

## Request for proposals for graduate student assistantships

### *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.

This RFP seeks proposals that will fund graduate student assistantships to work on innovative and impactful dairy-related research that fits 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 Hub enhances scholarship and advancement of innovation in the above priority areas needed to ensure the future success and resiliency of dairy-related research in Wisconsin. A central goal is to bring top prospective graduate students to UW-Madison, thus increasing training capacity to fund novel research projects that benefit the Wisconsin dairy community.

Recruiting, developing, and retaining top talent remains a major focus for the Hub. In four years, the Hub has attracted the best and brightest prospective graduate students and will continue to increase graduate training capacity at UW-Madison.

### ***Key characteristics of graduate student assistantship RFP***

Unique aspects of the Dairy Innovation graduate student assistantships include:

- Top two priority areas may be identified with opportunities to justify each selected area
- Different than in past years, **this RFP covers both the Madison and Collaborative Graduate Student Proposals**. In addition to four UW-Madison proposals selected for funding, one proposal that includes a UW-Madison and UW-River Falls collaborative team and one proposal that includes a UW-Madison and UW-Platteville collaborative team will be selected for collaborative funding. All proposals will be reviewed together but cross-campus collaborative proposals will be specifically noted.

- Inclusion of an already identified, prospective research associate level student is not required but will strengthen the proposal application.
- Collaborative Graduate Student Proposals no longer require the future graduate student to be from the collaborating (UW-RF or UW-P) institution; however, favorable consideration will be given to collaborative proposals that identify a prospective candidate who is a current student of, or alumnus of, UW-Platteville, UW-River Falls, or UW-Madison, or a student with a Wisconsin connection

In addition to the supplemental documents (see [Proposal Format](#) section), project narratives are required within applications

### A. RFP overview, submission, and funding

- Project budget cannot exceed **\$57,144** total per year
- Research of both applied and basic nature will be considered with emphasis on scientific merit, novelty of approach, and innovation
- Proposals should detail the anticipated research

**IMPORTANT!** Graduate students are not required to be U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

**Proposals MUST be submitted via email by 5:00 p.m. (CST) on Friday, April 5, 2024.** 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** include the following to be considered for funding:

- **Approvals** from chair, department administrator, and co-PI(s); appropriate individuals should be in the 'CC' line on the email message
- **Full proposal** (detailed below in [Proposal format](#) section)
- **Email submission MUST** specify/include the following:
  - Subject: "UW Dairy Innovation Hub: Graduate Student Assistantship"
  - Recipients: DIH staff ([Heather White](#), [Maria Woldt](#), [Elisabeth Berndt](#))

Once the RFP closes, a confirmation email will be sent to all primary PIs who submitted a proposal. *If you do not receive an email, please follow up with [Elisabeth Berndt](#).*

Funding decisions will be announced in August of 2024. ***If awarded, funds will be available for projects to start after July 1, 2025. Either summer or fall 2025 student start dates are acceptable.***



## B. Eligibility requirements

- Primary PI **MUST** be a tenure-track faculty with permanent PI status 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 graduate student grant application through this mechanism
- Receiving prior DIH graduate student assistantship funding does not preclude a primary PI from applying to this call
- PIs may only be PI on one trainee grant (i.e. graduate student research assistantship or postdoctoral research fellowship) at a time. PIs may apply for an open trainee RFP in the last year of current trainee funding. Eligibility for STHI and Capital Equipment RFPs are not precluded by receiving a graduate student or postdoctoral funding. Startup package graduate students (Hatch or Hub) do not preclude a PI from applying for Hub trainee grants.

Proposals that exceed two-years, exceed the budget cap, without proper budget justifications, or incomplete, will **NOT** be considered. The Dairy Innovation Hub has a pre-determined funding rate for this biennial, competitive call. Six total graduate student proposals will be selected for funding, including two collaborative graduate student proposals.

## C. Proposal format

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

**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.

1. **Cover page** ([click here for Excel template](#)) required fields **MUST** be completed including the following:
  - Full descriptive title for the project proposal
  - Names of project participants: primary PI, co-PIs, faculty, staff, prospective graduate student (*if known*), etc.
  - Maximum of two Dairy Innovation Hub [priority areas](#) in which the project addresses
  - Check corresponding academic rank: Asst. prof., assoc. prof., professor
  - Indication of current primary PI status



**New Hub PI** is defined as a primary PI who has not yet 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 type of proposal: UW-Madison, UW-Madison & UW-Platteville, UW-Madison & UW-River Falls, or 3-way collaboration (all campuses)
- 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) prepared with the following elements:

- **Background** and justification that identifies/provides
  - Sufficient literature review that explains proposed research and describes the significance to the project
  - Specification to fit of the proposed work to a DIH priority area that is most relevant to the project. If applicable, a secondary priority area may be identified. Define how the outcomes of this project will contribute to progress within Wisconsin, relative to the selected priority area(s)
  - Implications to social, economic, and/or environmental sustainability to the dairy community
- **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
- **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 stated objective
  - 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

**Please communicate the above-mentioned points in clear written language designed for a scientifically literate review whose expertise is other than the proposed work and understandable to stakeholders with a broad range of knowledge.**

3. **Previous results and fit to program** (1-page limit per primary PI and co-PI) **MUST** be provided with the following details:

- The unique contribution of respective co-PI must be highlighted within each co-PI page.
- If the primary PI and/or co-PI(s) 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 (within table or narrative)

**NOTE:** Stating that a project is in progress or is completed is NOT sufficient. Evidence of research productivity and outcomes should be explicitly stated, in the supporting narrative, including the impact on the scientific community and/or end users.

- 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
- There is overlap between this funding and past funding. If projects are related, or could be viewed as a continuation, a description of why continued Hub support in this area is needed as compared to other sources, federal funding, etc.

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

4. **Budget justification** template ([click here for Excel template](#)) that shall not exceed **\$57,144** per year and a **narrative** (1-page limit) that describes the following components:

- Fixed **salary** rate for student research assistantship salary: standard, annual UW-Madison [rate](#) is currently \$32,396
- Include **fringe** expenses within budget, calculated at 16.2% contributed by PI; paid directly by DIH at cost of approximately \$5,248



- **Tuition** remission of \$12,000
- Annual **supply & services expense** budget set at \$7,500 per year. (If costs exceed \$7,500, an explanation regarding the source of complementary funding **MUST** be included.) at minimum, please accommodate for the following incidentals:
  - **Page charges** for open access publishing fees
  - Description of anticipated research **travel** expenses

**IMPORTANT!** The proposal is not limited to funding for a two-year master's degree seeking student. If award will be used to fund a PhD student, please indicate leveraged or complementary funds that would be used to support additional years to degree completion.

Visit [Student Assistantships](#) for more information specific to CALS, UW-Madison.

5. **Research timeline** (*1-page limit*) which includes anticipated progress milestones for major activities of the project. Timeline can be described in text and/or visually.
6. **Future research goals** (*1-page limit*) that clearly describe the following:
  - Expected publications, related products, planned/submitted extramural proposals, and benefits to the graduate student
  - 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, interactive mentoring
  - Appropriate, impactful training, and career development activities
  - Description how the assistantship will aid the candidate reach career goals
  - Plan for regular evaluations
8. **Curriculum Vitae** (*2-page limit per investigator*) **MUST** focus on the following:
  - Employment history
  - Professional training
  - Honors, awards, key publications
  - Contact information: address/email/phone
  - Prospective graduate student: If a candidate has already been identified, a similar CV should be included



9. **References MUST** be provided for each citation in the proposal and do not count against the page limit.
10. **Letters of Support** may be included as relevant and appropriate and do not count against the page limit.

#### D. Proposal review process

Proposals will be reviewed by a group comprised of Hub steering committee members, ad-hoc reviewers, and campus leaders from UW-Madison, UW-Platteville, and UW-River Falls. 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 community.

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Justification for fit to Dairy Innovation Hub Priority area and future goals **(30%)**
2. Scientific merit: novelty and innovation of research aims **(50%)**
3. PI is an assistant professor and/or qualifies as a “New Hub PI” **(10%)**
4. Identification of prospective candidate who is an alum of UW-Madison, UW-Platteville, UW-River Falls, or a student with a Wisconsin connection **(5%)**
5. Collaboration with a UW-Platteville and/or UW-River Falls co-PI **(5%)**

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

**NOTE:** Receipt of Hub funding obligates a PI to review for future Hub RFPs. For each year of funding received, the PI will be expected to review one RFP. For example, if a PI receives a 2-year graduate student grant, that PI is expected to serve as a reviewer in 2 subsequent RFP processes.

#### 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: 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. 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 but will not be dispersed into the WISER child account because the Dairy Innovation Hub pays this expense upfront.

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

A: As with all 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 once per year. Project investigators and collaborators are strongly encouraged 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: Does a graduate student need to be identified prior to submitting this proposal?**

A: No, a specific student does not need to be identified. Once funding decisions are awarded, PIs may recruit a qualified student for the project. However, additional consideration will be given to proposals who identify an alumnus from UW-Madison, UW-Platteville, UW-River Falls, or a student with a Wisconsin connection. If a qualified candidate has already been identified, please include with proposal.

**Q: Can a PI submit more than one graduate student proposal?**

A: No, a PI should only submit one proposal to the RFP as the primary PI. However, the PI may serve as a co-PI on other proposals. Proposals from similar collaborative teams, and overlapping or similar proposals to previously funded projects, are discouraged.

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

For inquiries concerning the scope of research, acceptability, or appropriateness of a proposed project, 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)).

