

# Sustainable Design Faculty Grants

## Grant Guidelines – Spring 2021

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## Introduction

VentureWell is on a mission to cultivate a diverse and inclusive pipeline of inventors, innovators, and entrepreneurs driven to solve the world's biggest challenges and create lasting impact. We have pursued this work — at the intersection of science and technology (S&T) and innovation and entrepreneurship (I&E) — for twenty-five years. We strive to do so in a way that fosters sustainability-focused I&E, advances equity, and consistently upholds our organizational values: to collaborate for impact, to live innovation, to bring integrity always, to interact with consideration and candor, and to deliver excellence.

VentureWell awards up to \$30,000 grants (with a duration of three years) to colleges and universities for the purpose of strengthening existing curricular programs and/or building new courses and programs that engage student teams in developing and pursuing scalable solutions to real world needs through I&E.

## Commitment to Sustainability

**The Spring 2021 Sustainable Design Faculty Grants** cycle will support faculty and staff who are committed to cultivating I&E dedicated to positive social impact and environmental sustainability (see Appendix for definitions), and will integrate sustainable design concepts tools, and frameworks into their I&E curriculum. We are seeking proposals with innovative ideas related to the development of new courses and programs, or to strengthening existing courses and programs, that incorporate key sustainable design concepts with the end goal of developing novel inventions and technologies. Special consideration will be given to proposals that demonstrate clear support for student innovations that are dedicated to climate change solutions (i.e. mitigation and/or adaptation; see Appendix for definitions), as well as innovations to existing products or systems that address an opportunity to become carbon neutral or net zero energy, or reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, pollution, and waste.

Examples of sustainable design concepts, tools, and frameworks include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Systems thinking & [whole system mapping](#)
- [Environmental impact measurement](#) methods (i.e., [Life Cycle Assessment](#) (LCA), [Cradle-to-Cradle Certification](#), etc.)
- [Greener materials](#) development and/or selection (i.e., green chemistry, materials science, or manufacturing)
- [Engineering for One Planet \(EOP\) Framework](#)
- [Circular economy](#)

Learn more about sustainable design content on VentureWell's [Tools for Design & Sustainability website](#).

Sustainable design and technologies/fields include cleantech sectors: energy, water, agricultural and food production systems, waste, transportation, urbanism, materials science.

Proposals may include plans for creating or improving an individual course, course sequence, minor, major, certificate program or other co- and extracurricular programs that support I&E focused course and program efforts.

*Please note: For the Spring 2021 cycle, VentureWell is accepting proposals ONLY for courses and/or programs described above. If you would like to submit a proposal on another topic, please submit to a future cycle (deadline Fall 2021). See below for more information about Spring 2021 Faculty Grant Eligibility Requirements.*

## Commitment to Advancing Equity

VentureWell Faculty Grants support faculty and staff who are committed to inclusive support of students who are creating innovations for positive social and environmental impact (see Appendix for definitions). We seek proposals with innovative ideas related to the development of new courses and programs, or to strengthen existing courses and programs, with the end goal of developing novel inventions and technologies. We hope that support from these grant funds will lead to effective courses and programs that are sustained by the institution; lead to the creation and support of student teams; and propagate curricular innovations to expand opportunities for learning, inventing, and fostering I&E.

To advance our organizational commitment to equity, we are actively working to expand the participation of historically underrepresented, underestimated, and under-resourced faculty and students in S&T I&E (referenced throughout this document as URGs; see definitions in Appendix)— specifically those who identify as Black, Latinx, and Indigenous; women of all backgrounds; and individuals from low-income backgrounds. We especially encourage faculty and staff applicants from URGs and proposals from Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), including Tribal Colleges, Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions, etc., and other institutions that demonstrate clear support for students from URGs in S&T I&E.

Learn more about why racial equity is core to the mission of VentureWell by [reading this message](#) from VentureWell's CEO & President.

## How to Apply

You'll need to have a VentureWell account to start your application. Creating an account is easy, no-cost, and open to all. [To access your existing account or to create a new one, click here](#). You may start, save, stop, and return to your online proposal at any time before submitting.

VentureWell is here to help you with your application and answer your questions! We will be hosting informational webinars to walk through the application process on April 6 (3 pm ET) and April 19 (3pm ET), 2021. To register to attend a webinar or view the recording after the event, visit <https://venturewell.org/faculty-grants/webinar>

Additionally, our grants team is available to field your questions; please contact us at: [grants@venturewell.org](mailto:grants@venturewell.org).

## Eligibility Requirements

Faculty Grants are awarded to colleges and universities that are:

- **US-based.** We do not accept proposals from international universities at this time, but international partners are allowed. Note: If the program focus is outside the campus community or outside the US, a local partner must be identified.
- **VentureWell members.** While an institutional membership is required to apply, we are currently offering a no-cost membership to colleges and universities that sign up between September 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021. VentureWell is committed to broadening participation and advancing equitable opportunities for applicants. We believe that seeking support for your valuable and critical work should not be a hurdle during this challenging time when many colleges and universities, particularly under-resourced institutions, are facing budget constraints. Click here to learn more about the benefits of membership and to join or renew today: <https://venturewell.org/membership/>. Not sure if your college or university is already a VentureWell member? Check your status [here](#). If you have questions or need assistance, please contact [membership@venturewell.org](mailto:membership@venturewell.org).

The following additional eligibility requirements apply:

- We accept no more than two proposals per institution per cycle. If more than two are received, only the two submitted first will be reviewed.
- Proposals may only be resubmitted once.
- Proposals may also include non-member partners from education, nonprofits, industry, non-governmental organizations, governments, and/or the investment community, etc.

## Characteristics of Successful Proposals

VentureWell grants are competitive. Successful proposals will:

- **Focus on sustainable design.** Technology innovation/entrepreneurship centered on developing environmental and social sustainability-focused technologies and/or incorporating principles of sustainable design. (See Appendix below for definitions.) Disciplines or industries not typically considered “green” are encouraged.
- **Align with the aims of the grant** to create or strengthen curricular programs or courses that engage student teams in developing and pursuing scalable solutions to real world needs through I&E.
- **Provide students with a meaningful experience**, including opportunities for:
  - Experiential learning-by-doing and opportunities to solve real world problems.
  - Forming student-led teams focused on technology invention, innovation, and entrepreneurship with a positive environmental and social impact.
  - Applying to [VentureWell's E-Team program](#).
- **Set the stage for sustained institutional change.** A recent retrospective study highlighted the importance of the following factors in sustaining work started under VentureWell's Faculty Grant program:
  - A multidisciplinary, collaborative team approach
  - Well-defined connections to a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem beyond the proposed course or program. (Schools that are just beginning to grow their I&E ecosystems are encouraged to apply—please describe how this course or program is part of a larger plan for entrepreneurial ecosystem development. A letter of support from an administrator acknowledging this effort is highly recommended)
  - Campus-based champions and plans for continuation and financial sustainability of the course or program after VentureWell funding, as demonstrated in letters of support
- **Articulate a plan for broadening participation among URGs.** Proposals must provide a clear and specific plan to articulate how participation of students and faculty from URGs in STEM I&E will be fostered. Specifically, how will students from URGs be recruited, supported, and mentored in this work, and how will you measure success for each? Proposed course/program should include faculty and mentors with a wide range of backgrounds and expertise to support students, including students from URGs.

## Examples of Projects that are NOT Strong Candidates

Examples of projects that are NOT strong candidates for Faculty Grant funding include:

- Courses or programs that do not integrate key sustainable design concepts, tools, and/or frameworks.

- Courses or programs without a focus on sustainability-centric innovations and entrepreneurship.
- Pure research or single project courses (i.e. where there is no student team ownership or commercialization plan for the innovation/venture).
- Courses or programs that are unlikely to continue beyond the grant period.
- Existing courses or programs where there is little change or improvement proposed (i.e., ongoing support requests).
- Proposals that focus solely on extracurricular activities (e.g. hack-a-thons, business plan competitions, etc.) without a clearly stated connection to existing curriculum or other coursework.
- Courses or programs that are disconnected from other campus and community-based resources (i.e., without a description of how the course/program is part of a larger plan for entrepreneurial ecosystem development).
- Courses or programs that do not lead to the creation of student teams.
- Proposals that do not demonstrate support for the most promising technologies and teams to move beyond the classroom, lab, or club.
- Proposals that do not include as part of their plan both advancing equity and inclusion, and environmental sustainability in STEM I&E.

## Key Dates

- May 19, 2021 - submission deadline
- July 2021 - final decisions and notifications
- August 2021- funds disbursed and grant start date
- Fall 2021 - Green Launchpad Educators Workshop (GLP; more details below). Please note: due to COVID, the GLP workshop is planned to be offered fully online at a cost of \$2,000 per faculty member; a teaching team of two faculty members are required to attend the GLP workshop. Date TBA.
- January 2022 - As a follow-on to the GLP workshop, a Sustainable Design Community of Practice will be launched (SD CoP; more detail below); details TBA.

All proposals must be submitted online by **11:59 pm Eastern Time on the deadline date: Wednesday, May 19, 2021**. Anyone on the team may serve as the applicant.

## Institutional Support

VentureWell requires proof of institutional support for your proposal. Because many campus administrative offices have moved to a remote model of work, the timeline for obtaining institutional support may be longer than usual. We strongly recommend that you reach out to your Office of Sponsored Programs/Research to inform them of your intention to submit a

proposal, and to your institutional supporters (see below) well before the deadline date in order to obtain the verifications of support in time.

Most universities require a full proposal for administrative review and approval ten days to two weeks in advance before it can be submitted.

VentureWell requires that certain institutional representatives verify their support for your proposal by responding to an automated email request from our proposal system and entering their initials online. (This process is triggered within the online proposal process). The system will not allow you to submit your proposal until support has been verified from each of the following individuals:

- **Principal Investigator (PI)** The Principal Investigator should be the person who takes primary responsibility for the proposal and project, and will have overall responsibility for the grant and reporting. Ideally, the PI will also be the Instructor of Record, if applicable. VentureWell is eager to support personnel that are new to I&E so we strongly encourage junior faculty, tenure-track faculty, and/or staff to be listed as a PI. We have learned that for many PIs, a VentureWell Faculty Grant will be one of the first nationally-recognized awards a PI will receive. As a result the most credentialed person on the team need not be the listed PI. Co-PIs are allowed, but one lead PI must be identified. Students may not serve as PIs.
- **Administrative Contact (AC)** VentureWell defines the Administrative Contact as a grants administrator or fiscal officer authorized to sign the award letter and commit the institution to the terms of the grant. The AC should be someone in your institution's Office of Sponsored Programs/Research. Principal Investigators, other faculty, or students may not serve as the AC.
- **Department Chair (DC)** The Department Chair (or equivalent) will need to affirm their awareness of and support for your proposal as a demonstration of institutional commitment to the proposal. They have no other direct grant responsibilities beyond this support.
- **Dean of Faculty (DF)** The Dean of Faculty (or equivalent) will need to affirm their awareness of and support for your proposal as a demonstration of institutional commitment to the proposal. They have no other direct grant responsibilities beyond this support.

## Proposal Components

Proposals should be specific, clear, and compelling. The following components are required and should be combined into a single PDF file:

1. Project narrative, including a simple work plan or table that outlines major milestones during the grant period, no more than six pages

2. Proposed budget
3. Resumes of PI and key collaborators (up to **four** resumes total, no more than 3 pages each)
4. Letter(s) of support, at least one is required and up to a total of three will be accepted

You may include other supporting documents in an Appendix (optional, details below).

## 1. Proposal Narrative (required)

Your proposal narrative may not exceed six pages in length using 12-point Times font and 1-inch margins. Title page and references are not counted as part of your page limit.

The more **specific, clear, and compelling** your narrative is, the more competitive your proposal will be. Tell the reviewers a story: what efforts and opportunities currently exist at your institution, where are the gaps, what are you proposing to create, and what are the intended student and institutional outcomes? In other words, why this idea, and why now?

Your narrative should include the following (page lengths are approximate and suggestions only):

### **Context (half page):**

- What are you proposing? Is it a course or a program? Is it a new offering or an expansion of existing courses/programs?
- What are the goals and objectives of this proposal? List 2-3 specific objectives.
- What gap(s) are you addressing on your campus? What do you feel is missing to support I&E?
- What have you accomplished so far, if anything? Have you received other support for this work (e.g. financial, stakeholder, etc.)?

### **Proposed Initiative (2-4 pages):**

- Differentiate between what already exists vs. what you are asking for funding to support. Emphasis should be placed on what you are proposing, however, it is important to briefly share what already exists to support I&E on your campus (e.g. institutional resources, personnel support, makerspaces, competitions, etc.).
- Describe the project's potential for positive educational, environmental, and social impact. How will you foster the development of sustainability-focused technology inventions or innovations? Is there a focus on solutions to support climate change mitigation and/or adaptation?
- How will you incorporate sustainable design concepts, tools, and/or frameworks into the course or program? Which key sustainable design concepts are likely to be emphasized? Will you develop your own content? Where will the content come from? For some relevant sustainability-focused teaching materials and resources, visit these VentureWell, and VentureWell-partner, webpages dedicated to sustainable design:

- [Inventing Green Toolkits](#) webpage
- [Tools for Design & Sustainability](#) webpage
- [Environmentally Responsible Engineering](#) webpage
- [Engineering for One Planet](#) webpage
- Who are your target audience(s)?
- How will your work support student innovators from URGs in invention, innovation, and entrepreneurship—including Black, Latinx, Indigenous people, women of all backgrounds, and individuals coming from low-income backgrounds? As part of the narrative, include a specific plan that articulates how you will broaden participation in your course/program by answering the questions below:
  - How will you market to and recruit students from URGs to participate in the proposed course/program?
  - How will you recruit mentors that will reflect the URGs student participants? How will you mentor students to ensure inclusivity?
  - How will you create an inclusive curriculum? How else will you support these students' success in I&E?
  - How will you measure success? (Share metrics.)
- Explain the process: How will the proposed course or program lead to the creation of student teams? How will teams be formed? Where will the ideas come from?
- Describe the experiential learning opportunity for students.
- How will your entrepreneurship ecosystem support the most promising teams and technologies towards commercialization?

#### **Team and Partners (half page):**

- Describe the role of each key individual involved with delivering and supporting the proposed course or program.
- How might the backgrounds, experiences and identities of the PI and/or Instructor of Record, and other collaborators support the goals of this grant?
- Identify partners on campus or beyond who will help to broaden participation among students from URGs (e.g. for improved student recruitment and retention).
- Multidisciplinary faculty teams are highly encouraged.

#### **Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (half page):**

Describe the “entrepreneurial ecosystem” on your campus and in the community, and how your students will access these resources (i.e., centers, incubator/accelerator programs, other faculty, mentors, departments, etc.). Your proposal should go beyond a listing of entrepreneurial support resources to explain how the program participants will engage those resources. Describe how students who wish to continue on the commercialization path to market will be able to leverage other entrepreneurial resources.

Note: Schools that are just beginning to grow their I&E ecosystems are encouraged to apply — please describe how this course/program is part of a larger plan for entrepreneurial ecosystem development. A letter of support from an administrator acknowledging this effort is highly recommended.

### **Work Plan (half page):**

Create a simple table in the narrative that includes:

- A list of the milestones and a timeline for accomplishing each during the grant period. Please note: to get the most from the training workshop and from the Sustainable Design Community of Practice (SD CoP) meetings, courses or programs that will be implemented by Spring 2022 are encouraged.
- The number of estimated student teams formed/supported each year and the number of participating students.

### **Outcomes (half page):**

- What personal, student, and institutional outcomes do you aspire to achieve?
- What does success look like?
  - Complete this sentence: We will be successful if/when...
  - How will you measure success? What quantitative and qualitative metrics will be used to measure progress of individual students, student teams, and their innovations?
- What is an example of a tangible work product that you envision sharing publicly for the benefit of other educators?
- How will the course or program be sustained beyond the end of the grant period?

## **2. Proposed Budget (required)**

Your budget and justifications should demonstrate to reviewers how you intend to achieve the objectives proposed in your narrative. Funds may be proposed for expenses related to curricular development and course or program realization. Equipment and other resources purchased with grant funds become the property of the institution. Instructions and specific expense definitions can be found in the budget section of the online application, and are also summarized below.

### **Examples of eligible expenses:**

- **Equipment** expenses: Equipment not normally available to students—to facilitate the creation of prototypes, or required because of the technical or scientific focus of the work—are eligible for funding. However, VentureWell will not typically fund the purchase of equipment that is considered part of college or university infrastructure (e.g., computers, tablets, 3D printers, or furniture for makerspaces or labs). Equipment expenses should be no more than 10% of the total proposed budget and relate directly to the proposal.

- **Personnel costs:** Up to \$5,000 total (may be divided or proposed for one person, and can include the cost of any applicable fringe benefits). A clear rationale should be included that explains what the funds are specifically for and how they will contribute to the success of the proposed work.
- **Materials and supplies:**
  - Expenses related to the technical development of student team innovations, including (but not limited to) materials & supplies, prototyping, technical services, and testing.
  - Expenses related to students performing patent searches, creating marketing analyses, business model development, and customer discovery.
- **Travel** expenses may include expenses related to:
  - Up to two key participants to attend OPEN, VentureWell's annual conference, for one year only.
  - Registration for the GLP workshop and follow-on SD CoP monthly meetings. Two-person teaching teams are required to attend the fall GLP workshop and monthly SD CoP meetings. Registration per faculty member is \$2,000 per person and should be itemized in your budget.
  - Other relevant travel (e.g. for customer discovery; other related conferences, etc).
  - Travel should not exceed 33% of the total budget.
- **Other Direct Costs:** Any other direct costs not specified above must be included as other direct expenses. Such costs must be itemized and detailed in the budget justification.

*Please note: due to current restrictions, travel expenses may be reallocated to other categories if needed.*

#### **Examples of ineligible expenses:**

- Overhead - VentureWell funding may not be used to cover institutional overhead/Facilities & Administration (F&A)
- Expenses that are unlikely to be sustained beyond the proposed grant period, such as competition prize money; event expenses like food, space rentals or AV; and lengthy student internships.
- Personnel costs over the maximums mentioned above.
- Equipment expenses totaling more than 10% of the total proposed budget.
- Travel expenses over 33% of the total budget.
- Speaker honoraria over \$200.
- Wages for students during the academic year.
- Legal and other expenses of business formation or operation.
- Publicity expenses.

#### **Budget Justifications**

Justifying your proposed budget is a critical piece in helping reviewers understand how you intend to spend grant funds to achieve the objectives of your proposal. Budgeted items should align with the story you are telling in your narrative, and should be as specific and detailed as possible.

### 3. Resumes of Key Individuals (required)

Include resumes for the Principal Investigator and any other key collaborators. We do not need resumes for the Administrative Contact or non-key team members/collaborators. **Up to four resumes are allowed and they should be no more than three pages each.**

### 4. Letter(s) of Support (required)

At least **one** letter is required, and up to three may be submitted. Letters should demonstrate to reviewers that there is ongoing institutional support for your project and technical competence and market opportunity in the area of your proposed work. In addition, letter(s) of support should:

- Verify any partnerships discussed in your proposal narrative
- Verify any additional funding to complement the proposed budget
- Describe how the proposed course or program fits into or will enhance the existing entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Describe how support for the proposed program will be sustained beyond the grant period.
- Outline what actions are being taken to broaden participation in S&T I&E for this course/program in particular and at the institution in general to demonstrate commitment to advancing equity

More weight will be given to letters of support from key administrators (Dean, President, etc.) and/or community partners. Note that if the proposal focus is outside the campus community or outside the US, at least one off-campus local partner is required, and a letter of support from this partner should be provided.

### Appendix (optional)

You may include appendices in your proposal, up to a maximum of ten pages combined into a single PDF file. Any appendix materials should be referenced in the narrative. **Please note:** Sheer volume of material is not an asset. Reviewers are directed to use appendix materials only to supplement the six-page narrative. Key information should be included in the narrative.

## Proposal Selection and Notification

In general, eligible sustainable design faculty grant applications will be evaluated on the following criteria in order of importance:

- Environmental & Social Impact
- Likelihood of Generating Student E-teams
- Educational Approach and Experience
- Faculty Expertise and Other Support
- Institutional Commitment
- Advancing Equity
- Workplan and Budget

Proposals are reviewed by a group of external reviewers (Note: We are committed to creating a more representative and diverse reviewer pool. It is our goal that at least 50% of grant reviewers per cycle are women, URG faculty in I&E and/or MSI representatives.)

For this cycle we will award grants up to a maximum of \$30,000 each (dollar amounts vary), for a total of \$300,000 in funding to be disbursed. A typical cohort size is 10-15 grantees which varies based on funding amounts awarded. The funded percentage fluctuates depending on the total number of proposals received.

We are committed to continuing our path of excellence in S&T I&E in higher education and are aware of — and being responsive to — diversity and equity gaps in our past grant cycles. We are striving to achieve the following improved equity metrics for this and future grant cycles:

- Award at least 50% of grants to MSIs (including Tribal Colleges, HBCUs, Predominantly Black Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, etc.),
- Award at least 50% of grants to PIs who self-identify as members of one or more URGs in invention, innovation, and entrepreneurship, including Black, Latinx, Indigenous people, women of all backgrounds, and people from low-income backgrounds.
- Make one third of awards to universities or colleges that have never previously received a VentureWell Faculty Grant.

All PIs will be notified via email in July 2021 as to whether or not their proposal has been selected for funding. For funded proposals we will send an approved budget and award letter agreement for signature to the Administrative Contact identified in the proposal. Grants are awarded up to \$30,000 with a duration of three years (although you may spend the funds in one or two). Funds will be disbursed once this award letter is signed and returned to VentureWell.

Grantees will also receive additional details about the following activities, in which you and your fellow cohort of grantees will participate to help further your work to integrate sustainable design concepts into your course or program. We expect you will set aside time and grant funding to participate in these opportunities as relevant:

- **Training:** Green Launchpad Educators (GLP) workshop (cost is \$2,000 per faculty member). Participation of two faculty members in the GLP workshop is REQUIRED —unless a waiver is granted— for grant awardees to foster collaborative team work. Ideally, the PI and/or Instructor of Record will be one of the GLP attendees. Note: the GLP workshop will be held fully online in fall 2021; details TBA.
- **Communities of Practice (CoP) meetings:** Beginning in January 2022, to support the development of a Sustainable Design CoP, grantees will be required to attend and actively participate in monthly video conference calls to discuss progress to date, plans going forward, and challenges you would like to troubleshoot (estimated up to 2 hours per month time commitment). Ideally two, but at least one faculty attendee to the GLP workshop will be REQUIRED to attend these monthly SD CoP meetings (remote video conference meeting organized and facilitated by VentureWell staff, estimated 1- 2 hours per month time commitment). These peer-to-peer meetings will support grantee efforts to integrate sustainable practices and methodologies into I&E curriculum. Example discussion topics for monthly meetings may include but are not limited to: course/program development progress to date and plans going forward, challenges being faced and how to overcome them, opportunities for collaboration within and across institutions, course content and delivery, etc. A commitment to monthly attendance and active participation in SD CoP meetings is REQUIRED for grant awardees to foster group cohesion and a supportive, collaborative CoP. The fee to attend these meetings is incorporated into the GLP workshop cost.
- **Disseminate your learnings and outcomes** at VentureWell’s annual OPEN conference or other conferences focused on sustainability, education, innovation and/or entrepreneurship.

## Reporting

If you receive a grant, reporting requirements and deadlines will be specified in your award letter. Faculty Grant PIs will be prompted via email to complete required reports online (once each year throughout the grant period). Failure to submit reports may jeopardize both pending payments and your institution’s eligibility for future grants.

VentureWell expects to learn from grantee experiences. VentureWell requires timely submission of grant reports, and may require participation in surveys and interviews after the grant period for impact assessment studies and reports.

## Contact Us

If you would like to discuss your idea, or if you have questions about fit, requirements, process or anything else, feel free to contact Patricia Boynton, Grants Manager, at 413-587-2172 x115 or [grants@venturewell.org](mailto:grants@venturewell.org).

## Appendices

### Definitions

At VentureWell, we use the following definitions to guide our work:

**Climate change solutions:** *Innovations (in the form of products and/or ventures) that address the global environmental and social challenges presented by climate change.*

**Climate change mitigation:** *Innovations (in the form of products and/or ventures) that help to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and/or stabilize GHG-levels.*

**Climate change adaptation:** *Innovations (in the form of products and/or ventures) that allow adaptation to the potentially adverse effects of climate change in human, environmental, and economic activities.*

**Environmental and social sustainability:** *Sustainable practices, innovations, products and ventures that mitigate negative impacts, and/or enable increased positive and regenerative impacts on environmental and social systems.*

**Sustainable designs:** *Products and/or ventures that have been intentionally designed to reduce negative environmental impacts.*

**Sustainable innovations or solutions:** *Products and/or ventures that are striving to solve for a sustainability priority, such as the negative impacts of climate change, air or water pollution, non-renewable resource consumption, etc.*

**URG:** *Groups who are or have been traditionally underrepresented, underestimated, and/or under-resourced.*

**Underrepresented Groups in Science & Engineering (S&E):** *Women, people with disabilities, and people identifying as Black, Latinx, or Indigenous. The representation of these groups in S&E education and S&E employment is smaller than their overall representation in the U.S. population. [National Science Foundation “Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering”](#)*

**Under-resourced Groups in I&E:** *People who face systemic barriers to accessing leadership, physical assets, money, power, political will, institutions, community cohesion, and/or services.*

## Advancing Equity: National Study and Report

In 2019 VentureWell commissioned a national study to identify promising practices and existing efforts to broaden participation among early stage innovators and entrepreneurs. We present three interrelated action areas in our report *Advancing Equity: Dynamic Strategies for Authentic Engagement in Innovation and Entrepreneurship* (download the [full report](#)). As highlighted in the report, “engaging faculty as mentors” was identified as a key strategy for engaging students from URGs in S&T I&E. Mentoring for students from URGs occurred in two primary ways: vicarious mentoring (i.e. being a role model), and direct mentoring (i.e. ongoing, direct guidance). Faculty mentors provided conceptual and tactical support, including expressions of confidence and validation, sharing their lived and learned experience, and recommending information, resources, and additional support mechanisms to guide students along their entrepreneurship journeys.

We especially seek and encourage proposals that demonstrate faculty mentorship that clearly supports students from URGs in S&T I&E.