

Collaboration Initiative

Request for Applications (RFA): FY2024 Nebraska Research Initiative (NRI) Funds

Annual Meeting Registration Deadline:

To be eligible for funding, principal investigators (PIs) must [register](#) and participate in Collaboration Initiative Annual Meeting sessions on November 18, 2022. Registration closes on Friday, November 4, 2022. See registration page for exceptions and waivers.

Application Deadline:

Funding applications must be submitted by Tuesday, January 17, 2023, 5 p.m. Central Time via the [NuRamp.nebraska.edu website](http://NuRamp.nebraska.edu) [All routing signatures, after those required at submission, must be received by January 31, 2023.]

Program Website, Annual Meeting Registration, and Application Instructions:

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

Introduction: The primary purpose of the **Collaboration Initiative** is to enhance competitiveness of University of Nebraska (NU) faculty for extramural funding by fully leveraging the intellectual capacity and research resources across the NU campuses. The **Fiscal Year 2024** request for applications focuses on two funding opportunities:

- Grants designed to facilitate the exploration of ideas and innovations that will lead to eventual invention disclosures to NUtech Ventures or UNeMed, and
- Seed grants that are designed to facilitate research collaborations among faculty in **any discipline** that would lead to extramural funding.

Grant Descriptions:¹

[To support Idea/Innovation explorations: \$5,000 to \$25,000 total for one or two years]

Grants are available to allow faculty to explore ideas and innovations that will be expected to lead to new invention disclosures. These grant applications do not require multi-campus collaborators, are for activities not supportable by existing or traditional grant funding, and should be focused on research that strengthens evidence for the feasibility of an initial idea, innovation, or concept that will eventually result in a new invention. In addition to NU campus reviewers, applications for this grant type will be reviewed by NUtech Ventures and UNeMed representatives.

[To support extramural grant applications: \$10,000 to \$150,000 total for one- or two-years²]

Grants are available to support new and existing research collaborations at two or more Nebraska campuses to either 1) Generate preliminary data critical to extramural research proposals or resubmissions, 2) Initiate new exploratory research that, with further development, would be the basis for an extramural grant application, or 3) Develop capabilities

¹ The total award budget for a single year of programs described in this RFA will be approximately \$3 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 15, 2023. Funding will commence on July 1, 2023.

² Limited to a maximum of \$75,000 in a single year



that allow the University of Nebraska’s National Strategic Research Initiative (NSRI) to meet the needs of its sponsor (U.S. Strategic Command) as well as the broader Department of Defense community. Research collaborators seeking support to facilitate extramural grants (including exploratory research), must have confirmed that their research topic fits the objectives of an extramural funding agency’s program portfolio or matches [an identified NSRI IRAD topic](#). The research team must include faculty from more than one NU campus.³ If a proposal’s PI has not received extramural research funding in the last three years (as either a PI or Co-PI), they must identify at least one Co-PI who is both grant-active and willing to serve as a research mentor to the team. The research mentor need not be actively involved in the research itself, but a description of their role and activities associated with the mentoring process must be included in the project narrative (one short paragraph).

General Eligibility: Assistant, Associate, or Full Professors and equivalent-rank faculty with research appointments or formal research apportionments employed by any NU campus are eligible to submit funding applications as the PI and participate as Co-PIs. Other faculty and students are eligible to participate and contribute towards a project’s goals, but the primary focus of the program is to strengthen the research competitiveness and innovations of faculty who are likely to maintain longer-term employment with NU. Faculty may serve as the lead PI on one of each grant type associated with this year’s RFA; there is no limit on participation as Co-PIs. Collaboration Initiative funded PIs/Co-PIs are not restricted from seeking new funding for topics not previously researched with prior-year Collaboration Initiative support.

Collaboration Requirements: With the exception of applications for idea/innovation explorations, proposals will not be considered for funding unless **meaningful⁴ multi-campus** and appropriate disciplinary collaborations are documented. Faculty employed by one NU campus (UNK, UNL, 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 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. Investigators seeking funding for projects without multi-campus participation are not eligible for this program; they should contact their campus research office to explore campus-specific internal funding opportunities.

Annual Meeting: An annual meeting to facilitate multi-campus collaborations, gain perspectives from past NRI funding recipients, and to review the RFA will be held on Friday, November 18, 2022 (in-person). Potential PIs/team leaders wishing to be eligible for funding must participate unless special dispensation is granted. Potential team members (Co-PIs), former and current Collaboration Initiative grantees, and others looking to participate on

³ The Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR), including researchers at its Research, Extension, and Education Centers, are part of the UNL campus.

⁴ Meaningful collaborations should be evident from the proposal’s budget justification and be suitable for the planned contribution of the Co-PI.



research teams are **strongly** encouraged to attend. Participants will be expected to informally discuss their potential research projects with other attendees within a small group and be receptive to engaging other collaborators. NSRI, Nutech Ventures, and UNeMed representatives also will be available answer questions.

Deadlines:

Meeting Registration:

Register by Friday, November 4, 2022.

Submission of Applications:

Applications must be submitted by 5 p.m. Central Time on Tuesday, January 17, 2023, via the <https://nuramp.nebraska.edu> website.

Application Format and Content

Online text entry and PDF file uploads for:

- Application Title
- PI Contact Information
- Contact Information for Co-PI(s)
- Abstract/Summary (not to exceed 300 words)
- Project Description/Narrative
- Total Funds Requested and Budget
- Budget Justification
- Budget Allocation Amounts (to PI and Co-PIs)
- (Up to) Five primary aims/goals/objectives
- PI/Co-PI CVs

Project Description/Narrative (uploaded as a PDF document)

Eight-page maximum⁵ (including all references, tables, and figures), with the following elements:

- **Application Type/Purpose:** In a single sentence clearly state the application type/purpose as one of the following: 1) To generate preliminary data critical for a new extramural grant application, 2) To address reviewer concerns to make an extramural grant resubmission more competitive, 2) To initiate new exploratory grant-fundable research, 3) To specifically address an NSRI identified topic (also cite the topic), or 4) To explore ideas and innovations that will lead to new invention disclosures.
- **Long-Term Objectives:** Clearly state the research question(s) to be addressed in an eventual extramural funding application or contract. Cite the agency/foundation/funding source 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, [or, for NSRI, respond to a government solicitation or task order]. [For those seeking support to explore ideas/innovations, describe the need that might potentially be met/problem to be solved as well as a potential market(s) associated with the idea or invention being explored.]
- **Significance, Innovation, and Impacts:** Describe the **significance** of addressing either the long-term research goals (solves or addresses a scientific problem and/or helps meet an educational/societal need), or of successfully developing an invention. Also describe why

⁵ Eight pages is a maximum; for some award types and request amounts, much shorter narratives would be appropriate.



the PI/Co-PIs eventual extramural funding application or invention will/does 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 short-term goals to be achieved if the proposed grant is funded. [Or what elements of idea exploration will be facilitated.] Describe the approach (work plan) to be used to achieve these goals/aims (including the 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 and/or move towards an invention disclosure.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Clearly describe the *role(s)*, *responsibilities*, *unique expertise*, and *expectations* for the PI and all/any Co-PI(s). As appropriate, describe how the team’s expertise is ideally suited to address the specific aims and approach described in the application. Describe any existing collaborations and how they will be strengthened. 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. If a mentor is required (see the top of page two), indicate who that person is and outline their planned mentoring activities.

Budget

Complete the online budget and upload a budget justification as a PDF file. Personnel expenses aggregated on the budget form must be justified individually.

- F&A costs are not allowed.
- Allowable expenses include support for technicians, postdocs, undergraduate students, graduate research assistants (GRA), publication costs, and 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 from teaching.
- Academic year salaries for PIs and Co-PIs are not allowable expenses. Summer salary expenses are only allowed for a single individual (PI or Co-PI), and only if they don’t have summer salary support (not to exceed 0.5 month total; 12-month employees are not eligible); no salary savings can be accrued. Faculty researchers who are “soft-funded” and associated with a service center may bill/invoice their time as a service using approved service center rates.
- Outline the budget resources (dollars) available to each PI/Co-PI and how expenditures will be audited and monitored by the PI. Provide a clear rationale linking budgetary resources, collaborative roles, and responsibilities.

Project Goals

Use the online form to list up to five primary goals/objectives (specific aims) of the proposed research/ideation. These should match the specific aims/activities/actions listed in the uploaded project narrative. If there are fewer than five objectives/goals/specific aims, leave the extra fields blank. This section is not available to external or internal reviewers; this information is used to pre-populate all post-award reports.



PI and Co-PI CVs

Upload CVs for each PI/Co-PI as a single PDF. The PI's CV should be first. Follow a current format acceptable to a federal funding agency or foundation; the same format must be used for all CVs. Do not use formats that will result in individual CVs more than 5 pages long.

Review Process

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. Proposals will be assessed by NU research faculty or research administrators. Proposals seeking multi-year support totaling in the \$100,000-150,000 range may be reviewed by external reviewers. The primary evaluation criteria will be reviewers' evaluative summaries.⁶ Reviewers will also use a scoring rubric to assist them with providing the evaluative summary:

- a) Justification/description of significance, innovation, and impact (25 points);
- b) Evidence of research question(s) alignment to priorities of an existing extramural funding opportunity [or for ideation/innovation grants, have potential market or markets been identified] (25 points);
- c) Justification of approach/work plan that will enhance an extramural research application [or further the invention process] (35 points);
- d) Meaningful collaborations/roles/responsibilities defined for PI/Co-PIs (5 points);
- e) Budget and facilities adequate to support the plan of work (5 points); and
- f) Realistic and achievable timetable (5 points).

Post Award Management, Obligations, and Reporting Requirements: PIs will be required to submit a brief project initiation report 90 days 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 60 days following the award's end date. All reports will be submitted using a form linked to your application via the <https://nuramp.nebraska.edu> website. 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 and, if warranted, invention disclosures 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. This program is administered by the University of Nebraska Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.⁷

⁶ Reviewers provide written comments and group applications into three categories (Exemplary: Definitely fund (highest tier/greatest likelihood of external funding), Very Good: Strongly consider for funding (mid-tier / modest chance for external funding), Needs Improvement or Inadequate: Do not fund (lowest tier / unlikely to gain external funding)). Historically, applications are not funded if they receive any reviews Needing Improvement; those with combinations of Definitely fund and Very Good tend to be on the "funding line." Final funding decisions will be made by the Executive Vice President and Provost and the Vice Provost.

⁷ Questions regarding the RFA and award management should be sent by email to: David Jackson, djackson@nebraska.edu.

