
NIH COBRE Internal Competition



University of Nebraska-Lincoln Internal Competition Guidelines

Expression of Interest Deadline: 12 p.m. on Wednesday, January 25, 2017

Internal Proposal Deadline: 12 p.m. on Wednesday, March 8, 2017

The Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) expects that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) will submit its next new Phase I application to the Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) program at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) during 2019. However, the opportunity may arise to submit a new Phase 1 COBRE proposal to NIH in 2018. ORED is sponsoring an internal competition to identify UNL's next COBRE proposal team. The internal competition involves a two-stage process, including submission of 1) an expression of interest and 2) an internal proposal. Depending on the quality of internal proposals, ORED may provide one team with seed grant funding of up to \$100,000 to develop UNL's next COBRE concept.

The COBRE program is designed to strengthen an institution's biomedical research infrastructure by creating an interdisciplinary, and sometimes multi-institutional, center and enhancing the ability of early career investigators to secure independent external research funding. COBRE applications must have a thematic scientific focus supported by basic, clinical, and/or translational research approaches, including community engagement and outreach research. Proposed centers must be led by an established biomedical or behavioral investigator who has: 1) an active research laboratory, 2) a record of peer-reviewed funding related to the proposed center's scientific focus, and 3) a history of leadership and mentoring. Additional information is available on the [NIH website](#) and in the [Phase I COBRE program announcement](#) (PAR-16-415).

A. Instructions for Expression of Interest

Prepare your COBRE expression of interest according to the following instructions. Use a minimum of .5" margins on all sides and Arial 11-point font for body text (the text used in captions and figures may be smaller, but it must be legible). The expression of interest is limited to a maximum of six pages in length: one page for the center concept, one page for the list of potential personnel, and up to four pages for the PI's NIH-style biographical sketch.

Send your expression of interest as a single PDF file to unlresearch@unl.edu by 12 p.m. on Wednesday, January 25, 2017. The expression of interest must contain the following components in the order specified.

1. Center Concept – LIMITED TO 1 PAGE

- Include the proposed center's title and the PI's name, title, and contact information at the top of the page.
- Describe the thematic scientific focus and goal(s) of the proposed center, including a vision for how the center's formation will leverage a critical mass of established investigators to enhance Nebraska's research infrastructure and the competitiveness of early career researchers.
- Include a section labeled "**Keywords**" that includes up to four key descriptors associated with the proposed center's scientific focus. These keywords will be used to help recruit external reviewers.

2. List of Potential Personnel – LIMITED TO 1 PAGE

- Include the name, title, and affiliation of individuals expected to participate in the development of a full COBRE application, including research project leaders, mentors, core facility directors, etc.

3. NIH Biographical Sketch – LIMITED TO 4 PAGES

- Include a current version of the PI's biographical sketch in NIH format. Instructions and a template are available on the ORED [website](#).

B. Instructions for Internal Proposals

Prepare your COBRE internal proposal according to the following instructions. Use a minimum of .5" margins on all sides and Arial 11-point font for body text (the text used in captions and figures may be smaller, but it must be legible). The proposal narrative (i.e., Specific Aims, Significance, Innovation, Center Director/Principal Investigator, Proposed Research Project Leaders, Other Key Personnel, Center Organization and Management, and Research Core Facilities) is limited to a maximum of six pages in length. The Bibliography and References Cited section is limited to a maximum of two pages in length. Biographical sketches and the letter of commitment do not count toward the internal proposal page limit.

Send your internal proposal as a single PDF file to unlresearch@unl.edu by 12 p.m. on Wednesday, March 8, 2017. The internal proposal must contain the following components in the order specified. Internal proposals that do not conform to these proposal preparation guidelines will be returned without review.

1. Specific Aims – LIMITED TO 1 PAGE

- Include the center's title and the PI's name, title, and contact information at the top of the page.
- State the goal and specific aims of the proposed center, describe the center's thematic scientific focus, and summarize the expected outcomes, including the impact that the results of the proposed research agenda will exert on the field(s) involved.

2. Significance – SUGGESTED LENGTH 1/2 PAGE

- Introduce the proposed center's thematic scientific focus and explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field(s) that the proposed center addresses.
- Explain how the proposed center is expected to improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields.
- Describe the translational potential of the proposed research, including how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.

3. Innovation – SUGGESTED LENGTH 1/2 PAGE

- Explain how the center challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms.
- Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, or instrumentation or interventions to be developed or used, and any advantages of these over existing methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.
- Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.
- Indicate how the proposed center is distinct from existing NIH-funded COBREs. A directory of current COBRE awards is available on the COBRE program [website](#).

4. Center Director/Principal Investigator – SUGGESTED LENGTH 1/2 PAGE

- Detail the PI's qualifications to lead the proposed center, including a summary of relevant academic preparation and training and previous administrative and mentoring experience.
- Summarize the PI's record of research accomplishments and contributions that have advanced biomedical or behavioral science.
- Describe how the establishment of the proposed center represents a logical extension of the PI's professional trajectory.
- Indicate the level of effort the PI expects to dedicate as director/PI of the proposed center.

5. Proposed Research Project Leaders – SUGGESTED LENGTH 2 PAGES

- Describe a cadre of three to five early career investigators who are eligible to receive COBRE research project support (i.e., an individual who has not been and is not the PD/PI for an external, peer-reviewed research project or program project grant, or an established investigator who is making a significant change in his/her career). For each investigator, list his/her title and affiliation.
- Summarize the research expertise and interests of each early career investigator, including relevant academic preparation and training. Briefly describe a research project that each early career investigator may pursue with COBRE program support.
- Detail synergies and research collaborations expected to emerge among the research project leaders.

6. Other Key Personnel – SUGGESTED LENGTH 1/2 PAGE

- Describe the research expertise and relevant qualifications of additional key personnel (e.g., associate director, core facility director(s), etc.). For each individual listed, provide his/her title and affiliation.
- Briefly describe the role of each individual within the proposed center.

7. Center Organization and Management – SUGGESTED LENGTH 1/2 PAGE

- Describe how institutional biomedical research capacity will be augmented and strengthened through the establishment of the proposed center.
- Details plans for center organization and management, including leadership and advisory structure and efforts to facilitate collaboration and coordination among center personnel.
- Summarize evaluation strategies and specific milestones that may be used to measure progress toward the center's longer-term goal(s).

8. Research Core Facilities – SUGGESTED LENGTH 1/2 PAGE

- Provide an overview of research core facilities (existing or planned) that are required to support the proposed center's research agenda.
- Summarize expected research core facility usage by each of the proposed research project leaders.
- Describe how proposed research core facilities are distinct from those currently available at the participating institution(s).

9. Bibliography and References Cited – LIMITED TO 2 PAGES

- Include the full citation for each reference cited within your internal proposal narrative.

10. NIH Biographical Sketches – LIMITED TO 4 PAGES EACH

- Include current versions of NIH biographical sketches for the PI, potential research project leaders, mentors, and other key personnel. Instructions and a template are available on the ORED [website](#).

11. Letter of Commitment

- Include a letter of commitment co-signed by the PI's 1) academic dean and 2) chair/head/director indicating the proposed center is supported by and integrated into the research goals of the college and department/school/center; aligns with unit-, college-, or institutional-level hiring plans; and that, if selected, the PI has the administrative approvals necessary to develop a full COBRE proposal.

C. Review Process and Selection Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by senior research administrators at UNL. In addition, ORED may solicit external reviews to inform the decision-making process. The Interim Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development will make the final selection. Award notification is expected in April, 2017.

The merits of internal COBRE proposals will be considered based on the following review criteria:

1. Significance

- Does the proposed center's scientific focus address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field?
- If the aims of the proposed center are achieved, how will scientific knowledge and capacity, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved?
- Does the proposed center's research agenda have the potential to change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?

2. Innovation

- Will the proposed center challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions?
- Are the proposed concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel to one field of research or novel in a broad sense?
- Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed?

3. Investigators

- Are the center director, research project leaders, mentors, and other personnel well suited to the project?
- Do the research project leaders have appropriate experience and training?
- Has the center director demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have advanced his/her field?
- Has the center director shown effective judgment in the selection of research projects?
- Do the center director, research project leaders, mentors, and other personnel have complementary and integrated expertise?

4. Research Core Facilities

- Does the proposal describe the need for relevant core facilities and the effectiveness of these facilities to enhance the research efforts?
- Does the proposal indicate that each proposed core facility will serve the scientific needs of the individual research projects and show how each core facility will impact the development of the center?
- Does the proposal identify personnel qualified to direct the core facilities?

5. Institutional Support

- Does the letter of support indicate the proposed center is supported by and integrated into the research goals of the college and academic unit?
- Does the proposed center align with unit-, college-, or institutional-level hiring plans?
- Does the proposed center director have the administrative approvals and support necessary to develop a full COBRE proposal?

D. Additional Information

For additional information regarding the NIH COBRE Internal Competition, contact Nathan Meier, assistant vice chancellor for research, at nlm@unl.edu or 402-472-3902.