CAFNR AG-CELERATOR FOR AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES (CAAT)

Objective

This new CAFNR funding is designed to accelerate the translation of agriculture, food and natural resources innovations into products and processes that improve the lives of people in Missouri and beyond. The program bridges the gap between academic research and industry by providing funding to CAFNR faculty-led teams to perform experiments to generate data that will ultimately lead to commercialization of new technologies.

Oversight

The CAAT will have two committees that help direct activities.

The CAAT Oversight Committee. This committee will function as the Board of Directors of the Program and selects the projects that are funded. The committee reviews funded projects on a regular basis to assess progress toward milestones, and mentors project teams as needed. Committee members will have expertise in the translation of agricultural technologies and will represent industry, the investment community, MU Technology Advancement Office and CAFNR leadership. The committee will communicate regularly throughout the year and meets as a group three times annually for project selection and portfolio management activities.

The CAAT Executive Committee. This committee will be comprised of the CAFNR Office of Research and a subset of Oversight Committee members and be responsible for making decisions between meetings of the Oversight Committee. The CAFNR Office of Research will set the agenda for meetings, which can range from addressing pressing program or project matters to vetting strategies or projects that are to be put in front of the Oversight Committee. The Executive Committee will also be responsible for discussing ideas for improving the CAAT Program and ensuring that the best projects receive CAAT funding. The Executive Committee will meet bi-monthly.

Program Funding

The program will support two different kinds of project funding: full and seed:

Full proposals are for projects that require ~$50K to complete an experiment that validates the technology. Preliminary data indicating potential success of the technology will be essential to qualify for the full support. Full proposal awards fund projects for up to one year. Full projects should be 12-24 months from a commercial event (a license, for example) to an established company or funding sufficient to continue translation of the technology.
Seed proposals are for launching new projects, requiring $15K or less to complete major milestones.

Both seed and full proposals will be solicited once a year.   We expect to fund at least 2 to 4 seed grants and 2 full proposals per year.

Eligibility

All projects must include a team and a CAFNR faculty member should serve as the Principal Investigator. Collaborators from other MU Colleges and UM System campuses and from other universities may participate, however, award funding must be used on MU campus. A portion of any future royalties the college may receive from technology licenses resulting from the CAAT Program will flow back to the program, providing a return on investment for the sustainability of the program.

Expected Outcomes

CAFNR Strategic Plan (https://cafnr.missouri.edu/strategic-plan/) has a stated goal of doubling the intellectual property outputs (disclosures, patents, trademarks, and varieties) and outcomes (licensing of technologies and start-ups) over the next five years. CAAT is launched with the goal of accelerating the commercialization of technologies in CAFNR. We expect an annual increase of 5 to 10% in outputs and outcomes as a result of the CAAT program.

Application Process

The three-step application process includes submission of a two-page single-spaced Letter of Intent (LOI) (Deadline: December 15), submission of a full proposal (maximum 3 pages), if invited, by March 15, and an opportunity to make a Pitch if invited. The CAAT Oversight Committee will make the final funding decision by June 1 and projects could begin by July 1.

LOI Format

The two-page LOI should have the following details:

       Page 1.

- Title of your proposal
- Names of the PI and Co-PIs and their affiliations
- Whether you are submitting a Full or Seed proposal

       Page 2.

- What is the problem you plan to address?
- Why is it important to address this problem now?
- What is your proposed solution or technology?
- What are the expected IP outcomes and outputs?
- How far are you from a commercial event?
- Why are you the one to do the proposed work?

Please email the LOI as a PDF file to CAFNR Office of Research to the attention of Rhonda Turner (TurnerRH@Missouri.edu) by the deadline.