Frequently Asked Questions and Responses (updated 11/10/2015)

**Question 1.  What is the timing of the grants?**


**Question 2.  What was the reviewer feedback given from previous rounds of FIRE proposals?**

In general, reviewers gave preference to proposals that emphasized the multidisciplinary nature of the research, utilized the funds to collect data over hosting meetings, included teams of 3 or more people, listed specific tasks in the approach instead of a broad overview, and added new directions rather than extending current research. Most of these preferences did not preclude teams from getting funded, as long as sufficient justification was provided.

**Question 3.  What is the level of detail that should be provided in the proposal?**

The faculty members of the Research Policy Committee will help the Office of Research evaluate the proposals submitted to the FIRE seed grant program. The proposal will be assigned to reviewers that may or may not have expertise in your area of research, so writing to a broad audience and clearly describing the roles and contribution of team members is crucial. As mentioned in Question 2, the reviewers preferred to see specific tasks listed in the Approach section.

**Question 4.  Can teams include faculty members from the same department?**

Yes, as long as they have expertise in distinct disciplines. As mentioned in Question 3, your proposal will be reviewed by faculty members outside of your department. Accordingly, for teams from one department it is even more important to clearly define the roles, expertise and contribution of each team member.

**Question 5.  Can departments and institutions outside of ACES be included in the team?**

Yes. The Office of Research recognizes the importance of collaborating with colleagues both within and outside the College and University.

**Question 6.  Can the team have already submitted proposals in the past?**

Yes. Several teams have used the funds to address the reviewer comments of previously submitted proposals, typically to acquire additional preliminary data.

**Question 7.  Can existing, well-established teams apply?**

Yes. However, reviewers typically have higher expectations for these proposals. Therefore, it is important to demonstrate to the reviewers how the funds will strengthen your team and/or the scope and direction of your research. In the Need for collaboration section, existing teams must describe how the funding will allow them to achieve a new level of success.

**Question 8.  Who can be considered co-PIs and collaborators on the project?**

Anyone essential to the project can be listed as a co-investigator. Although this will primarily be other faculty members, it can also be postdoctoral and graduate students.
Question 9. **Can faculty members be involved in more than one FIRE proposal?**

Yes. At this time, we have not limited the number of proposals in which a faculty member can be listed as a collaborator or principle investigator.

Question 10. **How strict are the suggested limits for the summary and proposal sections?**

We would appreciate it if you could follow the guidelines as closely as possible. The only strict limit is that the proposal should be 3 pages. We won’t determine if you used the right amount of space for each section or count the number of words in your summary/abstract.

Question 11. **What is meant by “alignment with current areas of strength” in the RFP?**

“Current strengths” refers to two criteria. In Objective 2: “identify a research theme or question that gives coherence to the project and relates to the scope of programs within the College of ACES.” In the Evaluation Section, “build on current strengths” also refers to your research. Accordingly, you need to ensure that your proposed activities are a logical progression given each team member’s expertise and past research and that they pertain to the College of ACES scope of research.

Question 12. **How much detail is needed for the budget? Will a budget template be provided?**

We haven't designated a budget template. A standard line item budget that grant agencies require with justification would suffice. Categories could include but are not limited to personnel, fringe benefits, equipment, travel, materials and supplies, etc. The reviewers need to see a general plan for how you expect to spend the money that relates to your approach.

Question 13. **How should fringe benefits, tuition remission and indirect costs be handled?**

The FIRE program is supported by Hatch formula funds. Tuition remission and indirect costs do not need to be included in the budget. For salaries, you will need to include the fringe benefits within the $60,000. Hatch funding has different fringe benefit rates depending on the type of position. Please consult your department business manager for details. The highest rate that will be incurred is 6.5%; however, in most cases no fringe benefit rates will need to be applied.

Question 14. **Can faculty summer salary be included in the budget?**

From the discussion during the review process, the Office of Research has decided not to fund summer salary through this program.

Question 15. **Can travel be included in the budget?**

Yes. However, travel for personnel not from the University of Illinois is restricted due to the source of funds.

Question 16. **What should be included in the paragraph of professional information?**

The professional information can include a short description of the team member’s research, publication, and grant record. This should be given in the context of the proposal. You can indicate just the number of publications and grants in the last five years (i.e., Publications: X, Grants: X). However, if you would like to include the details of those publications and grants, you have room to do so.
Question 17. Can support letters be included?

In order to reduce the burden for proposal preparation, the Office of Research strongly discourages the inclusion of support letters. However, if they are provided, they will be included with the proposal during review.

Question 18. Can additional materials be provided in the supplementary section?

All the necessary materials needed to review the proposal are requested in the RFP. Accordingly, we discourage the inclusion of additional supplementary documents, such as articles, preprints, methodology, survey questions, etc. However, if they are provided, they will be included with the proposal during review.

Question 19. Do you already need to have an active Hatch project to apply?

No. You can apply without having an active Hatch project. If you receive the award, you will need to have a Hatch project that has overlapping objectives with your FIRE proposal in order to receive the funds.

Question 20. Can previous FIRE award recipients apply?

Yes, as long as the previous award is no longer active.

Question 21. Will there be another call for FIRE proposals? If so, when?

Future funding of the FIRE program depends on the feedback we receive from faculty and the availability of funds. We hope to have additional calls for proposals in the future. In the future we plan to use the following timeline: RFP released in December/January, proposal deadline in March, notifications in April, and funding to begin in October.