

# Grassroots Initiatives to Address Needs Together (GIANT) Proposal Call

## Program Synopsis

The IDEA Institute supports scholarship, innovation, collaboration, and leadership in the areas of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access. The goal of the Grassroots Initiatives to Address Needs Together (GIANT) program is to enable teams of students, postdocs, staff, and faculty to propose and implement research-based initiatives in these areas. A summary of funded projects can be found at the [program webpage](#).

## Areas of Interest

The GIANT program seeks proposals from teams that want to actively collaborate with a specific population to jointly identify and address a need through project activities, measure the outcomes, document best practices, and disseminate the results. The specific population can be at any level, e.g., the public, K-12 students in low-resourced schools, undergraduate and graduate students, postdocs, staff, and/or faculty within The Grainger College of Engineering. An example project could be to identify and address how Illinois can promote community, belonging, empowerment, and access to resources for vulnerable populations with the goal of publishing the results as a case study in an ASEE journal or conference. General areas of interest include but are not limited to:

1. Recruitment, mentoring, development, retention, and/or engagement of individuals from groups underrepresented in STEM
2. Integration of inclusion, diversity, equity, or access in engineering education
3. K-12 outreach and STEM pipeline development
4. Public policy and/or engagement of the public or local community
5. Continuing education, cooperative education, and engineering workforce development
6. Scholarly research of best practices at Illinois or other institutions and effective methods to institutionalize these best practices

In addition, IDEA would especially like to receive proposals that:

1. Utilize artificial intelligence (AI)/technology to: enhance math and engineering preparation for high school students; improve recruitment and yielding of groups underrepresented in the college, enhance professional development, etc.
2. Reduce or eliminate barriers to remote and online education
3. Actively address structural racism, especially if the effort is aligned with an [ARTF](#) recommendation
4. Focus on staff and/or faculty as the specific population
5. Focus on vocational schools, community colleges, and/or minority serving institutions as the specific populations
6. Build connections with industry, include industrial collaborators, and/or consider research questions from an industry context
7. Have impact across the state of Illinois or in strategic engagement areas like Chicago

Note that projects may not duplicate work that is already being supported but may leverage resources provided by existing programs.

Proposals to host a conference, workshop, or community building event are welcome, as are planning projects (e.g., conducting literature reviews, gathering preliminary data, and building partnerships) towards an extramural proposal focused on broadening participation (e.g., NSF's [broadening participation portfolio](#), especially [REU/RET](#) sites and [S-STEM](#), or for which broadening participation is a major program component (e.g., NSF [ERC](#), [STC](#), [NRT](#), [MRSEC](#), [IUSE](#)).

A single Illinois registered student organization (RSO) is ineligible for funding through the GIANT program. Instead, it is highly encouraged for two or more RSOs to collaborate and submit a joint proposal to address a larger need.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated on the extent to which they address each of the prompts in the proposal template as well as their timeliness, appropriateness of budget, and scholarly rigor.

### **Multi-Office Funding**

IDEA Institute, the Office of Research, and the Undergraduate Programs Office are partnering to support cross-cutting initiatives through their GIANT, [SRI](#), and [SIIP](#) programs, respectively. GIANT proposals that complement existing or proposed SRI or SIIP projects are encouraged and may be eligible for joint sponsorship and/or supplemental funding to expand the scope and impact of the work.

### **Who May Submit Proposals?**

The project leader must be any member of the Grainger College of Engineering (e.g., a student, postdoc, staff, or faculty). Teams may include a mixture of students, postdocs, staff, and faculty from any department on campus as well as from external community organizations. Each team should have at least three members.

### **Proposal Guidelines**

The proposal consists of a 2-page narrative (not including timeline), project timeline, an optional page for references, and a budget spreadsheet. Download the proposal templates from [Box](#). If there are participating faculty member(s), a single merged PDF of their biosketches is required.

### **Budget Guidelines and Rules**

Project proposals should include two (2) separate and distinct budgets:

1. A preferred, itemized budget that reflects total funding necessary to achieve preferred and likely attainable outcomes for the award period; and
2. A minimum itemized budget with a reduced scope of outcomes as a condition to accept the award for the upcoming funding period.

A review of expenditures will occur each semester to assess the proposed budget to the general expenses and identify any changes that may be necessary.

- Typically, allowable budget items include salary/wages for students (e.g., undergrad hourly or grad TA/RA) or postdocs, materials, software, equipment, and travel/conference registration funds to present project findings.
- No support for faculty or staff salary is allowed.
- Support for food/beverages, remuneration of study participants, or external partners may require additional justification and approval upon project selection.
- No more than \$5,000 for equipment.
- Tuition and overhead should not be included in the budget. Benefits are automatically computed in the spreadsheet.
- There is no explicit cap on the number of proposals a person can take part in, but team members should be mindful of the number of projects we expect to fund. Students cannot be the PI for more than one project given they need to make continuous progress towards degree completion.

### **Proposal submission**

Upload your proposal materials to: <https://forms.illinois.edu/sec/480562184>. All team members must register to be a member of the IDEA Institute: <https://forms.illinois.edu/sec/8012339> by the proposal due date.

### **Program Structure-**

GIANT is modeled after the [SIIP](#) program. GIANT teams should meet regularly, weekly or biweekly, as a community of practice. All SIIP teams (PI and/or team members) will be expected to participate in the following:

- Fall semester kick-off event–September
- Mid-year review (formal review and determination of continued funding)--December
- IDEA Conference–April

In addition to funding support, each project will be assigned a mentor to discuss progress and advise the team as the project moves along. Teams are expected to meet with mentors at least monthly to provide updates and address any challenges. Each team will also be assigned an IDEA Institute advisor who will hold an annual consultation regarding sustainability. When relevant, the Institute will help interested teams identify opportunities to obtain external funding to supplement and extend GIANT funding.

### **Funding**

GIANT teams are largely funded by the IDEA Institute. While we anticipate being able to fully support projects for a given period, we cannot guarantee funds beyond the end of the funding period due to the changing landscape of funding availability. Therefore, it is important to spend awarded funds during the one-year period of the grant.

The GIANT program supports projects for up to \$13,000. To encourage student leadership and involvement, the GIANT program intends for at least two of the awards to be made to student-led teams or multi-RSO collaborations.

### Phase 1 and Phase 2 Funding

New GIANT projects will be considered for Phase 1 funding. Projects with active funding may apply for Phase 2 funding.

### Funding Cycles

Each year, funding periods will be from July 1 – June 30. These dates indicate official start and end dates, respectively, for new (Phase 1) and continuing (Phase 2) projects.

### No Cost Extension Requests (Due by June 1)

Projects in their first year of funding are eligible to *request* a no-cost extension for *one year*. Justification for the extension must be provided. If approved, this extension will allow teams additional time to complete the project. There will be no additional funding provided by the IDEA Institute or any co-sponsors, and teams must use any remaining balance to fund activities during the extension period. Requests will be reviewed based on activities and expenditures completed during the current year of funding as well as anticipated activities and costs for the extension year.

Formal requests must be submitted in writing and require the following information:

- Project's remaining balance (we can help with this if needed)
- Detailed budget justification on how remaining funds will be spent

### Project Close Out

GIANT projects that will formally end must do so by completing the following:

- Submit a notice of project close out by email to [idea-giant@illinois.edu](mailto:idea-giant@illinois.edu) by June 1
- Submit a final report (due by June 30)
- Submit all outcomes to the Box folder including (publication and presentation files, project photos of activities or team members) and update bibliography with all citations of publications and conference proceedings (in reverse chronological order)

### Reporting

**All** GIANT projects are required to submit a report at the conclusion of the funding year. Reports should detail comprehensive information on the research questions, program activities, evaluation methods, outcomes and deliverables (copies of publications and presentations) resulting from your GIANT project, and sustainability plans. You may submit copies of evaluation instruments and other supporting documents. This information is needed to help the IDEA Institute with the dissemination of GIANT project outcomes to the college, at professional conferences, etc.

To share the generated knowledge and ideas and to help build community, each active team will give a mixed oral/poster presentation summarizing their project at the annual IDEA Conference held each spring semester.

### Questions

Please address questions to [idea-giant@illinois.edu](mailto:idea-giant@illinois.edu) or visit <https://idea.illinois.edu/>