



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) #2018-01**  
**SUNY CENTER-SCALE PROPOSAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**  
**GRANT PROGRAM**

Issued: December 7, 2017

**Due Dates**

First Round: February 16, 2018, 5:00 p.m. EST

Second Round: June 15, 2018, 5:00 p.m. EST

**I. INTRODUCTION AND PROGRAM GOALS**

Nationally funded research centers provide considerable resources in support of broad, interdisciplinary research; promoting enduring partnerships; positively impacting science, technology and the economy; and bringing significant prestige to the institutions. To further expand SUNY's research enterprise, SUNY System Administration, through The Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development ("VCRED Office"), seeks to build and grow more interdisciplinary, multi-institutional, center-scale research programs at its campuses.

**A. PROGRAM FOCUS**

The VCRED Office recognizes that the path to a successful, large, interdisciplinary program – from idea conception to submission of funding proposals – is an arduous process.<sup>1</sup> The goal of the SUNY Center-Scale Proposal Planning and Development Grant Program ("Program") is to assist teams through this course and enable the submission of center-scale proposals to Federal and State agencies, as well as private foundations. These multidisciplinary teams have a clear vision and possess deep expertise and intellectual excellence to pursue new discoveries and/or technological advances to address critical societal challenges.

---

<sup>1</sup> While the term "large" varies by discipline, agency and program, in general, "large" refers to funding that would support an interdisciplinary, multi-investigator, and multi-institution proposed Center. Consequently, the term "complex" is used here to refer to as the participation of many disciplines, institutions and sectors.

Examples of large, interdisciplinary center programs include DOE's Energy Frontiers Research Centers; NSF's Engineering Research Centers, Science and Technology Centers, Materials Research Science and Engineering Centers; NIH's P50 Project Grants; DoD's University Affiliated Research Centers, Multidisciplinary University Research Initiatives; CDC's Occupational Safety and Health Education and Research Centers; multi-institutional grants, institutional training grants, and infrastructure-building grants; as well as, centers funded by non-profit foundations and industry sponsors.

This RFP is designed to facilitate the preparation and development of large, complex grant applications that require extensive planning, networking, and significant investments of the faculty's time and effort. This RFP complements the project management and proposal development support services offered by SUNY campuses.

## **B. TYPICAL STAGES OF PROPOSAL PLANNING**

The Program seeks to support teams in their efforts to develop large, center-scale proposals. It recognizes that planning for proposals at this scale involves multiple steps as described below. Planning proposals at all steps can be considered.

### **1. Idea Development**

The process of building a large, interdisciplinary program may begin with the exploration of an initial idea/concept, mapping of opportunities, and identification of central, key concepts around which a large, complex proposal will be built. Gathering critical preliminary data may be required to strengthen proposals. Proposed Center teams may also wish to liaise with funding agencies to determine whether their ideas are aligned with the agencies' priorities and requirements.

### **2. Team Building**

Various planning and development activities are necessary to build a competitive, interdisciplinary, multi-institution, and multi-sector Center team. In addition to bringing together key expertise, the proposed Center team may include professionals who can contribute to education and outreach missions; industry partners who can collaborate in research and technology commercialization activities; community partners who can assist with broader engagement related work; and well-renowned leaders who will serve in an advisory capacity for the proposed Center. It is also important to formulate a Center leadership structure and identify potential leaders for the Center and each of the research and outreach thrusts.

### **3. Proposal Development**

Center-scale proposal development involves a significant amount of management coordination, such as but not limited to: planning team meetings; organizing workshops to bring together collaborators; reviewing team members' roles and responsibilities; developing task assignments and setting; managing internal deadlines; coordinating proposal writing/editing; developing the non-technical components of the proposal (e.g. evaluation plans, data and resource management plans, schematic illustrations and organization charts for the proposal); and obtaining letters of support/commitment.

Teams responding to this RFP must provide a brief statement on the current status of their proposal planning/development efforts in terms of the stages described above. Applications should list the activities (*Narrative*) and the concomitant resources (*Budget*) that would be required to successfully move the team toward proposal submission. The application should identify clear targets associated to indicate the successful completion of each stage. Since this Program's goal is to bring proposal development to fruition within a reasonable timeframe, proposed Centers requiring more than 18 months to reach the proposal submission stage would be outside its scope.

## **II. PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

All SUNY four-year campuses are eligible to submit a proposal under this RFP. Program guidelines are as follows:

- A total of \$1M is available for awards under this RFP: up to \$500,000 for the first round and up to \$500,000 for the second round.
- Each campus may submit no more than three individual proposals and no more than one joint proposal with other SUNY campuses in a given funding cycle.
- Generally, the total budget per proposal should not exceed \$50,000. The award size, however, will be commensurate with the activities needed for the team to advance from its current stage to proposal submission and with grants of comparable size in similar areas. If more than \$50,000 is needed for the planning of a Center-scale proposal in a certain area, please justify the budget in the proposal which will be taken into the consideration during the review.
- Core members of a team may not be a part of any other proposed Center team in a given funding cycle.
- All proposals must be submitted through the lead campus' sponsored programs office.
- This RFP requires that the submission of a Center proposal to a funding agency or other external sponsor occur within 18 months of the start of the planning process.
- The awarded team must begin to implement the planning process and use its funding within three months of receiving its award.
- The Principal Investigator ("PI") must be the main contact person for this RFP.

## **III. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES**

Proposals should clearly address the following questions:

- What is the compelling idea that has the potential to address a significant societal challenge or national need?
- Why are long-term, center-scale efforts needed?
- What is the vision for the proposed Center?
- What are the research goals?
- Who are the members of the core team, potential collaborators, and partnering public and private institutions?
- What are the plan and estimated timeline for submission of a Center proposal to a funding agency or other external sponsors?

## **A. PROPOSAL**

SUNY Center-Scale Proposal Planning and Development applications must be submitted electronically as a single PDF file no later than the deadlines specified in the RFP. The application package should be submitted through the lead campus' sponsored programs office to the following email address: [center-scaleproposalgrantprogram@suny.edu](mailto:center-scaleproposalgrantprogram@suny.edu). Enter the email subject line "RFP 2018-01 Submission." Applications must contain all following elements in one document:

1. *Cover Page* (Please use the provided Cover Page template.)
2. *Narrative*

The Proposed Center Narrative must be completed in a maximum of five pages, in font type Times New Roman, font size 12. The Proposal Narrative should include the following components:

- a. A clear description of what societal challenge the proposed Center aims to address; and why long-term, large-scale efforts are needed to address such a challenge.
- b. A vision for the proposed effort: an integrated, interdisciplinary, transformative research agenda that would qualify for a national-level center program highlighting the significance; scientific, economic, broader impact; and transformational nature of the work.
- c. The proposed Center's research objectives and approaches to achieve them.
- d. A brief statement on the current status of the team's proposal planning/development efforts in terms of the stages described in Section I. B.
- e. A list of the core team members (maximum 5, including Project Lead/PI) and their roles, potential collaborators, partnering institutions, and intended advisory committee members. Describe the strength of the team and their ability to be competitive. Include a succinct discussion of the team's external funding record.
- f. The targeted funding agency/organization and its programs, and additional entities (foundations, industry, national labs) likely to be interested in joining and supporting the proposed Center. Please identify contact people of these organizations and details of any preliminary conversations, if possible.
- g. An action plan including a detailed timeline (e.g. start date, end date) with anticipated milestones leading to the submission of a center-scale proposal.

3. *Budget and Budget Justification*

Please use the provided budget template to complete the budget in Portrait view, and submit along with a brief budget justification. No indirect cost recovery is allowed. Support to be provided by the lead campus (for example: course-buy-out, summer appointments, dedicated staff support, and in-kind contributions) should be listed.

4. *Two-page biographical sketches of each core team member (up to five core team members including Project Lead/PI)*

Please use the NSF format of biographical sketches which should include professional preparation, appointments, a list of up to five most recent publications closely related to the proposed areas, a list of up to five external sponsored research grants in the last 5 to 7 calendar years that are most closely related

to the proposed area (the external research funding in each grant attributed to the faculty as PI or co-PI must be listed), collaborative research activities, and other relevant research achievements.

**5. Letter of support from campus-level administrators**

A letter of support may be issued by Deans, Vice Presidents for Research, Provosts, and/or Presidents. The letter must indicate the alignment of the proposed Center with campus priorities, as well as, support for the proposed Center team. To reduce time for the preparation of such letters, concise letters that indicate clear, firm support and commitment in one paragraph are highly recommended.

**B. SUBMISSION DEADLINES**

- ✓ First Round: February 16, 2018, 5:00 p.m. EST
- ✓ Second Round: June 15, 2018, 5:00 p.m. EST

Awards will be announced within three months of receipt of the proposals. Funds will be available upon approval of the award by the VCRED Office.

**IV. PROPOSAL REVIEW**

The VCRED Office will review proposals by convening a confidential panel of ad hoc reviewers and make selections based on the panel's recommendations. Review criteria include:

1. The vision of the proposed Center and if a compelling challenge will be addressed;
2. The intellectual strength of the proposed idea, in terms of uniqueness, innovation and relevance to addressing a significant societal need;
3. The scope of the proposed Center, and if long-term, extensive center-scale research is required;
4. Viability of the proposed approach, including research questions; methods; and availability of required facilities/infrastructure at the team members' institutions to conduct the work. The VCRED Office recognizes that this RFP calls for planning proposals and the proposed approaches may evolve if awarded a planning grant;
5. Qualifications of the Project Lead/PI and the core team, including the strength of external funding track record; and
6. Validity of the proposal planning and development strategy and feasibility of the plan to pursue external funding.

**V. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

The Project Lead/PI will provide concise progress reports of no more than one page every six months until an application is submitted to an external funding agency. A template, to be provided by the VCRED Office, will help to simplify the reporting process and reduce the time required to complete the reports. The funding may be terminated if it is determined by the VCRED Office that the team has not made significant progress towards its stated goals.

**VI. CONTACT INFORMATION**

Please submit questions regarding this RFP to [center-scaleproposalgrantprogram@suny.edu](mailto:center-scaleproposalgrantprogram@suny.edu). Reference "RFP 2018-01" in the subject line.