



**Sustaining Illinois Seed Grant Funding Guidelines  
Academic Year 2024-2025  
November 11, 2024**

**Program Timing**

Event	Date
NOFO Release	November 11, 2024
Proposal Deadline	February 21, 2025
Funding Decisions	March 14, 2025
Project Start Date Range	May 16 through August 16, 2025

**Program Background**

The University of Illinois System, its Office of the Vice President for Economic Development and Innovation (OVPEDI), and Northern Illinois University are committed to advancing the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN) by providing supplemental (operational) funding for several projects. IIN members are guided by the following principles:

- i. Drive inclusive innovation, equitable workforce development and sustainable economic growth throughout the state of Illinois;
- ii. Assess and meet regional needs through a combination of collaborative research, public-private partnerships, and entrepreneurship and training programs;
- iii. Collaborate with hubs across the state and share best practices; and
- iv. Advocate for the value of higher education at the state and national levels.

*Sustaining Illinois* has multiple meanings, including the broad economic, health-related, and social well-being of the state and its communities, and environmental sustainability of its food and water ecosystem, which includes addressing issues affecting groups who are underserved, under-represented, or under-resourced.

*Sustaining Illinois* elements are as follows:

- a) Education and Workforce Development: developing and sustaining the education of its citizens and developing a productive and inclusive workforce for the 21st century;
- b) Economic Development: sustaining and developing the economy of the state, including understanding how best to support the growth of diverse entrepreneurship and business formation in Illinois;
- c) Health and Wellness: sustaining and improving the general health and social wellness of all Illinois citizens, including local and regional communities.
- d) Water, Food, and Agriculture: sustaining the water supply, with 20% of the world’s freshwater supply in the shores of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Basin, the largest in the US and 2nd largest in the world, and enhancing the home to a national leader in food and agriculture; and
- e) Computing and Data: under the umbrella of *Sustaining Illinois*, there is a foundation of computing, big data, and artificial intelligence. This is an important area in its own right as

Illinois develops its high- tech industry, but in this context, it is seen as an enabler for all other aspects of sustainability as articulated above.

### Eligibility

1. The Lead PI must be from an IIN Hub in their IIN hub role.
2. At least two IIN hubs must be involved significantly in the project with at least one Co-PI from a second IIN Hub.
3. While there is no limit on the number of proposals a hub may submit, an individual may only be designated as PI or co-PI on one proposal.
4. The project must be completed within one year of funding.
5. The project may begin on any date between May 16<sup>th</sup> and August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025.
6. Previously submitted but unfunded projects to this program or the IIN Social Innovation and Impact seed grant program may be submitted a maximum of 3 times in a three-year period.

### Project Requirements

1. The proposal must contain all components listed in the Proposal Outline below.
2. The project must identify how it aligns with the IIN principles. *Sustaining Illinois* must be the dominant theme of the project and specifically identified. Projects addressing multiple *Sustaining Illinois* elements are preferred.
3. The number of IIN hubs involved and the significance of each hub's participation must be identified in the project description and reflected in the project budget. Additionally, the number of non-IIN hubs institutions or organizations and their limited role must be identified.
4. Project must represent a "seed" concept not previously funded by this or the IIN Social Innovation and Impact Program or in later stages of project development, regardless of "seed" funding source. The scope of work and budget justification will be used to evaluate project maturity.
5. Proposals must address equity, diversity, and inclusion. Key issues facing underserved, under-represented, and under-resourced groups should be identified and addressed, and the target populations or representative group(s) must be specifically identified. Under-represented, underserved, and under-resourced groups include, but not are not limited to, the following:
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Women</li> <li>● Rural Residents</li> <li>● People of Color</li> <li>● Individuals with Disabilities - both cognitive and physical</li> <li>● Veterans</li> <li>● Justice-impacted Populations</li> <li>● Immigrant Populations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● LGBTQ Community</li> <li>● Homeless and Homeless Youth</li> <li>● Low-Income and Lower-Income Individuals</li> <li>● Foster Care Youth and Alumni</li> <li>● Migrant and Seasonal Workers</li> <li>● Recipients of public assistance</li> <li>● Individuals who are basic skills deficient</li> </ul>
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6. If your team previously received an award from this program or the IIN Social Innovation and Impact seed grant program, describe the accomplishments from that project, provide an estimate of the project's completion including which milestones have been achieved, and an estimate of when you expect to finish the work. Please note applications for new awards must

be for a totally different project or a meaningfully distinct component of the one that was already supported.

### Funding

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1. Up to \$40,000 will be available for each project.
2. Funding for these projects does not allow for indirect costs.
3. No more than 30% of the requested funds may pay for full-time researchers'/professors' salaries and benefits.

### Deliverables

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1. A written report must be submitted electronically to the University of Illinois System OVPEDI six (6) months after the project starts and upon completion of the project.
2. Interim reports and information must be submitted upon request.
3. Lead PI and Co-PIs commit to present their project to the IIN and to participate in related IIN events as requested.
4. Lead PI and Co-PIs commit to acknowledge IIN in outcomes and reports with the following statement or something similar: "This material is based upon work supported by the Illinois Innovation Network".
5. Lead PI and Co-PIs commit to notify the IIN of publications and follow-on funding achieved resulting from this grant.

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### Proposal Outline

Component	Page Limit ( <i>single-spaced, 12-point font</i> )
Cover Page <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Project Name</li> <li>2. Requested Period of Performance (<i>project duration of one year</i>)</li> <li>3. PI Name               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. IIN Hub</li> <li>b. Contact information</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Co-Principal Investigator Name(s)               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. IIN Hub(s)</li> <li>b. Contact Information</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	1 Page
Abstract	250 Words or Less
Project Description	2 Pages
Scope of Work, including a timeline for a clear completion within 12 months and description of who is responsible for which tasks	1 Page
If applicable, information about previous award	1 Page
Potential for Future Work, including follow-on funding	0.5 Page
Bios for Team Members (PI, Co-PI(s), and Others)	0.5 Page per team member
Budget & Budget Justification <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For the Budget, applicants are strongly encouraged to use the budget template below.</li> <li>2. The Budget Justification should include an explanation for how the costs were estimated, how they benefit or will be used for the project, and which institution will incur the costs.</li> <li>3. The Budget must be well-justified and commensurate with the Scope of Work and with the project being genuinely collaborative among the hubs.</li> </ol>	2 Pages

### Budget Template

Category	Funding Requests for Hub 1	Funding Requests for Hub 2*
A. Personnel		
B. Fringe Benefits		
C. Travel		
D. Equipment		
E. Supplies		
F. Other (specify each cost)		
G. Total		
H. TOTAL REQUEST		

\* Add additional columns may be added as necessary for additional Hubs.

### Submission

Proposals will be accepted at <https://go.uillinois.edu/SustainingIllinois> no later than 11:59 P.M. Central Time on February 21, 2025. Any questions should be submitted to [iincontact@uillinois.edu](mailto:iincontact@uillinois.edu) prior to the deadline.

### Post-Submission

1. Recipients of the awards will be notified on or around March 14, 2025. Awardees will be issued an agreement on a fixed price payment basis.
2. A review committee consisting of members of the IIN, including its Council, Committees, and OVPEDI or IIN staff, as needed, will evaluate all proposals received and will make recommendations to the University of Illinois Vice President of Economic Development and Innovation for funding. No IIN member will review submissions or make recommendations on proposals from its own hub.
3. Each proposal will be scored according to the matrix below:

Proposal Section	Evaluation Score	Weight	Total Score
A. Project and activity align with IIN principles (equity) and is thematic around one or more Sustaining Illinois elements		15%	Eval. Score x Weight
B. Project/concept is in the seed stage		15%	Eval. Score x Weight
C. Scope of Work		25%	Eval. Score x Weight
D. Collaboration component with other hubs and/areas throughout Illinois		10%	Eval. Score x Weight
E. Budget and Budget Justification		15%	Eval. Score x Weight
F. Demonstrates potential for further work		20%	Eval. Score x Weight