

Qualified Action Plan for the State of Nebraska Business Innovation Programs

Prepared for
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by the
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Submitted by
The Department of Economic Development

Effective July 1, 2017 through June 30th, 2019



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BUSINESS INNOVATION PROGRAMS QUALIFIED ACTION PLAN DEFINITION OF TERMS

Microenterprise – a for-profit business entity with not more than ten full-time equivalent employees.

Nonmetropolitan areas – counties with fewer than one hundred thousand inhabitants according to the most recent federal decennial census.

Prototype – an original model on which something is patterned by a resident of Nebraska or a company located in Nebraska.

Value-added Agriculture – increasing the net worth of food or nonfood agricultural products by processing, alternative production and handling methods, collective marketing, or other innovative practices.

Small business innovation – the provision of technical resources to locally owned and operated Nebraska-based growth businesses to foster development, growth, and high wage job creation.

Bioscience –related businesses – a for profit business entity in the bioscience sector of Nebraska’s rural and urban economies engaged in innovation in biofuels, biosensors, and biotechnology as it relates to animals, equipment, humans, industry, research, medical and health information, medical and health products, medical and health services, medical diagnostics, medical therapeutics, and pharmaceuticals.

**SECTION ONE:
INTRODUCTION TO THE BUSINESS INNOVATION
PROGRAMS**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Business Innovation Act was introduced under LB 387 by the Nebraska State Legislature in January of 2011 at the request of Governor Dave Heineman. LB 387 was also part of Governor Heineman's proposed Talent and Innovation Initiative. LB 387, which was operative October 3, 2011 has been codified in the Nebraska Revised Statutes at §§81-12,152 - 81-12,167. Most recently, LB 641, which amended the Business Innovation Act, was approved by Governor Ricketts on May 27, 2017.

The purpose of the Business Innovation Act, as stated in Neb. Rev. Stat. §81-12,154, is to “encourage and support the transfer of Nebraska-based technology and innovation in rural and urban areas of Nebraska in order to create high growth, high technological companies, small businesses, and microenterprises and to enhance creation of wealth and quality jobs”. As required by the Business Innovation Act, the Department must develop a Qualified Action Plan for submission and approval by the Governor. The Qualified Action Plan for the Business Innovation Programs is the Department's effort at meeting this requirement. The Qualified Action Plan sets forth the activities eligible for assistance under the Business Innovation Act. These activities have been selected by the Department to further priorities which are appropriate to local conditions and the state's economy. The Department is placing an emphasis on the state's need for innovation development, increases in jobs and investment, the leveraging of funds, and industry support and participation. The activities eligible for assistance through programs implemented under the Business Innovation Act are detailed in this Qualified Action Plan.

PURPOSE OF THE QUALIFIED ACTION PLAN

As previously explained, the Qualified Action Plan sets forth the activities eligible for assistance under the Business Innovation Act. The Department is placing an emphasis on the state's need for innovation development, increases in jobs and investment, the leveraging of funds, and industry support and participation. These priorities were considered in the development of criteria to be used in the selection of projects to be funded through the Business Innovation Act. Where appropriate, the criteria utilized in the selection of projects are included in the Qualified Action Plan. The state and local economic priorities are discussed in more detail in the following section.

The Department is required through the Business Innovation Act (Neb. Rev. Stat. §81-12,155) to develop a Qualified Action Plan. The statutory section requires the Department to prepare a qualified action plan and provide it to the Economic Development Commission for review. The Economic Development Commission is then to submit the qualified action plan to the Governor for approval.

LB 78 (2013) eliminated the provisions of the Nebraska statutes which authorized the Economic Development Commission. In response to this statutory change, the Qualified Action Plan will be submitted to the Director of the Department of Economic Development for review and approval. The Director is then to submit the qualified action plan to the Governor for final approval.

STATE AND LOCAL ECONOMIC PRIORITIES

As part of the Qualified Action Plan, the Department of Economic Development has been directed to select priorities which are appropriate to local conditions and the state's economy. The Department is placing an emphasis on the state's need for innovation development, increases in jobs and investment, the leveraging of funds, and industry support and participation. In determining priorities, the Department has looked to numerous state resources including the Competitive Advantage Assessment and Strategy for Nebraska, which was prepared by Battelle Technology Partnership Practice available at:

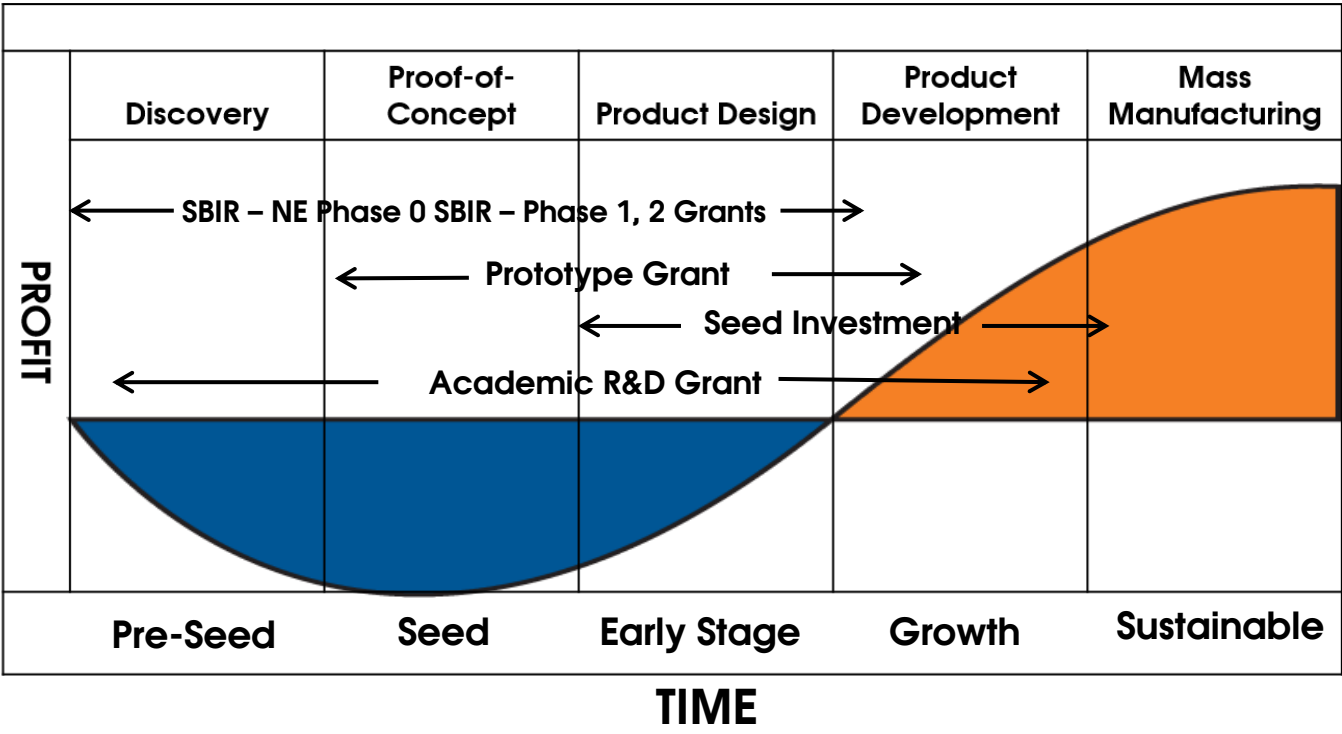
http://opportunity.nebraska.gov/files/businessdevelopment/battelle/Main_Report_NE_CompetitiveAdvantageAssessment_v8a.pdf ; and the assessment of Nebraska's innovation ecosystem prepared by SRI International available at: http://opportunity.nebraska.gov/files/govsummit/Supporting_Innovation_Led_Growth_in_Nebraska.pdf .

ADMINISTRATION OF THE BUSINESS INNOVATION ACT

As authorized by the Business Innovation Act, the Department intends to contract with a Nebraska-based nonprofit entity for the purposes of carrying out some of the provisions of the Act. In particular, the Department intends to contract with a Nebraska-based nonprofit entity for the purposes of carrying out portions of the Nebraska Innovation Fund Program described in Section Five of the Qualified Action Plan. The Nebraska-based nonprofit entity will aid the Department in carrying out a commercialization support program which will provide services to start-up, high growth, high technology businesses to assist them through the commercialization process.

BUSINESS FINANCING CONTINUUM

The Business Financing Continuum, shown on page 4, illustrates the process of development of a business from an idea all the way to the growth and sustainability phase. The Department intends to utilize funding from the Business Innovation Act, to provide the appropriate type of assistance to businesses depending upon the stage of the continuum they are in at the time of application for assistance. This Business Financing Continuum helps demonstrate how funding sources available within the State of Nebraska can be used create a comprehensive and unified program that can best serve Nebraska's economic climate.



**SECTION TWO:
ALLOCATION OF FUNDS, MONITORING STANDARDS, AND
AMENDMENTS**

ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

The Business Innovation Act authorizes the distribution of \$22 million in funding per year for FY 2018 and FY 2019. Each year, the Department may award up to \$2 million for grants through the Microenterprise Assistance Program. The Department may award up to \$4 million per year for grants or financial assistance through each of the following programs:

- Nebraska Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer Program
- Nebraska Innovation Fund Prototype Program
- Nebraska Innovation Fund Seed Investment Program
- Nebraska Innovation Fund Research and Development Program
- Nebraska Innovation Fund Value-added Agriculture Program

Provided however, the legislature appropriated \$6,511,200 in funding per year for FY 2018 and 2019 for the Business Innovation Act therefore, the Department reserves the right to award less than \$4 million per year for each of the aforementioned programs subject to department budget and available funds. The Department also reserves the right to redistribute funding between programs funded through the Business Innovation Act so long as the Department does not exceed the maximum amounts authorized by statute. Of the \$6,511,200 in funding, up to five percent (5%) can be used by the Department for the purposes of carrying out any or all of the provisions of the Business Innovation Act. Some of the funds allocated for administration may be distributed to a Nebraska-based nonprofit organization selected by the Department to administer various parts of the Business Innovation Act.

FY 2018- FY 2019 Allocation

<i>Table 1</i>	Business Innovation Act
Distribution Amount	\$12,371,280
State Administration	\$651,120 ¹ (5%)
Total Allocation	\$13,022,400

¹Funds allocated for administration may be reallocated to project activities at the discretion of the Department.

In addition to the Business Innovation Act allocation, the legislature passed LB 641 in 2017 creating the Bioscience Innovation Cash Fund. The fund shall be administered by the department to provide financial assistance to bioscience-related businesses applying for financial assistance under the Business Innovation Act. Effective October 1, 2017 the State Treasurer shall credit to the fund such money received by the department as repayments of loans from the Nebraska Progress Loan Fund. Money in the fund shall be expended by the department for the purpose of carrying out the Bioscience Innovation Program. Up to five percent (5%) of the fund may be used by the department for administrative expenses. The fund shall terminate on exhaustion of its funds following receipt of the final loan repayment from the Nebraska Progress Loan Fund.

Monitoring Standards and Procedures

The Department of Economic Development will implement monitoring standards and procedures to ensure that all statutory and regulatory requirements are being met for activities funded through the Business Innovation Act.

The Department plans to use a combination of both off-site, or “desk” monitoring and on-site monitoring. The Department will regularly review projects to verify that they are proceeding in the manner set forth in the agreement between the grantee and the Department, and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The Department will also ensure that any non-profit entities used to aid in the administration of the programs carried out under the Qualified Action Plan establish and implement monitoring standards and procedures as well.

Amendments to the Qualified Action Plan

The Department of Economic Development reserves the right to make changes to the Business Innovation Programs Qualified Action Plan at the Department’s discretion. In particular, the Department reserves the right to redistribute funding between activities funded through the Business Innovation Act so long as the Department does not exceed the maximum amounts authorized by statute.

If the Department determines that it is necessary to amend the Qualified Action Plan, the proposed amendment will be submitted to the Director of the Department of Economic Development for review and approval. If approved by the Director, the proposed amendment will be made available on the Department’s website at <http://opportunity.nebraska.gov/> for a fourteen (14) day public review and comment period. At the end of the fourteen (14) days, the Department will consider any public input provided, and then the Director will issue final approval on the amendment. The Qualified Action Plan, including any amendments, will be made available on the Department’s website at opportunity.nebraska.gov.

**SECTION THREE:
NEBRASKA SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATION
RESEARCH/SMALL BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER
INITIATIVE**

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Nebraska Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) Initiative establishes a program to provide financial assistance to small businesses with a principal place of business in Nebraska to support applications to the federal Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer program (Phase 0) and for the matching of successful federal Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer program applications (Phase 1 and 2) by the State of Nebraska.

The federal Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer program provides funding competitions in two phases that are relevant to the Nebraska SBIR/STTR Initiative. Phase 1- to conduct feasibility research; and Phase 2-to expand and develop Phase 1 results and develop commercially viable innovations. The federal SBIR/STTR program is administered by 11 federal agencies. Applicants for federal SBIR/STTR program funding compete by submitting proposals in response to solicitations issued by the participating federal agencies.

Small businesses apply for funding under the Nebraska SBIR/STTR Initiative by submitting an application to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development application portal at: <https://neded.fluidreview.com/>.

OBJECTIVES

1. Stimulate private investment in Nebraska-based high growth companies;
2. Accelerate knowledge transfer and technological innovation, improve economic competitiveness, and spur economic growth in Nebraska-based companies;
3. Support feasibility, concept development, and commercialization activities that have clear potential to lead to scalable commercially successful products, processes, or services within a reasonable period of time;
4. Stimulate growth-oriented enterprises within Nebraska;
5. Promote commercialization activities that are market-oriented; and
6. Support small businesses.

GOALS

1. To increase the number of applications for federal Phase 1 awards;
2. To increase the amount of federal research dollars received by Nebraska small businesses;
3. To increase the intensity of the research conducted under federal Phase 1 awards, making Nebraska small businesses more competitive in the competition for federal Phase 2 funds; and
4. To increase the opportunities for Phase 2 award winners to become commercially successful.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS & REQUIREMENTS

Small businesses that qualify under the federal SBIR/STTR program for the purposes of submitting an application under the federal program are eligible to apply for funding through the Nebraska SBIR/STTR Initiative.

- **Phase 0 Program for assistance in submitting a federal SBIR/STTR application**

1. Applicant must be a for-profit small business with its principal place of business in Nebraska;
2. Applicant must submit a qualified SBIR/STTR Phase 1 proposal to a participating federal agency in response to a specific federal solicitation;
3. Applicant must meet all federal SBIR/STTR program eligibility requirements that are applicable to the relevant federal solicitation;
4. Applicant must not receive concurrent funding support from other sources that duplicates the purpose of the Nebraska Phase 0 initiative, without DED approval;
5. Applications must be received by DED no later than 30 days before the closing date of the federal solicitation to which the applicant is applying. Any applications received by DED less than 30 days before the submission deadline in the federal solicitation will be returned without consideration;
6. Applicant must conduct at least 51% of the activities described in the federal SBIR/STTR proposal in Nebraska, and must maintain significant Nebraska operations during the entire corresponding federal SBIR/STTR Phase 1 project, if awarded federal funding;
7. Proposals resubmitted to a federal agency, for which the applicant has already received a DED Phase 0 award for the same project, are not eligible for an additional DED Phase 0 award; and
8. Applicant must satisfy any other eligibility requirements established by DED.

- **Phase 1 and 2 Matching Program for successful federal SBIR/STTR applications**

1. Applicant must be a for-profit small business with its principal place of business in Nebraska;
2. Applicant must meet all federal SBIR/STTR Program eligibility requirements that are applicable to the relevant federal solicitation;
3. Applicant must perform at least 51% of the activities conducted under the Phase 1 research and subsequent Phase 2 effort (if awarded), in Nebraska; and

4. Applicant must maintain significant Nebraska business operations for the duration of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 performance periods.

Phase 1 Matching Applicants

1. Applicant must have received official notification of Phase 1 award by the federal SBIR/STTR agency during the DED application cycle; and
2. Applications for Phase 1 matching program funds must be received no later than 45 days after the date of notification of Phase 1 award by the federal SBIR/STTR agency. Any applications received by DED after 45 days from the award notification by the federal agency will be returned without consideration.

Phase 2 Matching Applicants

1. Applicant must have successfully completed their Phase 1 effort corresponding to the federal award and have submitted a final Phase 1 report to the granting federal SBIR/STTR program agency (and to DED, if requested by DED);
2. Applicant must have received notification of the successful completion of the Phase 1 effort from the participating federal SBIR/STTR program agency and must submit to DED proof that the federal SBIR/STTR Phase 2 proposal has been submitted to, and received by, the particular federal agency; and
3. Eligible costs may be incurred, award made, but DED matching funds are not made available until federal approval of Phase 2 grant.

AMOUNT OF FUNDING AVAILABLE, GRANT LIMITATIONS AND MATCHING REQUIREMENTS

DED may award up to \$4 million per year for grants through the Nebraska SBIR/STTR Program. DED reserves the right to award less than \$4 million per year subject to demand, department budget, and available funds. The Department also reserves the right to redistribute funding between programs funded through the Business Innovation Act so long as the Department meets minimum award amounts and does not exceed the maximum amounts authorized by statute.

Phase 0 grants will reimburse qualified applicants, up to \$5,000 per project, for costs incurred in preparing and submitting a federal Phase 1 proposal to a solicitation from a federal agency. Reimbursable costs include: proposal preparation consulting fees paid to others; typing/word processing services; project related supplies and postage; database search fees for project related literature search; rental space and/or equipment directly related to the preparation of the federal proposal; and salaries of individuals who were directly involved in preparation of the Phase 1 proposal.

Phase 1 and 2 matching grants will match federal SBIR/STTR awards and will not exceed \$100,000 or 65% of the federal SBIR/STTR grant, whichever is less.

DED will not award funding to a business for more than one project every two years. Only the Federal SBIR/STTR funding is required to match the Nebraska SBIR/STTR Initiative.

PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

Evaluation criteria that may be considered in evaluation of applications under the Nebraska SBIR/STTR Initiative include, but are not limited to:

1. Scientific and technical merit and feasibility of the proposal; and
2. Potential for successful commercialization or federal contract of the new product or process.

APPLICATION TIMING AND PROCESS

Applications will be accepted from July 1 through June 30 each fiscal year under this plan or until funds are exhausted for each fiscal year. Applicants must use the required forms provided and must fully comply with all requirements within the time period specified, in order to be eligible for an SBIR/STTR Phase 0, Phase 1 matching award and Phase 2 matching award. Applications that do not include ALL of the documents specified or that contain documents that have not been fully completed, will be considered incomplete and will be returned to the applicant without further review. At its discretion, DED may request supplemental materials from the applicant and such materials must be received within 15 days of the date of the request or the application may be returned to the applicant without further review.

DED CONTACT PERSON

For clarifications on the Nebraska SBIR/STTR Initiative, please direct your inquiries to:

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Website: <http://opportunity.nebraska.gov/>

SECTION FOUR:
NEBRASKA INNOVATION FUND PROTOTYPE PROGRAM

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Nebraska Innovation Fund (NIF) establishes a Prototype Program to provide financial assistance to individuals and businesses operating in Nebraska to support proof of concept activities and commercialization of a product or process.

Innovation in value-added agriculture includes proof of concept and commercialization processes. Therefore, value-added agriculture is included in the Nebraska Innovation Fund Prototype Program. Agricultural cooperatives, farming and ranching operations are included as eligible applicants for value-added agriculture projects in the Nebraska Innovation Fund Prototype Program.

Innovation in Bioscience also includes proof of concept and commercialization processes, thus the Bioscience Innovation Program is included in the Nebraska Innovation Fund Prototype Program. Innovative projects in biofuels, biosensors, and biotechnology as it relates to animals, equipment, humans, industry, research, medical and health services, medical diagnostics, medical therapeutics, and pharmaceuticals are included as eligible applicants for the Bioscience Innovation Program under the Nebraska Innovation Fund.

In order to apply for funding through the NIF Prototype Program, applicants must apply to the Department of Economic Development (DED) using the online application portal at <https://neded.fluidreview.com/>.

OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

1. Stimulate private investment in Nebraska-based high growth companies;
2. Accelerate knowledge transfer and technological innovation, improve economic competitiveness, and spur economic growth in Nebraska-based companies;
3. Support feasibility, concept development, and commercialization activities that have clear potential to lead to scalable, commercially successful products, processes, or services within a reasonable period of time;
4. Stimulate growth-oriented enterprises within Nebraska; and
5. Support small and medium-sized companies.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

High growth, early-stage companies developing and commercializing a technology product, process, or service with potential to raise private capital are eligible applicants. They must also be:

- A corporation, limited liability company, partnership, registered limited partnership, sole proprietorship, business trust, or other eligible entity engaged in non-retail primary industries that are adding value to products or processes in Nebraska;
- with 500 or fewer employees; and that is
- operating within Nebraska.

AMOUNT OF FUNDING AVAILABLE, GRANT LIMITATIONS AND MATCHING REQUIREMENTS

DED may award up to \$4 million per year for grants through the Nebraska Innovation Fund Prototype Program. DED reserves the right to award less than \$4 million per year subject to demand, department budget, and available funds. The Department also reserves the right to redistribute funding between programs funded through the Business Innovation Act so long as the Department meets minimum award amounts and does not exceed the maximum amounts authorized by statute.

Prototype grants of up to \$150,000 per project can be awarded. Grant funds are to be used to assist with the creation of a prototype of a product stemming from research and development at a business operating in Nebraska or research at a public or private college or university in Nebraska. Applicants must provide a business plan that includes a proof-of-concept demonstration.

Applicants must provide matching funds equal to 50% of the grant amount. Eligible sources of match are funds from non-state sources, which include private foundations, federal or local government sources, quasi-governmental entities or commercial lending institutions, or any other funds whose source does not include funds appropriated by the Nebraska Legislature. A bioscience business or enterprise receiving financial assistance under the Bioscience Innovation Program shall provide a match of 100% of the amount of the grant amount. Value-added agriculture grants must provide matching funds equal to 25% of the grant amount. Funds must be expended within 24 months of awarding decision.

PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants must demonstrate that their proposed project has all of the following characteristics:

1. Significant promise of raising private investment;
2. Ability to produce a measurable result and be technologically sound;
3. Ability to lead to innovative technology or new knowledge;
4. Ability to lead to scalable, commercially successful products, processes, or services within a reasonable period of time; and

5. Significant potential for stimulating innovation-driven economic growth and a reasonable probability to enhance employment opportunities within Nebraska.

For each application submitted, DED will perform an independent review, and at DED's discretion, DED may utilize the assistance of outside experts. In completing the review, DED may examine the following:

1. Whether there is a clear indication that the company has already sought private investment, or will be ready to seek private investment within the timeframe specified by the DED;
2. Whether there is evidence that the project is a platform technology and is scalable for high growth potential;
3. Whether there is verification that the applicant meets the eligibility requirements of the NIF program;
4. Whether there is a technology description and plan that is sufficient for external expert review;
5. Whether there is a detailed financial analysis that includes the commitment of resources by the applicant and others;
6. Whether there is sufficient detail concerning proposed project, type, and amount of work to be performed, and expected product, process, or service with estimated costs to be reflected in the negotiated contract or agreement; and
7. Whether there is a statement on the economic development potential of the project with sufficient supporting documentation.

Applicant companies must provide the following information as it relates to the proposed project (Not all information may be applicable to each application; such applicability will be determined by DED):

- Business Plan
 - Executive Summary
 - Description of management team, including experience, qualifications and capabilities, previous successes, and organizational chart
 - Description of Advisory Board, including composition and members' backgrounds
 - Description of the company, product and what differentiates the product from current solutions
 - Market Analysis, including:
 - Description of the Market
 - Competitor Analysis

- Where business/product fits in the market
 - Anticipated market share
 - Regulatory landscape, if applicable
 - Marketing Plan (strategy and research)
 - SWOT Analysis
 - Financial Projections, including:
 - Revenue Model
 - Projected Revenue
 - Development Costs
 - Long Term Financial Projects
 - Financing Strategy, including required matching component
 - Intellectual Property costs, if applicable
 - Business Model, including:
 - Value Proposition
 - Resources to Deliver Value Proposition
 - Key Activities to Establish Market Presence
 - Partners
 - Cost Drivers
 - Target Customers
 - Methods of Developing Customer Relationships
 - Channels to Develop Customer Relationships
- Certification that no current or prospective employee, officer, principal, director, or owner has been accused or convicted of any crime (upon request)
- Financial Statements
 - Latest annual and accrual-based financials
 - Balance Sheet
 - Income Statement
 - Cash Flows Statement
 - Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable Schedules
 - Audit Reports
 - Tax Return
 - List and explain any loan agreements
 - Monthly comparison of projected versus actual revenue and expenses for the preceding 12 months
- Schedule of all litigation, arbitration, and governmental proceedings to which the company, or its directors, officers, or employees are or have been a party to within the last three years (if applicable)
- Current Certificate of Good Standing with the Nebraska Secretary of State
- Any License Agreements with third-parties for any Intellectual Property that the company does not own (if any)

- White-papers or drawings outlining the technology (if any)
- Proof of matching funds

DED may require an interview with the applicant's management to assess the management team and its business plan.

APPLICATION TIMING AND PROCESS

The DED will make application forms available for the purpose of applying for financial assistance under the NIF Program. Applications will be accepted from July 1 through June 30 each fiscal year under this plan or until funds are exhausted for the fiscal year. DED reserves the right to suspend applications until January 1 if 50% of the program funds have been awarded in the first 6 months of each fiscal year.

Applicants must use the application portal provided by the DED (<https://neded.fluidreview.com>), submit all required documentation or attachments, and must fully comply with all requirements within the time period specified. Applications that do not include ALL of the documentation or attachments specified, or that contain documents that have not been fully completed, will not be reviewed by DED.

At its discretion, the DED may request supplemental materials from applicants. If the DED requests supplemental materials, the DED must receive such materials within 15 days of the date of the request, or the application may be returned to the applicant without further review.

DED CONTACT PERSON

For clarifications on the Nebraska Innovation Fund Prototype Program, please direct your inquiries to:

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**SECTION FIVE:
NEBRASKA INNOVATION FUND SEED INVESTMENT
PROGRAM**

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Nebraska Innovation Fund (NIF) establishes a program to provide financial assistance to individuals and businesses operating in Nebraska to support commercialization of a product or process.

Innovation in value-added agriculture includes commercialization processes, thus value-added agriculture is included in the Nebraska Innovation Fund. Ag cooperatives, farming and ranching operations are included as eligible applicants for value-added agriculture projects in the Nebraska Innovation Fund.

Innovation in Bioscience also includes commercialization processes, thus the Bioscience Innovation Program is included in the Nebraska Innovation Fund Seed Investment Program. Innovative projects in biofuels, biosensors, and biotechnology as it relates to animals, equipment, humans, industry, research, medical and health services, medical diagnostics, medical therapeutics, and pharmaceuticals are included as eligible applicants for the Bioscience Innovation Program under the Nebraska Innovation Fund.

In order to apply for funding through the Seed Investment Program, applicants must apply to the Department of Economic Development (“DED”) using the Seed Investment application portal online at <https://neded.fluidreview.com/> .

OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

1. Stimulate private investment in Nebraska-based high growth companies;
2. Accelerate knowledge transfer and technological innovation, improve economic competitiveness, and spur economic growth in Nebraska-based companies;
3. Support commercialization activities that have clear potential to lead to scalable, commercially successful products, processes, or services within a reasonable period of time;
4. Stimulate growth-oriented enterprises within Nebraska;
5. Promote commercialization activities that are market-oriented; and
6. Support small and medium-sized companies.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

High growth, early-stage companies developing and commercializing a technology product, process, or service with potential to raise private capital are eligible applicants. They must also

be:

- A corporation, limited liability company, partnership, registered limited partnership, sole proprietorship, business trust, or other eligible entity engaged in non-retail primary industries that are adding value to products or processes in Nebraska;
- with 500 or fewer employees; and that is
- operating within Nebraska.

AMOUNT OF FUNDING AVAILABLE AND MATCHING REQUIREMENTS

DED may award up to \$4 million per year for grants through the Nebraska Innovation Fund Seed Investment Program. DED reserves the right to award less than \$4 million per year subject to demand, department budget, and available funds. The Department also reserves the right to redistribute funding between programs funded through the Business Innovation Act so long as the Department meets minimum award amounts and does not exceed the maximum amounts authorized by statute.

- **Seed Stage (Commercialization)**

Seed stage investments will be up to \$500,000 per project, for the commercialization of a prototype or process from a business or individual operating in Nebraska. Applicants must submit a business plan stating the potential sales and profit projections for the product or process. Applicants must provide matching funds equal to 100% of the amount of the investment. Eligible sources of match are funds from non-state sources, which include private foundations, federal and local government sources, quasi-governmental entities or commercial lending institutions or any other funds whose sources do not include funds appropriated by the Nebraska Legislature. A bioscience business or enterprise receiving financial assistance under the Bioscience Innovation Program shall provide a match of 100% of the amount of the investment. Value-added agriculture investments must provide matching funds equal to 25% of the of the investment amount. Applicants need not have received a separate prototype grant under NIF to be eligible for a seed stage investment. Funds must be expended within 24 months of the awarding decision.

Funds shall be invested via a stand-alone convertible note or as part of a minimum qualified round of financing. DED will contract with a Nebraska based nonprofit organization in order to have the nonprofit organization make investments, and administer and manage the investment process. For the purposes of the Seed Investment Program, a qualified round of financing is a formal financing round that is documented by standard legal documentation.

In order for funds to be considered as match for the Seed Investment Program, the company's matching financing must be closed less than six (6) months before the application or within (6) months after a notice of award.

PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants must demonstrate that their proposed project has all of the following characteristics:

1. Significant promise of raising private investment;
2. Ability to produce a measurable result and be technologically sound;
3. Ability to lead to innovative technology or new knowledge;
4. Ability to lead to scalable, commercially successful products processes, or services within a reasonable period of time; and
5. Significant potential for stimulating innovation-driven economic growth and a reasonable probability to enhance employment opportunities within Nebraska.

For each application submitted, DED will perform an independent review, and at DED's discretion, DED may utilize the assistance of outside experts. In completing the review, DED and/or the Nebraska based nonprofit organization contracted to make investments, and administer and manage the investment process may examine the following:

1. Whether there is a clear indication that the company has already sought private investment, or will be ready to seek private investment within the timeframe specified by the DED;
2. Whether there is evidence that the project is a platform technology and is scalable for high growth potential;
3. Whether there is verification that the applicant meets the eligibility requirements of the Seed Investment program;
4. Whether there is a technology description and plan that is sufficient for external expert review;
5. Whether there is a detailed financial analysis that includes the commitment of resources by the applicant and others;
6. Whether there is sufficient detail concerning proposed project, type, and amount of work to be performed, and expected product, process, or service with estimated costs to be reflected in the negotiated contract or agreement; and
7. Whether there is a statement on the economic development potential of the project with sufficient supporting documentation.

Applicant companies must provide the following information as it relates to the proposed project (Not all information may be applicable to each application; such applicability will be determined by DED):

- Nebraska Innovation Fund Seed Investment Program Application.
- Business Plan: Which should include the following: Description of the technology, market analysis, sales and marketing strategy and research, business model, financing strategy (including the matching component), and financial projections.
- One page description of proposed project.

DED may require an interview with the applicant's management to assess the management team and its business plan.

APPLICATION TIMING AND PROCESS

The DED will make application forms available for the purpose of applying for financial assistance under the Seed Investment Program. Applications will be accepted from July 1 through June 30, each fiscal year under this plan or until all funds are exhausted for the fiscal year. Applicants must use the online application portal, submit all required documentation or attachments, and must fully comply with all requirements within the time period specified. Applications that do not include ALL of the documentation or attachments specified, or that contain documents that have not been fully completed, may be returned to the applicant without further review. At its discretion, the DED may request supplemental materials from applicants. If the DED requests supplemental materials, the DED must receive such materials within 15 days of the date of the request, or the application may be returned to the applicant without further review.

DED CONTACT PERSON

For clarifications on the Nebraska Innovation Fund, please direct your inquiries to:

Joe Fox, Business Innovation Manager
Nebraska Department of Economic Development
301 Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor
PO Box 94666
Lincoln, NE 68509-4666
Telephone: 402-471-8604
E-mail: joe.fox@nebraska.gov
Website: <http://opportunity.nebraska.gov/>

SECTION SIX:
NEBRASKA RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Nebraska Research and Development Program (R&D Program) will provide financial assistance to businesses operating in Nebraska that use the faculty or facilities of a public or private college or university in Nebraska for applied research and development of new products, or use intellectual property generated at a public or private higher education institution in Nebraska. The total funds available through the R&D Program will be up to \$4 million per year for two years subject to availability.

Innovation in value-added agriculture includes businesses operating in Nebraska that use the faculty or facilities of a public or private college or university in Nebraska for applied research and development of new products or use of intellectual property generated at a public or private higher education institution in Nebraska. Therefore, value-added agriculture is included in the R&D Program. Agricultural cooperatives, farming and ranching operations are included as eligible applicants for value-added agriculture projects in the R&D Program.

Innovation in Bioscience also includes, businesses operating in Nebraska that use the faculty or facilities of a public or private college or university in Nebraska for applied research and development of new products or use of intellectual property generated at a public or private higher education institution in Nebraska thus the Bioscience Innovation Program is included in the R&D Program. Innovative projects in biofuels, biosensors, and biotechnology as it relates to animals, equipment, humans, industry, research, medical and health services, medical diagnostics, medical therapeutics, and pharmaceuticals are included as eligible applicants for the Bioscience Innovation Program under the R&D Program.

Companies apply for funding under the R&D Program by submitting an application to the Department of Economic Development online application portal at <https://neded.fluidreview.com/>.

OBJECTIVES

1. Encourage existing businesses in Nebraska to use Nebraska institutions of higher education for their research and development needs;
2. Stimulate growth-oriented spinoffs or new product lines;
3. Provide an added incentive for companies relocating to Nebraska; and
4. Increase the number of top level research professionals at Nebraska colleges and universities.

GOALS

1. Increase the number of commercializable products transferred in Nebraska;
2. To leverage resources to increase the amount of federal research dollars received by Nebraska small businesses; and
3. To ensure industry input is driving new research projects for a higher commercialization percentage.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Any for-profit business that has physical operations facilities in Nebraska that is conducting applied research and development in conjunction with a Nebraska institution of higher education or commercializing a technology developed by a Nebraska institution of higher education.

AMOUNT OF FUNDING AVAILABLE AND MATCHING REQUIREMENTS

DED may award up to \$4 million per year for grants through the R&D Program. DED reserves the right to award less than \$4 million per year subject to demand, department budget, and available funds. The Department also reserves the right to redistribute funding between programs funded through the Business Innovation Act so long as the Department meets minimum award amounts and does not exceed the maximum amounts authorized by statute.

An eligible business may apply for up to two awards in any four-year period per project. The Department may provide up to \$100,000 for the first phase of a project. Generally, a Phase I project is associated with the product development activities included in the proof-of-concept stage, but may include activities associated with the product design and development stages (see below). If the first phase is successful (as determined by the Department and the business), the business may apply for a grant of up to \$400,000 to fund a second phase project. Generally, Phase II funding will represent technical assistance associated with the product design and development stage(s), but may include some activities associated with the proof-of-concept stage.

All entities receiving assistance under the Nebraska Research and Development Program must provide matching funds of at least an amount equal to the amount of assistance provided through the R&D Program. The matching ratio requirement is a minimum of 1:1. A bioscience business or enterprise receiving financial assistance under the Bioscience Innovation Program shall also provide matching funds of at least an amount equal to the amount of assistance provided through the bioscience Innovation Program. Value-added agriculture grants must provide matching funds equal to 25% of the grant amount. Such matching funds may be from any non-state source, including private foundations, federal or local government sources, quasi-governmental entities, or commercial lending institutions, or any other funds whose source does not include funds appropriated by the Nebraska Legislature.

PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

Criteria used in evaluating applications under the R&D Program include, but are not limited to the following:

- The commercial potential of the desired product;
- Market opportunity; is there a large addressable market for the product or process;
- Total cost of the project;

- Is there a valid business opportunity to employing the product or process;
- Partnership or expertise of subject matter at the college or university chosen to conduct research; and
- Measurable goals to benchmark progress.

APPLICATION TIMING

For each funding cycle of the Nebraska R&D Program, the Department will make application forms available to businesses looking for assistance for the cost of researching and developing its product or service. Applicants must complete and submit the required application forms and submit them to the Department along with any attachments requested by the Department. Applicants must fully comply with all requirements of the application process within the time period specified by the Department, in order to be eligible for assistance under the R&D Program. Applications that do not include ALL of the documents specified or that contain documents that have not been fully completed, will be considered incomplete and will be returned to the applicant for further clarification. At its discretion, the Department may request supplemental materials from an applicant and such materials must be received within 30 days of the date of the request or the application may be returned to the applicant without further review.

Applications will be accepted from July 1 through June 30, each fiscal year under this plan or until all funds are exhausted for the fiscal year. The Department reserves the right to deny applications based on incomplete information and/or lack of project viability.

DED PROGRAM CONTACT PERSON

For clarifications on the Nebraska R&D Program, please direct your inquiries to:

Ben Kuspa, Business Innovation Consultant
Nebraska Department of Economic Development
301 Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor
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Lincoln, NE 68509-4666
Telephone: 402-471-3794
E-mail: ben.kuspa@nebraska.gov
Website: <http://opportunity.nebraska.gov>

**SECTION SEVEN:
MICROENTERPRISE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR MICROENTERPRISE **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

OBJECTIVES

1. To encourage, support, and grow Nebraska-based microenterprises by providing technical assistance in rural and urban distressed areas in order to better assure that Nebraska's microenterprises are able to realize their full potential to create jobs, enhance entrepreneurial skills and activity, and increase low-income households' capacity to become self-sufficient, and:
2. To coordinate resources and technical assistance provided by microenterprise service providers in the State.
3. All Microenterprise Technical Assistance funds will be used to provide assistance to businesses in distressed areas.

GOALS

1. To provide financial assistance for the purposes of providing technical assistance to microenterprise businesses located in Nebraska.
2. To provide financial packaging assistance, including resource identification and determining the programs of best fit, to microenterprise businesses located in Nebraska to grow Nebraska's microenterprise businesses.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include Internal Revenue Service (IRS) designated 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations located within the State of Nebraska. Such applicants must demonstrate state-wide coverage of services to all distressed areas of the state (see map of distressed areas on page 1-7). Statewide coverage may be achieved through a joint application consisting of one (1) Lead applicant and up to two (2) Joint applicants.

The applicant or Lead applicant in the case of a joint application must be a non-profit whose primary microenterprise service is micro-lending. In addition, the organization must also provide technical assistance to microenterprises consisting of businesses with 10 or fewer employees and further defined in the bill. The applicant or lead applicant in the case of a joint application must have a positive track record of micro-lending and technical assistance to microenterprises.

Joint applicants must also be eligible micro-loan delivery or micro-loan technical assistance organizations.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS/PRIORITY PROJECTS

Eligible projects include funding for the operating costs of a micro-loan delivery of micro-loan technical assistance organization. Operating costs include costs to provide technical assistance to microenterprise businesses, such as staff time, training costs, travel, and other costs deemed eligible by the Department. Ineligible costs include costs to hire staff above the baseline number of employees currently on staff, loans to businesses, operating funds for organizations not serving as the sole applicant, Lead applicant, or Joint applicant; and other costs deemed ineligible by the Department.

Priority will be given to applicants that:

- Demonstrate quantitative results and outcome measurements
- Have previous experience in providing technical assistance to microenterprise businesses
- Will sustain quality, successful technical assistance efforts to microenterprises and whose funding will not be used to increase the baseline staffing levels of the sole applicant, lead applicant, or joint applicants
- Demonstrate the ability to reach women and minority-owned businesses

AMOUNT OF FUNDING AVAILABLE & GRANT LIMITATIONS

The Department has committed a maximum of \$500,000 per year for the next two years to be awarded to one grantee to provide state-wide technical assistance. The maximum grant amount per project is \$500,000 per year for two years (\$1,000,000 total). Applications should reflect this 2-year time frame and funding requests for the 2-year period. Amount of award will be determined based on the number of applications received and the scoring and ranking criteria of each application.

Any funds used for technical assistance and/or operating costs for those organizations that are not the lead applicant can only be provided to joint applicants. The amount of funding and proposed uses of funding for these costs must be clarified by the organization.

MATCHING REQUIREMENTS

The awarded applicant is required to provide a match of no less than 35% of the total amount awarded (\$350,000 over a 2 year period). Funds shall be matched by non-state funds equivalent in money or in-kind contributions, or a combination of both. Such matching funds may be from any non-state source, including private foundations, federal or local government sources, quasi-governmental entities, or commercial lending institutions, or any other funds whose source does not include funds appropriated by the Nebraska Legislature.

PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants will be scored on the following criteria:

- Ability to provide business training and technical assistance to microenterprise clients
- Partnerships with microenterprise lenders across the State
- Capacity of the organization and ability to monitor and provide quantitative results to the Department
- Percentage of grant funds leveraged/matched and the sources and sufficiency of operating funds matched
- Geographic location and the ability to provide timely assistance to microenterprise businesses throughout the State
- The plan for providing business development services and micro-loans to microenterprises
- The scope of services to be provided
- The plan for coordinating the services and loans provided by micro-loan delivery and technical assistance organizations with commercial lending institutions
- Sustainability of program efforts: The Lead applicant and any Joint applicants will provide a statement: (1) explicitly stating that they understand that the micro-technical assistance funding is not a continuous source on which the organization can rely indefinitely for organizational operational costs, and (2) explaining how the organization will either reach a level with other funding that operations can be sustained beyond the 2-year micro-technical assistance commitment or how the organization would be impacted if continued micro-technical assistance funding is not available for operational costs at the same level as the micro-technical assistance 2-year funding. Examples of this would be a decrease in specific services (must be detailed), number of staff that the organization would no longer continue to employ, or revision of the service area of the organization. If the organization is using the micro-technical assistance funding to match federal or other funds that would also be lost without continued micro-technical assistance funding, the total impact should be described.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE APPLICATION TIMING AND PROCESS

Applications must be submitted to the Department no later than 5:00 PM on December 1, 2017.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR MICROENTERPRISE LENDING PROGRAMS

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Microenterprise Lending Program (Micro-lending) is to encourage and support the transfer of Nebraska-based technology and innovation in rural and urban areas of Nebraska in order to create high-growth, high technology businesses and to enhance creation of wealth and quality jobs.

All Micro-lending funds will be used by micro-loan delivery organizations to assist businesses in distressed areas.

GOALS

The goal of Micro-lending is to capitalize loan funds for the growth of microenterprise businesses located in Nebraska. Through this program it is expected that funds will be used to better assure that Nebraska's microenterprises are able to realize their full potential to create jobs, enhance micro-entrepreneurial skills and activity, and increase low-income households' capacity to become self-sufficient.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include Nebraska-based non-profit organizations located within the State of Nebraska. Such applicants must demonstrate that the organization and at least one key staff member has at least five (5) years of experience as a lender, preferably lending to micro-enterprises in Nebraska.

Eligible applicants must qualify as micro-loan delivery organizations that have Internal Revenue Service (IRS) designation as a 501(c)(3) or submit verification from an Attorney that the applicant operates as a 501(c)(4) or 501(c)(6) organization. All applicants must have a current Certificate of Good Standing from the Secretary of State at the time of application.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS/PRIORITY PROJECTS

Eligible projects include funding for a Revolving Loan Fund to make loans to eligible micro-enterprises in distressed areas. Other financing mechanisms administered by the applicant micro-loan delivery organization programs may be approved by the Department on project-by-project basis.

Priority will be given to applicants that:

- Have previous experience and a successful track-record as an organization in providing loans to microenterprises.
- At least one key staff person demonstrates previous experience and a successful track-record in providing loans to microenterprises.
- Demonstrate the Micro-lending Fund will result in filling a financing gap that is both needed and microenterprises are interested in accessing.

AMOUNT OF FUNDING AVAILABLE & GRANT LIMITATIONS

The Department commits a maximum of \$500,000 per year for the next two years to be awarded to micro-loan delivery organizations. A minimum grant amount per project of \$200,000 will be used as a guideline. No more than \$20,000 or 5% of the total Micro-lending grant, whichever is lesser, shall be used as a guideline to determine the maximum award amount for general administration (operating) costs of the micro-loan delivery organization.

MATCHING REQUIREMENTS

The awarded applicant is required to provide a match equal to no less than 35% of the total Micro-lending amount awarded. Funds shall be matched by non-state funds equivalent in money or in-kind contributions, or a combination of both. Such matching funds may be from any non-state source, including private foundations, federal or local government sources, quasi-governmental entities, or commercial lending institutions, or any other funds whose source does not include funds appropriated by the Nebraska Legislature. In addition to the proposed use of Micro-lending Funds, matching funds may be used for operational costs of the applicant micro-loan delivery organization, costs for technical assistance to microenterprises by the micro-loan delivery organization, or other similar activities approved by the Department.

PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Propose a sound business plan for the applicant micro-loan delivery organization which includes sufficient coordination with the Microenterprise Technical Assistance provider. Preference will be given to enhancing established Revolving Loan Funds by expanding the availability of these funds to businesses with 6 – 10 employees and loan terms conducive to investment in start-up, high-growth, high technology businesses. Examples of these loan terms would be deferring all or a portion of the loan for three – five years as the microenterprise completes the prototyping phase of a new product and transitions to full commercialization and profitability.
- Each loan program which ideally will have underwriting criteria appropriate for traditional micro-lending and micro-loans to start-up high-growth, high technology businesses as discussed above.
- Proposed increases in jobs and investment due to the Micro-lending Funds.

- Loan program guidelines that include favorable terms and design for assisting microenterprises locating in or located in a Downtown or Central Business District as part of a strategy to encourage sustainability of these community assets.
- A clear and precise plan for coordination with the Micro-enterprise Technical Assistance delivery organization(s) and requirements of the Micro-lending Funds to be provided to businesses willing receiving and responding to technical assistance efforts.
- Demonstrate reasonable expectations for loan losses.
- Demonstrate a proven system of reaching women and minority-owned businesses
- Geographic distribution of funds. All Micro-lending funds must be used to assist businesses in distressed areas.
- Partnerships and strategy for coordination with commercial lending institutions in the program service area.
- Capacity of the applicant organization and ability to monitor and provide quantitative results to the Department
- Increased leveraging of Micro-lending funds with non-state resources. Generally speaking, additional leveraged funds is considered a positive characteristic, however the applicant must explain the effect of leveraged funds on the Micro-lending funds. For example, will the Micro-lending funds be limited to assisting businesses with 5 or fewer employees because the leverage funds are federal funds? If leverage funds do further restrict the Micro-lending Funds the applicant must explain how the funds will still be filling a need and gap in available financing.

APPLICATION TIMING AND PROCESS

Applications will be accepted and reviewed in two (2) funding cycles.

Micro-lending Application Cycle 1: Applications must be submitted to the Department no later than 5:00 PM on December 1, 2017.

All applications will be reviewed by Department staff, with final approval given by the Department Director. Up to \$500,000 in Micro-lending funds will be awarded in the first cycle.

Micro-lending Application Cycle 2: Applications must be submitted to the Department no later than 5:00 PM on December 3, 2018.

Eligible applicants awarded in Application Cycle 1 are eligible to apply in Cycle 2 if all Micro-lending funds from Application Cycle 1 were loaned to microenterprises prior to the application due date.

All applications will be reviewed by Department staff, with final approval given by the Department Director. The Department Director has the discretion to award additional funds to micro-lending delivery organizations with open, successful projects awarded in Application Cycle 1. Up to \$1,000,000 (less funds awarded in Cycle 1) will be awarded in the second cycle.

DED CONTACT PERSON

For clarifications on the Microenterprise Assistance Program, please direct inquiries to:

Nisha Avey, Business Innovation Consultant
Nebraska Department of Economic Development
301 Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor
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Lincoln, NE 68509-4666
Telephone: 402-471-1466
E-mail: nisha.avey@nebraska.gov
Website: <http://opportunity.nebraska.gov/>

**SECTION EIGHT:
APPLICATION ACCEPTANCE DATES & DISTRIBUTION OF
FUNDS**

Solicitation Periods/Application Acceptance Dates

Funding Priority/Category	Application Acceptance Dates
Nebraska SBIR Program	
Phase 0	Open Cycle (begins July 1, 2017)
Phase 1 and Phase 2	Open Cycle (begins July 1, 2017)
Nebraska Innovation Fund	
Prototype Grants	Open Cycle (begins July 1, 2017)
Seed Stage Grants or Investments	Open Cycle (begins July 1, 2017)
Nebraska Academic Research & Development	
Academic Research & Development Grant	Open Cycle (begins July 1, 2017)
Microenterprise Assistance Programs	
Microenterprise Technical Assistance	December 1, 2017
Micro-lending <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle 1 • Cycle 2 	December 1, 2017 December 3, 2018

Annual Distribution of Funds

<i>Table 5</i> Funding Source →	Business Innovation Act
Section Three: Nebraska SBIR Program	\$0 to \$4,000,000
Section Four: Prototype Program	\$0 to \$4,000,000
Section Five: Seed Investment Program	\$0 to \$4,000,000
Section Six: Applied Industry Research and Development Program	\$0 to \$4,000,000
Section Four, Five, and Six: Value-Added Agriculture	\$0 to \$4,000,000
Section Seven: Microenterprise Assistance Programs	\$0 to \$2,000,000
TOTAL MAXIMUM AUTHORIZED DISTRIBUTION	\$22,000,000