

For some people, deciding what to do for a SCIF project is the easiest part of the application process. For others, it can be the most difficult. Either way, there are some things that you ought to ask yourself to ensure that you'll not only create a great concept and application, but that you'll receive the greatest experience from the process.

- **What are my interests?**
 - While this question may seem somewhat arbitrary, it is important to identify your interests and desired areas of activity, as you may be the primary driving force for this project. A project that does not hold interest for you will be more difficult to complete in the long run. Your interests need not align with your major/department; for example, SCIF PEs have been dance majors interested in energy-efficient lighting projects, chemical engineering majors interested in gardening and sustainable agriculture, and math majors concerned with printed outreach materials reduction.
- **What is my time frame/schedule?**
 - It's a good idea when beginning the application process to look at your schedule and determine what sort of time you can devote to the project. In some cases, as your application progresses and your concept develops, you'll find that you need to either change your range of activity or invite others to assist you in order to complete your project. Draw out a sample month-long calendar for yourself and identify your classes, extracurricular, and other activities to determine how much time you can expend on a project. In some cases, you may be able to participate in SCIF to satisfy a project requirement for a course (check with your professor before beginning the application process).
- **What have I noticed on campus that isn't as sustainable as it could be? Where can and should I direct my efforts?**
 - This may be an easy question for you to answer if you're coming to SCIF because you've already noticed an area in which sustainable efforts could be increased. Even if this is true, it is great to approach your potential topic with the perspective of someone who has things to learn; this means that you should be asking questions and doing research to find out if there are already efforts on campus through SCIF or another office/department to make the kinds of changes you're considering proposing yourself. In some cases, you may find that there are no efforts currently focused in your area of interest, which means you may have a great opportunity to create an original SCIF project. In other cases, you'll discover that certain students, faculty, and/or staff may already be looking at the issue as well, which may warrant changes to your project to be more complimentary to current activities, expand them beyond their original scope, or apply what others have learned in the past so that your project may be more successful and/or impactful in the future.
- **Once you have your project in mind (or if you're coming to SCIF for funding and sustainable support for an existing project), consider the following questions:**
 - **What makes this project sustainable?**

- Hopefully this is an easy question for you to answer, though you may have to conduct certain assessments of your project to better understand some of the sustainable implications. In some cases, after conducting life-cycle assessments (LCAs), you'll find that certain elements of your project may not be as sustainable in some ways as you may have assumed. Let's look, for example, at installing heated-air hand dryers to decrease the amount of paper waste in bathrooms. The assumed sustainable impact is that fewer paper towels will be used to dry hands and will therefore not make as great of a contribution to landfills, as well as reduce the demand for paper towels that need to be ordered for campus bathrooms, thereby reducing the demand for virgin trees or recycled paper goods. But what about the hand dryers? What are their components made of (are they made of recycled materials and are the components themselves recyclable)? How much energy do they use, and from where (coal power, wind power, solar power) does that energy come? What are the costs of paper towels v. the cost of the energy needed to power the hand dryers? How long will the dryers last, and is there someone who is willing to pay for them to be fixed/replaced should they break down? And will people actually make the conscious decision to use the hand dryers over paper towels? It may seem overwhelming to think of all of these questions, but an important part of the ability to answer questions of sustainability in SCIF projects (and elsewhere) is the ability to think critically about what makes your project sustainable. And in some cases, you may find through this thought process that your project is not sustainable in its original design, but that you now have the information to increase the sustainable impact by a great deal.
- **Is it satisfying an existing need or fixing a current problem on campus? If so, why is this project a good/the best solution to that need/problem?**
 - This question is closely linked to the question of whether or not something is sustainable. Though your project does not necessarily have to satisfy an obvious existing need on campus, it should be clear why it will increase sustainable efforts within the university community. In some cases, you may also identify a need that no one realized existed. For example, you may discover that a small number of Art and Design majors are involved in sustainable projects on campus. You could then argue that there is a lack of opportunities for such students to be involved in sustainable activities that relate to art and/or design, and that for your SCIF project, you would like to create a campus-wide Sustainable Design competition. This additionally could be an avenue to partner with groups outside of campus for increased funding as well as opportunities for students to connect to future employers, and depending on the competition's success, could lead to outside funding efforts that could make the competition sustainable beyond the scope of your SCIF project.

Once you identify your need, ask yourself why your idea is a good or the best solution to this problem. You should be attempting to convince the SCIF Allocation Committee as to why your project ought to be funded in both your application proposal and your presentation.

- **How are students going to be involved (other than the project PE)?**
 - One of the criteria for project funding is that students be involved with the project in some way. This may vary based on your application track and project reference/approach. For example, past project involving landscaping design have had interactive and/or descriptive signage educating students of the changes and SCIF's contributions to the project. An event, however, that engages students in sustainable activity, is by design interactive and impactful.
- **Has anyone attempted a similar project before? If so, how did it go? If not, is there a reason why no one has done this before?**
 - A great way to determine if a similar project has been attempted/executed is to ask the SCIF coordinator and any related departments on campus. They should be able to give you a better idea as to past activities and lessons learned, which can then be used in the design of your project.
- **Is this project eligible for matching funds, or can an affected department give some support?**
 - In some cases, departments or offices that may be positively affected by a sustainable project are willing to partially support that project in addition to SCIF. In others, a project is already being attempted by a department/group, and they could use additional funds to support current sustainable activities or make it possible for the project to expand into a more sustainable scope. Talk to related departments and the SCIF coordinator to determine how this might work for your project.
- **How (if at all) can/could this project be sustained beyond my involvement with SCIF? Is that necessary to the success of the project?**
 - One of the most important elements of your project design is that it does not place the burden of your project's activities on another person or department without their consent. Assuming that someone will pick up the slack in a project once your cycle of funding is completed (or upon your graduation from the university) is one of the reason why many projects are not sustained beyond the scope of a year. Some of these short-lived projects would have incredibly beneficial impacts for campus had they been designed to continue beyond the activities of their Project Executive. The SCIF Coordinator may help you navigate this and identify ways in which you may connect with departments or alter your project to make it more easily sustained. And in some cases, you may discover ways in which your project may be continued as you work through your project implementation phase. Anything you learn in this area should be detailed

in your post-project report, as it may be useful to students in future cycles of funding.