



**Sustainability Challenge Grant
Request for Proposals
Fiscal Year 2026**

**PROPOSALS DUE:
September 12, 2025 11:59 p.m.**

Direct questions and proposal submissions to:
Shane Tedder at shane.tedder@uky.edu

For additional information visit:
<https://sustainability.uky.edu/sustainability-grants/sustainability-challenge-grants>

I. General Information

The Sustainability Challenge Grant (SCG) program is requesting proposals for the 2025-2026 funding cycle. The Sustainability Challenge Grant Program was developed as a collaborative effort of the President's Sustainability Advisory Committee, the Tracy Farmer Institute for Sustainability and the Environment, and the Office of Sustainability. Funding for the program is provided by the Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, the Vice President for Research, the Office of the Provost, the Tracy Farmer Institute for Sustainability and the Environment, and the Student Sustainability Council.

The University has adopted a balanced approach to sustainability that considers environmental, social, and economic impacts in every facet of the university's activities and operations. This work also includes programs, such as this funding opportunity, that encourage the integration of these principles in curricula, research, creative work, healthcare, and outreach. This principled approach to operational practices and intellectual pursuits prepares students and empowers the campus community to support sustainable development in the Commonwealth and beyond.

The project implementation period for this call is October 15, 2025 - December 31, 2026.

Proposal submissions are due by September 12, 2025 at 11:59 p.m. Submissions and questions should be submitted by email to shane.tedder@uky.edu.

II. Program Objectives and Areas of Emphasis

The Sustainability Challenge Grant (SCG) program, now in its eleventh year, is designed to engage transdisciplinary teams from the University community to foster a wide array of projects that promote sustainability and advance field(s) of study, while simultaneously engaging students and seeking to balance environmental, social, and economic considerations.

This year, we encourage proposals that align with one or more of the five guiding principles (below) from the forthcoming Sustainability Strategic Plan (SSP) update AND support the UK-PURPOSE strategic plan (<https://pres.uky.edu/strategic-plan>).

Sustainability Strategic Plan Guiding Principles:

1. Make the pursuit of sustainability an integral part of the UK student experience
2. Reinforce the University's commitment to our people
3. Reduce Campus Emissions
4. Become a zero-waste campus
5. Model environmental excellence

Proposals should also address one or more of the categories below.

1. Operations: Using the principles of sustainability to improve material, physical, or infrastructural elements at the University of Kentucky.

2. Engagement: Fostering a campus and broader community culture of sustainability.
3. Research and Innovation: Scholarship and creative endeavors relating to sustainability opportunities in the Commonwealth and beyond.
4. Academics: Improving the university's capacity for integrating sustainability with the educational experiences of our students in both curricular and co-curricular activities.

III. Eligibility

All members of the University community are encouraged to develop project ideas. Project teams must be led by a faculty or staff member whose home unit/department agrees to manage the dispersal of funds. University cost centers will be provided to funded projects. Student involvement is strongly encouraged. Teams must include representatives from at least two distinct organizational units. Proposals not meeting the specifications of this RFP will not be considered for funding and will be returned without review.

IV. Funding

All awards are subject to the availability of funds, quality of the proposals submitted, and other applicable considerations. For 2025-2026, a total of \$130,000 is expected with a maximum award of \$50,000 per project.

V. Scoring Criteria

Proposals must comply with the proposal submission instructions and be written using the templates provided at the end of this document. A team of technical reviewers will use a rubric to score proposals based on the priorities listed below.

1. Define and address a sustainability-related opportunity within the local community – either UK campus or linked to the broader community. Projects that clearly align with the guiding principles listed above will be prioritized.
2. Clearly explain how the proposed effort will address the opportunity and promote sustainability by seeking to balance social, environmental, and economic factors.
3. Clearly define the approach and methodology.
4. Explain how the project will promote student engagement, education, and training.
5. Define and align the goals and objectives for the project. Specific connections to one or more of the following should be included for each goal and objective.
 - a. UK Strategic Plan - <https://pres.uky.edu/strategic-plan>
 - b. UK Sustainability Strategic Plan update - <https://wholesumky.org/?p=5497>
 - c. United Nations Global Sustainable Development Goals - <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>
6. Include a timeline with project milestones and measurable outcomes – specific, measurable deliverables should be outlined where possible.
7. Demonstrate engagement with, and where necessary approval from, campus and/or community stakeholders (e.g., neighborhoods, alumni, area businesses or nonprofits) that are critical to the implementation of the project.
8. Describe if/how the project integrates the campus as a living laboratory or classroom.

9. Include a communication plan that generates public engagement and shares information related to the project with the public. Priority will be given to proposals that have the potential to publicly disseminate, publish, and/or share information in a significant way.
10. Provide a reasonable and adequate budget for the work proposed.
11. Include scholarly products such as journal publications or conference presentations as deliverables.
12. Identify external funding opportunities that can be leveraged by project funding and/or outcomes.

VI. Review Process

Proposals that meet the requirements of this RFP will be evaluated by a technical committee composed of faculty, staff, and other experts with relevant experience in the specific project areas. Results from the technical committee reviews will be submitted to an Executive Review Committee that will further evaluate proposals based on campus priorities, available funding, and a balance of subject matter. The Executive Review Committee will then select a portfolio of projects for funding. If selected for funding, applicants may be required to address reviewer comments and/or provide additional project information. Awards will be publicly announced by October 15, 2025 with funds available in November 2025.

VII. Proposal and Project Timelines

Proposals must be submitted by **September 12, 2025 at 11:59 PM**. The table below details the anticipated timeline for proposal review, selection process, and project implementation.

Date	Milestone
September 12, 2025	Proposal Submissions Due
September 15, 2025- October 3, 2025	Technical Review of Proposals
October 6, 2025- October 10, 2025	Final Review and Selection
October 12, 2025	Status Notifications to Teams. Public announcement of funded projects will take place during the annual Sustainability Showcase on October 15, 2025
November 2025	Funds Available – Exact date TBD
April 15, 2026	1st Quarterly Report Due Date
July 15, 2026	2nd Quarterly Report / Mid-Project Report Due Date
October 2026	3rd Quarterly Report Due Date
December 31, 2026	Expected Project End Date. A one-time, no-cost six-month extension may be requested.
March 1, 2027	Final Report Due Date (or 60 days after Project End Date if extension approved)

VIII. Proposal Instructions

Each proposal shall consist of the four sections listed below. Individual templates for each section are included at the end of this document (for reference only) and available for download here: www.uky.edu/sustainability/sustainability-challenge-grants

1. Project Proposal
2. Budget Breakdown
3. Budget Justification
4. Letters of Support¹

For final submission, the four sections must be combined as a single PDF document.

Include a title page for the proposal and a cover page for each section. Proposals shall be submitted with this naming format: ProjectTitle.SCG2025.pdf. Proposals must be submitted by 11:59 pm on September 12, 2025 by email to shane.tedder@uky.edu.

¹One of the letters of support must be from the department head/dean/or business officer for one of the project leads confirming willingness/ability to support the project's procurement and expenditures if funded.

PROJECT PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

This section shall not exceed ten (10) single-spaced pages (12-point type, 1-inch margins). Delete all instructional text before submission.

Title:

Principal investigator(s) and Team Members: Provide name, title, department, and email address for each team member. Identify team lead(s)/principal investigator(s) and list first.

Category: Indicate the major category(ies) that your project will address: (1) Operations, (2) Engagement, (3) Academics, and/or (4) Research.

How did you hear about this call for proposals? _____

Type of Submission: Indicate whether the project is a:

- New Project
- Continuation - The proposal is linked to a project previously funded by a Sustainability Challenge Grant. Summarize previous outcomes and describe the key differences between the previous work and the work proposed here.
- Resubmission - The proposal is a resubmission/adaptation of a proposal previously submitted, but not funded. Discuss how the resubmission addresses the feedback provided in the previous funding cycle.

Project Summary: Clearly define your project and its relevance to sustainability. Include a summary of your goals and an explanation of how the composition of your team positions you for success.

Goals and Outcomes: Clearly define the goals and objectives that will be completed within the 15-month duration of the project. Include a timeline with project milestones and specific measurable outcomes. Specific connections to one or more of the following should be included for each goal and objective.

- a. UK Strategic Plan - <https://pres.uky.edu/strategic-plan>
- b. UK TEK - <https://uknow.uky.edu/campus-news/get-know-tek-uk-s-new-qep>
- c. UK Sustainability Strategic Plan update - <https://wholesumky.org/?p=5497>

Approach and Methodology: Describe the processes, procedures, tools, frameworks, etc. that will be used to address and/or investigate the sustainability challenge.

Statement of results or benefits: It is expected that an award will result in quantifiable or tangible research, scholarship, outreach, and/or creative works. Describe in detail the intended results and impacts that the proposed project will have on advancing sustainability.

Stakeholders: List the stakeholders that are critical to the success of the project and describe how each will be involved. Stakeholder support letters are encouraged and should be included in the final section of your submission. **If your project has direct impacts on the physical campus, a letter of support from the appropriate administrative unit (Facilities Managements, Transportation, etc.) must be included.**

Communication Plan: Provide a detailed description of how your team will generate public engagement throughout the project and communicate your results.

Student Engagement and Training Potential: Provide the number of post-doctoral fellows, graduate students, and undergraduate students, including degree level, who are expected to be involved with the project. If the information is available, include each student's name, major, and expected graduation date, and indicate if the project will be used to inform a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation.

Funding: Address the following:

- (a) Is your project team willing to accept partial funding for your project? Doing so will require submitting a revised scope and budget.
- (b) Is your project planning to use this funding as a match for a larger grant? If so, describe.
- (c) Is this project intended to provide preliminary results or experience for a future competitive proposal external to the Sustainability Challenge Grant program? If so, provide the name of the funding agency, the name of the program, and the intended year of application submission.

BUDGET TEMPLATE

Project Title:	
Principle Investigators:	
Cost Category	
1. Salaries and Wages	
a. Principal Investigator(s)	
b. Graduate Student(s)	
c. Undergraduate Student(s)	
d. Other Personnel	
Total Salaries and Wages	\$ -
2. Fringe Benefits	
a. Principal Investigator(s)	
b. Graduate Student(s)	
c. Undergraduate Student(s)	
d. Other Personnel	
Total Fringe Benefits	\$ -
3. Non-Personnel Costs	
a. Supplies	
b. Equipment	
c. Services or Consultants	
d. Travel	
e. Other direct costs	
Total Non-Personnel Cost	\$ -
Total Direct Costs	\$ -

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION TEMPLATE

General Instructions: The budget narrative should provide detail corresponding to the dollar values provided in Attachment B. Delete all instructional text below after completion. If a section is not utilized, enter “N/A” under that heading.

Reminder: Include a letter of support from the department head/dean/or business officer of one of the project leads confirming willingness to support the project if funded.

1. Salaries and Wages

Provide personnel, title/position, estimated hours and the rate of compensation proposed for each individual. For salaried personnel, provide percentage of time and annual salary; for hourly personnel, provide estimated hours and hourly rate. Other forms of compensation paid as or in lieu of wages to students performing necessary work are allowable provided that the other payments are reasonable compensation for the work performed and are conditioned explicitly upon the performance of necessary work. Note that health insurance, if provided, is to be included under fringe benefits.

2. Fringe Benefits

Provide the overall fringe benefit rate (% of salary) applicable to each category of employee proposed in the project. If applicable, include prorated health and life insurance.

3. Non-Personnel Costs

- **Supplies**

List all supplies to be purchased to conduct and disseminate the research. This may include computer software, lab glassware, fuel for research vehicles, computer expendables, reagents, chemical supplies, and supplies for poster sessions, etc. Be as explicit as possible (e.g. unit costs, number of units, total cost for each item).

- **Equipment**

Provide a detailed description of any equipment purchased and why it is required for this research/project. Provide documentation of agreement regarding which unit will retain the equipment at the conclusion of the project.

- **Services or Consultants**

Identify the specific tasks for which these services, consultants, or subcontracts would be used. Provide a detailed breakdown of the services or consultants to include personnel, time, salary, supplies, travel, etc.

- **Travel**
Provide purpose and estimated costs for all travel. Include all applicable travel details including location, number of personnel, number of days, per diem rate, lodging rate, mileage and mileage rate, airfare, etc.
- **Other Direct Costs**
Itemize costs not included elsewhere, including publication costs. Costs for services and consultants should be included and justified under “Services or Consultants” (see above). Provide a breakdown for costs listed under this category.