

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
Release Date: Thursday, January 18, 2007

Texas A&M University-CONACyT: *Collaborative Research Grant Program*

Deadlines:

Letter of Intent (Required): Friday, February 16, 2007, 5:00 p.m. (CST)

Full Proposal: Friday, May 4, 2007, 5:00 p.m. (CST)

Introduction: Texas A&M University and the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACyT) signed a five-year agreement of cooperation in higher education and research in April 2001. The agreement calls for significant international cooperation in research and graduate student training and in providing seed money for educational programs and collaborative research between Texas A&M University and Mexican higher education institutions and CONACyT research centers.

The agreement emphasizes joint programs including collaborative research programs, faculty and researcher exchanges, non-degree student training, graduate student education, and post-graduate certification. The agreement provides unprecedented opportunities for researchers from Mexico and Texas A&M University to work together in addressing issues that span our common border. Both CONACyT and Texas A&M University are dedicated to long-term, collaborative approaches to issues facing the United States and Mexico. Significantly, under this agreement Texas A&M University and CONACyT have each dedicated US\$200,000 per year for the *Collaborative Research Grant Program*. These monies fund inter-institutional research proposals between Texas A&M University and Mexican higher education institutions and research centers. The purpose of the competitive, peer reviewed *Collaborative Research Grant Program* is to advance inter-institutional cooperation in science, technology, and scholarly activities that have a direct application in industry or government through the complementary efforts of scientists and scholars from Texas and Mexico.

The Agreement of Cooperation for Higher Education and Research can be found at: <http://vpr.tamu.edu/images/Conacyt.pdf>

The two main objectives for the *Collaborative Research Grant Program* are to provide seed funding to:

1. Support the completion of a 12-month inter-institutional project, and
2. Support the development and submission of proposals for external funding of research from competitive granting agencies both domestic and international (e.g., NSF, NIH, DOE, CONACyT, World Bank, NATO, UNESCO, etc.) and industry. Upon completion of the 12-month project, the principal investigators must present evidence that they are seeking continued funding from another source. If the PIs have a funded project and plan to apply for additional funding, they will be required to provide an interim progress report as part of the application process.

Priority Areas of Funding: Texas A&M University and CONACyT have agreed on several research priority areas as listed below. The proposal must be linked to the private sector or end user and have direct application to solving an industrial, governmental, or societal problem.

A major portion of the funds available will be directed to proposals in these priority areas:

1. Biotechnology and Bioinformatics
2. Health
3. Telecommunications/Information Technologies
4. Environment
5. Advanced Materials and Manufacturing
6. Energy
7. Urban Development and Sustainability

A portion of the available funds has been allocated to facilitate funding of other relevant topics not covered in the above priority areas. Researchers should check with one of the contact persons listed on Page 7 to ensure the appropriateness of a topic for potential funding before submitting a letter of intent.

Funding priorities are jointly established by Texas A&M University and CONACyT and may change from year to year.

Each year, the joint fund consists of US\$400,000, which is awarded in grants of up to US\$24,000 to joint Texas A&M and Mexican higher education institutions and/or CONACyT research centers.

Eligibility: A principal investigator (PI) is required from both Texas A&M University and a Mexican higher education institution or CONACyT research center. The PI from the United States must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member at Texas A&M University. The PI from Mexico must (1) be part of the National System for Researchers (SNI), (2) be a full-time faculty member from any Mexican institution of higher education that is registered in the National Registry of Scientific and Technological Institutes and Companies (RENIECYT), and (3) have held his/her position for at least three years prior to the publication of this RFP. Other investigators may include Texas A&M University System or Mexican faculty, postdoctoral students, graduate students, or research staff. PIs are limited to one submission each per year.

It is possible to seek funding for successive years. PIs submitting a proposal for successive years will be required to submit a report that describes the results of the first seed grant and how additional funding will be utilized. Funds through the *Collaborative Research Grant Program* are to seed research collaborations and are not intended as a long-term funding source. Proposals submitted for successive years will be placed in priority behind new proposal submissions.

Deadlines:

Friday, February 16, 2007: Letters of Intent must be received by 5:00 p.m. Central Standard Time. It must be e-mailed to conacyt@tamu.edu. **A letter of intent (in English) is a requirement for eligibility to submit a full proposal. Only one LOI is required and may be signed by only one PI.**

Friday, March 2, 2007: PIs will be notified via email by this date if they are invited to submit a full proposal.

Friday, May 4, 2007 Full proposals (in English) must be submitted, routed electronically for appropriate signatures, and received by 5:00 p.m. Central Standard Time. **No late applications will be accepted.**

Friday, July 6, 2007: Notification of awards will be made electronically.

Monday, September 3, 2007: Funds will be made available on this date. Any compliance issues must be cleared and Mexican investigators must provide wire transfer information before transfer of funds can occur. It is helpful for the Mexican investigators to have their financial information ready to submit if awarded. If we do not receive this information when requested, we cannot guarantee funds will be transferred by this date.

Letter of Intent (LOI): To be eligible to submit a full proposal, a letter of intent (LOI) is **required** (in English). **Only one LOI is required and may be signed by only one PI.**

LOIs help the program administrators identify the required numbers and qualifications of reviewers. In addition, LOIs enable program administrators to provide feedback to PIs on appropriateness of the proposed projects to the *Collaborative Research Grant Program*. PIs should submit LOIs as early as possible in advance of the due date; feedback will be provided as expeditiously as possible, but no later than Friday, March 2, 2007.

The LOI shall consist of the following (all in English):

- Abstract – a brief summary describing the project’s objectives with emphasis on application to industry, proposed methodology, and anticipated results in layman’s terms.
- Detailed contact information for the two (2) lead PIs
 - Names
 - Titles and Positions (National System for Researchers (SNI) for Mexican PI only)
 - University/ CONACyT Research Center Affiliation—full name of the Mexican higher education institution or CONACyT research center followed by acronym, and the REINECYT registration number of the Mexican institution.
 - Department
 - Mailing Address
 - Phone
 - Fax
 - E-mail
 - Names of other investigators and institutions
- List of potential industrial partners or end users and level of involvement in the project (Note that early engagement or involvement is encouraged.)

The letter of intent must be submitted via e-mail to conacyt@tamu.edu no later than 5:00 p.m. Central Standard Time on Friday, February 16, 2007.

Full Proposal Format:

All proposals submitted for the *Collaborative Research Grant Program* must be submitted electronically using the on-line application system at <http://igps.tamu.edu>. A proposal will consist of the information listed below and should be in English. The abstract, project description, investigator resumes, current and pending support, and letters of support should be uploaded in an RTF, Word, or PDF format in the designated location of the application. **Failure to follow the guidelines outlined below will automatically disqualify a proposal without a scientific review.**

General Information (on line): Contact information for each investigator (limit 6), compliance reporting, key words for project, and report codes must be included.

- **Abstract** (upload): A summary briefly describing the project's objectives with emphasis on application to industry, proposed methodology, and anticipated results in layman's terms is to be included. The abstract is limited to one page in length using Times New Roman 12-point font with one-inch margins. The abstract will be used for various purposes, including posting on program web sites and promotion materials.
- **Project Description** (upload): A narrative of the project up to eight (8) pages in length using Times New Roman 12-point font with one-inch margins. The project description should include any illustrations, figures, data, references, or other information and should address the following details in order listed.

Use the following bold headings within the proposal text.

1. **Project Overview**
 - a. **Scientific or Scholarly Merit and Impact.** State the specific objectives of the project. Explain the scientific or technological significance of the work and its possible importance in economic, social, or other terms.
 - b. **Bi-national Problems.** Provide evidence that project has direct application to solving bi-national problems.
 - c. **Anticipated Results.** Describe the anticipated results of the project.
 2. **Qualifications and Balance of PIs and Research Team/Existing Inter-Institutional Relationships.** Identify the role of both PIs and any other members of the research teams involved in the project. If applicable, the PIs should demonstrate evidence of an existing inter-institutional relationship. If graduate students are to take part, list their names and university/program affiliation, and describe their work's relevance to their graduate study and the supervision planned for their participation. *Students already funded by CONACyT are not eligible for additional funding through this program.*
 3. **Link to Industry/End User.** Describe the work to be performed, the tasks of each person, and the timeline for the project, noting the project's importance to solving industrial, governmental, or societal problems.
 4. **Knowledge and Technology Transfer.** If applicable, describe relevant plans.
 5. **Future Funding Potential.** Include a plan for continued cooperation for research and plans to seek additional funding from other sources.
 6. **Matching Support.** Provide information regarding the availability of institutional and industrial support, as well as leveraging potential.
- **Investigator Resumes** (upload): Resumes (two-page max) for all investigators should be attached to the application. Resumes should not exceed the two-page limit.

- **Funding: Current and Pending** (upload): List the source, title, date, and amount of internal and external funding support received or pending during the previous three years (for all investigators) *relevant* to the project.
- **Industry Partner or End User** (on line): List contact information for all industry partners and/or end users whose letters of support will be uploaded with application. It is important to describe the level of involvement of the industry partner(s) and/or end user(s).
- **Budget** (on line): Not to exceed US\$24,000 (see budget criteria below).
- **Budget Justification** (on line): Specifically itemize each budgeted item. The PIs must agree upon and specify the expenses to be spent at their respective institutions. If there are matching funds, please include details in this section.
- **Budget Contacts** (on line): Include the contact name, phone number and email address for the budget contacts at Texas A&M and the Mexican higher education institution or CONACyT research center. Mexican investigators must provide wire transfer information before transfer of funds can occur. It is helpful for the Mexican investigators to have their financial information ready to submit if awarded. If we do not receive this information when requested, we cannot guarantee funds will be transferred by posted date.
- **Letters of Support** (upload): Letters of support are encouraged but not required. Limit the letters to six (6). Some examples of supporting organizations include:
 - Mexican higher education institution or CONACyT research center.
 - Texas A&M University
 - Industry partner(s) and/or end user(s).

All letters of support should be addressed to the following address and uploaded with the full proposal using the on-line application system:

Review Committee:

Texas A&M- CONACyT: *Collaborative Research Grant Program*
 c/o Texas A&M University
 1112 TAMU
 312 Jack K. Williams Administration Building
 College Station, Texas 77843-1112

On-line Submission Process: All proposals submitted for the *Collaborative Research Grant Program* must be submitted in English electronically using the on-line application system, which is available to submit proposals at: <http://igps.tamu.edu>. This site is password protected. Texas A&M University tenure or tenure track faculty PIs may use their neo password to access the system. PIs from Mexico will be given a logon ID and password via email from the program administrator at Texas A&M University once a letter of intent is submitted and accepted.

Evaluation of Proposals: A joint review committee will evaluate all proposals according to the following review criteria:

- Evidence of scientific or scholarly merit and impact (25%)
- Evidence that projects have direct application to solving bi-national problems (20%)
- Qualifications of and balance between the PIs and/or research teams (15%)
- Evidence of existing inter-institutional relationship between PIs and/or research teams (5%)

- Evidence that projects are linked to the private sector and/or end user (10%)
- Demonstration of future funding potential (10%)
- Evidence of institutional or industrial matching support or leveraging potential (5%)
- Evidence that the budget is in line with the proposed objectives (10%)

Please understand that failure to meet any of the above criteria may result in disqualification.

The Review Committee: The committee that reviews each of the proposals submitted consists of representatives from both Texas A&M University and CONACyT. The Review Committee is scheduled to meet during May/June of 2007.

The Review Committee is comprised of peer reviewers on the “Registro Conacyt de Evaluadores Acreditados” officials, who are selected by the Deputy Director General for Science, and Texas A&M University administrators and faculty, who are selected by the Vice President for Research.

Notification of Award: Recipients will be notified by Friday, July 6, 2007, via e-mail.

Transfer of Funds: The transfer of funds, awarded in U.S. dollars, will be made by Monday, September 3, 2007, assuming all financial information is provided by the PIs and all compliance issues have been cleared by the appropriate compliance committee(s). *Failure to provide timely and accurate financial contact information will result in delayed transfer of funds.*

Budget: Grants issued under this agreement will fund research projects up to US\$24,000 with a project duration of up to 12 months. The budget should clearly indicate how the funds will be distributed between Texas A&M University and the Mexican higher education institution or CONACyT research center in the budget justification section. Eligible costs incurred under projects are limited to:

- **Travel:** This includes travel-related expenses for PIs and/or other members of the research teams to visit partner institutions or potential funding sources and registration fees for professional conferences and meetings. As one of the underlying aspects of this cooperative program, bi-directional travel by the PIs, or senior members of the research team, is expected. Each home institution is responsible for providing medical insurance during travel. *Expenses incurred on behalf of the state and submitted for payment should be reasonable, necessary and appropriate. Employees or prospective employees may be reimbursed for the actual cost of meals and lodging on overnight travel. Other allowable expenses include: transportation costs (both ground and air). Expenses such as incidental lodging costs should be excluded; examples are laundry and movie rentals.*
- **Graduate student support:** The award money can be used to fund graduate students' salaries and tuition payments; however, *this project will not fund salaries for investigators, undergraduate students, or postdoctoral students.* The funds for these grants are not fringe-bearing. Fringe benefits must be included for all U.S. graduate student salaries listed in the budget (Instructions for calculating fringe benefits are located at: <http://sago.tamu.edu/soba/IDC/fringe-benefits-FY2003.htm>). *Students already funded by CONACyT are not eligible for additional funding through this program.*
- **Symposia/Workshops:** Expenses related to hosting focused symposia and workshops on topics fall within the scope of the initiative.
- **Scientific equipment and supplies:** This category must not exceed 20 percent of the total award. Personal computers **cannot** be purchased with this award.
- **Facilities and Administrative Costs** (F&A Costs/Indirect Costs) are not allowed.

- **Matching support** is not required, but it is strongly encouraged.

Reporting Requirements: At the end of the 12-month funding period, award recipients are required to submit a report that details the project activity and identifies the granting agencies, industry sponsors, or end users to which a proposal has been or will be submitted (The Final Report form is available on the Web at: <http://vpr.tamu.edu/forms/FinalReportwTableQues.doc>). Those PIs who fail to submit a final report showing evidence that they have submitted a proposal to an external granting agency or sponsor will not be eligible to participate in future calls for the *Collaborative Research Grant Program* or any future research enhancement programs at Texas A&M University.

Additionally, PIs are expected to participate in two (2) symposia to present the results of their research. One of these symposia will be for a more technical audience, and the other will be for a lay audience. Expenses for these symposia will be covered by the program and, therefore, should not be listed within the project budget.

Administrative Support: Questions concerning the CONACyT-Texas A&M University: *Collaborative Research Grant Program* should be directed to:

Texas A&M University, Office of the Vice President for Research:

Ms. Julie K. Barker (j-barker@tamu.edu or conacyt@tamu.edu; 979-862-2835)

CONACyT:

Mr. Victor Gabriel Fernandez (vfernandezo@conacyt.mx; 53227000 ex.6608)

Information on Internet: The information about the CONACyT-Texas A&M Agreement and the *Collaborative Research Grant Program* is available on the Web at:

- CONACyT's Web site: <http://www.conacyt.mx>
- Texas A&M University's Web site: <http://conacyt.tamu.edu>

Both of these Web sites will have the following information easily and readily available:

- Request for Proposals
- Frequently Asked Questions and Answers, which will include such information as:
Corrected budget link, No-cost extension, worksheets, etc.
- Official Agreement
- Administrative Support
- On-line Help