

Dairy Innovation Hub

Special Call for Capacity Building Projects (FY27)

The [Dairy Innovation Hub](#) is a \$7.8 million per year investment by the State of Wisconsin to build research capacity, plus expand teaching and outreach activities, at UW-Madison, UW-Platteville, and UW-River Falls within vital areas of interest to the Wisconsin dairy industry. The work of the Dairy Innovation Hub focuses on four priority areas (visit the [Hub website](#) for more information):

1. Steward Land and Water Resources
2. Enrich Human Health and Nutrition
3. Ensure Animal Health and Welfare
4. Grow Farm Businesses and Communities

Of the total \$7.8 million in annual base funding for the initiative, UW-River Falls receives \$1.872 million. This funding is used to support new faculty positions, research fellowships for existing faculty, post-doctoral teaching fellowships, research support staff positions, administrative support, facilities renovations and equipment (Laboratory Farms, campus laboratories and other facilities), and an annual Dairy Innovation Summit.

Call for Proposals: Requests for Capacity Building projects will utilize funding available **shortly after decision date**. The funding is intended for one-time expenses for supplies, equipment, or other needs associated primarily with building research capacity at the Laboratory Farms and the UWRF campus, with specific emphasis on research laboratories in Ag Science, the Food Science Addition, and the Ag Engineering Annex. Proposals expanding research capacity in other colleges and departments on campus are welcome, but a CAFES faculty member must be a Co-Project Director on the proposal and the connections and benefits to the Dairy Innovation Hub research priority areas must be strong and clearly explained. The call for proposals for Capacity Building projects is an annual RFP process. Project Directors are required to submit a progress report by July 1 each year. A link to the progress report form is emailed to each Project Director in advance of the deadline. Project Directors are expected to participate in Dairy Innovation Hub events such as the Dairy Summit and Dairy Symposium and provide information on equipment usage and renovation impact as requested for Hub newsletters and annual reports.

Funding Limits: A total of **\$500,000** is available for distribution in FY27 via the Capacity Building process. Proposals are not restricted to a maximum level of funding beyond the total available in FY27, although the investigators should be aware that this total of **\$500,000** is used to fund requests via the Capacity Building RFP and the non-personnel costs contained within the Faculty Fellowship RFP process. Furthermore, please note the following with regard to levels of support.

Awards are expected to be made in the range of \$5,000 to \$250,000. Initially, two levels of requests for support will be targeted: 1) requests of \$5,000 to \$50,000 where it is expected numerous requests might be funded annually, and 2) requests of up to \$250,000 for larger pieces of equipment or other sizeable capacity building needs where we would expect to fund 1-3 requests annually.

Proposal Guidelines: Proposals must address one or more of the four areas of focus within the Dairy Innovation Hub. Proposals must be approved by a Department Chair and the CAFES Dean's Office. Approval implies that the project may proceed with any necessary space changes and any equipment purchased via the RFP process can be used and stored properly, with sufficient storage space available for equipment when not in use. Questions regarding space or facility needs within the Ag Science complex should be directed to your Department Chair who will take it to the College level, if necessary. Joint proposals from multiple faculty members and Departments are encouraged.

Proposals are to be submitted via the Dairy Innovation Hub Grant Request form found under CAFES on the UWRF BP Logix home page. Proposals are due by **12 PM on Friday, October 9, 2026**. To be accepted, proposals must have all approvals and include all components as detailed below. Questions regarding the proposal should be directed to Sierra Howry, sierra.howry@uwrf.edu. **Proposals will be reviewed and the Project Director may be asked for additional information or clarification in the weeks following the submission deadline. We anticipate decisions will be announced by November 1, 2026. Funds will be available after November 1, 2026. All funds are expected to be spent by June 1, 2027.**

Proposal Review Process

Proposals will be reviewed by the UWRF DIH Steering Committee. Ad-hoc reviewers may review the proposals also, as needed. Feedback on the proposal will be provided with the decision letter.

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Creates novel research capacity or expands research/teaching capacity
2. Relevance and impact to goals of Dairy Innovation Hub
3. Benefits multiple PI and program areas/departments and stimulates new research and funding
4. Leverages another funding mechanism or references future leveraging

The Project Director (PD) must be a UW-River Falls faculty or academic staff member. The PD can be from outside of CAFES but at least one CAFES faculty/academic staff member must be a co-director. All faculty/academic staff are encouraged to apply. To allow wider distribution of fellowship and capacity building awards, faculty/academic staff without a permanent DIH research component in their base appointment may be given additional consideration in the evaluation process.

If you have questions regarding appropriateness or fit of a proposed item to this RFP, please contact Sierra Howry, sierra.howry@uwrf.edu.

Proposal components

- The Cover Sheet in BP Logix requires:
 - A descriptive title
 - The name and department of the Project Director and Co-Director, if any.
 - Most relevant Dairy Innovation Hub Priority Area(s)
 - Identify the Department Chair and the Dean who must approve the submission
 - Total budget requested
 - A 250-word non-technical summary of the proposed capital equipment purchase or capacity building project. The non-technical summary should address the cost and the importance of the project; specifically, what capacity the proposal brings to UW-River Falls research.
- First attachment to the BP Logix form: A brief (3-page limit) narrative addressing the following:
 - Provide justification of how the project is essential for research and how it will create novel or expanded capacity for high-impact research that does not currently exist on our campus. The burden to convey the importance of the proposed project, and the value to the Dairy Innovation Hub priority area(s), is on the project director.
 - Justify the use of Hub funds vs University/College/Department funds for this project. Estimate the percentage of the time the space or equipment will be used for Hub research vs other uses. Provide information on how many faculty/staff might benefit from this project and use this space or equipment in the future.
 - Identify the DIH priority area most relevant (a secondary priority area may also be identified) to the project. The proposal should include a justification of fit to priority area and how the outcomes of this project will contribute to progress within Wisconsin, relative to the priority area.
 - If desired, a description of future extramurally funded research proposals that will benefit from this proposed project.
- Second attachment to the BP Logix form: Estimated acquisition cost, costs to implement, and ongoing costs of ownership
 - **Capital equipment requests should provide at least one budgetary quote from a vendor.** If approved, purchases will need to follow university purchasing processes.
 - A brief statement of anticipated implementation costs is required, considering space needs, utility service (power, water, ventilation, internet, etc.), and ongoing costs of ownership.
 - **Capacity building requests involving space or facility modifications must include a budgetary estimate from UWRF Facilities Management. Contact Duane Thompson (duane.thompson@uwrf.edu) for assistance in facilitating these requests. Allow two weeks for this process to be completed, at minimum.**
 - Submission of requests that have matching funds available from another entity are encouraged. Please list the funding source, monies available, and any deadlines or conditions of usage for the dollars from a second source.