Rebuild, Renew, Reshape Initiative

Motivation
Progress toward a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable society is often incremental because of what American economist Milton Friedman termed the “tyranny of the status quo.” However, the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the many vulnerable and unsustainable aspects of our current systems. The catastrophic health, economic, and social impacts may have created a temporary opening for more radical change. We may be experiencing a rare moment in history in which we can shape how these systems recover and create a more sustainable and equitable society in the long run.

Framework
The stated goals of this initiative are to catalyze interdisciplinary research that benefits our communities, organizations, and society in the following ways: 1) Adapting to the current pandemic; 2) Building resilience towards future negative shocks; and 3) Rebuilding in a way that creates a more just and equitable society.

This initiative will be guided by the following seven principles:

1. Maintain a focus on our communities’ needs and involve stakeholders in the process. This includes a focus on the needs and contributions of under-represented individuals at the university (i.e., students, staff, and faculty) and in the community.
2. Commit to long-term projects/impacts with continuity in teams over time (e.g., 3-5 years)
3. Leverage interdisciplinary collaboration vs. cooperation, broadening the definition of “interdisciplinary” beyond involving different academic units.
4. Support teams including assistance with project activities (e.g., networking, expertise, education, mentoring, or resources) and support for individual participation in interdisciplinary collaboration (e.g., recognition of time and effort, credit for sustained participation).
5. Consider opportunities for student involvement in these projects (educational or research).
6. Develop metrics to measure meaningful and impactful outcomes.
7. Benchmark with peer/non-peer institutions to improve program design.

Process
The first step in the process will be bringing together faculty from across the university to ideate about how Ohio State can leverage this unique moment to address the needs of our communities with impactful research, education, and outreach. They will be asked to brainstorm ideas around the framing question:

How can communities and society recover and evolve to a new normal that is not only more resilient to future shocks but also more sustainable and just? What should the new normal be? What are we learning about the barriers that are preventing us from making headway on these topics?
Following this first ideation session, leadership will synthesize the output into several overarching research areas. Participants will be invited to join one of these groups for a second ideation session where they will drill down into the topics and begin to outline a potential research agenda. Part of this second session will be creating an inventory of assets and identifying people, groups, or resources still missing from the current group. Between the second and third sessions, the supporting institutes will help these groups reach out to fill some of these gaps.

The third session will be about further refining the research plan, but also mapping out a plan for future activities and assigning roles within the group. Groups will be encouraged to share with each other what they want to get out of this collaboration to ensure alignment on both research scope and desired outputs.

Following the initial three “microlabs,” we will be asking the groups to follow a 30/30 approach where every month they meet to discuss what they have done during the past 30 days and what the plan is for the next 30 days. Supporting institutes will remain in contact with the groups to monitor progress and look for continued ways to provide support.

**Details**

**Session 1 – Brainstorm:** Friday, October 23, 2020, 9:30-11 a.m., via Zoom

**Session 2 – Team Formation:** Friday, October 30, 2020, 9:30-11 a.m., via Zoom

**Session 3 – Planning:** Friday, November 6, 2020, 9:30-11 a.m., via Zoom

PI eligible researchers are invited to participate. While some people may need to miss a session or connect afterwards, the “microlabs” are going to serve as the foundation for the entire process so interested participants are encouraged to engage in the process as much as possible.

Groups are welcome to continue inviting members or shifting their scope/focus as needed over the following months. Unlike a traditional seed grant process, the goal is to build a dynamic research group, not incentivize a particular activity or output.

Similarly, support for the teams may take a variety of forms. Monetary resources should be viewed by the teams as a support tool, not an end goal, and may be replaced or supplemented by in-kind resources or other support as relevant to the needs of each team.

While there will be no formal definition of “interdisciplinary,” the topics will be framed to maximize the key points of intersection between the supporting institutes, and teams will be encouraged to engage participants outside their current “intellectual footprint” to help create more robust working groups.

**Join the Rebuild, Renew, Reshape initiative [here](#).**

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This initiative is being organized by the Infectious Diseases Institute, the Sustainability Institute, and the Translational Data Analytics Institute, with facilitation support from the Office of Research, Research Development Office.