Interdisciplinary Team Building Initiative

The Interdisciplinary Team Building Initiative (ITBI) is a program designed to promote collaboration among faculty researchers from different disciplines, with the goal of enhancing our capacity to grow interdisciplinary scholarship and to compete for external grants in the environmental sciences. ITBI is a joint initiative of the Environmental Science and Policy Program (ESPP) and MSU AgBioResearch.

Objectives

The ITBI grants support the formation and function of workgroups focused on strategically important research areas including, but not limited to, antimicrobials, bioeconomy, food systems, global climate change, invasive species, and water. A workgroup consists of a small number (e.g., 3-5) of core faculty members from multiple disciplines who interact regularly with the goal of developing grant proposals, designing an interdisciplinary curriculum, or working on major multidisciplinary publications. Workgroup members are expected to maintain regular interactions towards clearly specified workgroup goals, and should budget to spend their funds over the two year project period.

Eligibility

ITBI funding is open to all MSU faculty members.

Funding Level and Use of Funds

There are two tiers of funding: only funded Tier 1 teams are eligible for applying for Tier 2 funding.

Tier 1

An ITBI Tier 1 grant will provide funding for two years with a total amount of up to $10,000. The funds can be used for group meetings, workshops, campus visits for potential collaborators and seminar speakers, site visits, travel to funding agencies, identification of and responses to grant opportunities, preliminary research, etc. Unlike a typical seed grant, an ITBI grant primarily supports interactions of faculty members who otherwise do not have the opportunity to collaborate. The ITBI funding is not intended for supporting established research teams with well-developed research agenda. A key to successful team building is regular interactions. Groups should develop a work plan that promotes regular interaction and utilization of funding over the entire funding period to meet team goals.

Tier 2

An ITBI Tier 2 grant will provide funding for two years with a total amount of up to $100,000. Successful Tier 1 teams that have demonstrated effective collaboration and team building and identified major funding opportunities to pursue will be eligible for potential funding via the Tier 2 grant mechanism. Successful Tier 1
teams will be invited to make a presentation with their vision for a Tier 2 project, and will be given the option to expand their team and collaborative activities. Tier 2 projects will be required to focus on major funding opportunities. Funding will be provided to support activities such as preliminary research and data collection and research teams are encouraged to leverage the ITBI funds to other opportunities. Project plans must include specific timelines of activities and expenses of the funds.

**Application Instructions**

The application deadlines for Tier 1 funding are April 15 and Dec. 1, annually. Applications for Tier 2 funding are by invitation only.

Each Tier 1 proposal should include

- Cover page: outlining the research areas, names and department affiliations of workgroup members and the lead faculty, and contact information for the lead faculty.
- Workgroup and activity description (not to exceed 5 pages): outlining background information, research questions, goals of the workgroup, workgroup composition, activities of the workgroup, and expected outcomes.
- CV: NSF style two page CV of each workgroup member.
- Budget and budget justification with a timeline of activities and accompanying expenditures.
- Current and Pending Support form: NSF style document for each workgroup member.

A Tier 2 proposal differs from Tier 1 proposals in two aspects: “workgroup and activity description” is limited to 10 (instead of 5) pages, and the research team needs to make an oral presentation in support of the proposal.

**Review Criteria**

Proposals will be reviewed according to value added and merit of the workgroup, including the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Tier 1</th>
<th>Tier 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fostering new collaborations, especially with new and junior faculty members</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary nature of the group membership and approach</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual merit of proposed activities</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment to and likelihood of group members pursuing external funding opportunities</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alignment of research proposal with missions of ESPP and MSU AgBioResearch</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget and budget justification</td>
<td>Y/N</td>
<td>Y/N</td>
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**Award**

An interdisciplinary committee will review the proposals. Funding decisions will be made within 4 weeks of the application deadline. The funds are expected to be spent within the funding period.

**Post-Award**

ESPP will provide logistic support for the operation of the workgroups. This would include space for group meetings, help with scheduling, grant intelligence and assistance with proposal development.

ESPP and AgBioResearch will hold annual meetings for the workgroups to present their progress reports and discuss plans. The meeting will provide an opportunity for the workgroups to interact with each other.

Updated January 13, 2017
Each workgroup is required to submit a progress report after one year and a final report after two years, outlining the activities, expenditures, and achievements of the workgroup. A final report is due two months after the 2 year anniversary of the awarding of the funds. ESPP staff will also continue to monitor the progress of the group after the initial two years of funding for our own records.

Each workgroup must acknowledge ITBI in all publications that result from work supported or partially supported with ITBI resources such as: “This material is based upon work supported in part by the Interdisciplinary Team Building Initiative at Michigan State University.”