

Preparatory Grant Program: Enhancing Competitiveness for Externally Funded Major Grant Opportunities

OBJECTIVES

The complexity and interdependency of today's society coupled with current specialized research methods make it essential for scientists in different fields to collaborate to address the complex challenges and opportunities facing our planet in the 21st century.

Over the last decade, there has been a focus on and investment in multi- and interdisciplinary team-based programs from federal sponsors as well as private organizations. For example, in recognition of the need for a team-based approach to answering complex scientific challenges, the NIH instituted for the first time in 2007, the multiple-PI mechanism. The collaborative approach is resulting in innovations and advances that are not possible within a single PI's laboratory working in isolation. Emerging from these collaborative joint efforts are results and findings that leverage the techniques, approaches, and perspectives in multiple scientific disciplines and clinical areas.

Large collaborative efforts targeting significant grand challenges require the assembly of expertise that likely involves multiple participating colleges or units. In order to convince an external sponsor to support such an effort, preparatory activity is often needed to develop ambitious goals into proposals that are nationally competitive. With this objective, the Office of Research at UF is soliciting proposals for preparatory grants that target grand challenges that require a large, multi-investigator teams. Also required is an identified external sponsor with the interest and means to support such an endeavor. The aim is to promote inter-/multi-disciplinary research collaborations and equip teams with the resources necessary to successfully compete for these major funding opportunities.

Examples of such major multi-investigator funding opportunities of interest include, but are not limited to, NIH P- and U-class grants, NSF Engineering Research Centers, Materials Research Science and Engineering Centers, and Science and Technology Centers; USDA Coordinated Agricultural Projects (CAP); and DoD Multidisciplinary University Research Initiatives. It is required that proposals for a planning grant include detailed plans for submitting a competitive proposal to a major externally funded opportunity with a specified timeline.

ELIGIBILITY

To qualify, proposed projects must address a recognizable grand challenge that requires a multi-investigator approach. An existing record of collaboration among the team members will be viewed positively. Preference will be given to proposals that are inter-/multi-disciplinary in nature.

Proposals must identify a specific external sponsor and programmatic opportunity that is the primary focus of the proposed planning project. It is recommended that projects leverage existing resources including those of the relevant centers/institutes on campus.

Faculty with administrative appointments, including deans at all levels are not eligible to apply. Proposals must be forwarded to the Office of Research by the Associate Dean for Research of the College of the lead PI.

NUMBER OF PROPOSALS

Each College may submit no more than three proposals as the lead unit.

BUDGET

The Office of Research expects to support multiple meritorious projects. Each project will be supported by a total budget of up to \$300,000 for a total funding period of up to 2 years.

Allowable costs include, but are not limited to:

- Funding for graduate students or post-docs
- Materials and supplies necessary for preliminary activities
- Support for organizational activities required to develop and submit a large, multi-investigator proposal
- Travel to technical meetings and/or federal agencies
- Funds for the acquisition of preliminary data
- Administrative/consultant support during the planning process
- Equipment that is necessary to compete for the targeted sponsored program

The following costs are not allowable:

- Faculty salaries
- Conference support
- Subcontracts to non-UF investigators

There are no indirect costs associated with these awards.

Desired faculty release time will need to be provided by the unit.

Additional support of the effort from the participating units is strongly encouraged.

PROJECT PLAN

Proposals should describe in detail what activities will be funded by the grant. Proposals must also identify the externally funded multi-investigator grant opportunity that will be pursued as a primary focus of the proposed planning project. PIs must identify the expected time frame for the funding opportunity to materialize from the external funding entity.

The proposal should include in the following order:

- Cover sheet (1 pg)
- Abstract (1 pg)
- Background: What is the current status of the research area under consideration? What is the Grand Challenge that the team proposes to address? What are the obvious gaps in making UF competitive in addressing the issue? (1.5 pgs)

- Scientific aims and goals. Proposed research plan. Describe how the existing resources at UF (intellectual, other relevant Centers/Institutes) will be leveraged. Describe how and why the research proposed and the existing resources, intellectual and physical, would convince a sponsor that UF will be the optimal choice for the proposed activity. Why is it most appropriate to pursue this opportunity at this point in time? (3 pgs)
- Goals for the planning phase: What does the team/discipline require to become competitive for the proposed externally funded opportunity? How will this planning grant propel the team into a competitive position? What are the activities to be undertaken that will solidify the team science and initiate the launch of a concerted programmatic effort? (1.5 pgs)
- Milestones/timelines: Describe the milestones that must be achieved in order to be competitive in the targeted externally funded opportunity? (2 pgs)
- Management plan/Leadership structure: Describe how the faculty team was assembled and how it will be managed. What is the role of each member of the scientific and leadership teams? (1 pg.)
- External partners: Describe the anticipated external partners and expected interactions as the proposal for an externally funded major activity moves forward. (1 pg)
- Long term sustainability: Describe the long term plans for sustaining the effort once it is funded. Describe the expected contribution of the center towards the growth of the research enterprise at the College and UF. (1.5 pgs)
- Detailed Budget and budget justification (3 pgs)
- Biosketches of collaborating faculty (1 pg. each)

SUBMISSION DETAILS

Formatting requirements: Proposals must be single spaced; font size no smaller than 11 point.

Proposals should NOT be entered into PeopleSoft or submitted to UF Proposals at this time.

A signed DSP-1 form is required and may be scanned and submitted as a separate file on as many pages as are necessary to obtain all signatures (or it may be faxed, delivered or mailed to the Office of Research).

Please ensure that ALL faculty contributing time to the project, as well as their chairs and deans, sign the DSP-1 form.

No DSP or Vice President for Research signature is required on this form at this time. DSP-1 forms are due on **February 2, 2015**; any extension for DSP-1 forms must be requested by emailing by the due date.

Proposals must be forwarded to the Office of Research by the Associate Dean for Research of the College of the lead PI to Dr. Sobha Jaishankar, Assistant Vice President, Office of Research at sjaishan@ufl.edu, with a copy to Jeevan Jyot (jyotj@ufl.edu) on or before **February 2, 2015**. Proposals

must be emailed in Word or PDF format only; combine all files into ONE file. Paper copies will not be accepted.

The signed DSP-1 form may be scanned and submitted as a separate file (or it may be faxed, delivered or mailed to the Office of Research). Please ensure that all faculty contributing time to the project, as well as their chairs and deans sign the DSP-1 form. Department chairs and Deans must be made aware of the time, effort and financial commitment.

REVIEW CRITERIA

All proposals will be evaluated and scored by a peer-review panel consisting of at least three faculty members with appropriate expertise. Based on these written reviews, a subset of proposal teams will be invited to make an oral presentation to a selected panel and Office of Research personnel. From this, final selections for funding will be made. The panel members will score the proposals in the following categories:

1. Theme/Research Area: Does the scientific theme address a Grand Challenge? Are the proposed theme(s)/scientific foci aligned with the strategic goals/initiatives of the participating departments and colleges? Are they aligned with the goals of the UF Rising initiative? Does this area represent an existing strength at UF, or a field in which UF could become a leader?
2. Degree of interdisciplinarity: What is the breadth of academic departments represented by the proposal? What is the potential to produce and sustain long term interdisciplinary collaboration among the participants? Will the proposed collaborations result in a major multi-investigator research effort?
3. Scientific quality of research proposal: Does the proposal build on current strengths and visualize growth in a competitive/fundable area? Is the science at the forefront of the discipline? Are the contributions of each participant distinct and complimentary? Are the existing strengths of the departments/colleges/core resources leveraged sufficiently? Does the scientific plan address the gaps currently existing at UF? Are the reasons for UF to be the lead institution sufficiently compelling?
4. Goals of planning phase: Are the activities proposed for the planning period sufficient to propel the science to be competitive in addressing the stated grand challenge?
5. Relevance of faculty background experience and interest: Does the team represent the best available expertise in the required fields? Does the PI have sufficient leadership experience?
6. Leadership and team cohesiveness: Does the team possess the leadership required to carry the project to a competitive multi-investigator proposal at the federal level? Is there cohesiveness among the participants? Do the faculty members involved have a sufficient level of commitment to the project? What are the resources committed by the departments and colleges towards the success of the program?
7. Milestones and Timelines: Are the proposed milestones and timelines realistic towards meeting the goal of submitting a competitive external proposal?

Final award decisions will be made by the Office of Research.

The earliest anticipated start date for the award is **May 1, 2015**.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Principal Investigator and the leadership team will meet quarterly with the Office of the Vice President for Research.

Continued support for the teams will be contingent upon making adequate progress and meeting the milestones towards submission of an externally funded multi-investigator proposal, as determined by review of the annual reports.