Faculty Grants Collaboration Initiative

Request for Applications (RFA): FY2027 Nebraska Research Initiative (NRI) Funds

Key Deadlines and Resources

Annual Meeting Registration Deadline

Annual Meeting:
Friday, November 14, 2025

Required Registration Closes:
Friday, October 17, 2025

To be eligible for funding, principal investigators (PIs) must register and participate in Collaboration Initiative Annual Meeting sessions. See the registration page for exceptions and waivers.

Application Deadline

Funding Applications submitted by:
Wednesday, January 14, 2026, 11:59 p.m. Central Time

Routing Signatures received by:
Friday, January 23, 2026, 11:59 p.m. Central Time

Primary investigators can start a new application or continue an application in the NuRamp system.

Program Website

The University of Nebraska Collaboration Initiative program website includes the purpose of the initiative, information & links to register for the annual meeting, a description and instructions on applying for the funding opportunity, and a listing of previous recipients.

Request for Applications

Introduction

The primary purpose of the **Collaboration Initiative** is to enhance the competitiveness of the University of Nebraska (NU) faculty for federal extramural funding by fully leveraging the intellectual capacity and research resources across the NU campuses. The **Fiscal Year 2027** request for applications focuses on a single, flexible grant type:

- **Single-year seed grants** are designed to facilitate research collaborations among faculty in any discipline that would lead to federal funding.

Grant Descriptions[1]

[To prepare to submit federal grant applications: $10,000 to $100,000 total for one year]

Grants are available to support new and existing research collaborations across two or more Nebraska campuses to 1) generate preliminary data critical to federally funded research grant proposals or resubmissions, *or* 2) develop capabilities that allow the University of Nebraska's National Strategic Research Initiative (NSRI) to seek contract funding from its sponsor (U.S. Strategic Command), other Department of Defense entities, or any additional federal agencies.

Research collaborators must confirm: 1) that their research topic fits the objectives of a federal funding agency's grant program portfolio, or 2) matches an identified NSRI priority topic, and 3) is directly aligned with the NU Strategic Plan, and College/Department/Center Operational Strategic Initiatives.[2, 3] The research team must include faculty from more than one NU campus.[4] 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 formal *research apportionments* employed by any NU campus are eligible to submit funding applications as the PI and participate as Co-PIs. Other faculty are eligible to participate and contribute towards a project's goals, but the primary focus of the program is to strengthen the federally fundable research competitiveness of faculty who are likely to maintain a longer-term employment relationship with NU. Faculty may serve as the lead PI on **one** 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 federally fundable topics not previously researched with prior-year Collaboration Initiative support.

Collaboration Requirements

Proposals will not be considered for funding unless **meaningful[5] 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 permitted; in rare cases, this stipulation may be waived if there is not adequate expertise within the NU System and these individuals provide a billable service to the project. Collaborations are to be driven by mutual interest and disciplinary/expertise needs. Investigators seeking

---

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 most award notifications will be available before June 15, 2026. Funding will commence on July 1, 2026.

2   NU Strategic Plan: Odyssey to Extraordinary - Foundational Pillars & Strategic Priorities.

3   NU Strategic Plan: Strategic Initiative Dashboard.

4   For NSRI priority-topic projects, collaboration with an NSRI content expert is encouraged. If an NSRI content expert is included, collaboration between that expert and a PI/Co-PI from a single campus would meet the collaboration requirement. The collaboration requirement can still be met (without an NSRI expert) if the PI/Co-PIs are from multiple campuses.

5   Meaningful collaborations should be evident from the proposal's budget justification and be suitable for the planned contribution of the Co-PI. Ongoing contributions of the team should be strongly considered in the eventual federal grant application.

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 review the RFA will be held on Friday, November 14, 2025 (in-person). Potential PIs/team leaders wishing to be eligible for funding must participate unless a special waiver/dispensation is granted. Potential team members (Co-PIs), former and current Collaboration Initiative grantees, and others looking to participate on 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.

Deadlines

Meeting Registration

Register by **Friday, October 17, 2025**.

Submission of Applications

Applications must be submitted by **11:59 p.m. Central Time on Wednesday, January 14, 2026**, via the NuRamp website.

- Start a new application
- Continuing an application

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)
- Broad Topic Area (drop-down)
- Targeted Federal Grant Program
- Strategic Initiative Alignment

- Project Description/Narrative
- Total Funds Requested and Budget
- Budget Justification
- Budget Allocation Amounts (to PI and Co-PIs)
- PI/Co-PI CVs
- (Up to) Five primary aims/goals/objectives
- Five reviewer suggestions

Complete the Online Form

Specify the application title and complete the fields for all PIs/Co-PIs. Make certain you identify the correct campus, college, and department for each investigator. Provide a proposal abstract/summary that briefly outlines the proposed work and identifies the topic area being addressed (broadly interpret the topic areas[6] to avoid the use of the "other" field unless the topic being studied clearly can't be characterized by any of the pre-identified selections). Complete the fields used to identify the federal funding program being targeted for an extramural funding application, as well as the department/college/center operational strategic initiatives this application supports.[7]

Upload the Project Description/Narrative (as a PDF document)

Eight-page maximum[8] (including all references, tables, and figures), minimum 11-point font size, one-inch margins, and 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 federal extramural grant application, 2) to address reviewer concerns to make a federal extramural grant resubmission more competitive, or 3) to address an NSRI identified topic specifically geared to seeking a new NSRI task-order/contract with the DOD or other applicable agency.
- **Long-Term Objectives**: Clearly state the research question(s) to be addressed in an eventual extramural funding application or contract. (Re)-cite the agency/foundation/funding source(s) and announcement/program number(s) (or equivalent) from which the team will seek extramural funding, and how the proposed research aligns with the stated objectives of the funding source. Confirm when the team plans to submit the application for extramural funding, [or, for NSRI, respond to a government solicitation or task order]. [Note: The final report requires—at least—a draft federal funding proposal. At the conclusion of a funded project, the expectation is that a new application be submitted during the next available application acceptance period for the specified federal grant program.]
- **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). Also describe why the PI/Co-PIs' eventual extramural funding application will/does represent a conceptual innovation and/or an innovative approach, and how anticipated achievements will lead to a societal benefit/broader impact.

---

6 Potential Topic areas, which also must be in alignment with federal funding agencies, include: Aging/Quality of Life While Aging; Agriculture and/or Life Sciences: Crop, Food, and Animal Sciences; Structure/Function Biology and Chemistry; Behavioral/Mental Health: Prevention, Diagnosis, and Care; Biomechanics; Bioeconomy: Feedstocks, Processing, and/or Policy; Cancer Prevention, Screening, and Early Interventions; Clinical Trial Collaborations: Disease Prevention, Diagnostics, and Therapies; Computing, Information Sciences, Data Sciences, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Bioinformatics; Disease Mechanisms, Preventions, and Treatments; Drug and Vaccine Discovery, Delivery, And Development; Early Childhood: Policy and Practice; Education and Educational Sciences; Engineering and Material Science Applications / Use-Inspired Research; Humanities and Creative Arts; National Security: AI, Machine Learning, and Quantum Enhanced Tools; National Security: Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Countermeasures; National Security: Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Protection; National Security: Threat Detection, Mitigation, and Response; Natural Resources: Climate, Energy, and Habitat; Physical Sciences: Basic Chemistry, Physics, Astronomy, and Earth Sciences; Virology, Bacteriology, and/or Fungal Infections; Water Resource and/or Water Safety Management.

7 If investigators have questions related to campus or college-specific strategic initiatives, they should contact their campus research office, college, department, center, or unit.

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

- **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. Describe the approach (work plan) 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 federal research funding.
- **Roles and Responsibilities**: Clearly describe the role(s), responsibilities, unique expertise, and expectations for the PI and all 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 bottom of page one and top of page two), indicate who that person is and outline their planned mentoring activities.

Complete the Online Budget Form and Upload a Budget Justification

Enter proposed expenditures using *only* the Year 1 fields, enter the amounts to be provided to each researcher (PI/Co-PI), and upload a budget justification as a PDF file.

- 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. Personnel expenses aggregated on the budget form must be justified individually.
- 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 for any employee. 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 how Co-PI expenditures will be audited and monitored by the PI. Provide a clear rationale linking budgetary resources, collaborative roles, and responsibilities.

Upload PI and Co-PI CVs

Use the current format acceptable to the federal funding agency being targeted for an extramural funding application; the same format must be used for all CVs. *Combine all the CVs into a single PDF file; the PI's CV should be first*.

Complete the Project Goals Online Form

List up to five primary goals/objectives (specific aims) of the proposed research. These should match the specific aims/activities/actions listed in the uploaded project narrative. If there are fewer than five objectives/goals/specific

UNIVERSITY OF Nebraska System

Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost
Varner Hall | 3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0743 | Tel: (402) 472-5242 | nebraska.edu

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*.

Complete the Potential Reviewers Online Form

Provide contact information for at least five potential external reviewers who have disciplinary expertise in the work being proposed. *These individuals should not be contacted, and they must be free of real or potential conflicts of interest*. Such conflicts include: 1) Having a personal relationship (family/friend) with any PI/Co-PI, 2) Supervising the doctoral work of any PI/Co-PI, 3) Having their doctoral work supervised by any PI/Co-PI, 4) Being a co-author on a publication with any PI/Co-PI within the past 5 years, or 5) Being a colleague within the same organization with any PI/Co-PI within the past 5 years.

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, budget amounts, and strategic initiative alignment. After proposals are screened for eligibility, paid external reviewers will review them. The primary evaluation criteria will be reviewers' evaluative summaries.[9] 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 alignment to priorities of the identified federal funding agency and identified program (**25 points**);
c) An approach/work plan that is both scientifically sound and one that will enhance the identified federal research funding 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**).

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. The final report is due 60 days following the award's end date. Final reports must include a mostly complete draft of an extramural funding proposal to a federal agency. All reports will be submitted using a form linked to the application via the NuRamp website; an SAP expenditure report for all collaborators receiving funding (detailed line items) shall be attached to each report. Continued access to current and future award funds from the University of Nebraska depends on maintaining satisfactory progress and strict adherence to all award conditions. Failure to meet these requirements will result in disqualification from future University of Nebraska award opportunities. The University of Nebraska Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost administers this program.[10]

---

9   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 Needs Improvement reviews; those with combinations of Exemplary and Very Good reviews tend to be on the "funding line." The Office of the Provost will make final funding decisions.

10   Questions regarding the RFA and award management should be sent by email to: Michael Jolley, mjolley@nebraska.edu.