SpringBoard Seed Funding Challenge FAQs

How many proposals will be selected?
The Illinois Soybean Association/Soybean Innovation Center (ISA/SIC) aims to select at least two proposals from each of the five program areas. However, final decisions will depend on the number of proposals received, their quality, and available funding.

What are the two stages of funding for proposals?

- **Stage One:** Submit an idea. If selected, the project team will receive a $2,000 stipend to develop a full proposal.
- **Stage Two:** Submit the full proposal for potential project funding.

How will funds be distributed to awardees?
The lead entity identified by the project team will receive the award and distribute funds if multiple entities are involved.

- Stage One: $2,000 will be paid to the lead entity.
- Stage Two: Reimbursement-based payments will be made monthly to lead entities, in compliance with checkoff fund regulations.

Can individuals submit proposals?
Yes. Individuals, for-profit businesses, institutions of higher education, and non-profits are all eligible. ISA/SIC may request assurances of capacity to complete the project.

Will Illinois Innovation Network (IIN) institutions be given preference?
No. While ISA/SIC values IIN as a non-exclusive partner, this initiative is open to all higher education institutions and private entities.

Will preference be given to teams that involve students?
Yes. Among higher education teams, those with meaningful involvement from graduate and undergraduate students will be favored, as ISA/SIC recognizes students as future innovation leaders.

Can entities submit more than one proposal?
Yes, with limits:

- A lead entity may submit **one proposal per category** and no more than **two total** as the lead entity.
- Lead entities may be affiliated with other proposals submitted by others.
- Individuals who are not leads may participate in unlimited proposals.

Can two or more entities submit joint proposals?
Yes, but one entity must be designated as the lead.

Will ISA/SIC own any technology developed through the project?
No. You retain ownership of your existing intellectual property. A collaborative agreement will define ownership of new IP developed during the project.

Will confidentiality agreements be signed?
ISA/SIC will treat all submissions as confidential but will not sign Confidentiality Disclosure Agreements.

Is there a limit to the number of project team members?
No. There is no limit.

What are the deliverables required?
Awardees must submit quarterly progress reports and a final report at project completion.

Will applicants receive reviewer comments?
Formal comments will not be provided, but ISA/SIC staff may offer general feedback on proposal strengths and weaknesses.

Will there be future challenges? Can unfunded proposals be resubmitted?
Yes. A similar event is planned for 2026, and proposals not funded in this round can be resubmitted.

Will subject matter experts be involved in proposal evaluation?
Yes. The technical advisory panel will include experts across all five product areas, including fields like bioplastics and biofibers.

Can review teams request clarifications during the process?
Yes. Reviewers may seek clarifications that don't substantially alter the proposal's core idea.

Will teams receive feedback for future improvement?
Yes. Feedback will be provided to help teams improve future submissions.

Do applicants need to live in Illinois?
No.

Can we pursue our idea elsewhere if it's not selected?
Yes.

What if our project doesn't fit one of the five focus areas?
You must link your project to one of the five areas. Preference will be given to projects strongly aligned with them, but loosely related projects will also be considered.

How long should projects last?
Project funding is for one year. Projects should have defined phases and milestones. ISA/SIC may help support promising projects beyond the initial year.

Can ISA/SIC help connect us with partners or resources?
Yes. ISA/SIC encourages collaboration and will assist with partner connections and resource access for promising ideas.