REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

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

**OFFICE OF RESEARCH
AND INNOVATION**

Application Deadline: April 1, 2026
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 Development Grants.**
> Separate RFPs are available for Team Formation and Ideation Grants and Catalyst 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. Development 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 $50,000 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 Development Grants is 12 months. For this award cycle, the award period is August 1, 2026, to July 31, 2027.

Expected number of awards: 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: Full-time UNL faculty members are eligible to serve as principal investigator (PI) and submit a proposal to this competition. Postdoctoral fellows, faculty with part-time appointments, and visiting or adjunct appointees are not eligible to apply as PI.

Multiple PIs are allowed. Plans for this type of leadership configuration must be described within the page limit allowed for proposals. Teams with multiple PIs must identify one individual to serve as the contact PI because only one PI is identifiable in NuRamp. Proposers may wish to refer to National Institutes of Health guidance on multiple PI plans, including example plans, at https://grants.nih.gov/grants/multi_pi/index.htm.

Other personnel: Other essential project personnel (e.g., co-investigators) may participate in the proposed project. However, only project personnel with paid UNL appointments may receive funds from the Development Grant. Individuals from external institutions or holding only courtesy or adjunct appointments at UNL may be included but may not receive funds from the grant.

While co-investigators listed in the NuRamp submission form will be limited to internal investigators, unfunded project 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 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: 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.

Importantly, the proposal must be written in lay language understandable to non-specialist reviewers 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.

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

1. *Coversheet and Project Abstract (two-page maximum)*

Provide:

- The project title.
- A list of all project personnel, including their titles, affiliations (organization and departments/units, as applicable), and roles. Clearly identify the project PI(s), and in the case of multiple PIs, clearly identify the contact PI.
- The total amount requested for the Development Grant.
- An indication of whether funded external contractors will be involved (see Budget Guidelines below for information about allowable external contractors).
- A 300-word project abstract that summarizes the challenge, opportunity, or need the project will address; the goal and specific objectives of the proposed project; and how the project will enhance the team's competitiveness for external collaborative funding opportunities.

2. *Proposal Narrative (four-page maximum)*

   A. *Introduction*

   - Introduce your team's collaborative research/scholarly/creative question or topic.
   - Describe the team's need to conduct preliminary and/or exploratory work to build capacity for conducting collaborative work, and detail relevant background information and rationale to demonstrate the need for the proposed project. This may include situating the project in existing literature, research, or practice in the relevant field(s); 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 a one-year 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; 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.

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 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.
- Summarize, where appropriate, the project's alignment with national and/or institutional priorities.

D. *Timeline*

- Provide a timeline summarizing 1) when key project activities will occur during the one-year project period and 2) immediate future activities related to preparing the external grant submission. Include information about proposal submission deadlines, when known.

3. *References Cited* (two-page maximum)

- Provide a list of references cited in the proposal.

4. *Biographical Sketches* (three-page maximum per person)

- 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:
  o The template available here.
  o An agency-specific format (e.g., NIH, NSF, or USDA).
  o Another format.

5. *Current and Pending Support* (no page limit)

- Provide a listing of current and pending support (internal and external) 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:
  o The template available here.
  o An agency-specific format (e.g., NSF or USDA).
  o Another format.

- Regardless of the format chosen, the listings of current and pending support should include, at a minimum, the project title, total awarded/requested amount, funding period, funding agency, and percent effort or person months dedicated to each project.

6. ***Budget and Budget Justification*** *(two-page maximum for budget; two-page maximum for justification)*
- Provide a detailed budget (Excel or Word document) and budget justification for up to $50,000.
- See Budget Guidelines below for information on allowable and unallowable costs.
- Applicants should provide strong rationale in the budget justification about how the funds will be used to carry out the proposed project.
- Proposers may wish to consider and make use of the budget template and budget justification samples curated by the Office of Sponsored Programs on its Proposal Preparation Resources webpage.

7. ***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.

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Incomplete proposals will not be reviewed.

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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 Wednesday, April 1, 2026.

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Late proposals will not be reviewed.

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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.
- Salary for non-tenure track research faculty, postdoctoral associates, graduate or undergraduate student research assistants, and technical personnel. Requests for salary support must include benefits (including graduate student tuition remission and health insurance stipends, when appropriate).
- 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. More information about participating publishers and journals is available here. 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.

Unallowable costs

- Salary for tenure leading/tenured faculty
- Teaching release time (i.e., course buyouts)
- Normal operations (e.g., office space, administrative assistance)
- Equipment acquisition or development
- 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 may invoice UNL for project-related costs. Click here to access 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 – Development Grants	Maximum Value
Significance and fit with the Development Grants competition: The extent to which the project will enable an emerging team to conduct preliminary and/or exploratory work to build capacity for collaborating 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 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 build and strengthen the team through collaborative research/scholarly/creative work and enhance competitiveness for external collaborative funding opportunities. Where appropriate, the extent to which the project will contribute to national and/or 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 and the strength of the rationale in the budget justification.	10

Award timeline: Award announcements will be made no later than July 2026. For this award cycle, the award period is August 1, 2026, to July 31, 2027.

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 24 months of receiving the Development Grant.

No-cost extensions: Requests for a no-cost extension of up to six months will be considered if needed. Any requests for a no-cost extension of awarded funds must be made by the start of the final month of the award period to allow for processing. Only one no-cost extension will be considered for each grant.

Unused funds: Funds must be used by the project end date, unless a no-cost extension is granted. 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, provided the reallocation does not alter the scope of the funded 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 programmatic questions (e.g., the fit of a project idea with the priorities of the program), contact Matthew Dwyer, Senior Research Development Program Coordinator in R&I, at mdwyer4@unl.edu or 402-472-1661.

For questions regarding proposal submission, contact Mari Greer, Administrative Coordinator in R&I, at mgreer1@unl.edu or 402-472-2851.