Research Capacity Building Seed Grant
2026 Funding Opportunity Announcement

SYNOPSIS

The New Hampshire Long-term Investment to Fuel Transformative Research (NH-LIFT) project is a four-year initiative funded by an EPSCoR award from the National Science Foundation. NH-LIFT is one of six inaugural projects in the NSF EPSCoR Collaborations for Optimizing Research Ecosystems Research Infrastructure Improvement Program (E-CORE). It is administered by the NH EPSCoR State Office.

NH-LIFT aims to foster a collaborative and inclusive research ecosystem that broadens participation, catalyzes innovation, and strengthens New Hampshire's economy.

To support this aim, NH-LIFT is offering two complementary seed grant funding programs intended to build and strengthen research collaborations across NH-LIFT partner institutions and lead to successful proposals for external funding: Collaboration Projects and Catalyst Projects. Activities should be aligned with the NSF broad funding opportunities (more information **HERE**).

Collaboration Projects

Collaboration Seed Funds will be awarded to faculty at NH-LIFT partner institutions to build research collaborations with colleagues at other institutions or industry partners and work toward submitting proposals for external funding. The intent is to bring together teams who share similar research interests and expertise to explore how they could co-develop a research collaboration. Examples of activities supported by this seed fund include (but are not limited to) attending a conference together, running a collaboration workshop, offering a shared seminar or lecture series, travel to each other's campus to visit the labs. *This seed fund is not intended to support research activities.* Rather, the purpose is to convene groups of researchers around research topic areas to build awareness and relationships across disciplines, allow for cross-fertilization of ideas with internal and external partners, identify funding opportunities, and address known or anticipated barriers to securing external funding. Funding proposals must include investigators from two or more institutions, one of which is from a Primarily Undergraduate Institution (PUI) or Community College. Preference will be given to those proposals led by a PUI or Community College and include at least one early career researcher.

Catalyst Projects

Catalyst Seed Funds will provide funding for undergraduate and/or graduate students (MS or PhD) to advance critical research in support of multi-institutional collaborative research projects. These students will support data collection, pilot studies, and other early research collaborations necessary to enable team readiness for publications and proposals. While support should go

primarily toward the work of students advancing the research needs of the collaboration, funding may also be used to support faculty time and effort in guiding and mentoring their work. All students involved in the project should be mentored by a faculty member (or mentors) who is part of the collaboration team. As such, a mentoring plan is required as part of the application package. Proposals must include investigators from two or more institutions, one of which is from a Primarily Undergraduate Institution (PUI) or Community College. Preference will be given to those proposals led by a PUI or Community College and include at least one early career researcher.

Proposals integrating both Collaboration and Catalyst projects are welcome.

Eligibility

Faculty members at NH-LIFT partner institutions are eligible to apply for the Collaboration Seed Grant and the Catalyst Seed Grant. Proposals for Collaborative and Catalyst Projects must include Investigators from two or more institutions, one of which is from a PUI.

A faculty member may lead only one project but may be involved as a collaborator on another project within a funding cycle.

Teams can choose to apply for one or both Collaborative and Catalyst seed funds. However, while both Collaborative and Catalyst seed funds support multi-institutional collaborations, they have distinct expected outcomes. Collaborative funds provide a pathway to building and advancing new collaborative teams, while Catalyst funds position more established teams for success in actively performing research and seeking additional external research funding.

Both Collaboration and Catalyst seed grant applications must align with the NH University Research and Industry Plan

Submission Deadlines

Proposals will be accepted and reviewed twice annually, January and August. Seed grant proposals submitted after October 31, 2026, will be reviewed on January 15, 2027. Proposals submitted after January 7, 2027 will be reviewed in August. For project planning purposes, we anticipate up to two months between submission and funding decisions.

Awards

Combined total funding available: $90,000. It is expected that 6-12 awards will be made from this total.

Project Duration

Proposed projects are expected to be completed with one year of award.

Budget

It is expected that Collaboration projects incur minimal expenses to cover the cost of bringing together people to share research interests and discuss the project concept. Examples of

collaboration proposals supported by this fund include (but are not limited to) attending a conference together (domestic only), running a collaboration workshop, offering a shared seminar or lecture series, meeting supplies, travel to each other's campus to visit the labs (mileage, lodging if necessary).

Catalyst proposals may include all the above in addition to student partial stipend or hourly wages, and laboratory supplies required for this project (not general lab supplies).

Stipends, wages, fringe benefits may be requested if not included in the employee's annual contract (ex. CCSNH faculty).

Budgets must comply with guidelines for allowable costs to federal grants. Meals are not considered an allowable cost for these seed grants.

Funds to cover indirect costs will be provided in addition to the direct costs.

Availability of Funds

This funding opportunity is supported by an NSF E-CORE award (#2412054). Availability of funds is contingent upon continued funding from NSF.

Contacts

Questions are encouraged!

- General questions: email amanda.peterson@unh.edu
- Financial question: email Joe.Mekhael@unh.edu

REQUIRED INFORMATION

Proposals that do not include all of the required information will be returned without review. Email documents in one zipped file to amanda.peterson@unh.edu.

Documents related to the NH-LIFT Collaboration and Catalyst Seed Grants can be found on the

NH EPSCOR Website

Cover Sheet

Use the template in the application packet.

Project Description

- Abstract (1 paragraph) summarize the project objective.
- Project Narrative – up to three pages. Include:
    - Motivation and rationale for the collaboration
    - Description of activities that will enable collaborative work and knowledge sharing and timeline

- Collaboration plan that describes how the partners will interact, share information, manage students and make decisions during the project
- Statement of how the project will enhance the ability of faculty to advance toward collaborative publications and proposals for external funding
- Statement regarding the proposal's alignment with the NH University Research and Industry Plan

References Cited

If applicable, in addition to the three-page limit for the narrative.

Budget

Use the budget template provided in the application packet and provide details for each line item. **Each institution in a collaborative proposal must submit its own budget**. Funds are distributed only to academic institutions.

Rate Sheet

With the exception of UNH and the current partners in NH-LIFT (Keene State College, Plymouth State University, the Community College System of NH, Saint Anselm College, New England College and Antioch University of New England), a copy of the academic institution's current negotiated rate agreement with the federal government must be provided with each budget. UNH and its current partners must apply the indirect cost rate in effect at the time of the NH-LIFT proposal, December 2023.

Academic Institution Approval

Approval of this proposal submission by an institutional authority (sponsored programs office, budget office, financial officer) is required for each institution's budget. Use the template provided in the application packet.

Personnel Documents

Submit an NSF Biosketch for each academic participant using SciEnCV.

https://new.nsf.gov/funding/senior-personnel-documents

Review Process

The NH-LIFT PI will convene an internal review panel, composed of three members of the NH-LIFT Leadership Team, to review each Collaboration/Catalyst seed grant proposal. To avoid conflict of interest, reviewers cannot sit on review panels for Collaboration/Catalyst seed grant applications involving their institutions. A evaluation rubric will be used to score funding proposals and recommendations will be made to the Leadership Team for approval.

REVIEW CRITERIA

- **Collaboration and Ecosystem Strengthening**: Does the proposed project foster a cross-institutional research ecosystem and create an environment of reciprocal collaboration?
- **Role of PUI/Community College Faculty:** Does the proposal include two or more Investigators and align with NH-LIFT's aim to broaden the participation of PUIs and/or Community Colleges? Strong applications should include a project lead from a PUI and/or an early career faculty member.
- **Clarity and Feasibility of Activities**: Are the proposed activities clearly defined and feasible within the proposed funding time frame? Strategies for convening teams, building relationships or catalyzing innovation are demonstrated. Is the time frame for the proposed activity clearly defined?
- **Potential for Future Collaboration**: The proposal describes the potential for a future research collaboration and goals for future funding to sustain the collaboration.
- **Reasonableness and Justification of Budget**: The budget is reasonable and justified for the proposed activities. The requested funds are being appropriately allocated.
- **Aligns with the New Hampshire University Research and Industry Plan.**

AWARD CONDITIONS

Each awarded team will meet bi-monthly with a representative of the NH-LIFT Early Career Research Working Group and a research development professional from UNH or Dartmouth to discuss progress, work through challenges, and position for external funding opportunities. Updates will be provided to the full working group as needed for further discussion. Each project will submit a final report to the working group upon completion for review and approval.

At the conclusion of the project, the Principal Investigator will provide a summary report (up to three pages) that captures the approach and activities undertaken, progress toward goals, challenges, and plans for the future.

Projects selected for funding will be required to participate in NH-LIFT project management data collection and evaluation activities.

Acknowledgement of support from NSF Award #2412054 is required on all publications, posters, presentations or online or printed materials.