

## 2025 Guide to Writing an Environmental Venture Projects Proposal

**PROPOSALS ARE DUE TUESDAY, JANUARY 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025 @ 8PM PST**

**Complete and submit your application here:**

<https://web.stanford.edu/dept/woods/cgi-bin/seed/woods-seed.php>

The Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment EVP program provides seed grants from \$5,000 up to \$250,000 over two years, to Stanford faculty members with Academic Council or University Medical Line standing, for interdisciplinary research projects that seek to identify solutions to pressing problems of the environment and sustainability. Projects are evaluated for their intellectual merit, potential to solve environmental problems, the interdisciplinary strength of the team and the project's potential to secure additional funding in the future.

The EVP Program considers applications in two categories, EVP Small Grants, for requests of \$60,000 and less, and EVP Grants, for requests up to \$250,000.

**EVP Small Grants** –support from \$5,000 up to \$60,000 for discrete research needs and efforts, including to define and scope full research projects that may be at preliminary stages of development, in line with the EVP program priorities and guidelines below

*\*Requests may be for less than \$60,000, and PIs are encouraged to be judicious in their requests for EVP Small Grant funds. PIs who receive an EVP Small Grant remain eligible to apply in a future round for an EVP Grant or REIP Grant for that project.*

**EVP Grants** – support from \$60,000 up to \$250,000 for up to two years for research projects per the EVP priorities and guidelines below

*\*EVP Grants are set up as sponsored research encouraged awards rather than departmental grants and must comply accordingly. PIs are to be judicious in their requests.*

### PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The EVP program seeks:

- *High-risk, potentially transformative research projects* that have the potential to produce solutions to our critical global environmental challenges;
- Projects that address cross-cutting challenges that are relevant to one or more of the Woods Institute's objectives: Thriving Ecosystems on Land and in the Ocean, Natural Climate Solutions, Climate Change Adaptation, and Human and Planetary Health.
  - Address specific challenges for issues that might include: oceans, ecosystem services and conservation, environmental justice and equity, pollution and environmental health, freshwater, food security, climate risk and sustainable development and livelihoods.

- Broad research approaches are invited, and might include environmental ethics, cultural and humanistic influences, decision science, effective economic and incentive systems, environmental justice, political ecology, stewardship, risk perception and analysis, communication, mitigation and adaptation, valuation, and interdisciplinary modeling.
- Projects that involve interdisciplinary collaborations, especially among Stanford faculty who have not worked together, including scholarly communities that have not been active in the Stanford Woods Institute and School of Sustainability to date, will be given additional consideration.

## **PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

Proposed projects should:

- Represent the above program priorities;
  - *Contribute towards a solution* to a major global environmental challenge;
  - Demonstrate a clear strategy and pathway for connecting the proposed research to an actual solution to be implemented by identified, non-academic stakeholders;
  - Involve PIs at Stanford from at least two separate disciplines;
  - PIs must have Academic Council or University Medical Line standing;
  - Explain how the collaborative effort will be stronger than the sum of disciplinary parts; and
  - Have the potential for obtaining additional support.
- Faculty members may only be Lead PI on one EVP application per cycle, either for one EVP Small Grant or one EVP Grant, not both.
  - Likewise, a faculty member may not apply to Lead both an EVP grant and another grant from opportunities supported by Woods Institute funding, including Realizing Environmental Innovation Program (REIP), Big Ideas for Oceans (BIO) and Human and Planetary Health Early Career Awards (HPHECA), in the same application cycle.
  - Faculty members are also restricted from being the Lead PI on more than one active grant; faculty may not receive a new award that will overlap with an open award from previous cycle from the EVP, REIP, BIO and HPHECA funding channels.
  - However, faculty may be the Lead PI on consecutive grants from EVP, REIP, BIO or HPHECA. If a Lead PI's current award from one of these Woods-supported funding channels will close in 2025 with no further extensions beyond 2025, the Lead PI is eligible for award under the current call for proposals.
  - A Lead PI offered a consecutive Woods-supported award in 2025 will need to have any active grant award from EVP, REIP, BIO or HPHECA close in 2025 and must submit the required financial and narrative reports of any active award before the new award will begin.
  - *EVP grants must otherwise comply with the requirements and restrictions for University Research awards of the Office of Sponsored Research.*

## QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about your project or research idea, or would like additional information, please contact Chris Field, Stanford Woods Institute Director at [cfield@stanford.edu](mailto:cfield@stanford.edu) or Brian Sharbono, Director of Programs at [sharbono@stanford.edu](mailto:sharbono@stanford.edu).

If you and your Research Administrator have questions about the budget and budget justification requirements, please contact Yiannis Katsamakidis, Woods Finance Analyst at [yiannis.katsamakidis@stanford.edu](mailto:yiannis.katsamakidis@stanford.edu) and Brian Sharbono [sharbono@stanford.edu](mailto:sharbono@stanford.edu).

If you have technical questions or issues in submitting your LOI through the online application system, please contact Keith Iverson, IT Manager at [kailou@stanford.edu](mailto:kailou@stanford.edu) for assistance.

## REVIEW PROCESS

**Proposals are due Tuesday, January 21st, 2025, 8:00 pm PST.** Proposals will be reviewed and discussed by the EVP selection committee. The Woods Institute may invite review from experts not on the committee. Project teams may be asked to respond to questions raised, which may involve revising their proposal.

Finalists for awards may be asked to complete an Ethics and Society Review Statement and respond to any feedback and questions raised regarding mitigating societal risks by the Stanford Ethics and Society Review panel. This is a distinct process from that of IRB, and more information may be found here: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Z3ZKvfcpn\\_BcE7S\\_AmcnJ8YmIoJrPC299UTbbdipcTQ/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Z3ZKvfcpn_BcE7S_AmcnJ8YmIoJrPC299UTbbdipcTQ/edit?usp=sharing)

Upon satisfactory completion of the ESR process (~4 weeks), we will issue formal notices of award to finalists by approximately May 1 and move to award setup for start date October 1.

## PROPOSAL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

NOTE: THE LEAD PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR MUST INVOLVE THEIR QUALIFIED FINANCE ADMINISTRATOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION CORRESPONDING TO THE PROPOSAL AND IS ADVISED TO DO SO EARLY ON.

A Research Administrator is a person who normally handles budget information. The Research Administrator is not considered a member of the research team.

### Steps to anticipate for completing and submitting the application:

- 1.) **The Lead Principal Investigator** may begin an application for an EVP grant here: <https://web.stanford.edu/dept/woods/cgi-bin/seed/woods-seed.php>

The Lead Principal Investigator (Lead PI) must enter the Sunet IDs of the Lead PI and all Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PIs) in the fields provided. At least one Lead PI and one Co-PI is required. All PIs entered will be validated for Academic Council or University Medical Line status against the faculty list provided by the Office of Faculty Affairs.

- 2.) **The Lead Principal Investigator** must also enter the SunetID of the Research Administrator for the proposal in the field provided for the application.
- 3.) **The Lead Principal Investigator** must upload the proposal narrative, or problem statement, as separate pdf where provided for in the application system.

*The proposal narrative is to be completed per the instructions below.*

- 4.) **The Research Administrator** for the project must upload the budget for the proposal as separate pdf within the application.

*The budget is to be completed per the instructions below.*

- 5.) **The Research Administrator** for the project must upload the budget justification, with complete explanations for each line item, as separate pdf within the application.

*The budget justification is to be completed per the instructions below.*

- 6.) After the Research Administrator has uploaded the budget and budget justification pdfs, the Lead PI will be able to view all pdf documents, and only the Lead PI may proceed to submit the proposal. A confirmation email will be sent to the Lead PI upon submission of the proposal to the Woods Institute application system.

**NOTE:** The Lead PI may resubmit the application as many times as desired until the deadline. The system only saves the most recent submission.

- 7.) **Stanford University requires that all faculty and Finance Administrators submitting a proposal to the Woods Institute and application system additionally initiate and submit a PDRF to the Office of Sponsored Research.**

**Submission of project proposal to the Office of Sponsored Research:** A PDRF (previously a backed-in proposal) is now required as part of the application process. It must be approved according to the submitting department's approval process by the proposal deadline. Please note, this requirement is not subject to the [5-day policy for proposal submissions](#). Please add (Yiannis Katsamakis [yiannis.katsamakis@stanford.edu](mailto:yiannis.katsamakis@stanford.edu) and Rita Sader [rsader@stanford.edu](mailto:rsader@stanford.edu)) to the PDRF as an FYI. You can include your DFO as an approver if required by your school. The Department PTA setup contact should be the Research Admin submitting the PDRF. Please note: the new requirement will populate the Current and Pending Report with this grant opportunity.

## **1. Proposal Narrative** Lead PI uploads as separate pdf within the application system.

Rules to write by:

- The EVP proposal narrative of Parts I – IV must not exceed 6 pages in length.
- This 6-page limit excludes the title and summary page and the addendum of biosketches, current and pending support for each PI and the listing of scholarly references cited that support the proposal. Please keep Biosketches to two pages per person.
- Be concise and compelling. Excessively long proposals do not generally score extra points with the reviewers.
- Reviewers represent the social science, physical science, engineering, medicine, humanities, law and business communities. Assume that reviewers have little or no familiarity with your topic. Avoid jargon and explain your ideas in language accessible to a diverse audience.

Please include the following as the narrative problem statement pdf that you upload:

**Title and Summary Page** (not counted as part of the 6 page limit)

List project title, team members and project period (Oct. 1, 2024 – Sept. 30, 2026, if two years).

Include one brief paragraph in *layperson's language* describing the key objectives of the research proposal. If your proposal is funded, this paragraph will be used in marketing materials and published on the Woods website.

**Part I – Problem Statement** (Parts I – IV are limited to 6 pages, including use of figures)

The proposal should describe the following in clear terms (minimal use of jargon):

- a. Please articulate your research in the larger framework of a major environmental challenge that your research will help to solve. Describe any previous work done on the problem.
- b. Recognizing that major solutions are not often solved by one research team over the span of only two years, please explain how this project will contribute to a solution to a major environmental challenge in the longer term. Include relevant background information.
- c. Define project objectives, goals and desired outcomes.
- d. Explain proposed research and methods for design, evaluation and solution.

**Part II – Translating Knowledge into Action**

The Stanford Woods Institute is looking for projects that hold real promise for solving important environmental challenges. The following questions ask you to explain how the results of your EVP project will help to solve the environmental problem that motivates your research. Who must be engaged and what must be done to ensure that your research results in actual change.

- a. Through which pathway(s) will your findings/innovation solve the environmental problem that motivates your research? Please explain. For example:
  - Adoption or use by governmental policy makers or agencies
  - Development of new commercial products or processes
  - Changes to industrial or business practices
  - Use to change individual or societal behavior, including with NGOs
- b. Please describe any anticipated engagement of external stakeholders and partners before and during your project that may inform the research and thereby facilitate the transmission of your research discoveries into action to solve the motivating environmental challenge.

*External stakeholders and partners may be decision makers in executive and legislative capacities in government charged with public policy and public management related to the motivating environmental issue and/or your approach. They may be existing companies, a start up and venture capital interests, relevant NGOs, community groups or other organizations with capacity to adopt or implement your findings at some scale.*

- c. Who will employ the findings/innovation from your EVP to advance a solution? How will they learn about it from you and be interested?

- d. What additional steps will need to be taken to translate your findings/approach/innovation into a deployed solution? Who will you need to engage to do this (e.g., businesses, governmental agencies, nonprofits)? How do you plan to engage them and at what stage?
- e. If your research is successful, what obstacles may prevent the results of your research from translating into an actual solution? What steps and what partners are needed to overcome these obstacles to adoption of the findings or deployment of the innovation? Please share any additional thoughts regarding translating your research into adopted solutions, including resources you believe will be required and assistance you are interested in.
- f. Envisioning the conclusion of an EVP grant awarded for this research, what does success look like? How will you judge success for this project?

### **Part III – Interdisciplinary Team**

Describe the composition of your team, explaining to what extent the PIs bring different disciplines and diverse strengths, and how the team will work as an integrated unit. Please consider how you might have undergraduate and graduate students become involved in the research effort.

- a. Faculty Lead Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigator(s)
- b. Other Individuals involved and contribution to the project
- c. External collaborators
- d. Indicate if team members have worked together before.
- e. Define research roles and responsibilities. Be sure to articulate how the team will work together and how the collaborative effort will be stronger than the sum of disciplinary parts.

### **Part IV – Feasibility and sources of outside funding**

- a. Explain the feasibility (e.g. can this project be done within the proposed budget?).
- b. Why is EVP funding needed?

And, recognizing that research does not always lead to a solution over the span of a single grant, briefly articulate a vision for how you believe this project will attract outside funding and how your research agenda may evolve with outside funding to further contribute to the environmental solution.

- c. Articulate next and future investment needs (e.g. what are the expected long-term investment needs beyond the grant period?).
- d. Who you expect will be interested in providing follow-on funding? List specific sources of funding for which you believe progress under this grant will enable you to be competitive.

*Please fully address all Parts I – IV above. Only proposals that include all four parts will be considered for review.*

### **Addendum** (not counted as part of the 6 page limit)

- a. Current and pending support information for each investigator
- b. Biosketch for each investigator (maximum 1 page for each)
- c. List of scholarly references cited to support your proposal

## 2. Budget Upload as separate pdf within the application system

Note: The project's Research Administrator must be involved in the development of the proposal budget and justification to ensure compliance, including with Stanford budget rates, rules on use, etc. A Research Administrator is a person who normally handles sponsored project budget information. The Research Administrator is not considered a member of the research team. Only the Research Administrator indicated in the application is able to upload the Budget and Budget Justification pdfs and must do so before the PI will be able to submit the proposal. Please use the budget and justification templates available at the Office of Research Administration: <https://ora.stanford.edu/resources/proposal-preparation-resources/budgets-and-budget-justifications>.

Provide the following information:

- Salary
- Benefits
- Tuition
- Travel Domestic
- Travel International
- Participant Support
- Participant Travel
- Equipment Lease
- Equipment
- Professional/Consultant Services
- Materials and Supplies
- SLAC Charges
- Student Stipend
- Interdepartmental Costs Other
- Animal Care
- Other Inclusions

### Important Instructions and Limitations

- The research committee will consider EVP Grant projects with budgets up to \$250,000 over two years (approximately \$125,000 per year). Award period: October. 1, 2025 – September 30, 2027.
- **Faculty salary is not required. Faculty salary may not be more than 20% of the total budget, inclusive of any salary to faculty collaborating via a subaward. Requests will be closely scrutinized. The justification should state and well explain if it is for summer supplement salary.**
- Support may be requested for personnel (undergraduate, graduate, or postdoctoral scholars, research assistants or associates), supplies, equipment and travel. (Equipment is considered as such if it has a useful life of more than one year and is over \$5000 in expenditure.)
- Roles are required to be clearly and substantively defined and the expenditure intended for each to be made explicit in the budget justification sections.
- Please consider how you might have undergraduate and graduate students become involved in the research effort. They are an invaluable resource in the university's education and research mission.

- There may be occasions when hiring consultant/professional services may be necessary to support the grant when these services cannot be deployed through Stanford resources, including facilities and personnel (translation, sample collection, laboratory analysis, for example). Such consultant/professional services may be funded if there is a strong case for their involvement.
- A request for funds to support outside research collaboration (**this is not consultant/professional services**) requires a subaward and needs to be very well justified, including why the support is essential for the collaboration and how the expertise is not available at Stanford.
- Please refer to the web page below for more information to discern between a subaward and consultant/professional services: <https://doresearch.stanford.edu/policies/research-policy-handbook/subawards/definitions-and-classifications>
- **If your proposal includes a request for a subaward and this is approved, Form 33 will be required 30-days after the award letter is received. If this deadline is not met, the grant will not be awarded and funding will not be transferred.**
- **For any proposed subawards, in lieu of Form 33, a clear scope of work must be included in the budget justification, and a signed letter of support from the partner must be submitted along with the proposal.** The letter of support must contain:
  - Statement of commitment to the proposed HPH-ECA
  - Description of how the proposed HPH-ECA aligns with their organizational goals and mission, and the proposed HPH-ECA project
  - Description of the unique expertise or experience that the partner brings to the project
  - Description of the tasks they will undertake as part of the HPH-ECA
  - A statement of the organization's readiness to manage subaward funds responsibly, in compliance with Stanford regulations and reporting policies
  - A description of how the partner and the Stanford Principal Investigator have worked together in the past - and, if this is a new partnership - a statement of commitment to how they will ensure a successful and productive partnership, ensuring that project deliverables are kept on-track.
- **Approval of a proposed subaward within a Stanford Woods Institute grant is at the discretion of the Institute. Please note the following key parameters as guidance on use of funds through a subaward to support the objectives of the awarded project. Please note the uses of funds that are prohibited:**
  - Funds may not be used to support salaries at US universities or peer institutions in other countries.
  - Funds should not be used to support staff salaries in higher-income country NGOs.
  - The Stanford Woods Institute will consider uses of funds that support faculty salaries in lower-income country institutions, subject to the limitation that all faculty salaries on the award including subaward not exceed 20% of the budget.
  - The Stanford Woods Institute will consider uses of funds that support the involvement of students or post-docs in lower-income country institutions.
  - The Stanford Woods Institute will consider uses of funds that support the involvement of staff at lower-income country NGOs.
  - The Stanford Woods Institute encourages co-development of projects. However, PIs should avoid outsourcing the leadership of the project being awarded the Woods Institute grant.
  - Evidence of real engagement from Stanford PIs and other participants is required.



- Projects with professional services and subaward contracts that exceed 50% of the total proposed award budget are discouraged and will only be considered in the most unusual of circumstances.
- Conferences or workshops will not be funded.
- Enter all budget numbers in US dollars rounding up to the nearest whole dollar values.
- Inflation factor: 4% per year for salary, 4% for tuition.
- Effective dates for salary increases: 10/1 for faculty, 9/1 for staff
- ***Do not include ISC in your budget.*** *EVP research grant applicants do not need to account for indirect charges (IDC) or infrastructure charges (ISC) in their project budgets. ISC is charged to and paid by the Stanford Woods Institute on behalf of each awarded project at the time of funding.*
- **Provide a clear and complete justification for each budget line, in the pdf below.** Justification should not include narrative related to calculations, but rather the use and benefit to the project.

### 3. Budget Justification Research Administrator uploads as separate pdf within the application system.

Note: The project's Research Administrator must be involved in the development of the proposal budget and justification to ensure compliance, including with Stanford budget rates, rules on use, etc. A Research Administrator is a person who normally handles budget information. The Research Administrator is not considered a member of the research team. **Only the Research Administrator indicated in the application is able to upload the Budget and Budget Justification pdfs and must do so before the PI will be able to submit the proposal.**

**Please provide a clear, detailed, narrative budget justification for each budget line item in the proposal and describe (with specifics) how the budget line supports the scope of work. Include a clear and substantive definition of team roles, where not included in the project description.**

Please use the budget and justification templates available at the Office of Research Administration and provide robust explanations: <https://ora.stanford.edu/resources/proposal-preparation-resources/budgets-and-budget-justifications>.

Budgets will be scrutinized in this final step of the EVP review process, so please make sure that your budget is accurate and reflects realistic needs.