

William J Polzin Memorial NAFTNet Seed Grant Announcement

The William J Polzin Award NAFTNet Seed Grant Fund is to be used to fund new and ongoing research programs and activities of NAFTNet. The NAFTNet Executive Board will provide funds to members of NAFTNet to support research endeavors. These funds will be disbursed only in response to specific written proposals, which shall be initially be reviewed by an expert panel assigned by the NAFTNet Executive Board with final approval coming from a majority vote of NAFTNet Executive Board members.

Purpose or Scope:

The purpose of the Seed Grant is to provide funding for research projects that are focused on the diagnosis and treatment of fetal diseases. The projects that are translational and clinical studies are considered favorably. The intent of the grant is to develop preliminary data towards a competitive funding mechanism. Projects may be led by both Junior and Senior faculty. Core laboratory equipment, supplies, or career development activities that are not related to a research project are outside the scope of the Seed Grant.

The seed will have a process of review by an expert panel of 3 reviewers- selected by the board, without conflicts (similar to NIH). Only applications with high impact (average score of 4 or lower; 1-9, 1 is best) will be considered. The best application will be funded.

Eligibility:

All faculty, at the level of instructor or above, who are full-time faculty and affiliated with Regular NAFTNet Steering Committee centers. Projects may also consist of collaborations between clinical and basic science faculty, provided that the Seed Grant-eligible, clinical co-investigator has a significant role and active participation in the project. NAFTNet Centers will be limited to one award as Principal Investigator at any given time and may not submit a second application within two calendar years of the start date (date of award funding) of a currently funded proposal.

Guidelines for Preparation of Seed Grant Research Proposals

Format:

Proposals for funding should be submitted in electronic format to the NAFTNet Executive Office and include the following sections, where applicable. **The minimum font size is 11 point with 0.5 inch margins.** Applications that do not conform to these requirements will be returned without review.

A. Checklist items included/format used:

- 1) Title of project
- 2) Name of the Principal Investigator (PI), Department, School, University
- 3) Name of co-investigator(s), departments, school/institutions
- 4) Structured abstract (less than 30 lines of text, similar to NIH format)
- 5) 3-page scientific section:
 - a. Specific Aims and Hypotheses of the project
 - b. Significance
 - c. Innovation
 - d. Approach (including statistical analyses, projected timeline)
- 6) Other Factors and Assurances: Please include human subjects protection and/or animal welfare, IRB, IACUC and other regulatory approvals. Include the CV or biosketch of the Principal Investigator and all co-investigators. If the Principal Investigator is not clinical faculty, discuss the specific role of the clinical faculty investigator.

- 7) References on a separate page
- 8) NIH biosketches and NIH Other Support for the PI and any co-investigators
- 9) Budget and budget justification (see below)
- 10) Facilities and resources
- 11) Plan for extramural funding
- 12) Appendices**

* Seed Grant projects are typically funded for a maximum of 2 years. It is expected that all IRB approvals are to be completed within 1 year.

** Copies of relevant questionnaires, survey forms or letters of collaboration may be attached in an appendix.

B. Budget:

A detailed line item budget must be included. **The total amount requested must not exceed \$50,000.** If the Seed Grant will provide only partial support for a project, please indicate the source of the remaining necessary funds. Examples of appropriate budgetary requests include participant stipends, research assistant time, equipment, reagents, animals and animal care, and data management and statistical support.

It is not anticipated that awards will be given to fund any full-time positions. Partial salary support may be requested reflecting the time commitment to the proposed project, however salary support must be clearly justified and priority will be given to funding of the project rather than personnel. Items ineligible for financial support include clerical or secretarial support and faculty travel expenses unless it is a direct research expense.

C. Budget and Personnel Justification:

The Budget and Personnel Justification should describe each item listed in the budget and provide the justification and information necessary to determine how the budget was calculated and the relationship between budgeted items and the project's goals. The budget narrative must explain how each cost is necessary for the program, and match those items listed in the research proposal.

If requests are made for services or specific reagents (e.g. antibodies, pathology specimens, flow cytometry, real time PCR, gene arrays), indicate the number of samples to be processed and cost per sample or kit and provide documentation of these prices if possible. Requests for statistical or other support services should indicate hourly rate or per contract costs and justify the use of outside, non-institutional services or assays. For animal costs, indicate and justify the number of animals to be used and housing costs.

Please also provide a list of key personnel (Principal Investigator, Co-Investigators, collaborators, consultants, PRAs) and a brief (one paragraph) description of their specific role and percent effort on the project.

Application deadline for submission: January 17, 2025 11:59PM CST.

Applications should be sent as a single PDF file to Sarah Sandusky (NAFTnet) info@naftnet.org.

Review Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Significance: Project’s potential contribution to the body of knowledge and likelihood that research results will inform scientific concepts and methods.

Innovation: The extent to which the project employs novel concepts, approaches, or methods; challenges existing paradigms or develops new paradigms; or considers and existing problem from a new perspective.

Investigator(s): Investigator expertise and capacity to complete the proposed project or appropriate mentorship and/or collaboration plan. Priority is given to junior faculty, new investigators, and those with heavy clinical responsibilities.

Approach: The Hypotheses and Specific Aims should be clearly stated. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology? Is the project feasible, are the methods sound and appropriate to assess the hypotheses and specific aims? Are the study design and statistical analyses clearly stated and appropriate for the project? Is the timeline adequate to complete the project as planned? Is the budget justified clearly and specifically and is supportive of the planned work?

Potential for future funding: Pilot research studies designed to provide preliminary data to support subsequent proposals for extramural funding or that may lead to new avenues of research are given priority.

Reviewers will assign a score for each criterion described above using the following scale:

Overall Impact or Criterion Strength	Score	Descriptor
High	1	Exceptional
	2	Outstanding
	3	Excellent
Medium	4	Very good
	5	Good
	6	Satisfactory
Low	7	Fair
	8	Marginal
	9	Poor

Scores will be averaged to determine the final score.

Review Process

Grant proposals will be reviewed by the NAFTMet Executive Committee once a year. The deadline for submission of grants will be **January 17, 2025 for the 2025 Spring meeting**. The Executive Board will assign reviewers and score the proposals. Any Executive Committee member who is either a principal or co-investigator for a proposal or has a conflict of interest will disqualify him/herself from participating in the review. Any investigator making a proposal, whether an Executive Committee member or not, may be

asked to come to a committee meeting to explain or clarify any aspect of the proposal or such clarification may be requested in writing.

The Executive Committee will have the option of recommending acceptance of all or only part of the budgetary requests (i.e specific budget line items may be rejected or amended). Proposals not selected for funding may be resubmitted the next year. Revised applications should include a one-page response to reviewers' comments.

While the number of awards granted per cycle will be dictated by the availability of funds, individual research grants will generally not exceed \$50,000.

Administrative options of the Committee's review include a recommendation for acceptance or rejection of the entire proposal as submitted or acceptance of portions of the proposal with recommendations to delete or modify certain aspects of the proposed study. All applicants will receive a written review of their proposal well before the Spring Steering Committee meeting.

Administration of Award (July 1)

Once the proposal has been approved, the applicant will be notified via e-mail. Notices will contain the award, specifics of funding, the title of the project, name of the principal investigator (PI), and award duration. It is the responsibility of the PI to administer the research project and budget as outlined in the proposals and to comply with all applicable COMIRB and IACUC regulations.

By accepting the award, the PI agrees to the terms of the award which includes complying with the budget, providing an annual progress report, and completion of the study **within two years. Failure to submit an annual report within 30 days of the anniversary of the award (award funding date) will result in suspension of funds.** The annual progress report should include:

- A brief one-page summary of progress
- A budget report (including proposed budget and expenditures to date)
- A list or summary of abstracts or manuscripts that have been submitted, presented or published as a result of the project
- Grant or other funding obtained to either support the Seed Grant project or as a result of Seed Grant funding
- Changes to the personnel, specific aims, scope of project, project timeline, or budget

If the project is not completed in two years, an extension may be granted but will be based upon the submission to the Executive Committee of a detailed progress report indicating reasons for delay in completion, as well as an estimated date of completion. If any portion of the budgeted money remains unused by the completion of the project, this money will revert to the Seed Grants for future awards.

At the completion of the study, the PI will be required to provide a report of findings to include a summary of data, conclusions drawn, initiatives undertaken to utilize the data obtained for additional research studies, possibilities for extramural funding, and a list of publications, abstracts, presentations, and grants related to the study. It is anticipated that such a report will be made available to the Committee by the grant deadline closest to the anniversary of the award. This report must also include an accurate accounting of funds awarded and disbursed. Failure to comply with the terms of this award will result in revocation of the award.

All expenditures related to the Seed Grant program must be approved by the Executive Committee (or designee). A copy of all expenditures will be maintained by the NAFTNet treasurer or their designee for the PI.