



Request for Proposals
Office of Research and Economic Development
Pathway to Interdisciplinary Research Centers
Phase I: Planning Grants

Proposals must be fully routed and approved in NUgrant by 5:00pm, on these dates:
1st Friday in March; 1st Friday in June; 2nd Friday in September; 2nd Friday in December.

DESCRIPTION:

The Pathway to Interdisciplinary Research Centers program is designed to foster or support interdisciplinary research teams at UNL and enhance their competitiveness for large-scale or center grants. In addition to providing critical answers to complex questions that impact society, some interdisciplinary research teams may also be in a position to attract partners from industry to translate academic research into new products and services that may be licensed and commercialized to benefit Nebraskans and the general public.

Interdisciplinary research teams that build collaborations across departments, colleges, campuses, and with other institutions of strategic importance are critical to enhance competitiveness of UNL faculty. The program encourages team-building and collaboration with minority-serving institutions. These interdisciplinary research teams should emerge naturally from shared research interests or needs and take into account external funding opportunities, institutional priorities, and UNL's unique strengths. Interdisciplinary research teams include expertise across two or more distinct fields or disciplines and leverage an integrated or holistic approach to solve complex societal problems. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review and include references to recent reports from the National Academy of Sciences or federal agencies to become familiar with national priorities and critical societal issues.

AWARD AMOUNT: Awards for Pathway grants are made possible by support from the Office for Research and Economic Development (ORED). Awards will be made up to **\$10,000** for one year (maximum award duration). Up to ten awards per year are expected. Applications for subsequent funding (phase II) are by invitation only.

SCOPE OF THE AWARDS:

For the purpose of the Pathway to Interdisciplinary Research Centers program

- Interdisciplinary research teams must go beyond collaborations between two fields in the same discipline (e.g., molecular and computational biologists, basic and applied engineers, or social and cognitive psychologists) or two disciplines working in the same field (e.g., agronomists and plant pathologists, physiologists and molecular biologists, economists and risk analysts, or anthropologists and linguists). The rationale for the nature of the interdisciplinary research team should not be based solely on the use of various research techniques.
- Funds must be used to support interdisciplinary research teams where there is a *known opportunity* for obtaining competitive funding from a federal agency or a foundation. A large-scale or center grant is defined as a competitive, full Facilities and Administrative (F&A) cost-bearing funding opportunity of at least \$1 million per year (total costs) for a minimum of three years.



- Phase I Planning Grants will support activities that build interdisciplinary research teams, including:
 - faculty retreats to conduct strategic planning, discuss project management, or develop strategies to enhance communication and collaboration among team members;
 - meetings with team members from other campuses, including minority-serving institutions;
 - meetings with an external advisory board;
 - collection of stakeholder input; or
 - travel expenses and honoraria for nationally-recognized outside experts to evaluate the interdisciplinary research team at UNL.
- Phase I Planning Grants cannot be used to support salaries, benefits, stipends, or tuition remission. Grant funding cannot be used for the generation or analysis of preliminary data.
- In addition, these funds must NOT be used for construction, renovation, administrative assistance, international travel, or to purchase equipment. Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs are not allowed.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION:

- Lead PIs must be full-time (1.0 FTE), UNL faculty members on a continuous appointment (tenure-leading or tenured, with a rank of assistant professor or above), research (assistant/associate/full) professor or senior lecturer/Professor of Practice. Faculty with part-time appointments, visiting and adjunct appointees and other lecturer ranks may not serve as PI on awards from this program.
- A faculty member may submit only one application as principal investigator but is not limited as a co-PI, collaborator, or team member on other projects.
- Co-PI(s), collaborator(s), and/or team members can be affiliated with any University of Nebraska campus or be employed outside the University of Nebraska system.

OUTCOMES AND EXPECTATIONS:

A “White Paper” (not to exceed five single-spaced pages) must be submitted to ORED within one month after the conclusion of funding. Failure to submit this “White Paper” disqualifies the team from competition for Pathway Phase II funding. Following submission of the “White Paper” to ORED, a face-to-face meeting will be scheduled for all members of the interdisciplinary research team, senior research administrators from the College(s) or Institute, and senior research administrators from the Office of Research. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss the “White Paper” and provide feedback regarding the next steps for the interdisciplinary research team to obtain internal or external funding. The “White Paper” must include the following information:

- Description of the societal challenge that will be addressed;
- Description of the Interdisciplinary Research Team;
- Short-term and long-term vision and goal(s) for the large-scale project or center;
- Description of the external funding opportunity of at least \$1 million per year for a minimum of three years, including a URL for a specific funding program or communications from a Program Officer at a research funding agency;
- Justification of how this funding will enable the interdisciplinary research team to successfully compete for a large-scale or center grant in the future; and
- Timeline for submitting a large-scale or center grant application.



Following submission of the "White Paper" to ORED, a face-to-face meeting will be scheduled for all members of the interdisciplinary research team, senior research administrators from the College(s) or Institute, and senior research administrators from the Office of Research. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss the "White Paper" and provide feedback regarding the next steps for the interdisciplinary research team to obtain internal or external funding.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AWARDS:

- Applicants should identify external sources of funding and specify a timeline for proposal submission that will be pursued as a result of this internal funding.
- Recipients are expected to participate in at least one grant-writing seminar sponsored by the ORED during the award period if they have not already done so.
- Recipients are expected to actively pursue external funding sources (grants and/or fellowships) and to submit a proposal for external funding within 24 months of receipt of award. Failure to do so will disqualify the applicant from future competitions.
- A one-page final report is required, due to the ORED no later than one month after the conclusion of funding. A template for this report will be sent with the award notification.
- Recipients must agree to serve as a reviewer on at least two Office of Research and Economic Development ad hoc review panels over a 4-year period. Failure to do so will disqualify the applicant from future competitions.

REVIEW AND AWARD PROCESS:

- Applications will be reviewed by senior research administrators within the applicants' College(s) or Institute and ORED.
- The Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development will make the final selection.
- Announcement of awards will be made within 90 days following the submission deadline.
- The anticipated award period begins 120 days following the application deadline, or the new fiscal year (July 1 to June 30) – whichever comes first.
- A one-page final report must be submitted to the Office of Research and Economic Development within one month after the end of the grant period/fiscal year. In order to compete for Phase II funding, a separate "White Paper" (not to exceed five single-spaced pages) has to be submitted within one month after the conclusion of Phase I funding.
- Submission of a proposal for external funding to support future research (related to the center idea or otherwise) is encouraged within 24 months of Phase I award receipt.

GENERAL SELECTION CRITERIA: (100 point scale)

- Scientific or scholarly merit. (30 points)
- Potential for tapping funding trends and generating external funding in the form of a large-scale or center grant (defined as at least \$1 million per year for a minimum of three years). (30 points)
- Relevance to current institutional and/or national funding priorities (broader impact), including but not limited to addressing critical societal challenges. (15 points)
- Qualifications and potential of the interdisciplinary research team to compete successfully for this funding opportunity. (15 points)
- Budget. (10 points)

Priority will be given to interdisciplinary research teams that have not previously received a Pathway or Strategic Research Cluster grant from ORED.



PROPOSAL PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS

Only electronic submissions via NUgrant will be accepted (<http://nugrant.unl.edu>). **Paper applications will not be accepted.** If you are a first-time user of NUgrant you can log-in to NUgrant using your Blackboard username and password.

Information required as part of the electronic NUgrant application:

1. **250-word abstract** (in lay language, without the use of technical terminology or acronyms).
2. **3-page project description** plus a 1-page bibliography. The project description must include sufficient detail to convince reviewers of the project's scientific or scholarly merit, and **written in lay language understandable to non-specialists**. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the Pathway to Interdisciplinary Research Centers program, it is unlikely that reviewers will be experts in the areas of any application. Please make the project description and bibliography single spaced, using 11 point font and one-inch margins. The project description should include information to demonstrate to reviewers its merit and potential for external funding, including the following elements:
 - a. Introduction**
 - Pose a clear project goal.
 - Provide background/rationale that addresses the significance of the project to your field.
 - Describe the current status of research at UNL, including research strengths, relative competitiveness for funding, and landmark outcomes.
 - Describe the goals and objectives of the team-building activities and the research team's interdisciplinary qualifications. Applications from existing interdisciplinary research teams or programs of excellence must clearly indicate how the proposed activities differ significantly from current activities.
 - b. Proposed plan**
 - Describe the activities that will be organized and conducted to build interdisciplinary research teams.
 - Provide information to justify how these activities will enhance competitiveness of the interdisciplinary research team for a large-scale or center grant.
 - Describe what the Pathway Phase I funds will accomplish that cannot be achieved through other means.
 - c. Timeline for external funding proposal submission**
 - Identify a specific external funding opportunity (program and funding agency), submission deadlines, and submission timeline. For instance, provide a URL or communications from a Program Officer from a research funding agency that describes the external funding opportunity of at least \$1 million per year for a minimum of three years to which the team will eventually apply.
 - Describe how the proposed project aligns with external funding priorities/opportunities.
 - The **Timeline** should include a description of the team-building activities during the grant period. It should also outline plans for the interdisciplinary research team to obtain additional internal or external funding beyond Phase I funding, in order to collect and analyze preliminary data. Longer-term plans for submitting an extramural application to fund the large-scale or center grant should also be included.
3. **List of Key Personnel:** **attach a two-page biographical sketch/vitae** for all faculty names on the interdisciplinary research team. Applicants are encouraged to use the standard format required by the potential funding agency. Please use one common format for all CVs included.



4. **Current & Pending Support:** list all funded and pending internal and external grants for all faculty involved in the project. Basic information regarding internal and external funding is automatically provided for applications that have been submitted to NUgrant (grant ID, title, name of the lead PI, agency, current and total award amount). Include information regarding outcomes of previously awarded internally-funded projects from the Office of Research and Economic Development. Team members that are not employed by UNL are not required to provide this information.

5. **Project Budget:** 1-page budget and detailed justification for expenses up to \$10,000. The budget form is available in NUgrant. The budget justification is limited to one page and must include a rationale for the purpose of expenditures.