



## NEBRASKA CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES & SCHOOLS

# CYFS Signature Research Impact Program

### *Request for Proposals*

**Notice of Intent Due: Feb. 16, 2026 (5 p.m. CST)**

**Proposals Due: March 16, 2026 (5 p.m. CDT)**

The Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools (CYFS) is an interdisciplinary research center at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Its mission is to ***make a positive difference in people's lives through research in the social, behavioral and educational sciences***. Through generous support from private donors, CYFS solicits proposals for its ***Signature Research Impact Program***. Aligned with the University of Nebraska Foundation's [Only in Nebraska](#) campaign, the Signature Research Impact Program focuses on and brings to light CYFS' *Transformational Research and Innovation* — its collaborations, contributions and positive impacts that start in Nebraska and extend across the nation and world.

### **Expectations:**

Research receiving a CYFS Signature Research Impact award will **support one of CYFS' six [thematic areas](#), and have relevance to issues impacting Nebraska's children, families, schools and/or communities**. Proposals must document the project's relevance or need to Nebraska. Collaboration with field-based partners (e.g., documentation of need, commitment to project implementation) is highly encouraged. Applications may propose the collection of pilot data to demonstrate feasibility or proof of concept; analyses of secondary or extant datasets; or projects using a range of other methods to generate pilot data that will support submission of a larger, external proposal. Studies proposing the use of quantitative, qualitative, mixed or small-n designs will be considered.

In all cases, *submission of an application for external funding is required within one year of grant completion, with a requirement that the application and award be administratively managed by CYFS.* Future grant submissions and awards on topics associated with this pilot funding should also be administratively managed by CYFS.

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to submit is required to allow adequate planning for expert reviews. **NOIs are due by 5 p.m. (CST) on Feb. 16, 2026.** They are not binding, nor will they be rejected, unless they do not address a [CYFS thematic area](#). **Full proposals are due by 5 p.m. (CDT) on March 16, 2026.**

Applicants are encouraged to use one or more **CYFS core facilities** as part of their research plan, including [MAP Academy](#), [Database and Research Technologies](#) and [Communications and Media](#). If CYFS services are included in the proposal plan, the principal investigator must discuss project needs with the director of each core facility, obtain information on the scope of work required of the core facility to achieve project objectives and document these costs in the project budget.

Upon project completion, research teams are expected to develop a research, practice and/or policy brief summarizing its impact in one or more of these areas. In addition, all presentations and publications (e.g., journal articles, book chapters) resulting from this funding should cite the Signature Research Impact Program and CYFS as a source of financial support.

## Criteria for Funding:

1. Proposals must align with the center's mission and at least one of CYFS's six thematic areas: (a) Academic Intervention and Learning; (b) Early Childhood Education and Development; (c) Social, Emotional and Behavioral Well-being; (d) Biological Bases of Learning and Behavior; (e) Rural Schools and Communities or (f) Research, Measurement and Evaluation Methods.
2. Proposals may not exceed \$20,000 in total direct costs for up to two years; requests for more than \$20,000 or for more than two years will be returned as non-responsive. Facilities and administrative (F&A) costs, also known as indirect costs, will not be allowed. No-cost extensions will not be allowed.
3. Research must have relevance to issues impacting Nebraska's children, families, schools and/or communities; proposals must document this relevance or need. Collaboration with field-based partners is highly encouraged.
4. Projects must be sufficient in scope and anticipated outcomes to allow members of the research team to compete effectively for external funding upon project completion.
5. A clear plan and timeline for external grant application(s) following successful completion of the Signature Research Impact Program are required. *External grant submissions and awards resulting as a function of Signature Research Impact funding must be administered by CYFS.*
6. All publications, presentations and other products resulting from the award must acknowledge funding provided by CYFS. Copies of all products must be shared with CYFS via email at [cyfs@unl.edu](mailto:cyfs@unl.edu).

## Eligibility:

- Principal investigators must be faculty members at one of the NU campuses and a research affiliate of CYFS<sup>1</sup>.
- Post-doctoral fellows, graduate students and staff are not eligible to serve as lead PI on an application, but may serve as co-I, key personnel and graduate student investigators.

## Timeline:

- **Feb.16, 2026:** Notice of Intent to submit application due.
- **March 16, 2026:** Proposals due.
- **May 29, 2026:** Notice of award.
- **July 1, 2026:** Earliest possible start date.
- **Jan. 1 and July 1 (annual):** Project performance report due.

<sup>1</sup> Current research affiliates are represented in the [CYFS Research Network](#). Inquiries regarding becoming a research affiliate should be directed to Susan Sheridan, CYFS director at [ssheridan2@unl.edu](mailto:ssheridan2@unl.edu).

- **Oct. 1, 2028** (or 90 days after grant end)
  - Final performance report due.
  - Timeline for external grant submission, within one year of grant end.
  - Communicate with CYFS proposal development coordinator and develop proposal development/submission plan.
- **January – December 2029**
  - Compete for external funding to formally evaluate programs.
  - Plan with partners for sustainability and scale up.

For inquiries related to this funding opportunity, please contact Susan Sheridan, CYFS director, at [ssheridan2@unl.edu](mailto:ssheridan2@unl.edu).

## Submission Instructions

### Notice of Intent (NOI)

A Notice of Intent\* to submit a Signature Research Impact Program grant proposal is due by 5 p.m. CST on **Feb. 16, 2026**. This document should be saved as a single PDF and submitted via the secure SharePoint folder linked on the program web page: [cyfs.unl.edu/research-network/signature](https://cyfs.unl.edu/research-network/signature).

Please ensure your file is labeled clearly using the following naming convention:

**[PILastName]\_CYFS\_SRIP\_NOI**. NOIs should be no longer than one page, single spaced (12-point font, one-inch margins) and must include the following:

- Project title.
- PI name and departmental affiliation.
- Names and affiliations of additional team members.
- Primary [CYFS thematic area](#) to be addressed; secondary areas as appropriate.
- Abstract (no more than 250 words) providing a succinct overview of the proposal.

*\*NOIs are not binding, but they are required to allow adequate planning for expert reviews.*

## Research Proposal Application

Proposals\* are due by 5 p.m. CDT on **March 16, 2026**. Late proposals will not be accepted. Please structure your proposal in accordance with the outline below, save all components as a single PDF and submit the file via the secure SharePoint folder linked on the program web page: [cyfs.unl.edu/research-network/signature](https://cyfs.unl.edu/research-network/signature). Ensure your file is labeled clearly using the following naming convention:

**[PILastName]\_CYFS\_SRIP\_Proposal**. Proposals must be single spaced, 12-point type, left aligned with one-inch margins. **The Research Plan description cannot exceed five pages**; supplemental information (items 6-9) is not included in this five-page limit. Do not include appendices. Note that not all review committee members will have specific expertise in your area; proposals should be written for a broad academic audience.

*\*Proposals should be sent as one PDF document, including the cover page, research plan, budget materials, letters of commitment (if applicable) and biosketches. Proposals that do not conform to guidelines will be returned to the PI as nonresponsive.*

## COVER PAGE

Identifying information, not included in page count of proposal:

- Project title.
- PI name and departmental affiliation.
- Names and affiliations of additional team members, and roles on the project.
- Primary CYFS thematic area addressed; secondary areas as appropriate.
- Abstract (no more than 250 words) providing a succinct overview of the proposal.

## PROPOSAL

**I. Research Plan:** Five-page narrative comprised of the following sections:

**1. Background, Significance and Purpose**

- Provide a brief explanation of the social, behavioral or educational issue being addressed; explain why it is important to Nebraska children, families, schools and/or communities; describe its relevance to [CYFS' mission](#); and indicate the appropriate [CYFS thematic area](#). Projects that do not align with one or more CYFS thematic areas will be deemed nonresponsive and returned to the PI.
- Summarize the conceptual/theoretical framework/logic model and empirical evidence that provides the foundation for the proposed work.

**2. Project Aims and Objectives**

- Specify the aims of the proposed project. Provide a sufficient foundation for each aim, including the research/knowledge gaps to be addressed.
- List specific project objectives that will be achieved.

**3. Research Plan and Data Analysis**

- Summarize the project activities with sufficient details regarding access to necessary samples/data. For studies involving the recruitment of participants, include recruitment plans and feasibility for attaining necessary sample/data.
- Describe methods for addressing research aims.
- Explain data collection procedures and measures. If using secondary data, describe access to necessary datasets.
- Describe proposed analyses and justify that they are the most appropriate and rigorous to address each aim.

**4. Challenges and Future Potential**

- Describe anticipated challenges and plans to mitigate them.
- Provide a brief, specific description of potential dissemination activities.
- Explain how the proposed activities are designed to lead to a proposal for external funding. (Note: Priority is placed on proposals likely to lead to external funding, and this will be weighed heavily in funding decisions.) Include:
  - Investigators involved.
  - Working title of proposal.
  - Time frame for proposal submission.
  - External funding agencies/sources to be targeted, including specific mechanism (e.g., Request for Proposal/Application, program announcement).

## **5. Summary of Team and Qualifications**

- Provide a description of key members of the research team (PI, co-I, key personnel), including their current position, relevant background experience and expertise, and contribution to the project. Include percent commitment over 12 months.

## **II. Supplemental Information:**

### **6. Timeline**

- Provide the anticipated timeline for accomplishing the project's objectives and document its feasibility for accomplishing the study aims.
- Anticipated start date is July 1, 2026. Projects will be funded for up to two years (24 months). Submit a timeline not exceeding two years. Extensions will not be allowed.

### **7. Budget and Justification**

- Provide an itemized annual budget and budget justification for each fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). Use the form provided below when developing your budget.
- Funds may be used for faculty summer salary, salary for non-tenure track research faculty, post-doctoral associates, graduate or undergraduate student hourly work and technical personnel. Requests for faculty or staff salary support must include benefits. Student tuition remission and health insurance are not allowed. Funds may not be used for faculty overload.
- Travel for research activities is allowed. Travel for conference attendance is not allowed.
- Funds for graduate student research or post-doctoral projects are not allowed.
- Extensions to the two-year project periods will not be allowed. Funds must be spent during the proposed project period. Carryover from Year 1 to Year 2 will be allowed.

### **8. Biosketch or Abbreviated CV for all Investigators**

- Attach an NIH or NSF biosketch or abbreviated CV for each investigator on the project. Each document may not exceed five pages.

### **9. Letters of Commitment**

- Include letters of commitment from field-based partners, as appropriate, with statements about the research relevance, benefits and implications. Letters should also confirm that partners understand what their participation entails and outline what they expect to accomplish as an outcome of their collaboration.

## **Scoring Criteria**

Proposals will be assigned up to 50 points. They will be scored by a team of reviewers on the following criteria:

- **Project Significance – 15 points**

To what extent does the proposal address a social, behavioral or educational issue and align with the CYFS mission? To what extent is it of critical significance in Nebraska? Does the team present a viable plan to address a societal problem that is novel, compelling and convincing?

- **Scientific or Scholarly Merit – 20 points**

To what extent is a clear question/topic/objective being pursued? Is the proposal grounded in substantive/theoretical literature? Are the project's design, data sources, activities and analyses specified and appropriate for addressing the aims/answering the research questions? Is there a

clear and feasible plan with anticipated outcomes that are achievable within the project period?  
Are the budget and scope of work sufficiently aligned?

- **Qualifications of Team – 5 points**

What does the PI's track record of prior funding and/or scholarly productivity indicate about the likelihood this project will be completed and the objectives accomplished? Is the project sufficiently staffed in number and expertise to achieve its aims and objectives? If collaborating with a field-based partner, is there a plan for regular communication, joint decision-making and dissemination of findings to partners and the entities they serve?

- **External Funding Plan/Potential – 10 points**

Is at least one external funding mechanism identified, with details regarding external proposal submission? Does the project fit the funder's goals? Does the follow-up project proposed have potential to attract external funding?

## Budget Request

Applicants are encouraged to use this budget sheet or a highly similar format for their budget submission. Both a budget request and justification are required. Total request cannot exceed \$20,000. Requests exceeding \$20,000 will be returned as non-responsive.

	Year 1 Request	Year 2 Request	Total
Senior Personnel Salary Request			
Other Personnel			
Fringe Benefits			
Equipment (> \$5,000)			
Travel			
Supplies			
Other Direct Costs			
MAP Academy			
CYFS Communications and Media			
CYFS Database and Research Technologies			
Other			
Other			
<b>Totals</b>			

## Budget Justification

### **Senior Personnel**

- Report names, affiliations, person months.

### **Other Personnel**

- Report names, affiliations, hourly rates.

### **Fringe Benefits**

- Include for faculty personnel.

### **Equipment (> \$5,000)**

- Itemize all requests for any one piece of equipment with a cost of \$5,000 or more.

### **Travel**

- Provide details on purpose of travel and transportation expenses (e.g., airfare, mileage), per diem.

### **Supplies**

- Provide itemized list for all supplies.

### **Other Direct Costs**

- MAP Academy – Provide agreed upon hours, rates and requested total budget upon consultation with the MAP Academy director.
- CYFS Communications and Media – Provide agreed upon hours, rates and requested total budget upon consultation with the communications and media director.
- CYFS Database and Research Technologies – Provide agreed upon hours, rates and requested total budget upon consultation with the database and research technologies director.