Request for proposals for capacity building equipment proposals, spring 2026
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.

As one aspect of enabling novel and high-impact research within the priority areas of the Dairy Innovation Hub, funds are available for acquisition of equipment that will enable high-impact projects that will fit within one of the four (4) 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 these grants is to increase research capacity in the Dairy Innovation Hub's four priority areas by providing key pieces of farm or laboratory capital equipment, or a comparable research resource, that creates novel capacity for high-impact research.

A.   RFP overview, submission, and funding

- Matching funds required if cost exceeds $100,000
- Selection of at least one top priority area with justification(s) for how capital equipment fits the priority area(s)
- Proposals may be submitted by faculty or staff with PI status, or by a research station (or lead PI) reflective of a collaborative group of faculty

Proposals *MUST* be submitted via [Qualtrics](#) by 5:00 p.m. (CST) on Friday, April 3, 2026. Proposals should be submitted as a single merged PDF document. Requests for time extensions will not be granted. Proposals received after the deadline will not be accepted.

To be considered for funding, approvals (chairperson, department administrator, and co-PIs) must be determined at the time of application, as indicated in Qualtrics form.

A confirmation email will be sent upon submission of proposal to Qualtrics. *If you do not receive an email, please follow up with [Elisabeth Berndt](#).*

Funding decisions will be announced by June 2026. **If awarded, funds will be available for spending in FY27 (July 1, 2026).**

B.   Eligibility requirements

- The PI must be CALS faculty or staff with PI status (permanent or temporary)
- Co-PIs or collaborators from outside CALS may be included in the proposal but they cannot serve as the PI
- A proposal may be submitted by a CALS research station (or a lead PI) on behalf of collaborative group if the equipment will be housed at the research station
- Receiving prior capital equipment funding does not preclude a PI from applying to this call

Awards are expected to be funded in the range of $5,000 to $100,000. If the equipment cost exceeds $100,000, the PI must provide evidence of matching funds.

C.   Proposal format

Please upload application materials via Qualtrics as a **single PDF file** containing the four (4) required components in order as they appear below. Omission of section(s) *OR* multiple PDF documents outside section guidelines, may result in refusal of proposal.

> **PRO TIP!** *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. **Title page** *(1-page limit)* with the following elements **_MUST_** be included:

   o Full descriptive title for the project proposal
   o Names of project participants: primary PI, co-PIs, faculty, staff, etc.
   o Maximum of two Dairy Innovation Hub [priority areas](#) for which the project addresses
   o A 250-word **non-technical summary** of the equipment, what capacity it would bring to UW-Madison research, how the PI and co-PIs will benefit from the additional equipment, and the cost of equipment.

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2. **Brief proposal** *(2-page maximum)* providing/identifying the following:

    o   *Background* for how the equipment is essential for research and how it will create novel or expanded capital equipment capacity for high-impact research that does not currently exist within CALS.
    o   *Justification* for specific Hub priority area(s) that is/are most relevant to the project and how the outcomes of this project will contribute to progress within Wisconsin, relative to the priority area(s).
    o   *Researchers* who will benefit from the equipment (preference will be given to proposals that will benefit multiple investigators).
    o   *Description* of future extramurally funded research proposals that will benefit from acquiring the proposed equipment.

3. **Letters of support** must be provided by each investigator detailing the research in their program that will benefit from the equipment *(not included in proposal page limits)*.

4. **Quotes** for cost of equipment must be included. Please provide ***at least three (3) quotes***, or one quote with justification of a selected vendor. Quotes may be uploaded Independently from proposal document PDF.

    D.   Proposal review process

Proposals will be reviewed by a reviewer group comprised of DIH steering committee members, ad-hoc reviewers, and DIH staff. Scores will not be returned to PIs; decision letters will be sent to all applicants.

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Novel capacity that removes a current limitation or bottleneck in research aims **(35%)**
2. Impact of supported research on the Wisconsin's dairy community and fit to identified priority area **(30%)**
3. Equipment purchase will benefit multiple researchers across CALS or Hub faculty at UW-Madison, UW-Platteville, or UW-River Falls **(20%)**
4. Meets "New Hub PI" criteria **(10%)**
5. Utilizes leveraged funds from Hatch (pending decisions) or other sources **(5%)**

E.   Frequently asked questions

Q: How will equipment purchases be made?

A: *If selected for funding, acquisition of PO and equipment will be through the PIs home department. A Workday driver worktag will be assigned for the purchase.*

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 encouraged to participate in* [Dairy Summit](#) *and* [Dairy Symposium](#) *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 Is the Hub's definition of equipment?

A: *The Hub considers capital equipment to be any asset with useful life of more than one year and total acquisition cost over $5,000. The unit may qualify as physical property, machines, datasets, or high-performance computing software or devices needed to produce and elevate research. If you have any questions about the appropriateness of a purchase of interest, please contact DIH staff.*

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, Matthew Ruark** *(mdruark@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)***.**

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