

2021-2022
Collaboration Initiative
Request for Applications (RFA)

Retreat Registration Deadline:

To be eligible for funding, principal investigators (PIs) must [register](#) and participate in Collaboration Initiative Retreat sessions on October 28, 2021. Registration closes on Thursday, October 14, 2021.

Application Deadline:

Funding applications must be submitted by Monday, January 17, 2022, 5 p.m. Central Time via the NuRamp website.

Program Website, Retreat 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 faculty for extramural funding by fully leveraging intellectual capacity and research resources across the campuses. The **2021-2022** funding opportunity is designed to facilitate research collaborations among faculty in **any** discipline. This year there also is a special sub-category of preliminary data grants designed to support the national security mission of the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska.

Grant Descriptions:¹

Team Formation and Publication Grants

[Up to \$7,500 total for one year]

Team Formation and Publication Grants are intended to facilitate and build new research collaborations across University of Nebraska campuses. Funding is available to support planning meetings, joint-publications, national presentations, and interactions with funding agency program officers (or equivalent) to 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 research funding;
- 3) Prepare and submit, as joint authors, a research review, research-opinion, or research note to a national journal; and
- 4) Prepare and submit an application for research funding.

¹ The total award budget for a single year of program described in this RFA 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 15, 2022. Funding will commence on July 1, 2022.



Preliminary Data and Application Preparation Grants

[Up to \$40,000 total for one year]

Preliminary Data and Application Preparation Grants are intended for new and existing research collaborators across University of Nebraska campuses to generate preliminary data critical to extramural research proposal submissions. Collaborators must have confirmed that their topic fits the objectives of an extramural funding agency. These one-year grants should enable teams to:

- 1) Identify knowledge and expertise gaps that must be addressed prior to submission of a competitive application for extramural research funding;
- 2) Generate proof-of-concept or other preliminary data to support grant applications; and
- 3) Prepare and submit an application for extramural research funding.

In addition to being considered for the standard Preliminary Data grant, applications submitted in this category will be assessed for alignment with NSRI mission areas, and be considered for funding through NSRI's Independent Research and Development (IRAD) Program. NSRI's IRAD program develops technical capabilities and competencies for its sponsor, U.S. Strategic Command, as well as the broader Department of Defense community focused on detecting and countering weapons of mass destruction. Additional details are available at nsri.nebraska.edu/IRAD.

Faculty who have not received extramural research funding (as either a PI or Co-PI) are eligible to serve as the lead PI on either **Team Formation and Publication Grants** or **Preliminary Data and Application Preparation Grants**; however, one of the Co-PIs on the application must be grant-active and willing to serve as a research mentor to the team. In the event one of the PIs has not received extramural research funding, a brief mentoring plan must be included.

Team Seed Grants

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

Team Seed Grants are designed to enhance research collaborations among faculty that have previously collaborated (even if modestly so). Team members providing core leadership for the team must have individual records of extramurally-funded research as a PI or Co-PI. Addition of new team members to fill gaps in expertise is encouraged. 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.² 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.

² 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.



General Eligibility (all grant types): Assistant, Associate, or Full Professors and equivalent-rank research faculty (including Extension Specialists with research appointments) 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 (and other faculty ranks) that are members of the Graduate Faculty are eligible to serve as Co-PIs. Faculty may serve as the lead PI on one seed grant and one preliminary data or team formation grant 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 Collaboration Initiative support.

Collaboration Requirements: Proposals will not be considered for funding unless *meaningful*³ multi-campus and appropriate disciplinary collaborations are documented. Faculty employed by one University of Nebraska campus (UNK, UNL⁴, 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. Projects directed toward the NSRI IRAD topics will receive additional priority if NSRI staff are included in the collaboration.

Retreat: A retreat to facilitate multi-campus collaborations will be held on Thursday, October 28, 2021. Potential PIs/team leaders wishing to be eligible for funding must participate unless special dispensation is granted. Potential team members (PIs/Co-PIs), former and current Collaboration Initiative grantees, and others looking to participate on research 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 Thursday, October 14, 2021.

Submission of Applications:

Applications must be submitted by 5 p.m. Central Time on Monday, January 17, 2022, via the <https://nuramp.nebraska.edu> website.

³ Meaningful collaborations should be evident from the proposal’s budget justification and be suitable for the planned contribution of the Co-PI.

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



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
- PI Contact Information
- Co-PI(s)
- Abstract/Summary (not to exceed 300 words)
- Total Funds Requested
- Budget
- (Up to) Five primary aims/goals/objectives

Project Description/Narrative (uploaded as a PDF document)

Team Formation and Publication Grants or *Preliminary Data and Application*

Preparation Grants: Three-page maximum (including all references, tables, and figures), with the following elements:

- **Research area(s):**

Team Formation and Publication Grants

Describe the research area, questions to be addressed, and how the team intends to interact with potential funding agencies and program leaders to verify that their research question(s) are aligned with *specific* funding programs.

Preliminary Data and Application Preparation Grants

Describe the research area, questions to be addressed in an eventual extramural funding application (including their significance, innovation, and impact), and how any expertise gaps will be identified and addressed. Also, note how the team verified that their research question(s) are aligned with funding program objectives and cite the agency/foundation announcement/program number (or equivalent) from which the team will seek extramural funding.

- **Approach/Work Plan:**

Team Formation and Publication Grants

Describe how researchers involved in the effort intend to: a) hone research question(s) so that their significance, innovation, and societal impact(s) are clear; b) identify gaps in researcher expertise and further build/identify collaborations within and between faculty at University of Nebraska campuses (and, if



appropriate, other institutions); c) strengthen the collaborative bonds (via meetings, workshops, seminars, retreats); d) work together to prepare a joint publication (that helps demonstrate team collaboration to extramural funders); and e) submit a proposal for additional funding. The work plan should include a timeline for the proposed work. Fundable activities include research retreats (with external speakers), and extramural application planning and preparation (writing) meetings. Funding for literature reviews, modest data collection, data synthesis, etc., are allowed to support publication and grant submission requirements. Identify a mentor and include a mentoring plan for any PI/Co-PI that does not have extramural funding.

Preliminary Data and Application Preparation Grants

Describe the previous work of the team and the work/data collection that must be completed before a competitive grant application will be submitted. Outline how the proposed data collection will help address potential/actual reviewer concerns when evaluating the team’s eventual (or previous) extramural funding application(s). Clearly describe the targeted research question(s), hypothesis to be tested, and goals to be achieved by the proposed Preliminary Data Grant. Describe the approach (work plan/experiments and role of each PI/Co-PI) to be used to achieve these goals/aims (including timeline for completion of key project milestones and extramural funding applications). Identify a mentor and include a mentoring plan for any PI/Co-PI that does not have extramural funding.

Seed Grant Applications: Eight-page maximum (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.



- **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.

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 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 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.
- 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.

Project Goals

Use the online form to list five primary goals/objectives (specific aims) of your proposed research. These should match the specific aims/activities/actions listed in your uploaded project narrative. If you have 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.



Review Process

Team Formation and Publication Grants

Preliminary Data and Application Preparation Grants

- Proposals will be assessed by a multi-campus committee of University of Nebraska research administrators. Proposals deemed applicable for NSRI IRAD funding will also be reviewed by the NSRI Science and Technology Advisory Committee.

Seed Grant Applications:

- Proposals will be assessed by a panel of paid external reviewers.

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.

Team Formation and Publication Grants

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 (30 points);
- c) Strategy to identify expertise needs, build collaborations, prepare publication(s), and prepare competitive extramural research applications (30 points);
- d) Timetable (15 points); and
- e) Budget adequate to support the work plan (5 points).

Reviewers also will be asked to provide an evaluative summary.* Final funding decisions will be made by the Vice Provost and the Executive Vice President and Provost.

Preliminary Data and Application Preparation Grants

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) Justification/description of research significance, innovation, and impact (25 points);
- b) Evidence of research question(s) alignment to priorities of an existing extramural funding opportunity (25 points);
- c) Justification of approach/work plan that will enhance an extramural research application (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).



Reviewers also will be asked to provide an evaluative summary. * Final decision on efforts selected for funding under NSRI IRAD will be made by the NSRI Science and Technology Advisory Council. Final funding decisions will be made by the Vice Provost and the Executive Vice President and Provost.

Seed Grants

For those applications that meet the RFA submission criteria, a panel of paid external reviewers will be asked to evaluate seed grant applications using a 100-point scale as follows:

- a) Justification/description of research significance, innovation, and impact (25 points);
- b) Evidence of research question(s) alignment to priorities of an existing extramural funding opportunity (25 points);
- c) Justification of approach/work plan that will enhance an extramural research application (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).

The panel also will be asked to provide an evaluative summary* and rank all proposals. Final funding decisions will be made by the Vice Provost and the Executive Vice President and Provost.

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. 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. This program is administered by the University of Nebraska Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.⁵

* 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).

⁵ Questions regarding the RFA and award management should be sent by email to: David Jackson, djackson@nebraska.edu.

