

Program Description and Eligibility

Mines and NREL formally launched the Nexus partnership in July 2019 to strengthen and expand collaboration between the two institutions. The goal is to develop joint research initiatives and funding beyond the scope of either institution alone. The Nexus Seed Funding Grants allow Mines and NREL researchers to jump-start ideation on cutting edge collaborative, interdisciplinary research proposals and eventual funding (e.g., from DOE, NSF, or other sources). The aim is to stimulate new research initiatives and connections across the two institutions featuring faculty and researchers from Mines and NREL. The Nexus Seed Funding Grants fund the Mines/NREL teams to initiate, prepare, and submit compelling collaborative research proposals on topics in any aspect of the energy research agenda All teams must have two lead investigators – one from Mines and one from NREL. Time for each team will be covered by each respective institution.

Award Information

Award Amount: \$10,000-\$15,000 per institution-depending on the amount of time needed and the size of proposal being developed. Mines will issue the award for their faculty and NREL will issue the award to NREL staff.

Award Period: Two seed funding rounds are being held Summer 2020. The first round closed in May 2020. The second round of seed funding has a proposal due date is 5 PM 1 June 2020. Award decisions will be made by 8 June 2020. Work will need to be completed on the research proposals by 15 September 2020.

Allowable Expenses: Proposals must include a project component from both Mines and NREL, that entails largely collaborative research; funds must clearly support progress toward developing a competitive joint Mines/NREL proposal. Funds could support, for example, travel, teaching relief, workshops with potential team members, and/or salary per PI (e.g., could be faculty summer salary). Applicants may use their own funding from other sources to supplement the funds requested from Nexus. Do not include overhead or indirect costs in your budget justification.

For expenses that require department head approval at Mines, such as teaching relief, please ensure that you receive approval **prior to** submitting your seed funding grant proposal.

Proposal Requirements

Proposals should use clear writing appropriate for non-specialists and make a strong case for the importance of the project to reviewers outside the discipline. All documents should use 11-point Times New Roman font or larger and 1-inch margins.

Required documents:

- Cover Page
 - Project title.
 - Names and affiliations of current team members (note: must have a lead person from Mines and NREL identified).
 - Targeted external funding opportunity and sponsor deadline. Specific funding opportunities are not required, but highly encouraged.
- Project Narrative
 - **1-2 pages**, including narrative, tables, figures, charts, and references. Supporting information can be provided but should not exceed 2 pages.

- A vision statement and explanation of why a Mines/NREL team is uniquely positioned for the success of the proposed project.
 - The proposed seed funding grant objectives, expected outcomes, and tasks with milestones.
 - The anticipated impact and explanation of why the concept will be competitive for the targeted funding opportunity.
 - A brief management or team coordination plan, including discussion of how knowledge will be integrated across disciplines.
- Biosketches
 - **1 page** (maximum) per team member.
 - Required for all team members.
- Budget and Justification
 - **1 page.**
 - Provides a concise justification for items requested in the budget. (Note: the budget cannot be used for conducting research, but rather the seed grant is used for developing a proposal for research; do not include overhead or indirect costs).

Review Process and Criteria

A small team of Mines faculty, NREL researchers, and external volunteers will review seed funding grant applications, provide written comments, convene to discuss proposals, and recommend proposals for funding. Applicants will receive anonymous feedback from reviewers and a summary of the panel discussion. This will be a quick turnaround process, with decisions for the first round of seed funding expected to be released by 8 June 2020.

Proposals will be evaluated in four primary areas:

- **Intellectual Merit:** Merit and quality of research, scholarship, or creative work; potential to contribute value to the respective discipline(s) and advance knowledge (particularly factoring in the novel approach to concept(s) for relevant disciplines).
- **Potential for Success:** The potential for success in the targeted funding opportunity (or other opportunities suggested by the evaluators) and the potential that the seed funding grant effectively increases the probability of success.
- **Impact:** Potential to benefit discipline(s), society, or vitality of Nexus research, scholarship, or creative work.
- **Partnerships:** Potential to foster collaborations and partnerships across Mines/NREL; team development for future collaborations.

Terms and Conditions

Nexus Seed Funding Grant recipients agree to the following conditions:

- Teams will report progress toward milestones; funding may be terminated if milestones are not met.
- No later than 30 days following the end of the award period, teams will submit a draft project proposal that follows guidelines laid out in the target solicitation. Nexus will provide feedback on the narrative (possibly coupled with presentation from team).
- Recipients are expected to develop and submit a proposal for external funding (e.g., from DOE, NSF, or other sources), in close coordination with Nexus's Proposal Manager and NREL's

Director of University Partnerships, within 3 months of being awarded a Nexus Seed Funding Grant. Recipients who do not submit a proposal for external funding will not be eligible for future seed funding (exceptions will be made for extenuating circumstances such as illness or unexpected family leave).

- If the project entails any compliance issues such as internal review board (IRB), international traffic in arms regulations (ITAR), environmental health and safety (EHS), biohazardous material, etc., recipients certify that the appropriate compliance offices on campus will be made aware of the proposed activities before initiating any work.
- The expectation is that the proposal and/or subcontract will be routed through the Mines/NREL Nexus.