

I-MRSEC Call for Seed Proposals!

The Illinois Materials Research Science and Engineering Center (I-MRSEC), funded by the National Science Foundation, invites proposals for Seed Projects. The I-MRSEC is housed at the Materials Research Laboratory (MRL) on the UIUC campus. The goal of the I-MRSEC Seed program is to bring new ideas and people into the Center. *Seed projects can be on any topic that is fundable by the NSF for Materials Research.* We welcome proposals that either complement [current research themes](#), or form the foundation for new distinct directions. Current I-MRSEC research focuses on (i) directing energy and information using 2D strain-scapes, and (ii) photoionics: controlling ion transport and defects with light. We also welcome proposals that align with research at our [Partnership for Research and Education in Materials \(PREM\)](#) partner institutions. The Seed award size is approximately \$100,000 for 12 months, with the possibility of renewal for a second year; allowable expenses include student and postdoctoral salaries, materials and supplies, and instrument fees. No principal investigator (PI) summer salary is allowed. Standard F&A, benefit, and tuition remission costs apply. Seed competitions are expected to occur every two years.

Seed Project Proposal Requirements and Selection Criteria

There should be at least two PIs, preferably from two different departments, who will embark upon a new collaborative and interdisciplinary project. Current faculty funded through any of the IRGs of I-MRSEC are not eligible to lead Seed Projects but may be unfunded collaborators. Note that faculty supported by current Seed Projects are eligible to reapply. Furthermore, junior faculty are encouraged to apply. Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria: (i) scientific excellence, (ii) degree to which collaboration is required for success, (iii) contributions the project is likely to make to further the mission of the I-MRSEC as a center for excellence in materials research, including education and external collaborations (e.g., with industry or national labs).

As part of the funding requirement, the personnel funded by the Seed Projects will participate in I-MRSEC meetings and activities, be required to submit an annual report of progress toward the end of the 12-month period and acknowledge the I-MRSEC in publications.

Proposal Submission Details

1. The title page of the proposal should include the project title, names, affiliations, and contact information for the PIs. One PI should be designated the lead PI.
2. The Project Description should be 3-5 pages long and should describe the scientific rationale for the work, proposed collaborative research, the work's innovation, and how the project would contribute to the mission of the I-MRSEC, which includes promoting education, outreach, and external collaborations. Use of relevant I-MRSEC or MRL facilities should be briefly described. Additional pages should be used for references, a short budget with justification, and up-to-date short biosketches and current & pending support of each of the PIs.

Seed Proposals are due as a single PDF file to the I-MRSEC Outreach Coordinator Kay Tsai (kst@illinois.edu), by 5:00 pm Wednesday October 15, 2025.

Decisions will be announced by December 15, for a January 12, 2026 start date.

Questions? Ask Professor Axel Hoffmann, axelh@illinois.edu.