

**2019-2020**  
**Collaboration Initiative**  
Request for Applications (RFA)

**Retreat Registration Deadline:**

To be eligible for funding, principal investigators (PIs) must [register](#) and attend the October 31, 2019, Collaboration Initiative Retreat. Registration closes on Thursday, October 24, 2019, 5 p.m. Central Time.

**Application Deadline:**

Applications must be submitted by Monday January 13, 2020, 5 p.m. Central Time via the <https://nuramp.nebraska.edu> website.

**Program Website, Retreat Registration, and Application Directions:**

<http://nebraska.edu/collaboration-initiative/>

**Introduction:** The primary purpose of the **Collaboration Initiative** is to enhance competitiveness of University of Nebraska faculty for extramural funding by fully leveraging intellectual capacity and research resources across the campuses. The **2019-2020** funding opportunity is designed to facilitate new and strengthen existing research collaborations among faculty in **any** discipline.

**Grant Descriptions:**<sup>1</sup>

**Planning Grants**

*[Up to \$20,000 total for one year]*

Planning Grants are intended to facilitate and build new research collaborations across University of Nebraska campuses. Funding is available to support planning meetings, retreats, and travel to funding agencies to meet with program officers (or equivalent) and gauge support for the proposed project(s). These one-year grants should enable teams to:

- 1) Verify that their research questions align with specific extramural funding opportunities;
- 2) Identify knowledge and expertise gaps that must be addressed prior to preparation and submission of a competitive application for extramural research funding;
- 3) Facilitate experimental design and/or modest data collection; and
- 4) Prepare and submit an application for extramural research funding.

Faculty who have not received extramural research funding (as a PI or Co-PI) are eligible to serve as the lead PI on a Planning Grant; however, one of the Co-PIs on the application must be grant-active and willing to serve as a research mentor to the team.

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<sup>1</sup> The total award budget for this program will be approximately \$2.8 million. All awards are subject to funding availability, eligibility, and determinations of application suitability. It is anticipated that award notifications will be available prior to June 1, 2020. Funding will commence on July 1, 2020.



### Formed/Forming Team Seed Grants

*[Up to \$150,000 total over two years]*

Formed/Forming Team Grants are designed to enhance research collaborations among faculty that have had modest levels of previous collaboration. Team members providing core leadership for the team must have individual records of extramurally-funded research as a PI or Co-PI. Teams receiving these grants are expected to prepare and submit applications for extramural funding as described in their proposal. Applicants should request seed grant funding proportional to that available from the extramural program from which they will eventually seek support.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this grant type is to establish a collaborative research team that is **actively** generating knowledge/preliminary data to enhance competitiveness of the team for extramural funding from a federal funding agency or foundation.

### Team Strengthening Seed Grants

*[Up to \$300,000 total over two years]*

Team Strengthening Grants are designed to build upon existing research collaborations among faculty with a track record of joint extramural research funding with one or more team members. Addition of new team members to fill gaps in expertise is encouraged. Teams receiving these grants will be expected to prepare and submit multi-investigator applications to an existing extramural funding opportunity (award types of ~\$400,000 per year and above). The purpose of this grant type is to **strengthen existing research collaborations** to allow the team to be more competitive for larger extramural funding opportunities. Faculty are encouraged to consult with research administrator(s) on their campuses regarding this grant type/funding level. Faculty without a strong track record of collaboration (joint publications and/or joint extramural funding) are encouraged to apply to the Formed/Forming Team Seed Grants mechanism above.

**General Eligibility:** Assistant, Associate or Full Professors and equivalent-rank research faculty employed by any University of Nebraska campus are eligible to submit funding applications as the PI and participate as Co-PIs. Assistant, Associate, or Full Professors of Practice that are members of the Graduate Faculty are eligible to serve as Co-PIs. Faculty may serve as the lead PI on one planning grant and one seed grant associated with this RFA; there is no limit on their participation as Co-PIs.

**Collaboration Requirements:** Proposals will not be considered for funding unless **meaningful**<sup>3</sup> multi-campus and appropriate disciplinary collaborations are documented. Faculty employed by one University of Nebraska campus (UNK, UNL<sup>4</sup>, UNMC and UNO) must identify at least one collaborator affiliated with another campus; if appropriate because of unique expertise/resource availability, additional collaborations with researchers at other institutions

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<sup>2</sup> To seek funding for the full \$150,000 two-year award amount, the extramural program should fund applications at or greater than \$200,000 per year.

<sup>3</sup> Meaningful collaborations should be evident from the proposal's budget justification and be suitable for the planned contribution of the co-PI.

<sup>4</sup> The Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) is part of the UNL campus.



are allowed. Funding for collaborators outside the University of Nebraska system will not typically be allowed, unless they provide a billable service to the project. Collaborations are to be driven by mutual interest and disciplinary expertise needs.

**Retreat:** A retreat to facilitate multi-campus collaborations will be held on Thursday, October 31, 2019 at the Nebraska Innovation Campus Conference Center in Lincoln. Potential PIs/team leaders wishing to be eligible for funding must attend unless special dispensation is granted. Potential team members (PIs/Co-PIs), former and current Collaboration Initiative grantees, and others looking to participate on planning or seed grant teams are **strongly** encouraged to attend. Retreat participants also will be expected to informally discuss their potential research projects with other retreat attendees within a small group and be receptive to engaging other collaborators. Discussions will be facilitated by faculty leaders and research administrators.

### Deadlines:

#### Retreat Registration:

Register by 5 p.m. Central Time on Thursday, October 24, 2019.

#### Submission of Applications:

Applications must be submitted by 5 p.m. Central Time on Monday, January 13, 2020, via the <https://nuramp.nebraska.edu> website.

**Application Format and Content:** Applications (*including* references, tables, and figures) must not exceed the page limits specified for the grant type. Font size must be 12 points or larger and margins must be at least one inch on all four sides. A title or signature page is not required. Proposals will only be accepted when submitted through the <https://nuramp.nebraska.edu> website. Consult the grants or research office on your campus for more information. In addition, by submitting (or administratively approving) an application, each campus certifies that named PIs, Co-PIs and the campus itself agrees to waive all rights of access to the identity of any person who may conduct internal or external peer evaluations of their application. Each application shall have the following components:

### Online text entry for:

- Application Title
- Grant Type (Planning, Team Forming, Team Strengthening)
- PI Contact Information
- Co-PI(s)
- Non-Disclosure Agreement Request
- Abstract/Summary (not to exceed 300 words)
- Total Funds Requested
- Budget
- Budget Justification
- (Up to) Five primary aims/goals/objectives
- Seed Grants Only: Contact Information for six potential external reviewers



### Project Description and CVs (uploaded as a single PDF document)

*Planning Grant Applications:* Three-page maximum (**not** including CVs, but including all references, tables, and figures), with the following elements:

- **Research area(s):** Describe the research area, questions to be addressed, and likely source(s) of extramural funding
- **Approach/Work Plan:** Describe how researchers involved in the planning effort intend to: a) interact with potential funding agencies and program leaders to verify that their researchable questions are aligned with *specific* funding programs that would be sources of extramural support; b) hone research question(s) so that their significance, innovation and societal impact(s) are clear; and c) identify gaps in researcher expertise and further build/identify collaborations within and between faculty at University of Nebraska campuses (and, if appropriate, other institutions). The work plan also should include a timeline for the proposed work (including writing and submitting an application for extramural funding). Fundable activities include research retreats (with external speakers), extramural application planning and preparation (writing) meetings, and travel to potential sponsors. Funding for modest data collection or literature review activities will be an allowable expense only after sufficient interaction with funding agencies and collaboration building has occurred.
- **CVs:** Include CVs for each PI/Co-PI. Follow a standard format used by a federal funding agency or foundation (the same format must be used for all CVs). In lieu of Co-PI CVs, a brief biographical paragraph may be supplied. For PIs without previous extramural research grants, identify which grant-active Co-PI will serve as a research mentor. There is no expectation that all potential collaborators be identified prior to a planning grant award.

*Seed Grant Applications:* Eight-page maximum (**not** including CVs, but including all references, tables, and figures), with the following elements:

- **Long-Term Objectives:** Clearly state the research question(s) to be addressed in an eventual federal or other extramural application for funding. Cite the agency/foundation and announcement/program number (or equivalent) from which the team will seek extramural funding. Indicate when the team plans to submit the application for extramural funding.
- **Significance, Innovation, and Impacts:** Describe the *significance* of addressing the long-term research goals (solves or addresses a scientific problem and/or helps meet an educational/societal need), why the team's eventual extramural funding application will represent a **conceptual innovation** and/or an **innovative approach**, and how anticipated achievements will lead to a societal benefit/broader **impact**.



- **Specific Aims and Approach:** Clearly describe the research question(s), hypothesis to be tested, and goals to be achieved if the proposed seed grant is funded. Describe the approach (work plan) to be used to achieve these goals/aims (including timeline for completion of key project milestones) and how the proposed effort will better position the research team to obtain support for their eventual application for extramural funding. For applicants seeking Team Strengthening Seed Grants, clearly indicate how this funding will make the existing team more competitive for large extramural funding opportunities beyond which the team had previously applied for.
- **Collaborative Roles and Responsibilities:** Clearly describe the *role(s)*, responsibilities, *unique expertise*, and *expectations* for the PI and the Co-PI(s). Describe current or previous research collaborative interactions among team members. Describe how the team’s expertise is ideally suited to address the specific aims and research questions described in the application. Outline the existing facilities available to each participant, and the resources that will be made available if the project receives extramural funding in the future. Describe any existing collaborations, how they will be strengthened, and how new Co-PIs will be integrated into the research team. Include a management plan that describes how the PI will manage the project and the research team to ensure timely completion of the proposed studies, impactful and meaningful data acquisition, data sharing, data management, and quality evaluation/accountability. Include a process for making key decisions and managing conflict.
- **CVs:** Include CVs for each PI/Co-PI. Follow a standard format used by a federal funding agency or foundation (the same format must be used for all CVs).

## Budget

Complete the online budget and budget justification forms. Personnel expenses aggregated on the budget form must be justified individually.

- F&A costs are not allowed.
- Allowable expenses include support for technicians or undergraduate students and stipends for graduate research assistants (GRA); publication costs; or equipment. Tuition remission and health insurance for GRAs are allowable expenses. Funds from this program must not be used for construction; renovation; administrative assistance; or release time for teaching.
- Academic year salary for PIs and Co-PIs are not allowable expenses. Summer salary expenses are only allowed for a single individual (PI or Co-PI) without summer support (not to exceed 0.5 month total); no salary savings can be accrued.
- Outline the budget resources (dollars) available to each PI/Co-PI and how the resources will be managed “centrally” by the PI. Provide a clear rationale linking budgetary resources, collaborative roles, and responsibilities.



## External Reviewers

### For Planning Grant Applications:

- Proposals will be assessed by a committee of University of Nebraska research administrators; a listing of external reviewers is not needed.

### For Seed Grant Applications (via online form):

- Provide the names, professional affiliations, and email address for six academic experts (not affiliated with **any** Nebraska college, university, or institute) who may be recruited as external reviewers for the proposed project. Indicate if proposal reviewers should be asked to sign a non-disclosure form prior to receiving your proposal for review.<sup>5</sup> By providing these names, the PI confirms that none of these experts has a conflict of interest with the PI and Co-PI(s) listed on the application. For the purpose of this funding opportunity, conflict of interest is defined as: receiving extramural funding as a PI/Co-PI in the past three years; co-publishing articles with fewer than 20 co-authors in the past three years (including submitted manuscripts and pending publications); collaborating on projects within the past three years (including current and planned collaborations); having an existing personal/professional/consulting/financial relationship; or all thesis or postdoctoral advisees/advisors.

**General Criteria for Evaluation:** Applications will first be screened to determine if all RFA guidelines have been met, including (but not limited to) retreat participation, general eligibility, formatting, collaboration requirements, and budget amounts.

### Planning Grants

Applications that meet stated RFA submission criteria will receive at least four reviews from within the University of Nebraska system. Planning grant reviewers will be asked to rate applications to determine the potential for the PI/Co-PIs to build research teams that will actively seek and ultimately receive extramural funding. Applications will be scored as follows:

- a) Plan to interact with potential funding agencies/foundations (20 points);
- b) Justification of the proposed approach and evidence that the completed work plan will help the PI/Co-PIs align their research question(s) with funding agency/foundation priorities (25 points);
- c) Strategy to identify expertise needs, build collaborations, and prepare competitive extramural research applications (25 points);
- d) Timetable (15 points); and
- e) Budget adequate to support the work plan (15 points).

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<sup>5</sup> A reviewer NDA should only be requested in those cases where the disclosure would seriously jeopardize future extramural funding opportunities.



Reviewers also will be asked to provide an evaluative summary.<sup>6</sup> Final funding decisions will be made by the Vice Provost and the Executive Vice President and Provost. Funding decisions are expected to be released prior to June 2020.

### Seed Grants

For those applications that meet the RFA submission criteria, at least two external reviews will be solicited. Reviewers will be asked to evaluate seed grant applications using a 100-point scale as follows:

- a) Significance, innovation and impact of the proposed research (25 points);
- b) Alignment of research question(s) to priorities of an existing extramural funding opportunity (20 points.);
- c) Ability to enhance competitiveness of the team for extramural funding (20 points);
- d) Budget and facilities adequate to support the plan of work (15 points);
- e) Meaningful collaborations/roles/responsibilities defined for PI/Co-PIs (10 points); and
- f) Realistic and achievable timetable (10 points).

Reviewers also will be asked to provide an evaluative summary.<sup>7</sup> Final funding decisions will be made by the Vice Provost and the Executive Vice President and Provost. Funding decisions are expected to be made prior to June 2020.

**Post Award Management, Obligations, and Reporting Requirements:** PIs will be required to submit a brief project initiation report three months after the award start date. During the award period, programmatic progress and detailed financial reports will be due 30 days after each award anniversary. A final report will be due 90 days following the award's end date. Because the purpose of this program is to enhance the University of Nebraska's research capacity and competitiveness, submission of significant high-quality extramural research grants is an expectation of all awards. Satisfactory progress and adherence to award conditions will be required for access to current and future award funds from the University of Nebraska. All reports will be shared with applicable campus/institution research offices of the PI and Co-PI(s). This program is administered by the University of Nebraska Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Reviewers provide written comments and group applications into four categories (Exemplary: Definitely fund, Very Good: Strongly consider for funding, Needs Improvement: Fund only if resources allow, and Inadequate: Do not fund).

<sup>7</sup> Reviewers provide written comments and group applications into four categories (Exemplary: Definitely fund, Very Good: Strongly consider for funding, Needs Improvement: Fund only if resources allow, and Inadequate: Do not fund).

<sup>8</sup> Questions regarding RFA and award management should be sent by email to: [nri@nebraska.edu](mailto:nri@nebraska.edu).

