**Water Institute – Waterloo Institute for Nanotechnology**

**Seed Grant Program**

**Winter 2022 Request for Proposals**

***January 10, 2022***

**Background**

The missions of the Water Institute (WI) and the Waterloo Institute for Nanotechnology (WIN) are to facilitate collaboration, and to support and demonstrate excellence and innovation in inter-disciplinary research and education. In support of this mission, WI and WIN are pleased to launch an inaugural seed grants competition to stimulate new inter-disciplinary collaboration, to facilitate interaction with international authorities, to encourage new areas of research, and to support the development of research proposals. **Specifically, the inaugural WI-WIN seed grants will target new research or technology development at the intersection of water and nanotechnology that addresses contaminants of emerging concern (CECs), including microplastics, potentially causing ecological or human-health impacts**. Seed grants are expected to advance progress against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. A total of $100,000 is available for the Winter 2022 competition.

**Purpose**

Objectives of the WI-WIN Seed Grant Program, Winter 2022 competition are to:

* Encourage researchers to collaborate across Institute and disciplinary boundaries;
* Catalyze the development of new, inter-disciplinary research teams;
* Encourage inter-institutional, national and international collaborations;
* Encourage the development of research areas that are new to the University of Waterloo at the intersection of water and nanotechnology, preferably linked to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals;
* Identify new research or technology development ideas that addresses (the environmental, social and economic impacts and risks of) contaminants of emerging concern (CECs), including microplastics, and will make a positive impact on the environment, society and economy;
* Position research teams for external funding success.

The expectation is that a project supported by seed funding will contribute to an application for external funding within two years.

**Project Teams**

Project teams are comprised of two Co-Investigators and supporting Co-Applicants.

One Co-Investigator must be a WIN core faculty member and one Co-Investigator must be a WI faculty member. Co-Investigators must be from different Faculties.

Co-applicants can include WI or WIN faculty members, other University of Waterloo faculty, or individuals external to the University from academic or non-academic institutions.

A faculty member may only apply as a Co-Investigator on one proposal, but may be included as a Co-Applicant or project participant on other applications within this competition.

**Project Participants**

In addition to the Project Teams, project participants could include additional WI or WIN faculty members, other University of Waterloo faculty, graduate students, research scientists, post-doctoral fellows, or individuals external to the University from academic or non-academic institutions. The inclusion of international authorities, and other relevant external partners, will be viewed favourably.

**Awards**

A total of $100,000 is available for the Winter 2022 competition. The maximum seed grant will be $25,000 and the project duration is one year. If successful, Office of Research Cover Sheets will need to be completed and returned to the seed grant administrators prior to funds being made available through a University of Waterloo account. The Co-Investigators will serve as the contact persons for the grant and will be responsible for arranging the disbursement of funds with the appropriate department or school administrators. Seed grant fund accounts will be open for eighteen months from the date of initiation, after which time unspent funds will be returned to WI and WIN.

**Use of Funds**

Seed grants are intended to catalyze new interdisciplinary collaborations and research, and cannot be used to support or extend existing research activities. Seed grants should be used to support the generation of new initial data or research methodologies, or the planning and execution of activities such as workshops or symposia, that strategically position teams for external funding opportunities in new, interdisciplinary research areas. Seed grant funds can only be used to support HQP salaries if their activities are directly related to the seed grant. Seed grant funds cannot be used towards the purchase of equipment.

**Application Format**

Applications must be submitted using the WI-WIN Seed Grant Proposal Form which is available electronically. The proposal form includes the following sections:

1. Project Title
2. Project Team and Participants
3. Project Description
4. Inter-disciplinarity
5. Relevance and Impact
6. Anticipated External Funding Opportunities
7. Budget
8. Project Metric(s)

**Application Deadline**

Applications must be received electronically by **5:00pm EST, February 18, 2022**. Co-Investigators will receive acknowledgement of receipt within one week of submission. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Applications should be sent electronically in Word or PDF format to both:

Mary Anne Hardy

Water Institute

Email: mahardy@uwaterloo.ca

Lisa Pokrajac

Waterloo Institute for Nanotechnology

Email: lisa.pokrajac@uwaterloo.ca

**Evaluation Process**

The Executive Directors of the WI and WIN will co-chair a selection panel comprised of a minimum of three WI and WIN faculty members. The co-chairs and selection panel will review applications and determine award recipients. Any conflicts of interest will be declared in advance, and the reviewers will not participate in discussions or decisions related to applications for which they have a conflict of interest. Applications will be scored according to consistency with the evaluation criteria and preferences noted below, and will be declared either approved for funding or not-approved for funding. Approved applications will be ranked from highest score to lowest score and funds will be awarded as requested (to a maximum of $25,000 per application), starting with the highest ranked application and moving down the list until all approved applications are funded or seed grant funds are depleted, whichever comes first. Co-Investigators will receive written notice within 30 days from the submission deadline indicating whether or not the application was successful.

**Evaluation Criteria**

Applications will be assessed against eligibility and project criteria as follows:

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| **Eligibility Criteria** | **Description** |  |
| Project Teams | One Co-Investigator is a WIN core faculty member and one Co-Investigator is a WI faculty member. Co-Investigators are from different Faculties. Co-Investigators do not appear as a Co-Investigator on another application. | yes/no |
| *If “yes”, applications will be evaluated and scored on the following project criteria. If “no”, applications will be disqualified.* |
| **Project Criteria** | **Description** | **Points** |
| Inter-disciplinarity | * Project teams and participants are inter-disciplinary in character, and the project topic combines several relevant disciplines into one activity. Where appropriate, project teams and participants include external, national or international authorities, including possible end-users.
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| Relevance and Impact | * The proposed research aligns with the objectives of the seed grants program as outlined above, and the WI and WIN missions.
* The proposed project is innovative and novel and represents a new research area in both the WI and WIN.
* The proposed research or technology development clearly indicates how it will address (potential) risks and impacts of contaminants of emerging concern (CECs), including microplastics, using nanotechnology and how this benefits the environment, society and economy.
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| Anticipated External Funding Opportunities | * Potential for additional or continued activities, including funding beyond the seed grant stage.
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| Budget | * Application clearly describes and justifies the use of the requested funds.
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Applicants are encouraged to:

* Include at least one early-career investigator (i.e., started academic research career no more than five years ago) as a member of the project team;
* Consider Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in their project team;
* Include the participation of graduate students;
* Include the participation of government, civil society, private sector or industry professionals, either as stakeholders or potential end-users of the proposed research line or technology.

**Requirements of Successful Applications**

**Reporting Requirements**

Recipients of a WI-WIN Seed Grant are required to report on outputs and outcomes resulting from the grant. A report template will be provided that includes specific performance indicators, such as:

* Resulting applications for funding and their success;
* Number of new collaborations;
* Number of highly-qualified professionals (HQP) trained;
* Number of publications.

**Acknowledgement of Support**

Successful applicants are expected to acknowledge the funding support of the WI and WIN in any public announcements, presentations or publications related to their project.