# Fall 2021 CNS Catalyst Grant Competition

## Proposal Deadline: October 4, 2021, 4:59 PM CST

The CNS Catalyst Grants program is a College of Natural Sciences (CNS) internal funding mechanism meant to inspire interdisciplinary research collaborations that will seed efforts to secure external funding. It is not a bridge-funding program. Proposals for interdisciplinary projects with faculty members from different CNS departments or other UT colleges are requested. Principal investigators who accept a CNS Catalyst Grant must commit to the pursuit of external funding for the collaborative effort within 12 to 18 months of receiving Catalyst Grant funding. The CNS Strategic Research Initiatives Office will, as needed, assist teams receiving Catalyst Grant funding with the development of their proposal to an external funding agency.

## Award Information

Up to two CNS Catalyst Grants (**$50,000 maximum each**) will be awarded to teams of two or more members to begin new interdisciplinary research collaborations. Two award cycles are being offered for Fiscal Year 2021-2022, with proposal deadlines in October and March.

## Eligibility Guidelines

CNS Catalyst Grant funding is meant to catalyze *new* research collaborations in high-impact, emerging fields that have potential for major external funding. With this goal in mind, we expect that a successful Catalyst Grant proposal will possess the following characteristics:

- Project teams must include at least two members, each with a primary UT appointment to a different academic department, who are tenure-track faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, or research scientists. No combination of team members can have received external funding on a collaborative project, nor can they have contributed any unfunded effort on an externally funded project. Previously published collaborations are not disqualifying as long as the work was not funded by a shared grant. The participation of individuals at the Assistant and Associate Professor ranks is particularly encouraged. Adjunct faculty, visiting researchers, and postdocs are not eligible Co-PIs but may be named investigators in proposals.
- Eligible individuals may only participate in one application per cycle.
- Cross-college collaborations are allowed, but Catalyst Grant funds may only be used to support the CNS portion of the collaboration. If a cross-college collaboration requires funding or in-kind support for the other college, the commitment for those funds or support must be provided by the other college and be described in the proposal submission.
- Project teams must provide convincing evidence that external funding exists that will be viable to pursue. **Targeted grant mechanisms must be identified at the time of proposal submission.**
- The timeline for submitting a Catalyst Grant application should be 12 to 18 months ahead of the team's anticipated submission to one or more target external grant programs.

- Previous Catalyst Grant winners may apply no sooner than two calendar years from their winning competition cycle (e.g., a winner from Fall 2019 would not be eligible to submit another application until Fall 2021).
- Previously successful investigator teams are not eligible to submit a new Catalyst proposal as a team.
- Non-awarded applicants from previous cycles may resubmit their proposals only twice.

## What Will a CNS Catalyst Grant Pay For?

CNS Catalyst Grant funding should develop promising new research areas and teams in order to enhance competitiveness of applications to external agencies. CNS Catalyst Grant funding can only be used to support allowable expenses for CNS-affiliated personnel.

| ALLOWED Expenses: | UNALLOWED Expenses: |
|---|---|
| <ul><li>Materials/supplies/consumables</li><li>Equipment (< $5,000)</li><li>Graduate student support including tuition; Postdoc and Research Scientist support.<br>(*Note: Salary funds may only be paid to UT-Austin employees and may not be transferred outside UT.*)</li><li>Travel or conference hosting for team-building in advance of external sponsor proposal submission</li></ul> | <ul><li>Faculty salary (summer or otherwise</li><li>Administrative or secretarial support</li></ul> |

## Application Instructions

Application website: https://utexas.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1850094
Create your application (UT EID and password required) and upload your materials at the website above **by 4:59 PM, October 4, 2021**, to be considered for a Fall 2021 CNS Catalyst Grant.

*Note: If this is your first time submitting a proposal through the proposal submission website, you will first need to affiliate yourself with the College before you can submit. To do this, login with your EID and password, then click on the "Hello, [Name]" link at the top right of the website. This will take you to your user profile. In your user profile, under "Primary School or Department," select "Natural Sciences, College of" and then scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the Save Changes button. You will now be able to apply for a Catalyst Grant.*

## Required Submission Materials

Application pages for items 1 – 6 below should have 1-inch margins and use a 12-point font. Please combine all components into a single pdf file. **Proposals that do not conform to formatting and section guidelines will not be reviewed.**

1. **Lay Summary with Keywords**. In 200 words or less, provide an "elevator pitch" for your collaboration and proposed project. Describe for a general audience the potential impact. Following the lay summary, include 5 – 10 keywords that categorize the research proposed in this application.
2. **Proposal.** Limit to three (3) pages. Organize the Proposal in the specified order using

the section headings (Rationale and Vision, Justification, Participating Faculty) and the instructions provided below. The bibliography does not count against the page limit.

    a. *Rationale and Vision*. Explain what makes your team interdisciplinary. Explain the innovative and transformative nature of the proposed interdisciplinary research, describe the potential impact to the field(s), and provide an assessment of why the project team is particularly well-positioned to develop competitive external proposals in this research area. Assume that the Catalyst Grants review panel will not be experts in your field and write this section accordingly.

    b. *Justification*. Explain why a Catalyst Grant is required to initiate the collaboration, <u>emphasizing the barriers</u> (technical, funding climate, etc.) that currently inhibit the viability of your proposed collaboration and how the grant will impact the team's probability of success in securing external funding.

    c. *Participating Faculty*. List participating faculty members, providing a clear explanation of each member's role in the collaboration. If your proposal involves faculty members from other colleges, describe the source(s) of support for those members' portion of the collaboration.

3. **External Funding Landscape**. Limit to one (1) page. Summarize the external funding landscape for which the seed-funding proposal is being prepared and plans to pursue external funding. Include an anticipated timeline with milestones for development of an external proposal, names of potential sponsoring agencies, and relevant deadlines for those agencies.

4. **Budget and budget justification.** No page limit. <u>Submit a detailed budget that outlines expenditures in appropriate categories</u>. Other resources that will be committed to the effort, such as support from academic units, should also be outlined. **If your proposal involves a cross-college collaboration, you must specify the source of support for the other college's participation and provide proof of commitment (letter or email confirmation) from the appropriate college/department/center.**

5. **Response to prior reviews**. For applications being resubmitted for consideration, please summarize in a single paragraph any changes made to the proposal to address prior reviews.

6. **Biosketches or CVs, Current and Pending.** Submit biosketches or CVs and include current and pending funding information for all members of the faculty team.

## Application Review Process and Evaluation Criteria

A standing faculty review panel with **general** subject matter expertise will evaluate CNS Catalyst Grant applications, so proposals should be written in a style accessible to non-experts. Up to two awards will be announced approximately 4 weeks after each grant cycle deadline, and funds will be disbursed approximately 6 weeks after each deadline. The following evaluation criteria will be used and given equal weight:

- Demonstrated commitment by the faculty team to establish a new interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Evidence that Catalyst Grant funding will enable the faculty team to overcome <u>identified</u> barriers that currently prohibit a successful collaboration.
- The proposed collaboration's potential to enhance their competitiveness in securing external funding.
- Strength of the proposed plan to secure external funding.

- The project is in a high-impact, emerging field that has the potential for major external funding.
- The scientific merit and rationale of the proposed project are sound, and the scope of the proposal is feasible for the Catalyst performance period.

**What's Required of Me After I Receive a CNS Catalyst Grant?**

In addition to submitting a proposal for external funding, you must submit the following information to Dan Bost in CNS Strategic Research Initiatives 6 and 12 months after receiving the award: A two-page progress report including (i) research outcomes and (ii) progress toward securing external funding. If progress has been hindered in one or both of these areas, a clear explanation for the delay is required. The report must also include a list of any other key outcomes of Catalyst Grant funding (e.g., manuscripts published or submitted; conference presentations given; external collaborations formed).

Successful collaborative teams may be asked to:
- Provide subject matter expertise by participating on a review panel for a future Catalyst Grant competition
- Highlight their collaborations in a College-wide forum such as a CNS Town Hall meeting or research symposium