The Atkinson Center invites proposals for the Academic Venture Fund (AVF) program. This fund stimulates innovative and interdisciplinary sustainability research, convenings and programmatic development at Cornell. The AVF is intended to support research that would not be funded by traditional granting organizations because the proposed activity is interdisciplinary, still early in development, high risk, too applied, or some combination of these factors.

All proposals must show a clear means of effecting real-world impact, such as through the promise of securing future external funding and/or a sustained future through adoption and implementation. Successful proposals will advance sustainability locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally.

### 2019 Program Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 25</td>
<td>AVF program call issued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 14</td>
<td>AVF Information Session (2-3pm, 300 Rice Hall)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 25</td>
<td>Letter of Intent due (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 12</td>
<td>AVF Information Session (10-11am, 300 Rice Hall)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 1</td>
<td>Full proposals due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late May</td>
<td>Applicants notified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul 1</td>
<td>Projects can start as of 7/1/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 19</td>
<td>Engaged Cornell Supplement application due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul 8</td>
<td>Engaged Cornell Supplement awardees notified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Proposal Themes

The Atkinson Center continues to welcome proposals from interdisciplinary teams of faculty across campus, spanning the entire range of sustainability themes. Consistent with our strategic plan, we will prioritize proposals that advance the development of resilient rural-urban systems and working group priorities themes listed below. Knowledge of the integrated systems that connect rural and urban communities—including food, water, health, economic, and energy systems—is vital to the creation of a sustainable future. The Atkinson Center, in concert with the provost’s Sustainability Task Force's recommendations, will emphasize the role of rural-urban systems in developing a holistic systems approach to sustainability. Areas of focus include:

- **Increasing Food Security**: Improving the interlinked systems of food production, processing, and distribution to meet the nutritional needs of current and future populations while enhancing the quality of life of those who are earning a livelihood within food systems and improving the state of the ecosystems on which they depend.

- **Reducing Climate Risks**: Innovating technology, financial instruments, and policy to reduce greenhouse gas concentrations and mitigate their impact, while adapting agriculture and the built environment for a low-carbon future.
• **Accelerating Energy Transitions**: Improving the generation, distribution, and storage of clean energy through smart-grid technology, solar and wind installations, and the promotion of smart energy practices.

• **Advancing One Health**: Incorporating into our agriculture and built environment the understanding that human health and happiness are inextricably linked with environmental, livestock, and wildlife health.

(Note: Projects linked to Advancing One Health *that have explicit connections to human health* may be supported in part by joint Atkinson-Cornell Master of Public Health funds.)

All AVF proposals must:

• **Describe a clear path to impact.** Clearly outline the steps of your project and how each step leads to the next and, ultimately, to the impact you hope to achieve. Importantly, describe how your project will move from the output to the outcomes and impact stages and the role your partners might play in helping to achieve this. The illustration below can help you think through these steps (adapted from the *Theory of Change* methodology).

• Demonstrate a strong interdisciplinary team approach to the project, or clearly explain why a single disciplinary approach is sufficient to achieve a sustainability outcome (e.g., a next step in product development).

(We are especially interested in how your external partners and other collaborators might ensure research findings lead to real-world impact. For example, how will external partners help get findings into the hands of policy makers? Or how might community partners help ensure adoption of recommendations?)

**Review Criteria**
Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

• **Intellectual Merit**: Will the proposal advance understanding – filling gaps in academic and/or non-academic knowledge – regarding important sustainability issues? Is the research innovative?
- **Impact:** Does the proposed research project have the potential to impact real-world changes and/or solutions leading to greater sustainability? Are the critical steps on the path to impact clearly articulated and convincing?

- **Collaborations:** Does the proposal establish or convincingly outline new, important, lasting collaborations within Cornell and/or with external organizations? Are the roles of listed participants clearly explained?

- **Interdisciplinary Reach:** Does the research team reach across disciplines and/or campus units? If not, does the proposal clearly explain and justify why this approach is not needed?

- **Metrics:** Does the proposal include clear and appropriate measures of success and explicit milestones with a realistic timeline?

All proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by faculty fellows working with our leadership team. Applications self-identifying as having a *One Health* theme connected to human health will also be evaluated by the leadership of Cornell’s Master of Public Health program.

Applicants are encouraged to contact members of the Atkinson Center leadership team to discuss their ideas prior to submission in order to help strengthen proposals by addressing AVF goals and identifying potential collaborators or partnerships. Examples of successful past proposals are available online.

The center is offering information sessions to help prospective applicants on Tuesday, Feb 12, from 2-3 pm and on Tuesday, Mar 12, from 10-11 am in 300 Rice Hall. Faculty members considering submitting proposals are strongly encouraged to attend. Please contact Gladys Brangman to register.

**Principal Investigators and Eligibility**

We continue to encourage interdisciplinary, multiple-investigator research projects addressing real-world, complex problems that require a range of perspectives and expertise to solve. We encourage teams of faculty investigators from different Cornell departments and colleges to apply, but collaborators within a single department can be considered if they have sufficient breadth of expertise and perspective. We will consider single investigator proposals if there is a clear and compelling justification that explains why a multi-investigator approach is not appropriate. All PIs must meet Cornell’s principal investigator (PI) eligibility criteria.

**Letters of Intent (due February 25, 2019)**

We encourage applicants to submit a letter of intent (LOI). The **LOI must include a clear statement of the potential real world impact of the project in the short, medium, and/or long-term.** Submit LOI online

**Full Proposals (due April 1, 2019)**

Full proposals will be accepted through a link from [www.acsf.cornell.edu/avf](http://www.acsf.cornell.edu/avf). The complete proposal must consist of a cover sheet, narrative with supporting information, and budget. Awards will be made for projects of up to 24 months duration.

**Proposal Instructions**

1. Go to the online submission page and fill in the cover sheet form.
2. Provide an abstract in non-technical language (maximum 300 words) of the proposed activity. This abstract may be used in whole or adapted for AVF announcements and publicity material.
3. Complete a proposal narrative with supporting information. This must be a single pdf file, with 12-point font, single-spaced, with at least one-inch margins. Please see instructions for proposal narrative content below.

4. Fill in the project budget template (excel spreadsheet). Upload the budget to complete your proposal. AVF funding may be used for any reasonable and appropriate research expense. Support for postdocs, students, and technical staff is permitted. Funding cannot be used to support tenure-track faculty salaries. Last year awards ranged from $63,000 to $155,000.

The narrative sections (I-VI) must not exceed FIVE PAGES and must include all of the following sections. Use section headings in your narrative:

I. BACKGROUND
Summarize your research topic and its importance. Explain what led you to this topic, including your prior experience (research or other) and the timeliness and importance of the project. Also include the overarching challenge/research questions that you will address and a summary of methods to be used.

II. INTELLECTUAL MERIT
Discuss how the proposal advances understanding and fits into the current body of knowledge and/or gaps in knowledge around sustainability issues (consider academic and non-academic knowledge, for example, knowledge gaps of an NGO or other non-academic partner). Also, please describe how this research is innovative — in its research questions, methods/approach/data collection/ways of knowing, team formation, and/or other aspects.

III. IMPACT
Summarize how the proposed research has the potential to impact real-world changes and/or solutions leading to greater sustainability. Explain how the project will change or influence behavior, practice, procedures, or policy to help implement sustainable solutions to world needs. Consider temporal (short, intermediate, and long-term) and special (local, regional, national, global) impact. Include the intended concrete steps on the path to impact (please refer to the Theory of Change diagram above).

IV. COLLABORATIONS
Describe how your project will help establish or strengthen new, important, lasting collaborations within Cornell and/or with external organizations. Describe actual or prospective external partners that can apply, scale, or otherwise further the research discoveries of the project, as well as their level of engagement. If applicable, describe local collaborators, such as local individuals and/or communities, who will be involved in the project, as well as your plan for involving these collaborators.

V. INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH
Please describe how the research will reach across disciplines and/or campus units, including a plan that describes how new, substantive connections will be established to form the
interdisciplinary team. If the research does not include multiple or interdisciplinary investigators, clearly explain and justify why this approach is not needed.

VI. METRICS
Include clear and appropriate measures of success and explicit milestones with a realistic timeline that can be used to evaluate the team’s progress in advancing sustainability. Please include your plan/timeline for involving postdocs, graduate students, or undergraduate students in the research.

Please also include (not part of the 5-page maximum):

VII. BUDGET JUSTIFICATION
Provide sufficient information for reviewers to understand the funding request. AVF funding may be used for any reasonable and appropriate research expense. Support for postdocs, students, and technical staff is permitted. Funding cannot be used to support tenure-track faculty salaries.

VIII. CURRICULUM VITAES
Include a brief CV for the lead author and each co-PI. CVs for senior investigators are optional. Strict two-page maximum per investigator. Excess CV pages will be deleted from the final review package.

Responsibilities
Investigators awarded AVF funds will:
1. Meet with the Center leadership to discuss the progress of efforts in research, intended applications, desired impacts, development of Cornell and external partnerships, follow-on funding, and milestones met or missed.
2. Submit annual and final reports. Reports should describe results and progress relating to each specific metric of success presented in the original proposal.
3. Respond to surveys or other requests for information about the longer-term impacts of the AVF project after the funding end date.
4. Acknowledge the Atkinson Center in all presentations, reports, and publications stemming at least in part from this funding.

Additional funding opportunities for AVF grantees:
Researchers may apply for supplemental funding of up to $10,000 from the Office of Engagement Initiatives (Engaged Cornell) to provide opportunities for undergraduates to participate in community-engaged sustainability research projects. Reviewers will be looking for innovative experiences that broaden undergraduates’ knowledge of community-engaged research. For additional details, please contact engagedcornell@cornell.edu. Engaged Cornell AVF Supplemental Applications will be due by June 19, 2019, and awards will be announced in early July.

Email acsfavf@cornell.edu with any questions.