



FOOD FROM THOUGHT

Food from Thought: Agricultural systems for a healthy planet Thematic III Research Fund

Program Guide

April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2025

Overview

The University of Guelph's Food from Thought Program, funded by the Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF), is inviting eligible U of G faculty to submit ***Thematic Research Fund*** proposals for projects beginning as early as April 1, 2022 and ending by March 31, 2025. This fund will support research projects that strongly align with and support Food from Thought's mission to develop innovative solutions that improve both the sustainability and productivity of agricultural production at global, landscape, and micro scales and that fit with the following program goals and current priorities, outlined below.

Program Goals

- Increasing the sustainability and productivity of global food systems by leveraging the considerable power of data science, leading-edge agri-food research, and biodiversity science.
- Positioning Canada as a global leader in the development of innovative solutions that improve both the sustainability and productivity of food systems at global, landscape, and micro levels.
- Contributing solutions that help address significant, complex problems with global impact, such as climate change, public health, food insecurity and inequity.

Priority Focus Areas

Projects may fit within any, or more than one, of the Food from Thought (FfT) thematic areas, including Crops, Livestock, Pathogens and Food Safety, Ecosystem Services, Biodiversity, Integrated Food Systems, or Digital Agriculture and must address at least one of the following high-level research priority areas:

1. **Research integration projects.** This priority area is intended to build on FfT research funded to-date, enabling interdisciplinary cross-collaboration that synthesizes and integrates five years of data and discoveries to advance research that challenges conventional wisdom, leads to unexpected insights, and redefines the boundaries of science in agri-food research.

2. **New or ongoing research projects that have the potential to be catalytic or transformational with demonstrable benefits and measurable impact within three years.** Projects in this priority area will advance existing strategic initiatives, contribute solutions to significant problems, impact policy or practice, or respond to stakeholders' research needs in a short time horizon.

Examples of priority problems include, but are not limited to:

- Climate change – nature and agriculture-based climate solutions
- Inequity in agriculture and agri-food research
- Pandemic recovery – future proofing food systems and supply chains
- Food safety and animal health
- Human health and livelihoods

3. **Projects that support FfT's data management strategy and the development of Agri-food Data Canada (ADC).** Food from Thought's Data Strategy Team is leading the development of Agri-food Data Canada, a well-governed integrated platform for agri-food research data at the University of Guelph and beyond. ADC is developing a service catalogue for the broader agri-food research data ecosystem that will address the data needs of the research community. This priority is guided by FAIR data principles – to increase the value of data by making it Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable.

In addition to funding the coordinating leadership and operational capacity of ADC, through this funding call, FfT will provide funding support for new use-cases working with the FfT Data Strategy Team to onboard the data management needs of the project(s) to ADC.

Projects funded by FfT, the Ontario Agri-food Innovation Alliance, industry partners, or other project sponsors can be eligible to partner with ADC. Contact the ADC team at adc@uoguelph.ca to assess your data needs.

Budget

Projects can be up to 36 months (3 years) with a maximum request of \$360,000. The duration of the proposed projects and the size of the budget request must be commensurate with the nature of the research proposed.

For projects focusing on Priority Area #1, Research Integration, budget stacking is permitted allowing \$120,000/year for each PI and CI.

The total funding available is approximately \$6M.

Eligibility and Award Allocation:

The *Thematic Research Fund* is open to faculty at the University of Guelph who are eligible to hold Tri-Agency grants.

To ensure that the Food from Thought program remains highly strategic and responsive to sector needs, existing Food from Thought researchers are encouraged to collaborate with faculty researchers who have not held Food from Thought funding to date. This is intended to:

- enable existing Food from Thought research teams to expand their expertise to support changing research needs and objectives related to their central topic areas;
- support integration and collaboration opportunities across disciplines, research groups, themes, and topics;
- open the door for new research groups and new areas of research that directly align with Food from Thought; and
- provide an opportunity for early career researchers to contribute to the body of research.

Eligible researchers may participate in, and receive funding from more than one project, and may act as Principal Investigator on one or more projects.

Review Process:

Research proposal workplans will be reviewed by a panel of external experts from academia, industry, and/or government, which may include Food from Thought’s International Scientific Advisory Council members. All workplans will be evaluated against the Review Criteria listed and described in this document.

Consensus reviews for each proposal, based on multiple individual reviews, will be used by the Food from Thought Steering Committee to inform award decisions, which may also be shaped by funding availability, strategic considerations, program-level considerations of equity, diversity and inclusion, and distribution of funds across Colleges and thematic areas.

Only workplans that meet the high standard of research excellence will be considered for funding.

Review Criteria:

All research proposal workplans will be reviewed using the following criteria:

1. **Research excellence - Equity, diversity and inclusion:** Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is a necessary underpinning for research excellence. Projects must demonstrate practical implementation of the U of G’s principles of EDI. Research workplans include a robust action plan on how EDI best practices will be applied to the project, reflected in the project’s team, HQP recruitment plans, training and development opportunities, as well as dissemination and knowledge mobilization strategies. Attention should be paid, but not limited to, Indigenization, integration of BIPOC participation, and engagement of marginalized communities and early career researchers.
2. **Research excellence – Scholarly merit:** The proposed research is clearly presented, is highly original and innovative, and is likely to have impact by leading to ground-breaking advances in the area and/or leading to a technology or policy that addresses socioeconomic or environmental needs. Long-term vision and short-term objectives are clearly defined. The methodology is clearly defined and appropriate. The application clearly demonstrates how the research activities to be supported are distinct from those funded (or applied for) by other sources.

3. **Alignment with Food from Thought and agri-food sector priorities:** Research objectives clearly align with or address specific FfT priority areas of focus and the agri-food sector more broadly, and revolve centrally around leveraging data and advanced analytics to generate solutions for food productivity and sustainability within the themes identified. The project fits with at least one of the three established priority areas for the call, which address current FfT priorities. In addition, the workplans should indicate how the research project will contribute to the development of an integrated research data sharing and analytics platform, if applicable.
4. **Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP) training:** HQP training plans include innovative, unique, and multi-disciplinary opportunities for students and research/technical staff. Training plans are clearly defined and expected to produce high quality results in terms of overall approach and specific projects for HQP.
5. **Knowledge mobilization and research impact:** The project scope and associated outcomes include a clear description of how the project activities will result in real social, economic, and/or environmental benefits for Canadians. The project has high impact and/or commercialization potential and knowledge mobilization plans include specific objectives and methods to engage with non-academic communities, end users and partners, and include a robust partner engagement strategy that is aligned with proposed project outcomes and impacts.
6. **Strength of the project team:** The project team is composed of researchers who are, or are demonstrably progressing toward being, leaders in their fields. Project teams are multidisciplinary and reflect the necessary expertise required to address the proposed scope of research, meet the objectives and outcomes of the project, and conduct the anticipated knowledge mobilization activities. Projects that support early career researchers with direct research funding will be prioritized.
7. **Partner contributions and leveraging:** Proposals include clear evidence of partner engagement, as demonstrated through letters of support documenting cash and in-kind contributions, if applicable. Proposals also include evidence or a plan for leveraging the Food from Thought award to extend or expand the project with other research support, through grants, awards and/or contracts.
8. **Project management capacity and appropriateness of budget:** Workplans will be evaluated on the strength of the team's capacity to ensure the project proceeds on time and on budget, addresses key milestones, and ensures appropriate integration that avoids disciplinary silos. This includes describing plans for, and expertise in, managing research data through collection, analysis, and storage. Workplans will also be evaluated on the appropriateness of the budget in relation to the proposed scope of research and methods.

How to Apply and Deadlines

Applications must be submitted electronically to the Food from Thought Office at fft@uoguelph.ca no later than 11:59 pm on **December 20th, 2021**, using the forms provided. Applications are available on the [FfT Website](#).

Important Dates

Call for Proposal Launch	November 15, 2021
Town Halls	November 23 rd , 24 th , and 25 th
Proposals Due	January 5 th , 2022, 11:59pm
Notification of Review Results and Award	March 2022
Earliest Project Start Date	April 1, 2022
Project End Date	March 31, 2025 (max 3-year projects)*

*Principal Investigators may request a no-cost extension of up to one year beyond March 31, 2025 by December 31st, 2024.

For each research project, the following completed components must be submitted on or before January 5th, 2021:

1. Project Workplan (one per project). Applicants must use the detailed workplan template provided.
2. Project Budget (one workbook per project, which may include multiple budget sheets – one per budget-holding PI and co-investigator(s)).
3. Recent Common CV or Form 100 for the Principal Investigator and all co-investigators, collated in alphabetical order using last names.
4. Signed letters of support from any partners committing cash and in-kind support, collated in alphabetical order using organization name.
5. Signed OR-5 Forms for each account holding researcher.

All documents, aside from the Project Budget form (in Excel), should be submitted as a searchable PDF.

Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator and Co-Investigators:

Upon acceptance of the award, the Principal Investigator (PI) for each approved Food from Thought research project must submit to the Food from Thought Office the following, in order to initiate the account setup¹ for the award:

1. Data Management Plan²
2. An updated project budget and its distribution across eligible project investigators (if necessary)
3. Signed delegation of authority forms for the PI and all Co-Investigators receiving funding

¹ Each PI and CI will be provided with a separate trust account in accordance with the approved budget.

² A template and support to complete the Data Management Plan will be provided to those approved for funding.

After issuance of the award, the PI and Co-Investigators (CI) will be asked to sign a Food from Thought funding agreement before their trust accounts are opened. Investigators must ensure that all necessary certifications are in place for the duration of the project.

The CFREF grant is governed by the Tri-Agency Institutional Programs Secretariat (TIPS) of the Government of Canada, which has specified rules and requirements for its use to which all project investigators must adhere. The PI and each CI are responsible to ensure that project expenses budgeted and charged to the Food from Thought award are eligible and in accordance with CFREF rules and requirements, as outlined in the [CFREF Administration Guide](#). Any ineligible expenses charged to the Food from Thought award will not be covered by Food from Thought and the investigator will be responsible for the payment of ineligible expenses from other sources.

PIs are required to provide annual reporting on the overall project and associated results of the research to the Food from Thought Project Office at the end of each fiscal year (ending March 31st) during which CFREF funds are held. This reporting must include information and results of all project investigators and will be in a format determined by the Food from Thought Project Office for the purposes of supporting institutional reporting requirements on the CFREF grant to TIPS. All project CIs will be required to provide relevant project information and results to the Principal Investigator to ensure reporting requirements are met. In addition, all project investigators will be required to provide project information to the Food from Thought Communications Coordinator for the purposes of showcasing and sharing project information and results on the Food from Thought website, social media, and other communications for both internal and external audiences.

All project investigators will be expected to participate in a Food from Thought Annual Meeting, including the presentation of the research project in the form of oral and/or poster presentations, as determined by the Food from Thought Project Office.

Questions:

Questions on this Call for Proposals should be submitted in writing to Food from Thought at: fft@uoguelph.ca.