ASAP SPRINT PROGRAM - PHASE 1

Strategic Planning Research Initiatives

REQUEST for APPLICATIONS

1. BACKGROUND

UT AgResearch is implementing the AgResearch Strategic Action Plan (ASAP), a plan of action to meet the goals set forth in the UTIA Strategic Plan. Information about ASAP is available here.

As part of the AgResearch plan of action, the Strategic Planning Research Initiatives (SPRINT) Program is inviting program concepts (Phase 1) for subsequent development of teams, building from concepts to initiatives, and receiving targeted support from AgResearch. Proposed concepts must address emerging issues that require transdisciplinary teams and integrated approaches.

The proposed research concept should align with one of the AgResearch program foci identified in its Strategic Action Plan (Figure 1). Submissions should capture the core technical concept and related information, as reflected in the required quad chart on the last page of this request for proposals (RFP). Based on alignment with the criteria set forth here, up to six concepts will be selected for support to facilitate team development and program goals. Successful applications will be awarded $5,000 for the team to develop a full proposal for competition in Phase 2 of the SPRINT Program. Funding can be used for meeting organization or planning, travel to meet with prospective team members at their institutions or a conference (pending relaxed travel restrictions), or preliminary data collection to support determination of program goals. Concept applications are **due March 26, 2021,** and are to be submitted via email to Jessica McCord (jfox16@utk.edu). Selection notifications will be sent by April 15, 2021.

Phase 2 applications will be due in October 2021, and the two selected programs will be awarded up to $100,000. Phase 2 funding could support preliminary data collection, competitive grant applications, publications, presentations, and related outputs that demonstrate effectiveness of the team. Phase 2 applications that include global components and/or collaborations will be eligible for Phase 2 supplemental funding provided by the Smith International Center.
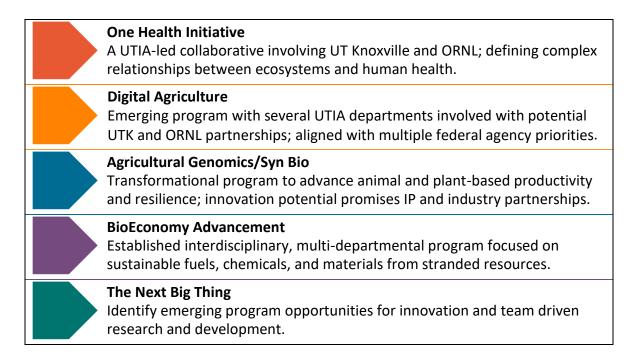
	One Health Initiative
	A UTIA-led collaborative involving UT Knoxville and ORNL; defining complex relationships between ecosystems and human health.
	Digital Agriculture
	Emerging program with several UTIA departments involved with potential UTK and ORNL partnerships; aligned with multiple federal agency priorities.
	Agricultural Genomics/Syn Bio
	Transformational program to advance animal and plant-based productivity and resilience; innovation potential promises IP and industry partnerships.
	BioEconomy Advancement
	Established interdisciplinary, multi-departmental program focused on sustainable fuels, chemicals, and materials from stranded resources.
	The Next Big Thing
	Identify emerging program opportunities for innovation and team driven research and development.

Figure 1. UT AgResearch Program Focus Areas.

2.   SUBMISSION DETAILS AND FORMAT

For Phase 1 of SPRINT, a program "Quad Chart" is being requested for review. (A formatted Quad chart is included as the last page of this document). The quad chart requires a concise overview discussion of essential information about your proposed program concept. The four sections of the chart are as follows:

1.   What is the technical area to be addressed? Describe without jargon or acronyms the concept for the research program. Articulate why and provide compelling evidence that this technical area is an emerging or growing issue, or a long-standing issue subject to new approaches. Provided compelling evidence of the potential for the topic area to attract significant and sustained funding and identify possible funders.

2.   What are the key technical bottlenecks to be addressed? Explain what obstacles have impeded progress in the proposed area, and how those have limited essential progress.

3.   What is the potential research approach and innovation to address the bottlenecks? Why is UTIA (e.g., Extension expertise, collaborative opportunities, etc.) particularly suited to address this program area?

4.   Describe the plan for team building, including potential UTIA, UT Knoxville, ORNL team members and external partnerships that would be engaged in the program. Highlight the transdisciplinary scope of the proposed concept, including any involvement of industry and Extension.

3. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND APPROACH

A. Evaluation Criteria

Each Program Concept Quad Chart will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. The program concept is consistent with the AgResearch program foci, including "the next big thing." That is, the proposed work may fall under existing focus areas (with appropriate scope) or target emerging transformative science and engineering that will benefit from unique skills and capabilities of AgResearch faculty.

2. The problem addressed is complex and the proposed work could be transformative. Evidence is provided that the issue is an emerging or significantly expanding issue or opportunity, in that the program concept is advanced by recent research findings or new technologies or approaches, and is capturing the attention of the public, policymakers, or program leaders at funding agencies, foundations, or industry.

3. AgResearch, with engagement of Extension and other partners, has a compelling reason to be engaged in the proposed program concept. The program as described would build upon and benefit from relationships with industry, ORNL, or UT Knoxville, or would build relationships with other partners who complement UTIA expertise.

4. The program, once developed, has potential to attract significant, long-term funding (greater than $1 million), and aspects of the program could appeal to multiple funders, including industry, foundations, or agencies other than USDA to ensure sustainable growth.

B. Evaluation

Evaluation entails two levels of assessment: 1) how well the application addresses each evaluation criterion (50 points), and 2) the overall likelihood that the project will have significant outcome and impact both in addressing the problem on which it focuses and in aiding AgResearch in meeting the performance objectives of its Strategic Action Plan (25 points).[1] Quad Charts will be reviewed and ranked by AgResearch's Faculty Innovation Council with final selections made by AgResearch leadership. The AgResearch leadership team will determine the number of concepts ultimately selected for Phase 2 of the ASAP SPRINT program, which will involve further development of a full proposal.

Note that the evaluation is not based on specific tasks, milestones/deliverables such as proposals or funding plans, or a budget. This SPRINT Phase 1 also is not focused on resource gaps in laboratory, analytical, or data needs, nor does it require a detailed plan of collaboration. These details will be the focus of the selection of programs for future development at SPRINT Phase 2. Project directors leading the program concepts selected in SPRINT Phase 1 are expected to:

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[1] Evaluation methods are based on project evaluation described in USDA NIFA Sustainable Agriculture Systems Request for Applications, 2019.

1. Finalize the research team;

2. Establish communication plans to coordinate subsequent work; and

3. Develop and submit a full proposal for the ASAP SPRINT Phase 2 competition.

Quad Chart Title: _____

What is the technical area to be addressed? Provide compelling evidence that this area could attract significant funding and identify potential funders. (1,200 characters max)	What are the key technical bottlenecks to be addressed? (1,200 characters max)
What is the potential research direction for AgResearch? (1,200 characters max)	Steps for team building: Potential team members and impact on AgResearch and UTIA (1,200 characters max):