



Request for Proposals (RFP)

Enhancing Demand • Adding Value • Ensuring Sustainability

The Nebraska Corn Board (NCB) works to increase the value and sustainability of Nebraska corn through promotion, market development and research

Table of Contents

1	Program Area Priorities
2	Proposal Submission & Contact
3	Eligibility
4	Award Duration
5	Content and Form of Application Submission
6	The Review Process
7	Conditions of Funding Acceptance
	Appendix 1 RFP Timeline
	Appendix 2 Budget Template Example
	Appendix 3 Research Project Annual Report

1 Program Area Priorities

1.1 Enhancing Demand & Adding Value:

Nebraska's corn farmers have the ability to grow more corn than consumers can currently utilize as food, fuel 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 support 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, especially regarding water and nitrogen use
- Enhanced carbon sequestration and improved measurement, reporting, and verification
- Minimizing threats from pests and diseases
- Improved quality of soils, surface water and groundwater resources
- Increased resilience to changing climate conditions and weather extremes

1.3 Education & Outreach:

The future of farming in Nebraska depends not only on continuing to advance research-based technologies and production practices, but also on improving information delivery systems to producers and improving consumer appreciation of the importance of food, fuel, and feed production to human and animal health and sustainability. NCB seeks proposals that address information access barriers for producers, foster the next generation of agriculturalists, and/ or promote the vital roles and advancements of corn production. Education and outreach components might include:

- Intentional dissemination mechanisms of educational content and/or research findings to producers
- Promoting linkages among secondary education (grades 6 – 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:

Rachael Whitehair
Director of Innovation & Stewardship Nebraska Corn Board
rachael.whitehair@nebraska.gov
(402)-310-6938

The deadline for submitting proposals to NCB is **5:00 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST) on January 14, 2025**. Awards will be announced by July 1, 2025 (see Appendix 1 - RFP Timeline). If you are questioning the fit of a research or program idea with Nebraska Corn's priority area, you are encouraged to reach out to the above contact for a one-on-one consultation meeting.

3 Eligibility

NCB will accept all proposals that adhere to the application guidelines below.

4 Award Duration

Awarded funding for research projects has a 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.

No Cost Extensions (NCE)

Requests for no-cost extensions (NCE) will not be regarded favorably by the Board and will be granted only under extenuating circumstances. A NCE will require prior approval by NCB staff and will be contingent on a satisfactory merit review conducted by NCB (section 7.5).

5 Content and Form of Application Submission

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

5.1 Executive Summary/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. The executive summary is limited to **350 words**. The executive summary 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 executive summary must adhere to the formatting guidelines detailed in section 5.7. The executive summary should not include proprietary information as it may be published on the NCB website in the case project funding is granted.

Succinctly describe the project and explicitly communicate the value of the project toward supporting NCB's vision. The executive summary should clearly describe how return on investment (ROI) may be measured within the context of the project and the anticipated timeline of that ROI whether expected in the short (within 1-2 years of project completion), medium (within 3-5 years of project completion), or long (within 6+ years of project completion) term.

It is highly encouraged to write the executive summary in such a way that NCB board members could effectively describe the project and justify the use of checkoff dollars to other corn producers.

5.2 Project Narrative

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

Investigator Names & Affiliations – Include the full names, roles, and affiliations of all major investigators.

Introduction – Include a clear statement of a goal(s) and supporting objectives of the proposed project. Clearly state which priority area the project is addressing (section 1). Clearly state how the project is novel or duplicative, and if so, provide 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 both the corn industry and consumer audiences 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
- Means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted
- Pitfalls that may be encountered or 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 manage data, communicate findings and project accomplishments

5.3 References Cited in the Proposal

- References should adhere to the following guidelines:
- References used in a proposal should follow APA style to the extent possible
- For in-text citations, the author-year system is required; please do not use numbered references
- Arrange the list of citations alphabetically by the surnames of the first authors and then by the second and third authors
- Only literature that is available through libraries or other readily accessible public media can be cited. Material that does not meet this standard should be cited as personal communication or unpublished data.
- Any previous works related to the proposal should be referenced

5.4 Reviewers

To the extent possible, please provide the names and contact information of **up to three** suitable reviewers for your proposal. These individuals will be invited to be part of the review process. There is no guarantee that those indicated will be assigned to your proposal as reviews are assigned on a first come, first serve basis. 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 the Research Committee. All proposals will undergo a double-blind peer review in that author names and affiliations will be removed from the proposal prior to review and reviewers will remain anonymous to authors.

5.5 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.

5.6 Proposal Document Format

NCB mandates that all proposals be presented in electronic PDF form. Submitted documents must adhere to the following formatting guidelines.

- 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
- Order of attachments must follow the same order as outlined in the RFP
- Number pages sequentially for each attachment
- The document header should include the project title

6 The Review Process

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, in some cases, request a verbal presentation of proposals to the NCB Board of Directors. An invitation to provide a verbal presentation is not indicative of favor to receive funding
- 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:

Project Relevance

- 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

Scientific Merit

- 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 project fills knowledge gaps that are critical to development of practices and programs to address the stated problem or issue
- An appropriate plan is stated 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. Multi-year projects must resubmit a renewed proposal annually for consideration.

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

<u>Date</u>	<u>Action</u>
October 14, 2024	Request for proposals made available for application
January 10, 2025	Research proposals due back to NCB
February 2025	Proposals screened by NCB Staff and Research Committee Proposals peer reviewed Research committee meets to rank proposals and request verbal presentation of proposals requiring further inquiry
March/April 2025	Verbal presentation of requested proposals to Board of Directors and Research Committee
June 2025	Recommended proposals considered and finalized by Board of Directors at annual budget meeting
July 1, 2025	Beginning of FY 2025-2026 projects
June 30, 2026	Conclusion of FY 2025-2026 projects

Appendix 2 - Budget Template Example

Effective Dates	PROPOSAL BUDGET		
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S):			
PROJECT TITLE:			
PROPOSED BUDGET SUMMARY		FUNDS REQUESTED FOR FY	
<i>See Narrative Below</i>		Year 1	Year 2
A. SALARIES AND WAGES <i>Commodity Board usually does not pay the cost for Project Investigators</i>			
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%, 41% or 52%			
2. Grad Student: \$341/Credit Hr Plus Health Ins. (\$3,205)			
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

(Four page limit – due August 15 annually)

Project Title:

Lead Researcher(s):

Lead Researcher(s) Address & Contact Information:

Additional Researcher(s):

University Department:

Project Duration: _____ to _____
(month/year) (month/year)

Annual Report Impact Story/Summary (1-3 paragraphs):

The impact story/summary should be written briefly and in Layman's terms, and describe the following:

- **The Issue/ Challenge Being Addressed** (What is the issue, why is it an issue and for whom is it an issue?)
- **Actions** (Describe major activities, who was involved? Highlight innovation and collaboration)
- **Outputs** (What has been learned or produced?)
- **Impacts** (Why do the project/program results and outputs matter? What kind of impact? How big was the impact? Where did the impact occur?)

For additional guidance, please refer to the [IMPACT WRITING GUIDE](#) adopted from the [Multistate Research Fund Impacts Program](#)

Progress or Results for Report Year:

This section should include:

- A description of progress toward project objectives
- Project reach to agricultural and non-agricultural audiences or plans to do so (*if applicable*)
- Factors of measured or potential economic impact following the dissemination of work (*if applicable*)

Project Objectives for Upcoming Year – if applicable:

Comments on Next Step(s) After this Project is Completed (e.g., next funding step, publishing results) (*if noting a publication, please provide a link*)

Date Annual Report Summary Completed:

Including Pictures of equipment and/or research team members conducting or disseminating work is highly encouraged and appreciated