

## **Request for proposals for postdoctoral research fellowships, fall 2023**

*UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences*

The Dairy Innovation Hub, which launched in 2019, is a \$7.8 million per year investment by the State of Wisconsin to build a world-class talent pool and enable bold discoveries to ensure that Wisconsin's dairy community is at the global forefront in producing nutritious dairy products in an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable manner.

To support novel, high-impact research within the priority areas of the Dairy Innovation Hub, funds are available for postdoctoral research fellowships that fit within one of the four priority areas of the Hub (*visit the [Hub website](#) for more information*):

1. Stewarding Land and Water Resources
2. Enriching Human Health and Nutrition
3. Ensuring Animal health and Welfare
4. Growing Farm Businesses and Communities

The objective of this call is to attract top prospective postdoctoral fellows, and to fund innovative, impactful dairy-related research projects that will benefit at least one of the four recognized priority areas of the Hub.

### ***Key characteristics of postdoctoral research fellowship RFP***

Unique aspects of the Dairy Innovation postdoctoral research fellowships include, but are not limited to:

- Top two priority areas may be identified with opportunities to justify each selected area
- Postdoctoral candidate does not need to be identified, although inclusion of a top-candidate will strengthen the proposal application
- In addition to the supplemental documents (*see [Proposal Format](#) section*), project narratives are required for all applications

## A. RFP overview, submission, and funding

- Project budget cannot exceed \$75,000 total per year
- Research of both applied and basic nature will be considered with emphasis on scientific merit, novelty of approach, and innovation
- Grants include postdoctoral fellowship salary and fringe, set at 16% for DIH funded personnel

**Proposals must be submitted via WISPER by 5:00 p.m. (CST) on Friday, June 30, 2023.** Proposals should be submitted as a single PDF document. Requests for time extensions will not be granted. Proposals received after the deadline OR not as a single merged PDF document will **NOT** be accepted.

In addition to submitting a proposal by the deadline indicated above, proposals must also include the following to be considered for funding:

- **Approvals** from chair, department administrator, and co-PI(s)
- **Full proposal** (detailed below in [Proposal format](#) section)
- **WISPER submission** must specify the following:
  - Short title: "UW Dairy Innovation Hub: Postdoctoral Research Fellowship"
  - Document type: "Grant"
  - Routed to Elisabeth Berndt: [elisabeth.berndt@wisc.edu](mailto:elisabeth.berndt@wisc.edu)/edalt02

Once the RFP closes, a confirmation email will be sent to all primary PIs who submitted a WISPER record. *If you do not receive an email, please follow up with Elisabeth Berndt.*

Funding decisions will be announced in December (2023). ***If awarded, funds will be available for projects to start July 1, 2024.***

## B. Eligibility requirements

- Primary principal investigator must be a tenure-track faculty within CALS, UW-Madison
- Co-PIs or collaborators outside CALS may be included in the proposal but they cannot serve as the primary PI
- Faculty may only be principal investigator on one postdoctoral fellowship grant application
- Receiving prior DIH postdoctoral fellowship funding does not preclude a primary PI from applying to this call
- Projects should generate tangible products like publications, apps, videos, survey results, briefing papers, etc. by the end of the proposed timeline (2 years, maximum)

Two-year proposals with proper budget justifications and complete applications will be considered. The Dairy Innovation Hub has a pre-determined funding rate for this bi-annual, competitive call.

## C. Proposal format

Please upload application materials via WISPER as a **single PDF file** containing the nine components in order as they appear below. Omission of sections *OR* multiple PDF documents outside section guidelines, may result in rejection of proposal and request for resubmission.

**NOTE:** The burden to convey the novelty/importance of the proposed project, the value of project impact on the Wisconsin dairy community, and fit to priority area(s) within the Dairy Innovation Hub is the responsibility of the primary PI and postdoctoral applicant.

1. **Cover page** ([download template here](#)) required fields below must be completed:
  - Full descriptive title for the project proposal
  - Names of project participants: primary PI, co-PIs, faculty, staff, students, prospective postdoctoral fellow, ect.
  - Maximum of two Dairy Innovation Hub [priority areas](#) in which the project addresses
  - Indication of current primary PI status:

**New Hub PI:** Primary PI cannot have received previous Hub funding

- Faculty startup support excluded
- New primary PI status is independent of career stage

Please refer to the [DIH Project Showcase](#) to verify current Hub PI status.

- Check corresponding academic rank: Asst. prof., assoc. prof., professor
  - A 250-word non-technical summary of the proposed research that addresses the following:
    - Importance of the project
    - Major objectives of the project
    - Basic methods used to collect and produce data
    - Ultimate goals, impacts, and tangible outcomes the project hopes to achieve
2. **Project narrative** (5-page maximum, single spaced, size 12-point font with standard 1-inch margins) written in language clear to a scientifically literate reviewer whose expertise is other than the proposed work and MUST address the following:
    - **Background** and justification that identifies/provides
      - Sufficient literature review that explains proposed research and describes the relevance of the project
      - Specification to fit of the proposed work to DIH priority area that is most relevant to the project
      - Implications to social, economic, and/or environmental sustainability to the dairy industry

- **Advancement** of scientific knowledge and public welfare
  - Demonstrate how the **goals** will produce an outcome, defined as a measurable change of state in knowledge, action, or condition. Tell how the outcomes of this project will contribute to the progress within Wisconsin relative to the selected priority area(s).
  - **Hypotheses** comprised of clear, complete, and logically organized statements with specific objectives to be pursued or tested
  - **Experimental/methodological** designs and approaches that describe:
    - Working plans and methods that pursue each of the stated objectives
    - How methods correspond to specific objectives
    - Methods to avoid obvious pitfalls
    - Distribution of outcomes to target audiences such as other scholars, extension agents, and farmers. Explain the strategic delivery of outcomes to external audiences.
    - Appropriate statistical analyses for the data to be collected.
  - **Location** of work and the facilities/equipment required to perform research
  - Hub **priority area** that is most relevant to the project. If applicable, a secondary priority area may be identified. The proposal should include reasoning of corresponding priority area(s) and how the outcomes of this project will contribute to progress within Wisconsin, relative to the priority area(s).
3. **Previous results and fit to program** (1-page limit per primary PI and co-PI) must be identified IF and ONLY IF .....
- Primary PI and/or co-PI(s) has/have received previous DIH funding
    - Evidence of prior productivity and results should be listed
    - Provide a table that includes:
      - Hub funding type
      - Project timeline
      - Projects status (*completed, in progress, not yet started*)
      - How funding relates to current proposal
  - Project leverages a DIH funded capital equipment purchase; specify the use of equipment within this proposed project
  - Project complements or leverages current funding outside DIH; include synergies and novel aspects of this proposal relative to other funding.

**\*New Hub PIs may omit this section.**

4. **Budget justification** (1-page limit) with the following components that cannot exceed **\$75,000** per year:
- **Salary**, exclude fringe expenses from budget (16% for postdoctoral fellows)

**NOTE:** If the proposed salary exceeds the [NIH](#) published postdoctoral salary rate, provide justification of a published departmental or programmatic rate.

- Description of anticipated research **travel** expenses
  - Annual **supply & expense** budget
  - Explanation regarding the source of complementary funding if total project costs exceed allowable expenses under the budget guidelines
5. **Research timeline** (*1-page limit*) that includes anticipated progress milestones for major activities of the project.
6. **Future research goals** (*1-page limit*) that clearly describe the following:
- Expected publications, related products, planned/submitted extramural proposals, and benefits to the postdoctoral fellow
  - Availability of supplemental or matching funds to support the proposal, *if any*
  - Project's forecast for positive impact on the Wisconsin dairy community
7. **Mentoring and management plan** (*1-page limit*) should include, but is not limited to the following:
- Approach for productive and interactive mentoring
  - Appropriate, impactful training and career development activities
  - Description how the fellowship will aid the applicant to reach career goals
  - Plan for evaluation
8. **Curriculum Vitae** (*2-page limit per investigator*) must focus on the following:
- Employment history
  - Professional training
  - Honors, awards, key publications
  - Contact information: email, phone, ect.
  - Prospective postdoctoral fellow: If a candidate has already been identified, a similar CV should be included.
9. **References** must be provided for each reference cited in the proposal.

#### D. Proposal review process

Proposals will be reviewed by a group comprised of Hub steering committee members and ad-hoc reviewers. Additionally, external stakeholder members of the DIH advisory council will review the 250-word summary to provide input on potential research impact in the dairy industry.

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Justification for fit to Dairy Innovation Hub Priority area and future goals **(20%)**
2. Scientific merit: novelty and innovation of research aims **(60%)**
3. Recruiting and mentoring plan; qualifications of post-doctoral candidate, if identified **(10%)**
4. Meets "New Hub PI" or assistant professor criteria **(10%)**

Scores will not be returned to primary PIs; however, synthesis feedback may be provided with decision award letters.

## E. Frequently asked questions

### **Q: What expenses are allowable in the budget?**

A: The annual supply and expense budget may be used for lab/field/farm supplies or consumables, undergraduate hourly expenses, travel to farm or research station, travel to conferences where research will be presented, publication fees, technology, and computing hardware/software needs specific to the project. **ALL** expenses should be clarified within the budget justification.

### **Q: What should be included as post-doctoral fellow salary and fringe?**

A: DIH suggests using the [NIH published](#) post-doctoral fellowship salary rate, which is currently \$56,484 (Mar. 2023) for a new post-doctoral fellow, or the salary index consistent with primary PI's discipline. If there is a different published precedent in a program or department, please provide reasoning for an elevated salary. Fringe *must* be included at 16% for postdoctoral fellows.

### **Q: How will the funds be dispersed?**

A: A project account will be set up with funds for the PI to manage salary and supply expenses. Money will be allocated fiscally for two years. If awarded, project PIs should spend according to the budget justification plan submitted with proposal. Fringe amount, 16% rate of RA salary, should be included in the budget justification. Because the Dairy Innovation Hub pays the fringe expense upfront, the amount will not be dispersed into the WISER child account.

### **Q: Are there expectations that come with this funding?**

A: As with all DIH funding, there are reporting expectations. The Hub reports financial and research outcomes on a fiscal year basis. Researchers will be asked to complete an online submission form twice per year. The form is brief and formatted similarly to Hatch reporting to avoid excessive administrative loads on primary PIs. Project investigators and collaborators may be invited to participate in the Dairy Summit and/or Dairy Symposium, which are annual events in Wisconsin that include opportunities to present research findings. Additionally, Hub funded PIs will be expected to peer-review proposals submitted to future DIH RFPs to guide Hub decision-making processes.

**Q: What if the selected postdoctoral fellow candidate cannot start on July 1, 2024, or accepts a different position after the proposal is funded?**

A: If the selected postdoctoral fellow cannot start within 60 days of July 1, 2024, please inform faculty director, Heather White. An alternative start date should then be provided with explanation of deviation for approval. If the postdoctoral fellow leaves the position after the start of the proposal, please notify program manager, Maria Woldt. Decisions regarding remaining funds will be two-fold: (1) the amount of time remaining on the project and (2) the availability of an alternative post-doctoral fellow replacement to complete the research. In most cases, a primary PI may hire a different postdoctoral fellow to finish the project. Funds must be reserved to support a post-doctoral level researcher with no exceptions.

***Still have questions? Contact the Hub directly...***

For inquiries concerning the scope of research, acceptability, or appropriateness of a proposed fellowship, please email **faculty director, Heather White** ([heather.white@wisc.edu](mailto:heather.white@wisc.edu)).

For more information about overall DIH program operations and reporting expectations related to funding, please email **program manager, Maria Woldt** ([maria.woldt@wisc.edu](mailto:maria.woldt@wisc.edu)).

For further guidance regarding the application, general RFP proposal process, budget, and allowable expenses, please email **administrative specialist, Elisabeth Berndt** ([elisabeth.berndt@wisc.edu](mailto:elisabeth.berndt@wisc.edu)).