

Susan E. Duncan Innovation in Agriculture Seed Grant

Summary

The *Susan E. Duncan Innovation in Agriculture Seed Grant* is in honor of [late Dr. Susan Duncan](#) who was Professor of Food Science & Technology, the founding Director of the Center for Advanced Innovation in Agriculture (CAIA), a senior fellow at the Virginia Tech Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT), and the Associate Director of the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station (VAES) at Virginia Tech. This seed grant aims to support user-centered and user-driven research and development activities directed at building capacity, security, and resilience in the U.S Agriculture and Food sector.

The Susan E. Duncan Innovation in Agriculture Seed Grant program is jointly funded by [Virginia Tech Applied Research Corporation \(VT-ARC\)](#) research funds and the matching funds from The Virginia Tech [Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology \(ICAT\)](#) and the [Center for Advanced Innovation In Agriculture \(CAIA\)](#) with the support of [Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station \(VAES\)](#). The overarching goal of the Seed Grant is to revolutionarily advance research, innovation, and education in agriculture by bringing together faculty and students across disciplines; providing funding, space, support, and expertise; and building mutually beneficial partnerships beyond campus. We invite proposals for projects that are user-inspired and centered, creative, innovative, and show strong potential to advance the goals of VT-ARC, CAIA, and ICAT and their partners. Grants can be used for agriculture-focused transdisciplinary activities, creative projects, feasibility studies, and preliminary research. We expect that the funded projects will grow into larger grants and/or industry collaboration initiatives, performances, exhibitions, or events that are visible at a national or international level. In addition to its generous monetary contribution, VT-ARC will provide the funded research teams with mentorship on research translation to application including establishing research partnerships with industry and pursuing funds from applied research sponsors to advance discoveries toward prototypes (DHS, DOD, DoS, etc.).

Eligibility

This seed grant RFP is open to all faculty members at Virginia Tech. We're looking for teams comprised of faculty from at least two different fields, with preference given to projects that include meaningful participation of faculty from two or more colleges. In order for teams to be eligible, at least one of the participating team members must be a CALS faculty. We're looking for projects that advance the priorities and goals of the CAIA, ICAT, and VT-ARC.

VT-ARC, CAIA, and ICAT celebrate the critical importance of diverse teams of scholars and are dedicated to [InclusiveVT](#) - serving in the spirit of community, diversity, and excellence to create a community that nurtures learning and growth for all of its members.

Topic Areas

The Susan E. Duncan Innovation in Agriculture Seed Grant program seeks user-inspired and centered proposals that translate basic research into application and advance the use of new technologies in agriculture. Although any topic relevant to agriculture and the life sciences is appropriate for submission, the review committee is particularly interested in proposals addressing challenges that are outlined in the [2025-2035 AgInnovation Research Roadmap](#). All projects must:

1. Demonstrate innovative and meaningful integration of agricultural and life sciences with the arts, creativity, design that produces unique but synergistic advances in both disciplines
2. Have clear potential, or a clear plan, for translation of research outcomes to application

3. Clearly outline a long-term path for how the project could eventually become independently supported and position Virginia Tech as a national or international leader in the subject matter

Funding limit

Two or three teams will be selected for funding for up to \$25,000/team for one year. The funded teams are qualified to compete for an additional \$20,000-\$25,000 during the second year.

Submission Process

Email a PDF copy of your submission including the **cover page** and the **2-page proposal document** to Will Singer at vtcaia@vt.edu by February 3 (midnight), 2025.

Please address each section in your proposal using Times New Roman 12-point font and page margin of 1". Proposals should be limited to **two pages**, including images but not the cover page and reference list. Proposals received without cover page will not be considered.

Submission Guidelines

Cover page:

- Principle Investigator's name, email, and home department (this will be the primary contact person)
- Names, emails, and home departments of co-PI(s)
- Brief description of the expertise of team members unique to the project (1 paragraph/PI or co-PI, no CV please)
- List of PI and co-PI(s)'s on-going funded projects (include project title, duration, funding agency, funded amount)
- ICAT space requests (if applicable)
- ICAT specialist request (if applicable)
- VT-ARC mentor request (if applicable)
- Total budget request
- Detailed budget and budget justification (< 1-page)
- Project Summary (5 sentences)
 - Justification for the relevance of the problem to agriculture and/or the life sciences
 - Objective of the proposed work
 - Approach to integrating agriculture and the life sciences with arts, creativity, and design
 - Approach to translating research to application
 - Strategy for long-term fundability and recognition

Proposal Document (2-page limit):

Please address each of the following proposal sections in your proposal using Times New Roman 12-point font and 1" page margin.

- **Background (½ page)**
 - Research area(s) involved and their relevance to agriculture and/or the life sciences
 - Evidence of user engagement leading to the selection of the proposed research topic(s)
 - Need for a transdisciplinary approach linking agriculture and/or the life sciences with arts, creativity, and design
 - Need for a strategy for translating research to practice

- Long-term opportunity for fundability, sustainability, and global distinction
- **Project Description (1 page)**
 - Goals and Objectives
 - Methods, strategies, and activities
 - Gantt Chart showing timeline of activities, roles/responsibilities, location of work, key performance indicators, and any requested technical resources/mentorship from CAIA, ICAT, or VT-ARC
 - Anticipated outcomes and deliverables
- **Vision (½ page)**
 - Brief plan of 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year programmatic goals to progress toward fundability, sustainability, and global distinction
 - Timeline should begin on July 1, 2025 and end by June 30, 2026.

Funding Information

Awarded funds will be available July 1, 2025 and be transferred to the PI's home department. All project expenses must be posted to Banner within 30 days of the project's June 30, 2026. No indirect cost applies to this grant. Proposals do not need approval by the Office of Sponsored Programs.

Unspent funds must be transferred back to CAIA and/or ICAT within 45 days of the project's end date (June 30, 2026).

We anticipate yearly call for this funding opportunity.

Please note that faculty on an awarded team failing to deliver the outcomes identified in a funded proposal, a final project report within 45 days of project conclusion (June 30, 2026), and a mandatory lightening talk at an ICAT event may be ineligible for competing for the 2nd year additional funding and similar awards in the future.

Funding Restriction

Funds will not be awarded for conference travel or food. Travel for site visits is permitted. Funds can be used to buy out faculty time during the academic year or summer, **pending home department approval** (A faculty time buy out endorsement letter from your home department should be included in the PDF proposal submission, but will not be counted towards the 2-page proposal limit).

Review Criteria

The proposals will be reviewed by a committee consisting of the director, associate director, and program manager of CAIA, the director and associate director of ICAT, and two VT-ARC representatives. The following evaluation criteria will be used:

- Demonstrate innovative and meaningful integration of agricultural and life sciences with the arts, creativity, & design that produces unique but synergistic advances in both disciplines (33%)
- Have clear potential for, or a clear plan, for translation of research outcomes to application (33%)
- Clearly outline a long-term path for how the project could eventually become independently supported and position Virginia Tech uniquely as a national or international leader in the subject matter (34%)

Awards will be announced by March 21, 2025.

Reporting Requirements:

A final report at least 2 pages in length outlining the activities undertaken, outcomes, assessment and impacts must be submitted within 45 days of the completion of the project, i.e., no later than August 14 2026. An impact statement (1/2 page in length) related to the project, targeted toward non-academic external stakeholders within the state, should be appended to the final report.

Acknowledgement

All publications, presentations, illustrations, etc. resulting from this competitive grant program must include the following statement: “This activity was funded, in part, with the Susan E. Duncan Innovation in Agriculture Seed Grant, jointly funded by the [Virginia Tech Applied Research Corporation \(VT-ARC\)](#), The Virginia Tech [Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology \(ICAT\)](#), and the [Center for Advanced Innovation In Agriculture \(CAIA\)](#) with the support of [Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station \(VAES\)](#).”