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Dr. Matthew T. Andrews

**Request for Pre-proposals
for Nebraska EPSCoR
FIRST AWARDS**

May 4, 2021

TO: Deans and Research Administrators (**please notify appropriate faculty**)

FROM: Matthew T. Andrews, Director, Nebraska EPSCoR

RE: Call for pre-proposals for Nebraska EPSCoR FIRST Award grant program
Deadline: 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, July 7, 2021

Nebraska EPSCoR has created a competitive FIRST Award grant program to help Nebraska early career faculty members compete successfully for a federal CAREER award. This program is funded by an NSF research infrastructure improvement grant to Nebraska EPSCoR. The FIRST Award grant is limited to \$25,000 for the funding period with a 100% matching requirement. Nebraska EPSCoR anticipates awarding approximately six grants. Each grantee is required to submit a CAREER grant proposal to the National Science Foundation (NSF) during or immediately after the end of the award period.

NSF states:

The CAREER program embodies NSF's commitment to encourage faculty and academic institutions to value and support the integration of research and education. Successful PIs will propose creative, integrative and effective research and education plans, developed within the context of the mission, goals and resources of their organizations, and which will build a firm foundation for a lifetime of contributions to research, education and their integration.

All proposals must have an integrated research and education plan at their core. NSF recognizes that there is no single approach to an integrated research and education plan. Rather, these plans should reflect both the proposer's own disciplinary and educational interests and goals, as well as the needs of his or her organization. Because there may be different expectations within different disciplinary fields and/or different organizations, a wide range of research and education activities may be appropriate for the CAREER program.

Who may apply: Assistant Professors in a tenure-leading position in any college/university in Nebraska who are: a) in the first four years of their academic career; and b) eligible to apply for an NSF CAREER grant during the award period.

Type of eligible project: Any project that could qualify for support by a National Science Foundation standard research grant is eligible for a FIRST Award.

Match requirement: An award amount is limited to \$25,000 and requires a dollar-for-dollar, non-federal match (cash, such as start-up funds, or documented in-kind release from teaching). No Indirect Costs are allowed.

Duration: FIRST Awards will be granted for a period starting December 1, 2021, and ending November 30, 2022.

Selection process: Selection is a two-step process.

In the first step, all pre-proposals will be reviewed by a grant subcommittee. The grant subcommittee will be composed of members of Nebraska's scientific community but not necessarily experts in the field of each proposal; therefore, use language that is understandable to those with general knowledge of the area. Based on the merit review of the pre-proposal, a group of finalists will be invited to prepare a CAREER proposal. It is anticipated that approximately ten finalists will be invited to prepare an NSF CAREER-like proposal to be submitted by late September/early October.

In the second step, the received CAREER-like proposals will be reviewed using NSF proposal review criteria by three external experts in the field. The Nebraska EPSCoR Committee will select FIRST Award recipients by considering the external merit reviews.

Pre-proposal content: The pre-proposal must be prepared using font size 11 or greater with one inch margins. The pre-proposal should consist of the following:

1. Budget:

Attach a completed *Nebraska EPSCoR Budget and Approval Form* available from our web site at <https://epscor.nebraska.edu/programs/forms> (please check the web site to ensure that you are using the most current version). This form will serve as your cover sheet. In the Federal Agency/Program space on the form, you must specify the NSF program to which your CAREER proposal is intended to be submitted. *The pre-proposal budget should provide an expenditure plan for the twelve-month budget (EPSCoR funds plus match) of the FIRST Award.* Faculty salary cannot be part of the FIRST Award budget; however, it will be allowed for Nebraska's small universities or colleges whose main focus is teaching and who have an annual institutional research expenditure of less than \$8 million. Be sure that appropriate signatures and match account numbers appear on the form. No indirect costs or foreign travel costs are allowed.

2. Body of the Pre-proposal:

- a. *Main body.* The main body, including references, may not exceed **six pages**. It should contain the following:
 - i) a section describing the research,
 - ii) a section stating its significance and intellectual merit,
 - iii) a section describing the educational plan and how research and education will be integrated,
 - iv) a section addressing the planned FIRST Award activities and a description of how these activities will better position the applicant to develop the CAREER proposal,
 - v) a budget justification section for the FIRST Award activities. Other sections may be included as necessary. Any citations should be included in the six-page limit;
- b. *Biographical sketch:* a **two-page bio sketch** that has been prepared according to NSF instructions and also lists the PI's current grants;
- c. *Letter of endorsement:* A letter from the appropriate department chair or dean must be included. The letter should include the following:
 - i) attest that the PI meets the necessary qualifications for the FIRST Award,
 - ii) describe how this grant would enhance the competitiveness of the PI,
 - iii) demonstrate an understanding of, and a commitment to, the PI's plan for the effective integration of research and education, and
 - iv) describe the nature of the match provided.

Submission:

1. The pre-proposal must be submitted electronically no later than **5 p.m., Wednesday, July 7, 2021**. Proposals will be submitted through a link on the Nebraska EPSCoR web site (<https://epscor.nebraska.edu/proposals>) for the FIRST Award application. This link will take you to a web site for our proposal collection provider (RegPack). If you do not 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, pre-proposal, bio sketch, letter of endorsement, and budget justification must be submitted as one PDF file. Electronic submission will need to include verification of DocuSign or similar signature authentication.** You can start your application, save it and log out and then log in again to finish it later. You can change any part of your submission up until the deadline.

Faculty selected to develop a CAREER proposal will be notified by early August. Full CAREER proposals will be due in the Nebraska EPSCoR office by late September/early October. More detailed instructions will be provided to those faculty selected as finalists.