Rural Futures Institute Competitive Grants Program
2014 Research & Engagement Development Grants
Request for Pre-Proposals

All pre-proposals must be electronically uploaded, as a single PDF document to ruralfutures.nebraska.edu/2014REgrant

Pre-proposal deadline: December 20, 2013, 4:00 PM CST
Full proposal notification: February 10, 2014
Full proposal deadline: March 17, 2014, 4:00 PM CST
Award notification: May 15, 2014
Starting date: July 1, 2014

Scope: Up to six awards will be made with $150,000 maximum per award. The project time period will not exceed 24 months.

I. BACKGROUND
The University of Nebraska is committed to establishing a transformative Rural Futures Institute (RFI) The RFI vision, mission and core values are the fundamental underpinnings for this request for pre-proposals.

Vision
The RFI will be an internationally recognized leader for increasing community capacity as well as the confidence of rural people to address their challenges and opportunities, resulting in resilient and sustainable rural futures.

Mission
Building upon the strengths and assets in rural Nebraska, the Great Plains, and globally, the RFI, through a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, will mobilize the resources and talents of the University of Nebraska and its partners, including community partners, to create knowledge and action that supports rural people and places to achieve unique paths to their desired futures.

The work commissioned and supported by the RFI must be guided by the nine core values defined at http://ruralfutures.nebraska.edu/institute

II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION
The purpose of the RFI Competitive Grants Program is to foster the development of research and engagement work that addresses critical challenges and opportunities facing rural areas. These grants are to function as “seed grants” that are designed to lay the foundation for grant requests to funding sources external to the University of Nebraska or sustainable funding through other mechanism such as fees and contracts.

Although all of the core values underpin this Competitive Grants Program, successful proposals must explicitly address transdisciplinary

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and collaborative considerations both internal and external to the University. Transdisciplinary work “utilizes a broad range of views and expertise, including community-based knowledge, to address contemporary rural issues...” Additionally, if the RFI is to be successful, it must create an environment in which deep and meaningful collaborative partnerships are the norm: across campuses; across departments and disciplines; and with external stakeholders such as other non-University campuses, communities, state and local government, trade associations, civic groups and the philanthropic community. These collaborative partnerships are the essence of engaged research or “engagement.” Engaged research establishes reciprocal relationships of mutual respect and understanding. The mindset and attitude must be one of doing research “with the community”, rather than doing research “for the community” or “to the community.” Finally, proposals are expected to be innovative and bold in their proposed action, partnerships and outcomes.

It is important to note that the issues facing rural areas include economic considerations but not to the exclusion of other equally important considerations. Basic human services such as health care and education present both challenges and opportunities to rural people and places. Even broader considerations are the natural environment; and the civic, cultural, design and artistic aspect of human and community development that cannot easily be counted and measured, nor justified only in terms of economic returns. This competitive grants program encourages proposals in which “progress and viability” are defined by the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental considerations.

III. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- University faculty and staff as well as Nebraska community members and non-NU higher education faculty/staff are welcome to apply, however, either the Principal Investigator (PI) or a co-Principal Investigator (co-PI) must be affiliated with NU and take responsibility for administering the grant funds.
- Collaboration with partners external to the University of Nebraska is strongly encouraged.
- An individual may serve as the PI for only one proposal but may serve as a (co-PI) on one or more proposals.

IV. REVIEW PROCESS

Pre-proposals will be reviewed by a panel that will include both academic and non-academic representation. This panel will prioritize applications for funding based upon the selection criteria provided in Section V of this RFP. Final selections of pre-proposals will be made by the Founding Director of the Rural Futures Institute in consultation with the NU Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources. A similar process will be used to prioritize and make awards from the full proposals that are submitted for further consideration.

V. SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Potential to result in contributions to and measurable outcomes consistent with the RFI vision and mission.
2. Compatibility with the RFI core values, especially transdisciplinary and collaborative considerations.
3. Potential to increase competitiveness for future external funding that is consistent with the vision and mission of the RFI.
4. Matching funds are not required but may increase the likelihood a pre-proposal will be selected for further consideration.
VI. EXPECTATIONS
Those proposals ultimately funded will have certain expectations of the PI and the key personnel including the following:

- Participation in a working group composed of RFI grant recipients. It is anticipated this group will meet at least once per academic year to share ‘best practices’ and lessons learned around innovative and creative processes and strategies unique to the research and engagement work undertaken.

- Recipients are expected to demonstrate sharing their insights and findings at a variety of appropriate venues including conferences such as the Rural Futures Conference and refereed publications.

- Recipients are expected to actively pursue external funding sources and submit a proposal for external funding within 24 months following the initial RFI award. Failure to do so may disqualify the applicant from future RFI funding competitions.

- A final report is required and due to the RFI no later than one month following the conclusion of the project.

VII. FUNDING LIMITATIONS
Funds *may* be used for wages and salaries of faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students and other key personnel; as well as operating expenses such as databases, supplies and travel that are directly related to the project. Funds *may not* be used for any of the following purposes:

- Indirect costs
- To replace current funding;
- Remodeling, renovation or construction;
- Recruitment or start-up packages for new hires;
- Items for purposes not exclusive to the project, such as desktop or laptop computers, printers, software and related accessories and general office supplies.

VIII. PRE-PROPOSAL SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS AND APPLICATION FORMAT:
Go to [http://ruralfutures.nebraska.edu/2014RRegrant](http://ruralfutures.nebraska.edu/2014RRegrant) to:

- Enter title page information using the online form
- Upload proposal information as a single PDF document

**Title Page Information: (entered online, required for submission)**

- Title
- Total Request Amount ($)  
- Principal Investigator
  - Name
  - Affiliation
  - Telephone
  - Email
- Co-Principal Investigator(s)
  - Name
  - Affiliation
  - Telephone
  - Email
- Other Partners (if applicable)
Pre-proposal Description (upload as a single PDF document)

1. **Project Description:** (two-pages)
   - The project description is *limited to two* single-spaced pages, using Arial 11-point font and one-inch borders in a PDF format.
   - The project description should include the following:
     **Introduction**
     - Provide background/rationale for project, including (a) why the topic/scope is critical to the future of rural Nebraska and the Great Plains, (b) its linkage to the RFI’s vision and mission, and (c) its connection or relevance to the RFI core values, with a special emphasis on transdisciplinary and collaborative considerations.
     **Proposed Plan**
     - List the project’s long-term goals and short-term objectives.
     - Describe project methodology.
     - Delineate the linkages and partnerships that will be forged by the project.
     - Describe what these funds will accomplish that cannot be achieved through other means.
     **Outcomes**
     - Identify potential practical applications, tools, solutions, processes and/or innovations from the project.
     - Describe how this funding will lead to future external funding support, including identifying potential funding sources.

   *Note: References cited in Project Description are included in the two-page limit and should conform to an accepted journal format.*

2. **Project Budget:** (one page)
   Provide a one-page budget in which personnel and operating expenditures are identified and explained.

3. **Biographical Materials:** (two pages per person)
   Provide up to a two-page biographical sketch/vitae for each key personnel.

**IX. FULL PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**
Pre-proposal applicants will be notified by February 10, 2014 whether they are invited to submit a full proposal (due March 17). The invited applicants will be provided a link where they can upload the full proposal. Full proposals will require a refined project description, a more detailed budget as well as various supporting information and signatures.

If you have questions about the submission process, please contact Kim Peterson at kpeterson@nebraska.edu or call 402-472-9287.