Request for Proposals (RFP)

Enhancing Demand • Adding Value • Ensuring Sustainability
The Nebraska Corn Board (NCB) works to promote the value of corn by creating opportunities.

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1 Program Area Priorities

1.1 Enhancing Demand & Adding Value:

Nebraska's corn farmers have the ability to grow more corn than consumers can utilize as food or feed. In order to sustain the economic viability of corn farmers, it is critical that we discover new uses and markets for Nebraska's corn crop that meet the needs of a growing and evolving world. NCB seeks to encourage research that will give the highest return to Nebraska corn producers through:

- Innovative research to find new uses for corn and corn products
- Identify value-added uses of the chemicals/components of corn
- Corn focused projects that result in commercialization of corn-based products or technology
- Expanding/developing commercially significant markets for corn utilization

1.2 Ensuring Sustainability:

Nebraska corn farmers are faced with the challenge of producing crops necessary to meet local, national, and international demands while maintaining the quality and quantity of resources for future generations. The purpose of this solicitation is to request proposals for developing research-based technologies and practices that will help farmers increase production efficiency

and profitability while safeguarding and improving the natural resources needed for agriculture. NCB will support research that will lead toward a regionally integrated system of plant and animal production practices designed to produce long-term results such as:

- Sustained economic viability of corn production in Nebraska
- Improved efficiency of inputs
- Minimizing threats from pests and diseases - specifically, resistance to common inputs
- Improved quality of surface water and groundwater resources
- Improved soil health

1.3 While not a stand-alone priority, extra consideration will be given to proposals which include developing linkages between STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math education) and agriculture:

The future of farming in Nebraska depends not only on continuing to advance research-based technologies and production practices, but also on improving consumer appreciation of the importance of food and feed production to human and animal health and sustainability. NCB seeks proposals that include education and outreach as components of the research project. While the research projects must be relevant to Nebraska corn production, NCB appreciates that research in a spectrum of disciplines supports agriculture and corn production in the state. Education and outreach components might include:

- Promoting linkages among Pre-K through 12, two-year postsecondary, and higher education programs in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) disciplines related to food and agricultural sciences
- Teacher preparation and professional development programs
- Communicating agriculture research to non-ag audiences

2 Proposal Submission & Contact

Submit proposal electronically in the format described below to:

Boone McAfee
Director of Research & Stewardship
Nebraska Corn Board
(402)-471-2676
boone.mcafee@nebraska.gov

The deadline for submitting proposals to NCB is 5:00 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST) on **January 15, 2021**. Awards will be announced by July 1, 2021 (see Appendix 1 - RFP Timeline).

3 Eligibility

NCB will accept all proposals that adhere to the application guidelines below. However, NCB shall look first to Nebraska organizations and institutions to accomplish its domestic objectives.

4 Award Duration

Awarded funding for research projects has duration of one (1) year. NCB will consider funding multi-year projects. However, funds will be dispersed for only one fiscal year, with projects reviewed for subsequent funding on an annual basis. Requests for no-cost extensions (NCE) will not be regarded favorably by the Board and will be granted only under extenuating circumstances. Please note the procedures for NCE of time that extends the project period (paragraph 7.5).

5 Content and Form of Application Submission

Proper preparation of an application will assist reviewers in evaluating the merits of each application in a systematic, consistent fashion. The proposal should contain the following information.

5.1 Cover Page

Research projects first and foremost must support NCB's vision of enhancing demand, adding value, and ensuring sustainability of Nebraska corn farmers and the corn industry as a whole. In **350 words or less**, succinctly describe the project and explicitly communicate the value of the project toward supporting NCB's vision. It is highly encouraged to write the cover page in such a way that NCB board members could effectively describe the project and justify the use of checkoff dollars to other corn producers. Consideration should be given to describing how return on investment (ROI) may be measured within the context of the project.

The cover page should not include names of PIs or budget detail. The only identifier should be a simple project title, and project number (if assigned by the submitting institution). The cover page must adhere to the formatting guidelines detailed in section 5.7.

5.2 Executive Summary/Abstract

The executive summary is limited to 250 words and must list the names and affiliations of all investigators. The executive summary should not include proprietary information as it may be published on the NCB website.

5.3 Project Narrative

The project narrative is limited to four (4) pages and must include the following sections:

Introduction – Include a clear statement of a long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives of the proposed project as well as a statement that the project is novel or reasoning for duplication of previously completed research. Summarize the body of knowledge or past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed activities

significant to the proposed project including the work of key project personnel. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed project. All cited literature should be referenced.

Rationale and Significance – Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed project. The potential benefit of the work to the corn industry should be clearly stated.

Approach – The activities proposed or problems being addressed must be clearly stated and the approaches applied are to be clearly described. Specifically, this section must include:

- A description of the activities proposed and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed
- Methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the methods
- Expected outcomes
- Means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted
- How results will be used
- Pitfalls that may be encountered
- Limitations to proposed procedures
- A timeline for attainment of objectives and for production of deliverables that includes milestones with specific, measurable outcomes
- A dissemination plan describing the methods that will be used to communicate findings and project accomplishments and manage data

5.4 References Cited in the Proposal

5.5 Reviewers

To the extent possible, please provide the names and contact information of suitable reviewers for your proposal. Also, please identify anyone who you would prefer not to review your manuscript. This information is confidential and visible only to the NCB staff and Research Committee.

5.6 Budget

Funding is based on a reimbursement of expenses as outlined in the proposal (documentation of all expenses must be submitted to receive reimbursement). Therefore, detailed budget information is required for each line item. A sample budget template is appended to this document (See Appendix 2 – Budget Template Example). Project funding is granted on a year-by-year basis.

Budget Limitations

NCB does not pay for overhead expenses, indirect costs, or non-expendable capital equipment.

Matching Funds

While matching funds are not required for funding, NCB funds are not intended to solely replace other sources of funding; rather NCB "seed money" should generate other sources of funds to

enlarge and expand research efforts or to initiate new research efforts. Collaborative efforts among researchers, departments, institutions and organizations are strongly encouraged.

5.7 Proposal Document Format

NCB requests that all proposals be presented in electronic form.

Submitted documents must adhere to the following formatting guidelines. NCB will only accept attachments in PDF.

- Font size must be at least 11 point
- Margins must be at least 1 inch in all directions
- Follow the page limitations for each attachment
- Number pages sequentially for each attachment
- Title each attachment in the document header and save each file with the referenced name

6 The Review

6.1 Process

- Proposals will be screened by NCB staff and the NCB Research Committee for relevance to the priority research areas and adherence to requirements stated in this RFP
- Proposals to be considered will be sent to at least two external/*ad hoc* reviewers selected on the basis of their expertise relative to the proposed research
- The NCB Research Committee will meet to rank proposals and request a verbal presentation of proposals to the NCB Board of Directors
- Recommendations from the NCB Research Committee will be considered and finalized at the NCB annual budget meeting

6.2 Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will take into account the following factors:

<u>Project Relevance</u>

- Research must be directed toward a specific priority area as identified in this RFP (section 1)
- Is NCB uniquely positioned to fund this proposal – i.e., is this proposal more appropriately funded by some other entity
- Whether or not funding of this proposal is likely to lead to funding from other sources such as USDA/AFRI or NSF

<u>Scientific Merit</u>

- Project objectives and outcomes are clearly described, adequate, and appropriate
- Proposed approach, procedures, or methodologies are innovative, original, clearly described, suitable, and feasible
- Expected results or outcomes are clearly stated, measurable, and achievable within the allotted time frame

- Proposed research fills knowledge gaps that are critical to development of practices and programs to address the stated problem or issue
- An appropriate plan for communicating findings and project accomplishments and for managing data

Qualifications of Project Personnel, Adequacy of Facilities, and Project Management

- Roles of key personnel are clearly defined
- Key personnel have sufficient expertise to complete the proposed project, and where appropriate, partnership with other disciplines and institutions are established
- Evidence of institutional capacity and competence in the proposed area of work is provided
- Support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation are sufficient
- A clear plan is articulated for project management, including time allocated for attainment of objectives and delivery of products, maintenance of partnerships and collaborations, and a strategy to enhance communication, data sharing, and reporting among members of the project team
- The budget clearly allocates sufficient resources to carry out activities that will lead to desired outcomes
- Plan and methods for evaluating success of project activities and documenting potential impact against measurable short and mid-term outcomes are suitable and feasible
- Appropriate inclusion of all the disciplines needed to address the problem

6.3 Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential permanently. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

7 Conditions of Funding Acceptance

7.1 Progress Reporting

NCB requires that financial reports be submitted quarterly and a final written progress report and final financial accounting report be submitted within 45 days of project completion (see Appendix 3 – Research Project Annual Report).

NCB is a producer-funded organization and it is essential that NCB is recognized as a funding source when research information is orally presented or distributed in written form.

7.2 Award Administration

Funding will be provided to those responsible, eligible, applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth herein. The project need not be initiated on the effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period.

7.3 Application Disposition

Once the review process has been completed, the NCB Research Committee will recommend to the full board that the project: (a) be approved for support from currently available funds or (b) be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

NCB reserves the right to negotiate with the proposer and/or with the submitting organization or institution regarding project revisions (e.g., reductions in the scope of work, funding level, period, or method of support) prior to recommending any project for funding.

7.4 Changes in Project Plans

Modifying Proposal Content

The permissible changes by the grantee or other key project personnel in the approved project proposal shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the grantee or PI(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to NCB staff for a final determination. Other changes, (including approved goals or objectives; project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel; budget allocation) shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by NCB staff prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

Additional Funding and Duration

Awards will not be considered for additional funding beyond that approved in an original award. No-cost extensions will be granted only under extenuating circumstances, will require prior approval by NCB staff, and will be contingent on a satisfactory merit review conducted by NCB.

7.5 Award Contract

The award contract will provide pertinent instructions and information, and shall include:

- Legal name of performing organizations or institution to which NCB has issued an award under the terms of this RFP
- Title of project
- Name(s) of principal investigator
- Identifying award number
- Project period, specifying the amount of time NCB intends to support the project
- Total amount of financial assistance approved by NCB during the project period

Appendix 1 - RFP Timeline

Date	Action
November 16, 2020	Request for proposals made available for application
January 15, 2021	Research proposals due back to NCB
February 2021	Proposals screened by NCB Staff and Research Committee
	Proposals peer reviewed
	Research committee meets to rank proposals and request verbal presentation of top proposals
March/April 2021	Verbal presentation of requested proposals to Board of Directors
June 2021	Recommended proposals considered and finalized by Board of Directors at budget meeting
July 1, 2021	Beginning of FY 2021-2022 projects
June 30, 2022	Conclusion of FY 2021-2022 projects

Appendix 2 - Budget Template Example

Effective Dates	**PROPOSAL BUDGET**		
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S): PROJECT TITLE:			
PROPOSED BUDGET SUMMARY *See Narrative Below*		FUNDS REQUESTED FOR FY	
		Year 1	**Year 2**
A. SALARIES AND WAGES *Commodity Board usually does not pay the cost for Project Investigators*			
1. Senior Associates			
2. Research Associates – Post doctorate			
3. Other Professionals			
4. Prebaccalaureate Students			
5. Secretarial – Clerical			
6. Technical, Shop, Other			
7. Graduate Students			
B. FRINGE BENEFITS			
1. Faculty & Staff @ 30%			
2. Grad Student @ 41% plus Health Ins.			
C. NON-EXPENDABLE CAPITAL EQUIPMENT ($5,000 or more; more than 2 years use)			
D. TRAVEL	Domestic		
	Foreign		
E. ALL OTHER DIRECT COSTS - Materials & Supplies, Subcontracts, Publication Costs, etc. (Budget Narrative should list these individual items and dollar amounts separately)			
F. TOTAL AMOUNT OF THIS REQUEST			

Appendix 3 - Research Project Annual Report

Research Project Annual Report Summary

(one to two pages – due August 15 annually)

Project Title:

Lead Researcher:

Lead Researcher Address & Contact Information:

Additional Researcher(s):

University Department:

Project Duration: _____to_____
(month/year) (month/year)

Abstract (one paragraph, abbreviated from proposal):

Progress or Results for Report Year (two paragraphs):

Project Objectives for Upcoming Year – *if applicable* (two paragraphs):

Preliminary Comments on Next Step After this Project is Completed (e.g., next funding step, publishing results)

Date Annual Report Summary Completed: _____