



**Africa Research Initiative
Request for Applications (RFA)**

Updated 9/13/18

Introduction: The primary purpose of the **Africa Research Initiative** is to strengthen the University of Nebraska's research competitiveness and understanding of Africa¹ by fully leveraging its multi-campus intellectual capacity and research resources. It is designed to facilitate new and strengthen existing research collaborations among faculty studying extramurally-fundable research question(s) about, with or in Africa from a broad multidisciplinary "systems" approach. This initiative is focused on helping position faculty teams to be more competitive for the extramural funding required to further their research and to better understand the wide variety of complex systems found in nature and society in Africa.

Planning Grants [up to \$20,000 total for one year]

Planning Grants are intended to facilitate and build new research collaborations focusing on Africa at any University of Nebraska campus. Funding is available to support planning meetings, retreats, and travel to funding agencies in order to meet with National Program Leaders (or equivalent) and gauge support for the proposed programmatic direction(s). These one-year grants should enable teams to: 1) identify specific extramural funding opportunities that would grow its collective research portfolio; 2) identify knowledge and expertise gaps that must be addressed in order to prepare a competitive extramural research proposal; 3) facilitate study design and/or modest data collection; and 4) prepare extramural funding applications. PIs who have not received extramural research funding (as a PI or Co-PI) are eligible for this grant-type, but one of the Co-PIs on their application must be currently grant-active and willing to serve as a research mentor to the team.

General Eligibility: Assistant, Associate or Full Professors and equivalent-rank researchers employed by any University of Nebraska campus are eligible to submit funding applications as Principal Investigators (PIs).

Collaboration Requirements: Proposals will not be considered for funding unless meaningful and appropriate multidisciplinary collaborations are documented. A PI employed by one University of Nebraska campus (UNK, UNL², UNMC and UNO) must identify at least one additional collaborator; ideally collaborators would span campuses. If appropriate because of unique expertise/resource availability, additional collaborations with researchers at other institutions are allowed. Funding for non-NU collaborators 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.

¹ For our purposes, Africa includes the countries of the Middle East due to their long-standing connections with North Africa.

² The Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) is part of the UNL campus.

Deadlines:

PIs must submit fully-completed applications by Wednesday October 31, 2018, 5 PM Central via the grants-awards.nebraska.edu website. Consult your research office for additional campus-specific requirements.

Application Format and Content: Applications (including references, tables, and figures) must not exceed three pages. 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 by the grants-awards.nebraska.edu website; campus approval processes also must be followed. Consult your grants or research office 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 peer evaluations of their application. Each application shall have the following components:

Online Entry Form

- Application Title
- PI Contact Information (Auto completed, please confirm)
- Co-PI List
- Total Funds Requested
- Abstract/Summary (not to exceed 300 words)
- Budget
- Budget Justification
- (Up to) Five primary aims/goals/objectives (these must match those outlined in the proposal narrative)

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

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 identify 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 associated with all undertakings (including one for writing and submitting an extramural funding proposal). Fundable activities include research retreats (with external speakers), extramural application planning and preparation (writing) meetings, and travel to funders. 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. The activities/actions listed in this section should match those listed in the online form (“(Up to) Five primary aims/goals/objectives”).

- **CVs:** Include CVs for each PI/Co-PI; follow a recognized standard federal grant agency or foundation format (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 grant activity, 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.

Additional Guidance:

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 allowable expenses.
- Academic year salary for PIs and Co-PIs are not allowable expenses. Summer salary expenses (0.5 month maximum) are only allowed for a PI without summer support (no summer salary is allowed for any Co-PI); no salary savings can be accrued.
- Outline what budget resources (dollars) would be made available to each PI/Co-PI and what resources will be managed “centrally” by the PI. Provide a clear rationale linking budgetary resources and collaborative role(s).

Review Process:

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

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.

For those applications that meet stated RFA submission criteria, at least four internal (NU) reviews will be solicited. 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 (using a 40-point scale) based on: a) the plan to interact with potential funding agencies/foundations (8 pts.); b) evidence that the completed work plan will help the PI/Co-PIs align their research question(s) with

funding agency/foundation interests and justify the proposed approach (10 pts.); c) their strategy to identify expertise needs, build collaborations, and prepare competitive extramural research applications (10 pts.); d) having a realistic timetable (6 pts.); and e) having a budget adequate to support the work plan (6 pts.). Reviewers also will be asked to provide an evaluative summary.³ Final funding decisions will be made by the Vice Provost and the Executive Vice President and Provost. Funding announcements are expected to be made prior to June 2018.

Post Award Management, Obligations, and Reporting Requirements: PIs will be required to submit a brief project initiation report three months after award; while the grant remains active, programmatic progress and detailed financial reports will be due 30 days after each award anniversary. A final report will be due 90 days after the award's termination date. As 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 a condition 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. This program is administered by the University of Nebraska's Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.

³ 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).