



UC SANTA BARBARA
Bren School of Environmental
Science & Management

ECO-E PROJECTS: REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS 2024-2025

OBJECTIVES

Bren School Eco-E Projects solve environmental problems through new ventures. Serving as the MESM program's Master's thesis, Eco-E Projects are nine-month collaborations for teams of highly dedicated Master's students.

Eco-E Projects cultivate innovation and systems thinking, as well as develop analytical capacity. Students learn how to apply an entrepreneurial approach to scientific problems and to create a business case for a new environmental venture.

This work helps students develop skills in project management, teamwork, leadership, business model development, financial analysis, organization and data presentation, and effective communication. The projects also serve to expand students' professional networks by requiring students to connect with environmental leaders, industry experts and real-world entrepreneurs.

DESIRABLE PROJECT ATTRIBUTES

Student-Based. Eco-E Projects should represent an original idea, and students do not collaborate with outside clients. Students may seek information and guidance from any source, but the concept must be the original creation of the proposers. Proposers are encouraged to identify an industry advisor to help guide the project and serve as one of the project's external advisors.

Problem-Driven. Eco-E Projects prepare students to produce meaningful solutions to today's environmental problems. To this end, projects should focus on a pressing and tractable environmental problem that may be connected to a specific customer or industry problem, contain multidisciplinary elements, and align with student and faculty interest.

Innovation-Oriented. Innovative business models require deep customer understanding, technical feasibility, business viability, and adaptability in a changing environment. Projects should provide an opportunity for students to integrate innovation with human context and systems thinking, as team develops the idea into a viable business model.

Data-Driven. Projects should identify existing data for students to analyze. Projects should also provide an opportunity for original data collection and analysis to test business model and industry assumptions, such as interviews, focus groups, surveys, and prototype/pilot project development.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

Project proposals should meet the following criteria:

1. Represent a significant environmental problem that potentially can be addressed by a new product or service
2. Focus on a clear science and policy or management question

3. Provide clear and testable business model hypotheses
4. Data is available for analysis
5. Match the interests, expertise and capabilities of students and faculty
6. Present a feasible project scope, given student experience and availability (must propose a manageable scope of work for a team of 3-5 master's students spending about 25% of their time during three academic quarters, or 9 months)
7. Financial needs for testing business model hypotheses are within the budget provided by the Bren School

Each of the requirements listed above should be addressed individually. The Eco-E Project Committee will evaluate and score the proposals using these criteria.

SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL

Any MESM student from the Class of 2025 is welcome to submit an Eco-E Project Proposal but must be enrolled in ESM 256B Value Proposition Design for New Environmental Ventures.

Proposals will be reviewed during Winter Quarter (January – March) by the Bren School Eco-E Project Committee. The Committee will evaluate proposals on the criteria outlined in the Project Requirements section above.

Project proposals are limited to three pages (excluding references). For a complete description of proposal requirements, please see the full proposal guidelines.

Examples of successful proposal submissions are available for viewing on the Bren School website.

Visit bren.ucsb.edu/projects to explore our project archive.

TIMELINE

YEAR 1

Fall: Students will explore environmental problems and industry challenges through Discovery Team projects in ESM 210 Business and the Environment.

Winter: Proposers must enroll in ESM 256B Value Proposition Design for New Environmental Ventures. Students submit project proposals by 2/15/24. Projects are selected in late February; students and faculty advisors are assigned by end of March.

Spring: Students gather data, review literature, and begin development of a business model.

Summer: Students may apply for research fellowships to continue Eco-E Project work or gain valuable experience through internships.

YEAR 2

Fall: Students work on analysis, review literature and produce an outline for their Eco-E Project. Students often develop a prototype or pilot project.

Winter: Students complete an academic faculty review and their final reports.

Spring: Students present business model and findings to the public, and create an executive summary.

THINKING ABOUT SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL?

All proposers must enroll in Value Proposition Design for New Environmental Ventures (ESM 256B), a course which supports proposal development, during the winter quarter of their first year. During this course, Eco-E Project Coordinator Emily Cotter will serve as the instructor and provide guidance regarding proposal content and format. She also connects proposal authors with Bren faculty, staff, and students, as well as industry experts, who can provide additional guidance and assistance in writing proposals. To register your interest in submitting a proposal, please contact Bren School Eco-E Project Coordinator Emily Cotter (ecotter@bren.ucsb.edu).