

**Request for Pre-proposals for
NSF EPSCoR \$20 million
Research Infrastructure Improvement
(RII) State Proposal**

April 3, 2019

TO: Research Administrators, Deans and Department Chairs/Heads
(**please notify appropriate faculty**)

FROM: F. Fred Choobineh, Director, Nebraska EPSCoR
Matthew T. Andrews, Director-Designee, Nebraska EPSCoR

RE: Call for Pre-proposals for NSF EPSCoR Research Infrastructure
Improvement (RII) State Proposal

Submission Deadline: 5:00 PM, Monday, July 8, 2019

Nebraska EPSCoR is committed to capitalizing on existing strengths while further strengthening the state's research infrastructure and ability to compete for the largest awards from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and other federal agencies. In addition, Nebraska EPSCoR encourages and promotes inter-institution and multi-disciplinary collaboration that includes Nebraska industries.

Nebraska will submit its next Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) grant proposal to the National Science Foundation (NSF) in July 2020. The RII grant is a joint investment of the state, participating universities, and NSF. The funding period for this \$20 million grant, if funded, will be August 1, 2021, to July 31, 2026. This five-year grant will assist Nebraska EPSCoR in fulfilling its mission of enhancing the state's research competitiveness while broadening the diversity and participation of underrepresented groups.

In preparation for this planned RII grant submission, Nebraska EPSCoR seeks pre-proposals for research clusters from faculty groups in Nebraska research institutions that could become one of two possible research components of the next Nebraska RII grant proposal. A proposed research cluster must be congruent with at least one of NSF's ten big ideas. The following web site will provide more information about these: https://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/big_ideas/

A pre-proposal must be multi-institutional and focus on a research “cluster” that has an **integrated scientific theme**. The research team must be led by a senior faculty member at one of Nebraska’s research universities and the team must position itself to submit at least one large grant proposal to the NSF no later than the third year of the RII grant. The cluster team members may include out-of-state researchers but no EPSCoR funds may be spent for their activities.

Nebraska EPSCoR encourages partnerships and alliances with Nebraska research and/or technology-based businesses to increase the competitiveness of the state’s science and technology talent in competition for federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grants.

Cluster leader qualifications: The cluster leader must be a senior tenured faculty member at one of Nebraska’s research institutions with established funding and scholarship records suitable to be the principal investigator (PI) of a major NSF grant.

Funding limit and duration: Each group may request up to \$2.5 million per year from NSF for a research cluster. The outreach and broader impacts requirements of the grant will be budgeted separately from the cluster budget and will be included in the administrative section.

Institutional commitment and sustainability: The RII grant requires institutional expenditure commitments of 20 percent of the pre-proposal’s budget for each participating institution.

Selection process: Pre-proposals will be evaluated on their scientific merits by a grant subcommittee of experts. Nebraska’s State EPSCoR Committee, by considering the recommendations of the grant subcommittee, will select the research components of the new RII proposal.

Evaluation criteria: Pre-proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- a. How important is the proposed activity to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field and across different fields?
- b. To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative and original concepts?
- c. How well-qualified is the cluster team to conduct the project?
- d. What is the potential of the cluster team in obtaining a major NSF grant within three years of the proposed project’s start date?
- e. What is the potential economic impact of the proposed research (patents, partnership with current state companies, spin-off companies)?

Pre-proposal content: The pre-proposal must be prepared using **font size 11 or greater with 1 inch margins**. A complete pre-proposal must include Parts A, B, C, D and E as described below.

- A. Budget form and budget justification
Complete the Nebraska EPSCoR Proposal Budget and Approval Form available from our website <https://epscor.nebraska.edu/programs/forms> and provide a maximum one-page budget justification. The budget and justification are not included in the page limit for the

main body of the pre-proposal. The budget form will be the pre-proposal cover sheet. Only a cumulative, 5-year budget needs to be submitted. The budget must show the amount requested from NSF, the institutional commitments, appropriate approval signatures and account numbers, and the indirect costs as they relate to the appropriate university campus.

B. Executive summary

The executive summary includes the title of the proposed project and must be at least half a page but not more than one page in length. The executive summary is not included in the main body page limit.

C. Main body

The main body of the pre-proposal, including references, cannot exceed **10 pages**. The main body should include the following four mandatory sections; additional sections may be added when necessary.

1. A section titled “**Introduction**” must provide a general description of the cluster theme and should establish the basis and importance of the proposed research.
2. A section titled “**Current Status**” must describe the current status and strength of cluster-related research activities within the state of Nebraska.
3. A section titled “**Major Outcomes and Activities**” must describe research activities and the anticipated outcomes, their significance, and how the proposed investment enhances research competitiveness of the cluster.
4. A section titled “**Performance Metrics**” should provide a clear specification of performance milestones, a timetable for achieving such milestones and necessary metrics for tracking the cluster progress. Also, a brief plan for sustainable scientific success beyond the RII funding period must be included in this section.

D. Curriculum vita

Provide a two-page CV for the cluster leader and significant collaborators. Do not append full CVs. This CV should indicate your position, degrees, and reflect your experience (grants and publications in general terms, but also in specific terms as related to the proposed research project or recent efforts) and any special background information of which you wish the Nebraska EPSCoR Committee to be aware.

E. Letter(s) of endorsement

A letter of endorsement from the chief research officer of each institution participating in the cluster is required. Please include specifics of the institutional expenditure commitment of 20 percent within the letter. If faculty hires are part of the institutional commitment, a letter of commitment-to-hire from each hiring Academic Dean is also required. Additional letters of support may be appended.

Pre-proposals not conforming to the above specifications will be returned without review. If you have any questions or wish any assistance, please call the Nebraska EPSCoR Office at 402-472-8946 or e-mail: epscor@nebraska.edu.

Submission requirements and deadlines:

Pre-proposal: Pre-proposals must be submitted electronically *and* in print.

1. *Electronic:* The original pre-proposal must be submitted electronically no later than **5:00 PM, Monday, July 8, 2019**. Proposals will be submitted through a link on the Nebraska EPSCoR web site for the Nebraska RII Pre-proposal applications. This link will take you to a web site for our proposal collection provider (RegPack). If you do not already have an account with them, you will need to create an account with a few pieces of information that will pre-populate your application once you have entered the site. There you will provide your campus contact information and upload your proposal and budget package. **Please note: Your budget, budget justification, pre-proposal, CVs, and letter(s) of endorsement must be submitted as one PDF file.** You can start your application, save it and log out, and then log in again to finish it later.
2. *Print:* The entire pre-proposal package must also be submitted in print and with appropriate signatures. Please check with your campus Sponsored Programs Office for any requirements they have regarding their signature on your pre-proposal or other submission requirements. The printed submission must also be received no later than **5:00 PM, Monday, July 8, 2019**, in the Nebraska EPSCoR Office at W192 Nebraska Hall, P.O. Box 880557, Lincoln, NE 68588-0557. If unable to drop off your submission in person, it must be postmarked by the above date to be considered on time.