

Request for Limited Submission Competition Internal Proposals

National Institutes of Health
National Institute of General Medical Sciences
Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) Phase 1



Office of Research and Innovation
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Notice of Intent Deadline: 5:00 p.m. CST, Friday, February 28, 2025

Internal Proposal Deadline: 5:00 p.m. CDT, Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Overview and Purpose

The Office of Research and Innovation (R&I) expects that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) will submit its next new Phase 1 application to the Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) program at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in early 2026.¹ R&I is sponsoring an internal competition to identify UNL's next COBRE proposal team. The internal selection process involves two stages: 1) submission of notice of intent (NOI) to submit a proposal and 2) submission of an internal proposal. Submission of a NOI by the deadline (February 28, 2025) is required for the submission of an internal proposal (April 30, 2025).

The COBRE program strengthens an institution's biomedical research infrastructure by creating an interdisciplinary center focused on building the success of early career investigators to secure independent external research funding. A COBRE must have a thematic scientific focus supported by basic, clinical, and/or translational research approaches. 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, including active external peer-reviewed funding related to the center's scientific focus, and 3) a history of leadership and mentoring.

Additional information is available from National Institute of General Medical Sciences ([NIGMS](#)) and in the most-recent Phase 1 program announcement ([PAR-22-250](#)). NIGMS is expected to release an updated PAR for COBRE Phase 1 in the spring of 2025. Based on COBRE program history, major changes in Phase 1 direction and application requirements are not expected. For that reason, [PAR-22-250](#) is being used as the reference document for this internal competition.

Instructions for the Notice of Intent (NOI) to Submit

Formatting Information: Following [NIH format rules](#), prepare your NOI with a minimum of 0.5" margins on all sides and 11-point Arial font for body text. Caption and figure text may be smaller,

¹ ***UNL submitted a new Phase 1 application to the COBRE program's January 30, 2025, submission deadline. If necessary, UNL may decide to prioritize the resubmission of that application in 2026. If that occurs, the team identified through this limited submission competition will be supported by R&I to continue to develop its center vision and plans for the following submission deadline, which is expected to be in early 2027.***

but it must be legible when printed. NOIs are limited to seven pages: one page for the center concept, one page for potential personnel, and up to five pages for the PI's biographical sketch.

Required Content: The NOI must contain the following sections in the order specified.

1. Center Concept – LIMITED TO 1 PAGE

- Include the proposed center's title along with the PI's name, title, and contact information.
- Describe the thematic scientific focus and goal(s) of the proposed center. Include a vision for how the center's formation will leverage a critical mass of established investigators (i.e., mentors, core directors, etc.) to enhance the competitiveness of early career researchers (i.e., the Research Project Leaders [RPLs]) and, more generally, Nebraska's research infrastructure.

2. 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 – RPLs, mentors, core directors, associate director(s), etc.
- For everyone, add a brief narrative describing their qualifications and, if relevant (e.g., for RPLs), how they meet the COBRE program's eligibility requirements.
- A proposed center may include an RPL or other key personnel from another Nebraska institution. For the internal full proposal, this approach will require strong rationale for enhanced synergy and additional collaborative supports to ensure COBRE objectives are met.

3. NIH Biographical Sketch – LIMITED TO 5 PAGES

- Include the PI's biographical sketch in NIH format. Instructions and a template are available [here](#).
- The Personal Statement (Section A) should build the case for the PI's qualification as they relate to serving as a COBRE Director (e.g., highlight history of mentoring, leadership, and administration).

Submission Instructions: On-time submission of an NOI is required to submit a full internal proposal. Send your NOI as a single PDF file to unlresearch@unl.edu by **5 p.m. on Friday, February 28, 2025**.

Review Process: NOIs will be internally reviewed to inform the process for reviewing internal proposals. No potential COBRE proposals will be eliminated at this phase. Some shift in focus, personnel, and vision is expected by the time the full proposal is submitted.

Instructions for Internal Proposals

Formatting Instructions: Prepare your COBRE internal proposal according to the following instructions. Use a minimum of 0.5" margins on all sides and Arial 11-point font for body text. Caption and figure text may be smaller, but it must be legible when printed. The proposal narrative with the cover page (Items 1 to 6 below) is limited to a **maximum of six pages**. References and biographical sketches do not count toward this page limit.

Required Content: The sections requested are closely aligned to the current Phase 1 COBRE

program announcement ([PAR-22-250](#)). Use this PAR and the instructions below to guide your writing.

1. Cover Page (page 1 of the proposal narrative should include only this information)

- Include the center's title and the PI's name, title, and contact information at the top of the page.
- Provide an NIH style [Project Summary/Abstract](#) that is no more than 30 lines of text. Include the thematic focus and goal(s) of the proposed center, a vision for how the center's formation will leverage a critical mass of established investigators (i.e., mentors, core directors, etc.) to enhance the competitiveness of early career researchers (i.e., Research Project Leaders [RPLs]), a description of how the proposed center builds on existing strengths at UNL, and the public health relevance of the thematic focus and other center activities.

2. Overall Plan

Address the key points in the Overall Plan section of [PAR-22-250](#). These include but are not limited to:

- Indicate how the proposed center is distinct from existing NIGMS-funded COBREs at UNL, in Nebraska, and among the current COBRE awards across the country. A directory of the funded COBREs can be found [here](#).
- Describe how a COBRE Phase 1 award will be leveraged to develop a cadre of early career researchers who can compete for independent, external funding – the primary target for this funding is an NIH R01 or equivalent.
- Denote how the thematic research area of the proposed center aligns with UNL's strategic priorities for growing research capacity. Include how this support will be used to enhance the institution's research infrastructure in this thematic area.
- Outline the proposed center's organizational and management structure. Include leadership and advisory structure along with approaches to facilitate collaboration and coordination among center personnel and the larger UNL and national COBRE research community (see also Administrative Core that follows).

3. Administrative Core

Address the key points in the Administrative Core section of [PAR-22-250](#). These include but are not limited to:

- Detail the PI's qualifications to lead the proposed center, including a summary of relevant research accomplishments, scientific leadership, administrative experience, and mentoring of faculty at early career and beyond. How does this COBRE opportunity represent a logical extension of the PI's professional trajectory?
- Describe how institutional biomedical research capacity will be augmented and strengthened through the establishment of the proposed center. Consider the capabilities of the proposed center to offer center-wide scientific, technical, and career development activities.
- Summarize evaluation strategies and specific milestones that may be used to measure progress toward the proposed center's longer-term goal(s).

Link this section with the Overall Plan section given that the Administrative Core is responsible for implementing the proposed Overall Plan that includes the research core(s), advisory committee, RPLs, mentoring activities, pilot projects, etc.

4. Proposed Research Project Leaders

- Identify three to five early career investigators who are eligible to receive COBRE research support as an RPL (see [PAR-22-250](#) for specific eligibility criteria).
- For each RPL, list title, affiliation, and summary of scientific expertise. Note any relevant experiences that improve the likely success of securing extramural funding as an independent investigator (the primary target for this funding is for RPLs to serve as PI on an NIH R01 or equivalent).
- Briefly describe a project that each RPL will pursue with the proposed center's support. How does the project fit thematically with the center? Include potential synergies and research collaborations expected to emerge among the RPLs.

5. Other Key Personnel

- Describe the research expertise and relevant qualifications of additional key personnel (e.g., associate director, core director(s), etc.). For everyone, provide title, affiliation, and role within the proposed center.
- A proposed center may include an RPL or other key personnel from another Nebraska institution. If included, provide rationale for enhanced synergy and additional collaborative supports that ensure the COBRE objectives are met.

6. Research Core Facilities

- Provide a brief overview of research core facilities (existing or planned) that are required to support the proposed center's research agenda (see [PAR-22-250](#)).
- If planned (i.e., to be created with COBRE funding), describe how each new core is distinct from those currently available.
- Summarize expected research core(s) usage by each of the proposed RPLs. Also note the potential research core(s) usage by other investigators at UNL as well as those from other [IDeA institutions](#).

Note: Sections 7 and 8 are not included in the page limit for the proposal narrative.

7. References Cited – LIMIT TO 2 PAGES

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

8. NIH Biographical Sketches (do not include CVs or resumes)

- Include NIH biographical sketches for the PI, potential RPLs, core facility directors, and other key personnel. Instructions and a template are available [here](#). Per NIH instructions, each biosketch is limited to 5 pages.
- The Personal Statement (Section A) should build the case for the qualifications as related to the role they will be serving in the proposed COBRE.

Review Process: Shortly after the NOI deadline, R&I will notify each PI about the internal proposal review and selection process. Overall, this process will focus on fit with the COBRE funding mechanism and the readiness of the PI and team to meet the COBRE Phase 1 submission deadline expected in early 2026.

Submission Instructions: Combine all application components into a single PDF document in the order listed above, with the cover page as the first page. Do not include additional information in the proposal beyond what is requested.

Send your internal proposal as a single PDF file to unlresearch@unl.edu by **5 p.m. on Wednesday, April 30**. The proposal must contain the required sections in the order specified. Internal proposals that do not conform to these guidelines will be returned without review. ***Late internal proposals will not be accepted.***

Important Additional Information

- R&I anticipates that each PI will be notified of the review outcome before the end of June 2025.
- Depending on the submitted internal proposals and availability of funds, R&I may provide funding to support the development of UNL's next COBRE concept(s).
- As indicated in the footnote on page 1, UNL submitted a new Phase 1 application to the COBRE program's January 30, 2025, submission deadline. If necessary, UNL may decide to prioritize the resubmission of that application in 2026. If that occurs, the team identified through this limited submission competition will be supported by R&I to continue to develop its center vision and plan for the following submission deadline, which is expected to be in early 2027.

Additional Information

For additional information regarding this limited submission competition, contact:

- Nathan Meier, associate vice chancellor for research, at nlm@unl.edu or 402-472-3902.