

Request for Proposals

Collaboration Grants: Catalyst
Office of Research and Innovation
University of Nebraska-Lincoln



Application Deadline: April 1, 2027
Proposals must be submitted in [NuRamp](#).

Program Overview

Collaboration Grants support teams of University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) scholars seeking to take their programs of research, scholarship, and/or creative endeavors to a more collaborative level. Three grant types are available for teams at various stages of development.

- **Team Formation and Ideation Grants:** These grants provide support for teaming and ideation activities for collaborative groups to coalesce around a proposed project. The expected outcome is for recipients to build and strengthen collaborative teams in a manner that will better position them to perform collaborative research, scholarship, and/or creative endeavors.
- **Development Grants:** These grants provide support for collaborative groups to conduct innovative, timely, and collaborative research, scholarship, and/or creative endeavors. The scope of work should be more preliminary and/or exploratory in nature than that supported by Catalyst Grants and should occur at an earlier stage of a team's progression than work supported by Catalyst Grants. The expected outcome is for recipients to build and strengthen their team through collaborative work that will enhance competitiveness for external collaborative funding opportunities.
- **Catalyst Grants:** These grants provide support for well-established collaborative teams to implement a project that will better position them to compete for major external funding. Competitive teams for Catalyst Grants will be able to articulate a robust plan of work for advancing their collaborative programs of research, scholarship, and/or creative endeavors and demonstrate the existing capacity of the team to effectively collaborate. The expected outcome is for recipients to conduct a project that will enhance competitiveness for external collaborative funding opportunities and begin to position the team for long-term project sustainability.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is for Catalyst Grants.

[Separate RFPs](#) are available for Team Formation and Ideation Grants and Development Grants.

Award Information

Allowable activities: While not an exhaustive list of allowable activities, funds may be used to support activities such as preliminary studies, pilot projects, or prototype development; data collection or analysis; demonstration of societal impacts such as educational/public service programs, activities, or resources; and the preparation, development, and/or hosting of performances, recordings, and exhibitions. Catalyst Grants may request funds for some team formation and ideation activities, but the majority of funds must

be dedicated to collaborative research, scholarship, and/or creative endeavors. See [Budget Guidelines](#) below for information about allowable and unallowable costs.

Award amounts: Up to \$150,000 is available per award. However, applicants are not required to seek the maximum level of funding. Budget requests should reflect the scope and scale of the proposed work.

Project duration: The project duration for Catalyst Grants is 18 months. For this award cycle, the award period is August 1, 2027, to January 31, 2029.

Expected number of awards: The Office of Research and Innovation (R&I) will award no more than two Catalyst Grants per competition. Within this limit, the number of awards issued will be determined based on proposal quality (see [Proposal Review Process and Timeline](#) below) and availability of funds.

Eligibility

Applicant eligibility: Individuals holding positions in the following categories are eligible to serve as a principal investigator (PI) and submit a proposal to this competition:

- Tenured and tenure-track assistant, associate, and full professors.
- Research assistant, associate, and full professors.
- Professional staff whose job responsibilities include the expectation to pursue external funding for research, scholarship, creative endeavors, or engagement, provided they obtain approval from the appropriate department, school, or center leadership and the dean of the relevant college or division, or from the vice chancellor overseeing the administrative unit. Approval is indicated by electronic signatures collected during the proposal approval and routing process in NuRamp.

Other personnel: Other essential project personnel (e.g., co-investigators) may participate in the proposed project and may be internal or external to UNL. While co-investigators listed in the NuRamp submission form will be limited to internal investigators, personnel from external organizations should be listed on the proposal coversheet (see [Proposal Requirements](#) below), along with UNL personnel.

Limit on the number of applications: Individual PIs may submit one Development Grant or Catalyst Grant proposal within R&I's Collaboration Grants program per deadline. There is no limit on the number of applications to which an individual may contribute in another role (e.g., as other project personnel).

Limit on the number of awarded grants: UNL faculty may have no more than one active award from the Collaboration Grants program as PI (inclusive of all three award types). Additionally, individuals may not serve as a PI on more than two internal grants awarded by R&I in any four-year fiscal period (excluding Biomedical Research Seed Grants, Book Fellowship and Manuscript Workshop Program awards, Invited Scholar and Event Grants, and Revision Grants).

PIs who are unsure about their eligibility based on current or prior R&I-funded grants received within the last four years are strongly advised to contact R&I staff to discuss the potential allowability of another award before applying (see the [Additional Information](#) section below).

Repeated R&I funding for the same project: Applicants cannot receive funding for the same project from multiple R&I-funded grants. Applicants proposing projects similar to work currently or previously supported by an R&I-funded grant must demonstrate that the new scope of work is significantly different from the previous project or a substantial advancement of the prior project.

Resubmissions: Declined proposals may be resubmitted following substantive revision in response to reviewers' comments. However, all proposals will be treated as new applications. Resubmissions should not be described as revised applications, and revisions should not be called out in proposal narratives.

Proposal Requirements

Overall instructions and formatting: Importantly, the proposal must be written in lay language understandable to non-specialist reviewers (see [Proposal Review Process and Timeline](#) below) and should include sufficient detail to demonstrate its scientific, scholarly, or creative merit and potential to achieve the stated outcomes. Avoid the use of technical jargon and acronyms to the extent possible.

Proposals should be prepared using an 8.5" x 11" page size with 1" margins and single-spaced 11-point font (Arial, Calibri, Aptos, Georgia, or Times New Roman). The font sizes used in captions, graphics, tables, and detailed budgets may be smaller, but this text must be legible when printed.

Proposal components: Please prepare the following information—in the order described—as a single PDF file. The inclusion of appendices or documents in addition to those requested below are not allowed.

1. Coversheet (two-page maximum)

- Prepare the coversheet using [this template](#).
- The coversheet requests the project title, a list of project personnel, the total Catalyst Grant amount requested, and a 300-word project abstract.

2. Proposal Narrative (four-page maximum)

A. Introduction

- Introduce your team's collaborative research/scholarly/creative question or topic.
- Describe how the proposed project is strongly rooted in existing research/scholarship/practice in the relevant fields and detail any additional relevant background information and rationale to demonstrate the need for the proposed project. This may include describing relevant preliminary study, data, or work by project personnel and/or providing background information on societal needs that the project will help to address.
- State the long-term goal that the proposed project will contribute to and list the project's overall goal and specific objectives.
- Summarize the significance and potential impact of the proposed project, including the potential of the project to advance relevant fields of research, scholarship, or practice.

B. Proposed Plan

- Describe the specific collaborative research/scholarship/creative endeavors to be conducted with the funds with enough specificity so reviewers may understand how the proposed objectives will be accomplished. The scope of the activities must align with the 18-month funding period and the requested budget.
- If any teaming/ideation activities are proposed, include detailed descriptions and justifications for the activities.
- As appropriate for the project, describe data/information sources to be used; methods of analysis or development; engagement with relevant technologies, platforms, resources, or audiences; potential pitfalls and alternative approaches; etc.
- Provide a project leadership, management, and collaboration strategy that details the relevant experience, expertise, and roles of the PI and essential project personnel; strategies for

meaningful engagement and collaboration; the roles of any partners who will engage in or support the project (see Letters of Commitment below); and how interdisciplinary convergence will be achieved if the team is interdisciplinary.

- **Note:** *It is critical to demonstrate the team’s existing capacity to effectively conduct collaborative research, scholarship, and/or creative endeavors and how the leadership/management/collaboration plan builds on existing practices.*
- **If a multi-PI leadership configuration is proposed**, describe how leadership will be coordinated amongst the multiple PIs. Proposers may wish to refer to National Institutes of Health [guidance on multiple PI plans](#).

C. Outcomes

- Describe specific outcomes and/or deliverables expected from the project.
- Clearly articulate how the outcomes/deliverables will enhance the team’s competitiveness for major external collaborative funding opportunities. Identify at least one specific external funding opportunity (program and funding agency) and describe the fit of the proposed project to the external funding opportunity or opportunities.
- Discuss plans for achieving project sustainability through institutionalization and/or the pursuit of follow-on external funding.
- Explicitly describe how the project aligns with: 1) institutional priorities, referencing relevant documentation or stated priorities where appropriate (e.g., [Our Bold Path Forward](#) and/or [Odyssey to Extraordinary](#)), and 2) current federal administration and/or federal sponsor-specific priorities. See R&I’s [Federal Research Updates webpage](#) for links to relevant resources, including the Office of Management and Budget’s *Fiscal Year 2028 Administration Research and Development Budget Priorities* and sponsor-specific resources.

D. Timeline

- Provide a timeline summarizing 1) when key project activities will occur during the 18-month project period and 2) immediate future activities related to preparing the external grant submission(s), including the targeted submission deadline(s) or anticipated submission date(s) in the case of rolling or anticipated deadlines.

3. References Cited (two-page maximum)

- Provide a list of references cited in the proposal.

4. Detailed Budget (two-page maximum)

- Prepare a detailed budget table using the Excel budget template available on the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP)’s [Proposal Preparation Resources webpage](#). Applicants may request up to \$150,000.
 - Once complete, print the budget to PDF from the “Basic Budget” tab in the template so that it may be combined with the other proposal components as a single PDF. The final budget should generally look like [this example](#), though content will vary depending on the specific budget.
- Applicants are encouraged to review OSP’s [Budget Template Training Videos](#) and/or work with their business center staff to prepare the budget.
- See [Budget Guidelines](#) below for information on allowable and unallowable costs.

5. Budget Justification (two-page maximum)

- Provide a budget justification that provides strong rationale about how the funds will be used to carry out the proposed project.

- If individuals in the budget are TBD (e.g., technicians, postdoctoral researchers, graduate students), applicants are encouraged to briefly describe a recruitment plan and timeline.
 - Proposers may wish to make use of the budget justification samples on OSP's [Proposal Preparation Resources webpage](#).
- 6. *Biographical Sketches* (three-page maximum per person, unless generated using SciENCv)**
- Provide a biographical sketch for the PI(s) and any essential project personnel.
 - Proposers may use any format they choose. However, the same format should be used for all project personnel regardless of the format chosen. Proposers may use:
 - [This template](#).
 - An agency-specific format (e.g., NIH, NSF, or USDA).
 - Another format.
 - Applicants are asked to combine all proposal components as one PDF. Biographical sketches generated in SciENCv have protections that prevent combining them with other documents in Adobe Acrobat. To combine SciENCv-generated bios with other PDFs, first print the files to PDF.
- 7. *Current and Pending Support* (no page limit)**
- Complete a current and pending report form using [this template](#). Only one form is requested for the entire team (i.e., complete one form for all personnel on the project).
 - Unlike most current and pending support forms, only list current and pending support that has potential overlap with the proposed Catalyst Grant project in terms of scope, budget, or personnel time commitment.
 - The required template must be completed and included even if there is nothing to report.
- 8. *Letters of Commitment* (if applicable; one-page maximum per letter)**
- Up to three letters of commitment from partners engaging in or supporting the project in ways that are essential to its completion may be submitted. Letters are not required and should only be included when appropriate to demonstrate a partner's commitment to the project.
 - Letters should be limited to stating the partner's commitment to participating in the project as detailed in the proposal and must not be used to circumvent proposal page length requirements.

Proposal Submission Process and Deadline

Applications for internal funding must be submitted via the Internal Competitions module in NuRamp (<https://nuramp.nebraska.edu>). Sign in to [NuRamp](#) using your institutional credentials.

Proposals must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. Central on Thursday, April 1, 2027.

Late proposals will not be reviewed.

Budget Guidelines

Budget requests must comply with applicable university policies.

Allowable costs

- Costs to support well-justified activities for collaborative research, scholarship, and/or creative endeavors

- Costs to support team formation and ideation activities, such as team and partnership development activities, external facilitation, convenings, and planning meetings. While applicants may request funds for these activities, the majority of funds must be dedicated to collaborative research, scholarship, and/or creative endeavors.
- Summer salary for tenure leading/tenured faculty
- Salary for non-tenure track research faculty, postdoctoral associates, graduate or undergraduate student research assistants, and technical personnel
- Equipment acquisition or development
- Publication charges are allowable budget expenses. However, proposers are encouraged to leverage the open access publishing agreements available through the UNL Libraries whenever possible. These agreements with scholarly publishers allow UNL authors to publish in selected open access journals at no cost or at reduced rates. Visit the UNL Libraries' [Open Access Publishing Agreements webpage](#) for more information about participating publishers and journals. If publication charges are included in the budget, the budget justification should explain why publishing through one of these journals is not suitable for the proposed work.
- ***Note:** Requests for salary support must include benefits (including graduate student tuition remission and health insurance stipends, when appropriate).*

Unallowable costs

- Teaching release time (i.e., course buyouts)
- Normal operations (e.g., office space, administrative assistance)
- Alteration/renovation of facilities
- Facilities and administrative (F&A) costs (sometimes known as indirect costs)

Sub-recipients/external contractors: Sub-recipients are not allowed. However, external contractors providing goods or services, not substantive intellectual contributions, are allowed and may invoice UNL for project-related costs (see [federal definitions of subrecipients and contractors](#)).

Compliance Guidelines

Funds cannot be released unless all personnel identified on the project routing form have an approved conflict of interest (COI)/conflict of commitment (COC) disclosure in place. Participating UNL personnel who do not have a currently approved COI/COC disclosure should complete the online COI/COC Annual Disclosure Form in [NuRamp](#) as soon as possible.

Outstanding compliance approvals—such as those required for research involving human subjects, Human Embryonic Stem Cells and/or their derivatives and Human Fetal Tissue and/or their derivatives, animal subjects, transgenic animals, recombinant DNA, biohazards, select agents, radioactive materials, regulated plant materials, and/or the export laws and regulations of the United States—will delay the release of funds following award notification. Contact [Research Compliance, Integrity, and Security](#) for more information.

Proposal Review Process and Timeline

Review process: R&I will recruit peer reviewers from across the UNL community to provide non-technical reviews. Applicants should not expect peer reviewers to be subject matter experts in their fields and should prepare their grant proposals accordingly.

R&I staff will prepare a report summarizing the proposal review process and review outcomes and share it with the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, who will make final funding decisions.

All applicants will receive summarized written feedback on their applications based on the review process when notified about the funding outcome.

Proposal review criteria and rubric: Proposals will be reviewed based on the following scoring rubric (100 points possible):

Proposal Review Criteria – Catalyst Grants	Maximum Value
Significance and fit with the Catalyst Grants competition: The extent to which the project will better position an established team with existing capacity/experience to work together to compete for major external funding opportunities and will advance relevant fields of research, scholarship, and/or practice.	25
Quality and feasibility of the proposed plan of work: The extent to which the proposal presents feasible goals and objectives; a strong grounding in existing research, scholarship, and/or practice in the relevant fields; a realistic plan of work; appropriate methods for the project and discipline(s); an effective leadership/management/collaboration strategy; and a realistic timeline for activities during and beyond the grant period.	25
Potential to achieve program-relevant outcomes: The likelihood that the proposed project will enhance competitiveness for major external collaborative funding opportunities and help to position the team for long-term project sustainability. The extent to which the project will contribute to national and institutional priorities.	25
Qualifications of PI/personnel: The extent to which the PI/personnel are well-qualified to successfully complete the proposed project and the roles and responsibilities of all personnel are clearly explained.	15
Quality of the budget and justification: The extent to which the outlined costs are appropriate, reasonable, and realistic in relation to the scope, duration, and objectives of the project. The strength of the rationale in the budget justification.	10

Award timeline: Award announcements will be made no later than July 2027. For this award cycle, the award period is August 1, 2027, to January 31, 2029.

Award Conditions and Requirements

Reporting: Recipients must submit a final report to R&I no later than 30 days after the end of the funding period or award termination date. A report template will be sent with the award notification.

External grant submission: Awardees must submit a proposal for external funding within 36 months of receiving the Catalyst Grant.

Unused funds: Funds must be used by the project end date. Any unused funds at the completion of the grant must be returned. University purchasing and travel reimbursement guidelines and timelines must be followed; thus, applicants are encouraged to spend grant funds in a timely manner to avoid last-minute purchases near the end of the grant term.

Budget reallocation: Minor reallocations of funds among existing, approved budget categories are allowable without approval from R&I if the reallocation does not alter the scope of the project. However, reallocations involving 25 percent or more within an approved budget category or for new, unapproved items or budget categories must be approved by R&I in writing in advance of the reallocation.

Transfer of grant: If a PI leaves the university before the project start date, or during the award period, it is possible funds may be transferred to another UNL faculty member if the personnel can demonstrate that the transfer will not alter the original scope, timing, or quality of the funded work. PIs should contact R&I immediately in the case of a planned departure from the university to discuss the possibility and process for transfer to a new PI.

Failure to meet award conditions or requirements may disqualify PIs from future internal R&I funding.

Volunteer to Serve as a Peer Reviewer

Given the number of internal grant applications R&I receives, many faculty volunteers are needed to serve on review panels. If you are interested in learning more about the internal review process and/or volunteering to serve as a reviewer, please visit our [peer reviewer volunteer webpage](#).

***Note:** Faculty will not serve on review panels of competitions to which they have submitted a proposal.*

Additional Information

For questions or to discuss the fit of a project idea with the priorities of the program, contact Matthew Dwyer, senior research development program coordinator in R&I (mdwyer4@unl.edu or 402-472-1661).