Opportunity to Obtain Preliminary Feedback on Your Driving Digital Innovation Strategic Plan Round #4 Seed Grant Proposal

During the past two years, the University awarded seed grant funding for a number of pilot projects designed to implement the University’s 2016-20 Strategic Plan. January 31st 2019 at 11:59 p.m. is the deadline for submission of the fourth cycle of Strategic Plan seed grant proposals.

“Driving Digital Innovation [DDI]” is one of the five thematic priorities in the Strategic Plan. Cycle 4 Proposals that are based on the DDI thematic priority will be evaluated by the Driving Digital Innovation Steering Committee, the Driving Digital Innovation Executive Committee, and an Oversight Committee before the final funding decision is made by the Provost and President.

In an effort to help proposers maximize their chances of success, the DDI Steering Committee will provide preliminary feedback before the Cycle #4 submission deadline. If you would like to take advantage of this feedback opportunity, please send a one-page “concept paper” to DDI Steering Committee Co-chair Colin J. Neill cjn6@psu.edu by 9am on Tuesday November 20, 2018. The Committee expects to complete its review by Tuesday, December 4, 2018, after which it will provide you with feedback.

Successful DDI proposals will not necessarily be limited to the four goals set forth in the DDI portion of the Strategic Plan, but if your proposal advances one of these four goals, it will be helpful for your Concept Paper to identify the DDI goal(s) your proposal advances and explain the connection. (The four goals are to develop a more robust digital infrastructure and culture; to make online education and personalized learning central to our 21st-century land-grant mission; to create digital solutions that cross academic borders; and to drive economic development.)

Factors that were weighted heavily during previous RFP Rounds include: 1) the degree to which the proposal is aligned with the Strategic Plan; 2) the potential transformative impact of the proposal on the University; 3) whether the proposal would allow Penn State, as an institution, to have a transformative impact at an international, national, or Commonwealth level in line with its land-grant priorities; 4) whether the proposal’s partner list, narrative, and budget demonstrates substantive engagement and collaboration among multiple programs, campuses, and/or Centers at Penn State and the strategic use of any existing University resources; 5) the metrics used to evaluate progress; 6) whether the requested budget was likely to accomplish the proposal’s goals and sustainable change; and 7) alternative funding sources (i.e., whether the proposal was different than a research proposal that might be funded through external channels such as NSF, NIH, foundation, or other sources); and 8) whether the proposal is redundant in part with initiatives that already exist.

The DDI Steering Committee welcomes digital innovation proposals that could have a transformative impact within the University, as well as digital proposals that could have a transformative impact outside of the University by improving digital access and fostering economic prosperity across Pennsylvania and beyond. Concept papers should clearly address how the proposed project contributes to the University’s Strategic Plan paying particular attention to the DDI goals listed above. The Committee is particularly interested in proposals that increase digital access, literacy, and leverage, e.g., by providing digital resources to all corners of the Commonwealth or preparing students and Pennsylvania citizens for the digital age and economy, or revealing or maximizing the opportunities that digital technologies and data can provide in growing the economy and addressing societal challenges. The best proposals will have the potential for broad and significant impact across the University or the Commonwealth. That said, the committee would consider a localized project if the proposal explains how the successful pilot project could later be extended (i.e., scaled up). We discourage proposals that represent work typically within the remit of individual Departments, Colleges, or Campuses, and research proposals traditionally funded by external agencies.

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