

Field Research Seed Grant Program - Pilot

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Program Description

Researchers across the University of Utah engage in field research. The specific type of engagement varies widely between academic disciplines– for purposes of this mechanism, field research is defined as “research that is removed from traditional spaces of academic inquiry.” This program is open to funding activity that ‘typically involves the collection of raw data outside of the typical on-campus laboratory or workplace.’ While remotely sensed data from satellites can be an important component of a proposal it should not be the primary data used in the research activity.

In coordination with the Office of the Vice President for Research, the Global Change and Sustainability Center (GCSC) and PEAK Water Hub, we are excited to announce a new intramural seed grant - the inaugural “Field Research Seed Grant Program”. This program provides awarded research teams with funding to pursue innovative field research projects that expands the University of Utah’s capacity to leverage extramural funding opportunities.

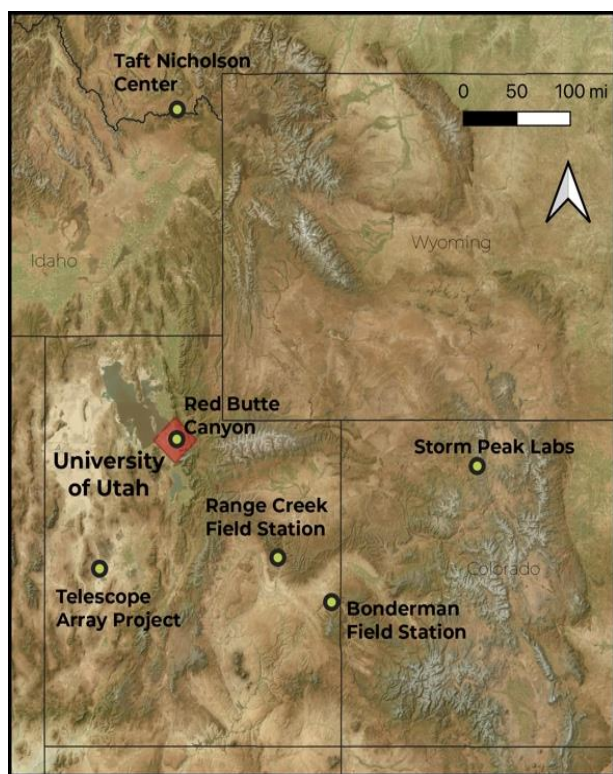
The primary objectives of this program are to:

- Promote research activity within the scope of GCSC and PEAK Water Hub. Example themes are provided under the “Theme Areas” section of this RFP.
- Further engage University of Utah field stations, facilities, sensor systems, and sites in research activity and extramural grant proposals.
- Build research teams, produce pilot data, and motivate high-impact, extramural grant proposals.
- Support new cross-campus teams to solve challenges around the key sustainability issues of our time

Expected Outcomes

The key expected outcome from this program is the promotion of research activity in topical areas relevant to GCSC, PEAK, University of Utah research field stations, facilities, sensor systems, and sites. This research activity will be leveraged to craft exceptional extramural grant proposals. Additionally, this program is designed to encourage meaningful engagement with University of Utah research field stations facilities, sensor systems, and sites.

Definition of Field Stations and Research Sites



University of Utah field stations include:

- Storm Peak Laboratory
- Bonderman Field Station at Rio Mesa
- Range Creek Field Station
- Telescope Array Project
- Taft Nicholson Center

Additional, research facilities, sensor systems, and sites to consider*:

- Atwater site at Alta
- Olympic Venues
- U of U Meteorological Network (UUNET)
- Wasatch Environmental Observatory (WEO) Environmental Monitoring
- University of Utah Landscape Lab
- Red Butte Garden

A map of University of Utah field stations can be found [here](#). See 'Research Contacts for University of Utah Field Stations' section for contact information of these research stations, facilities, sensor systems, and sites.

*The research facilities, sensor systems, and sites list is not comprehensive. While the University of Utah field stations list is complete, the terms 'research facilities, research sensor systems, and research sites' are intentionally left vague and those named above are just possibilities. As per the 'Program Description' this funding opportunity is open to any research activity that typically involves the collection of raw data outside of the typical on-campus laboratory or workplace.'

Example Theme Areas

The themes below have been identified as high-priority and -value. Your proposal may address themes not included on this list, but these are provided as examples of potentially relevant theme areas.

- Urban/Built Environments
- Transportation and Mobility Air Quality
- Great Salt Lake
- Jordan River
- Alpine Environments
- Snow/Ice/Arctic
- Mountain-Water Nexus/Holistic Watershed Research

Eligibility Criteria

- Lead applicant and Principal Investigator (PI) must be tenure-line or career-line faculty in residence at the University of Utah to apply.

- This program is meant to create new cutting-edge research collaborations related to the University of Utah research stations facilities, sensor systems, and sites. As such directors and leaders of these entities are prohibited from acting as PI or Co-PI for proposals at their research station, facility, sensor systems, or sites.
 - Project teams are encouraged to include personnel (PI, Co-PI, etc.) from two separate units. Project teams should be designed to “bridge” units that would benefit from new collaboration within this research space. This bridge could also address intellectual and/or organizational divides.
 - A lead applicant/PI may only act as lead applicant/PI on **one** application. A faculty member may participate in up to **three** total applications under any other capacity (Co-PI, advisory, senior personnel, etc.). It is the responsibility of the lead applicant/PI to ensure all individuals participating in the proposal have available time/bandwidth to conduct the proposed work if awarded. This should be considered when building an application for this program.
 - Proposals must exhibit high potential for extramural funding. Awarded teams must commit to submitting at least one extramural funding proposal based on the pilot project.
 - All applicants must clearly and convincingly demonstrate that the proposed project represents a new research direction in an area that is likely to generate extramural funding. Research that is already supported by other sources (including other VPR-sponsored internal funding programs) is not eligible for this seed funding. (For example, PIs cannot receive funding from the URC program and/or the Research Incentive Seed Grant Program for the same or similar projects.)
 - Proposals that have already been submitted to an extramural agency, or those already reviewed and found noncompetitive by an extramural agency, will not be considered for funding.
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Anticipated Number and Total of Awards

The inaugural program anticipates supporting 3-5 awards. Funds allocated will total \$100,000 (i.e., the committee could fund two proposals at \$40,000 each or five proposals at \$20,000 each or some combination therein). Each proposal should present a budget of either \$40,000 or \$20,000 depending on the project scope. The grant period for awardees will be 12-18 months. Please consider the grant amount and period when building your budget outline.

Budget Information

Requirements

- All applicants are **required** to submit a budget outline using the [mandatory and provided Field Research Seed Grant Program Budget Template](#). Add lines to the Budget Template to include all pertinent items. Enter all amounts in whole dollars.
- Budgets cannot exceed \$40,000.
- Hourly wages of research assistants must be listed and justified. Please utilize [current fringe rates for all assistance benefit estimates](#).
- Proposed inclusion of Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP) or Wilkes Scholar students can be described in the proposal, but those students must apply to the UROP/Wilkes program for funding.
- The basis for figuring travel related to the project and per diem costs must be itemized and made clear and may not exceed rates for per diem and travel set by the [Travel Office](#).
- Careful justification should be given for the purchase of equipment (including computer software, books, or supplies) which may already exist in the University. Equipment purchased by the research grant becomes the property of the University of Utah. Where leasing equipment is a possible option, the purchase must be justified.
- These are considered “one-time” seed grant funds. Continuing funding over multiple years is not provided.
- All proposed expenditures must follow all University of Utah Purchasing and Procurement policies and use best judgment. No exceptions.

Use-of-Funds/Allowable Expenses:

- This program covers direct costs immediately related to conducting the proposed work. Examples of direct costs include:
 - Hourly wages for assistance
 - Stipends for assistance from graduate students/faculty operating outside their typical job responsibilities
 - Equipment /instrumentation (for equipment directly related to conducting the proposed project)
 - Travel/per diem
 - Supplies

Restrictions on Funds:

- Conducting research at other entities or institutions (including sub-awards). Faculty are expected to conduct their research at the University of Utah and affiliated field stations, facilities, or sites.
- Travel that is not directly related to successful completion of the project. Travel to present project findings at conferences, workshops, or meetings is not allowed.
- Faculty salaries or course/administrative buy-out
- Tuition (of any kind)
- Graduate student-initiated and led projects (i.e., this program cannot fund proposals where graduate students are acting as PI/lead on project.)
- Curriculum development
- Career development (e.g., taking courses, attending professional conferences, etc.)
- Computers or computer hardware (unless the applicant can provide strong evidence that the project cannot be pursued without procuring that specific computer hardware or workstation – contact vpgrants@utah.edu with questions)
- Society/group memberships
- Consultant costs

Program Deadlines and Important Dates

Applications are due (to the InfoReady portal) by 11:59pm (MST) on Thursday, August 7th, 2025. The review process is expected to take up to 90 days from the deadline but may take longer depending on the scope of review needed. Awarded projects are anticipated to start in late Fall 2025.

Required Application Materials

All materials should have standard 1-inch margins, single-spacing, and 12 pt. font.

Important Note: Each application can include a 1-page bibliography that is separate from the 2-page Research Proposal.

1) Applicant Basic Information (to be collected by InfoReady)

2) Abstract (PDF Format Only; 510-word maximum)

Abstracts should be up to 500 words or 3000 characters in length and summarize the pressing need for seed funds. Abstract should also include up to 10 keywords that help identify the key objectives, disciplines, research types, and associated departments of the Field Research Seed Grant Program proposal. Keywords are separate from 500 word or 3000-character abstract maximum.

3) Team Roster (PDF or Excel Format Only)

Team rosters must include all senior personnel on the project. The following information must be provided for all team members:

- a. Full Name

- b. Professional Title
- c. Home Department
- d. Home College
- e. Role Type (Co-PI, Advisory, Sr. Personnel, etc.)
- f. Specific function/contribution for the proposed project

4) Research Proposal (PDF Format Only; 2-page maximum)

All proposal narratives must include a detailed, concise description of the project's

- Motivation and research objectives
- Specific research questions and hypotheses where appropriate
- Methodology or procedure.
- Broader impact on the research field and community
- A clear description of how the proposal addresses an emerging funding need, i.e., identify areas of research that have emerging extramural funding/attention, areas of research with limited funding options, identify components of project that are challenging to fund (and why), identify why the Field Research Seed Grant Program is an ideal mechanism for accomplishing a specific goal as part of a larger research effort, etc.

5) Field Research Feasibility and Promotion Statement (PDF Format Only; 1-page maximum)

All applications must include a plan describing the feasibility of conducting the field research. This must include description of all permitting and/or permission requirements for field sampling, data collection, and research. We encourage applicants to reach out to permitting agencies and describe the timeline and viability for obtaining permission to conduct the research activity. Any safety concerns for project participants should also be addressed in this statement. We encourage applicants to allocate 1% of their budget to promotion, including funding for signage, video creation, or other activities/materials that amplify the grantee's research activity and the associated research station, facilities, sensor systems, or sites

6) Letter of Support (PDF Format Only).

The required letter-of-support from a representative of the established field station, facility, sensor system, or site. The letter should outline the willingness of the entity to 1) cooperate/collaborate on the proposed research activity; 2) address any potential logistical issues relating to the installation of equipment or the research activity; and 3) benefit other ongoing research at the site. If a member of the proposal team is a representative of the field station or research site a letter should still be included outlining any potential logistical issues relating to the installation of equipment or the research activity and how funding this proposal could benefit other ongoing research at the site. Applicants should reach out to field station, facility, sensor system, or site directors at least one month before the due date.

7) Extramural Funding Plan (PDF Format Only; 1-page maximum)

All applications must include a written plan for applying to extramural funding sources that build from the seed funding. At minimum, this plan must include:

- Information on external funding targets: Please provide specific sponsors, program/opportunity titles, and targeted submission deadline for all extramural funding opportunities identified. You must provide at least 1 target program and deadline. You may list as many as you are planning to pursue.
- Longer term funding plans beyond the project period are encouraged. How would funding your project lead to the long-term transformation of research at the University of Utah?

8) Budget Outline

Please use the [mandatory Field Research Seed Grant Program Budget Template](#) to complete your budget outline. Target budget sizes are \$40,000 or \$20,000. Do not exceed \$40,000. Please also reference the 'Budget Guidelines and Restrictions' section of the RFP when completing this section. Budgets should be well-justified, accurate, and reflect the full scope of the proposed work. Budgets must be well justified and reflect the actual funding need of the project. Projects with deliberately inflated budgets will not be considered.

9) Abbreviated CV or Biosketch

Please provide the abbreviated CV or Biosketch for each PI and Co-PI listed on the grant. Please provide this as a SINGLE PDF document.

Review Process and Evaluation Criteria

In general, Field Research Seed Grant Program proposals are evaluated on the criteria listed below. Reviewers may also comment on overall strengths and weaknesses of the proposal to ensure applications receive a thorough review of their quality, merit, feasibility, and impact. Important note: The review process may take up to 90 days to complete.

- Overall quality and significance of the proposal
 - Merit of the proposal's research questions, methodologies, personnel, facilities, etc.
 - Likelihood that the seed project will lead to extramural funding
 - Articulated need for funding
 - Importance of the work for the growth of the investigator
 - Potential for amplifying
 - GCSC and/or PEAK Water Hub,
 - Field stations or research sites as described above
 - Potential impact on the team's department, college, and discipline
 - Potential impact on the University of Utah and surrounding communities
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Research Contacts for University of Utah Field Stations

Storm Peak Laboratory	Gannett Hallar	gannet.hallar@utah.edu
Bonderman Field Station at Rio Mesa	Mark Bergstrom	mark.bergstrom@utah.edu
Range Creek Field Station	Shannon Boomgarden	sboomgarden@nhmu.utah.edu
Telescope Array Project	Charlie Jui	jui@cosmic.utah.edu
Taft Nicholson Center	Taft Nicholson Center	taft-nicholsoncenter@utah.edu

Additional research contacts for relevant research facilities, sensor systems, and sites that could be considered as part of this opportunity.

- Atwater site at Alta
 - Contact: McKenzie Skiles; m.skiles@utah.edu | [Website](#)
- U of U Meteorological Network (UUNET)
 - Contact: John Horel; john.horel@utah.edu | [Website](#)

- Wasatch Environmental Observatory (WEO) Environmental Monitoring
 - Contact: Paul Brooks; paul.brooks@utah.edu | [Website](#)
 - University of Utah Landscape Lab
 - Contact: Sarah Jack Hinnners; sarah.hinnners@redbutte.utah.edu
 - Red Butte Garden
 - Contact: Sarah Jack Hinnners; sarah.hinnners@redbutte.utah.edu | [Website](#)
 - Olympic Venues
-

Apply Here

Applications for the pilot cycle of the Field Research Seed Grant Program are due by 11:59pm (MST) on Thursday, August 7th, 2025. Applications must be submitted via InfoReady. Late applications will not be accepted.

[APPLY HERE](#)

Contact

Please contact Jackie Rees (jackie.rees@utah.edu) with questions about this RFP or utilizing InfoReady.