 community-engaged service-learning courses are offered at UVM. Students apply their coursework in real-world settings, and in ways that address priorities identified by community partners. Faculty provide a structure for accountability to the project or service that benefits the community partners and helps students learn from their experience.

8. What are the reporting requirements for this grant program?

Funding recipients will be asked to complete two reports over the yearlong period of performance: a 6-month report in September 2024, and a final closeout report in March 2025. It is the Leahy Institute's intent to keep reporting streamlined and we will attempt to reduce the burden on the awardee wherever we are able.

9. If I am denied funding for this cycle, what are my next steps?

If your partnership does not receive funding in this first cycle, there will be more opportunities to request support. The Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships will host subsequent grant cycles over the coming years with different areas of focus. We will be publicizing future grant cycles in our Office of Engagement newsletter. Please sign up [here](#) to receive updates from the Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships directly to your email inbox.

Letter of Intent/Proposal Questions

*Questions with an asterisk are included in the proposal only.

Applicant First/Last Name

Email Address

Phone Number

Organization Name

Organization History*

Annual Operating Budget

Does your organization currently have a partnership with the University of Vermont?

Key Staff Members*

Project Description

Project Start/End Date

Estimated Total Project Budget

Amount Requested

How have you integrated community stakeholders into your project? Who are some of these stakeholders?*

List at least two goals of your project. For each goal, list the measurable outcomes, quantitative and qualitative, that will result from achieving these goals.*

How do you currently evaluate your programs?*

How does your organization plan to sustain the project beyond the Seed/Capacity grant lifecycle?*

Attachments

Estimated Project Budget*

Budget Justification*

Partner Letter of Support (optional)*

**Application Evaluation Rubric
Seed Grant Program
Fall/Winter 2023-2024 Cycle**

Objective	Description	Scoring Scale
<i>Engage in a partnership with the University of Vermont and its students, faculty, and resources.</i>	Does the proposed partnership integrate explicit partners within the UVM network? This can include faculty, research centers/institutes, and university offices.	5-The proposal clearly expresses how the applicants seek to partner with different entities across UVM 1-The proposal does not articulate how the applicants will partner with UVM
	Does the proposed partnership plan for the inclusion of students, either through internships, participation in service-learning courses, or other opportunities for UVM's student body?	5-The proposal clearly expresses how student engagement via internships, service learning, and other educational opportunities is incorporated into the partnership 1-The proposal does not articulate how student engagement applies to the proposed partnership
<i>Align with Leahy Institute for Rural Partnership themes.</i>	Does the proposed partnership align with one or more of the eight Leahy Institute thematic areas?	5- The proposal aligns with one or more of the Leahy Institute's thematic areas, and articulates an innovative approach to problem-solving in that area 1-The proposal does not clearly articulate alignment with at least one Leahy Institute theme
<i>Show a deep understanding of what is challenging Vermont's rural communities and economies and propose impactful solutions.</i>	What is the intended impact on the rural communities targeted through the proposal? What is the impact at the community level, county level, state level in Vermont? Who are the recipients of anticipated outcomes?	5-The proposal clearly identifies the different impacts that the partnership will have for different groups across scales, and considers the different tiers of effects that this partnership can have on the larger communities 1-The proposal does not clearly articulate intended outcomes, and is vague in who is impacted
<i>Consider principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in project outcomes and evaluation.</i>	Does the proposed partnership incorporate principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice into the intended outcomes?	5- The proposal clearly articulates how the partners plan to incorporate principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in their programming 1-The proposal does not meaningfully incorporate these principles

		Bonus (1 pt) - The proposal includes a significant partnership with a disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE)
<i>Demonstrate feasibility and scalability in project design.</i>	Is this project feasible? Does the project have strong potential for creating lasting partnerships that positively impact rural communities in Vermont?	5- The proposal clearly identifies how the partnership will achieve its intended outcomes and has a plan for sustained operations beyond the grant 1-Evidence of the proposal's intended impact is vague and unclear
	Does the proposed partnership and its outcomes show significant potential for growth in funding, activity, or participation beyond the Leahy Institute funding? Does the proposal include plans for future funding opportunities to sustain the work?	5-The proposal includes a clear growth trajectory, including additional sources of funding, additional partnerships, and possible replicability of programming 1-The proposal does not include a clear growth plan