

Request for Applications:
Big Ideas Grants – Round 2



Office of Research and Economic Development
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Concept Paper Deadline: Monday, February 2, 2015
Full Proposal Deadline (Invitation Only): Monday, April 13, 2015

Introduction

The Big Ideas Grants program will support new or existing interdisciplinary teams as they lay the groundwork or conduct preliminary studies essential to the competitiveness of grant proposals requesting external funding of \$3 million or more for thematic, interdisciplinary research. Examples of such areas include, but are not limited to, the research themes discussed during the [2014 UNL Interdisciplinary Faculty Retreat](#):

- Signaling, Sensing and Imaging at the Intersection of Engineering and the Physical & Life Sciences
- Enhancing Lives: Integrating Research and Practice Across the Social, Behavioral & Educational Sciences
- Integrating Big Data into Your Research Program at UNL

The Big Ideas Grants program is *not* a typical seed grant competition and is *not* intended to support discrete projects. To be competitive, applicants must describe an interdisciplinary research area or initiative for which a major source of external funding is ultimately available. For example, a team might propose to organize faculty around a focus area that can be developed over time through a combination of small- and medium-sized grants for research, education, and/or training to build the team and track record necessary to capture major external funding of \$3 million or more. This includes, but is not limited to, funding available through the following programs:

- Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURI) at the Department of Defense;
- Centers for Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) program or Program Projects Grants (P01) at the National Institutes of Health;
- Engineering Research Centers (ERC), Improving Undergraduate STEM Education (IUSE), Physics Frontiers Center (PFC), or Science and Technology Centers: Integrative Partnerships (STC) programs at the National Science Foundation;
- Coordinated Agricultural Projects programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture; or
- Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) competition at the U.S. Department of Education.

Award Amount and Project Scope

The Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) will award up to \$400,000 in Big Ideas Grants during the second round of the competition. Faculty teams may apply for two levels of funding: 1) *planning grants* of up to \$10,000 for one year and 2) *accelerator grants* of up to \$100,000 over two years. ORED provided awards totaling \$150,000 in response to five planning grant proposals and one accelerator grant proposal submitted during the first round of the competition.

Eligibility

Tenured/tenure-track and research faculty may serve as the principal investigator (PI) on one planning grant and/or one accelerator grant through the Big Ideas Grants program. Co-principal investigators (co-PIs) from UNL must hold a full-time appointment, but they do not need to hold a tenured/tenure-track or research faculty position. There is no limit regarding the number of applications on which UNL personnel may serve as co-PI or in another capacity. To foster the level of interdisciplinary research that is increasingly the hallmark of large-scale, collaborative efforts, at least one co-PI on each Big Ideas Grants application *must* be affiliated with UNL and have an appointment in a college different from that of the PI. As appropriate, co-PIs may be affiliated with other institutions.

Investigators with current internal or external research funding will not be at a competitive disadvantage for funding from the Big Ideas Grants program. However, applications to the program must describe plans to organize existing or new teams around interdisciplinary projects for which it is possible to secure a major stream of external funding.

Concept Paper Requirements

All teams are required to submit a project concept paper that will be reviewed by ORED's senior leadership team.

- *Planning grant* awards will be made based on the review of concept papers.
- Teams submitting *accelerator grant* concept papers that describe innovative and meritorious interdisciplinary approaches will be invited to submit a full proposal (see below).

To submit a Big Ideas Grants concept paper, send the document as an email attachment to unlresearch@unl.edu by 5 p.m. CST on **Monday, February 2, 2015**. Include the text "Big Ideas Grants Concept Paper – Planning Grant" or "Big Ideas Grants Concept Paper – Accelerator Grant" in the subject line of the email. Concept papers are limited to three pages in length and must contain the following information and be submitted in PDF format:

- An overview of the opportunity or challenge and the thematic area to which the proposed project responds. Teams pursuing *planning grants* should describe the rationale for the formation of the proposed interdisciplinary team. Teams pursuing *accelerator grants* should describe the primary objective of the proposed research and how it relates to prior or ongoing work.
- An outline of the goals and objectives for the proposed project. Describe the project's overall aim and the steps that will be taken to meet that target. Include a detailed plan of work.
- A summary of the level of innovation associated with the proposed research and how the project team provides the interdisciplinary expertise and experience necessary to support that innovation.
- A clear description of expected project outcomes, including a development roadmap or a timeline for pursuing major external funding via known or emerging opportunities, such as those listed above.

References Cited. A list of references cited no more than one page in length may be appended to each concept paper.

Budget. Detailed budgets are not required for concept papers describing *accelerator grant* projects. Teams requesting *planning grant* support must append a detailed budget and a budget justification of no more than one page in length to their concept paper. Budget information will not count toward the concept paper page limit. Planning grants may not be used to support faculty summer salary or teaching release time. Planning grants will support activities such as:

- faculty workshops 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; or
- meetings with an external advisory board or key project stakeholders.

Accelerator Grant Full Proposal Requirements

Submission of full proposals for accelerator grants is by invitation only. Following the review of concept papers, invitations to submit full proposals will be made by February 16, 2015. Full applications for accelerator grants must be submitted via the Internal Competitions module within NUgrant (<http://nugrant.unl.edu>) by 5 p.m. CST on **Monday, April 13, 2015**.

Teams invited to submit full proposals for accelerator grants should prepare the following information as a single PDF file in the order described:

- A letter of transmittal that includes the application title and the names and affiliations of all senior/key personnel.
- A project plan of no more than six pages that details the following:
 - Brief project overview (written in language accessible to non-experts)
 - Plans for preliminary study and/or data collection to enhance grant proposal competitiveness
 - Alignment with institutional strengths and relevant prior investment (e.g., personnel, facilities, equipment, etc.)
 - Description of the innovation associated with the proposed interdisciplinary approach and the project's fit with one or more of the thematic areas detailed in the introduction to this document
 - Information regarding the project's alignment with federal research priorities and prior institutional investment
 - Summary of relevant funding opportunities and a detailed proposal submission timeline (applicants should describe plans for preparing and submitting a major federal grant within 12 months following the period of Big Ideas Grants support)
 - Description of key personnel and their project role and substantive contribution
- A list of references cited within the project plan that is no more than one page in length.
- A detailed budget and budget justification of no more than two pages for funds requested from the Big Ideas Grants program. Applicants should provide a strong rationale for their budget request and describe how funds will be used to support preliminary study and/or data collection (e.g., GRA or postdoctoral research associate support, travel, etc.). Funds may not be used for faculty summer salary or teaching release time, which may instead be provided by the PI's academic unit or college to strengthen institutional commitment to the proposed effort. Sub-awards are not allowed; however, external collaborators may invoice project-specific expenses.
- A two-page biographical sketch or CV for all faculty named to the interdisciplinary research team. Applicants are encouraged to use the standard format required by the potential funding agency. Please use a common format for all team members.

Big Ideas Grants Program Requirements

Each team receiving Big Ideas Grants program support must submit a final written report of project outcomes to ORED within 30 days following the end of the project period (the report guidelines will be distributed with award notification letters). Following submission of the final report, a face-to-face

meeting will be scheduled for all members of the interdisciplinary research team, senior research administrators from the relevant college(s) or division, and ORED. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss the project's overall progress and the next steps needed for the interdisciplinary research team to obtain additional internal or external funding.

In addition, if they have not already done so, all members of the interdisciplinary research team from UNL are expected to participate in at least one proposal writing seminar sponsored by ORED during the award period.

Selection Criteria and Review Process

Planning Grant selection criteria will include:

- Potential to launch and ultimately secure major federal funding for an interdisciplinary initiative or project within a focused thematic area, as well as alignment with institutional and federal research priorities;
- Description of a clear, comprehensive planning process; detail regarding expected project outcomes; and inclusion of an appropriate project management strategy;
- Project team member qualifications; and
- The extent to which the proposed project costs are necessary and reasonable.

Accelerator Grant selection criteria will include:

- A clear fit between the proposed project and a focused thematic area, as well as alignment with institutional and federal research priorities;
- Scholarly merit and capacity of the proposed research to solve critical societal challenges;
- The level of innovation of the proposed project and its potential for generating a significant level of new external funding;
- Feasibility of the team's plan to submit large-scale grant proposals;
- Project team member qualifications; and
- The extent to which the proposed project costs are necessary and reasonable.

Applications will be reviewed initially by senior research administrators from ORED. In addition, ORED may solicit additional internal or external reviewers to aid in the decision-making process. The Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development will make the final selection.

Award Notification

Award notification for planning grants will occur during February of 2015, and notification of accelerator grants will occur during May of 2015.

Additional Information

For additional information regarding the Big Ideas Grants program, contact Nathan Meier, director of research strategy (402.472.3902 or nlm@unl.edu), or Monica Norby, assistant vice chancellor for research (402.472.4180 or mnorby1@unl.edu).