Northern PRIME fund: FAQs

Q: How was the Northern PRIME fund established?

NMU representatives were invited to attend the MCubed Symposium at the University of Michigan in Fall 2013. The symposium highlighted and celebrated U of M's new internal funding mechanism that requires interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary teams of three to develop student-centric collaborative projects. The program serves as inspiration for Northern's PRIME program. A small team of NMU representatives worked through Spring 2014 to develop the parameters of PRIME. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs committed funds for the pilot project in May 2014.

Do the two investigators need to be from two separate disciplines?

Yes. Investigators can be from the sciences or arts, but must be a) from different departments or b) have backgrounds/research and experience in segments of a discipline that are vastly distinctive (e.g. genetics and microbiology) . In the case of a three-member project, two of the investigators can be from the same discipline provided the third is from a different discipline. For collaborative submissions with four faculty members a maximum of two investigators can be from the same discipline.

Do both investigators have to be employed at NMU?

Yes. At this time the Northern PRIME fund is available only to NMU faculty, staff and academic administrators with appropriate time available to commit to the project.

Do the students have to be from different disciplines?

It is not a requirement but it is encouraged. Remember one of the parameters for evaluation is the interdisciplinary nature: Projects should take a novel approach to the problem/need. Projects must prove the multi-disciplinary nature of the proposed project will enhance any potential impact. Projects that involve students from different disciplines would likely be evaluated higher given the potential for impact and benefit to the students involved.

Can teams of four submit?

If a project team includes four people two proposals should be jointly submitted for a total of $40,000. The submission in such a case would be done as a collaborative submission, similar to the collaborative submission option available via NSF and NIH. Teams must work with the Grants and Contracts Office to ensure the process is done correctly.

What constitutes as a "tangible deliverable," as is required for each product?

A "tangible deliverable" will vary according to the nature of the project. A physical deliverable could result—i.e. a physical product or prototype—or a work of art. A scholarly article to be published in a reputable journal qualifies, as does a substantive dataset or manuscript for a literary work. The purpose of any deliverable must be that it would lead to an external endeavor: A scholarly article that has potential for publication (and potentially continued research); a work of art that could be considered for display in museums/art exhibits outside of NMU; a dataset that would contribute to efforts seeking external funding.

Do I need to work with the Grants and Contracts Office to develop the budget?
Yes. All proposal budgets must be developed with and approved by the Grants office staff. An appointment can be made either with Kristin Beck (krbeck@nmu.edu) or Erica Lynn Franich (efranich@nmu.edu).

Does the cost of a graduate student assistantship and/or tuition need to be included in the budget?
No. But investigators should a) include summer payment for students and b) if a graduate student will be involved, hire a student who already has a graduate assistantship. It is also possible to request funds from alternate sources to cover the cost such as the department or college. Further it is acceptable to involve undergraduate students in projects instead of, or in complement to, graduate students.

Is there any reporting component expected at the conclusion of the project?
Yes. The reporting component involves participation in the symposium, at which investigators and students will present a poster and a discussion of the project.

What happens if I or my co-Investigator cannot attend the symposium?
In the event of extenuating circumstances that could prevent participation, investigators should request an exemption from the Associate Provost for Graduate Education and Research, and develop an alternative final reporting component,

Who will be reviewing the proposals?
The review committee will include a team of evaluators (faculty and administration). Grants and Contracts Office staff will be involved in an ex officio capacity. An established evaluation form will guide the process to ensure objective rankings.

When will awards be announced?
Award notices will be released no later than September 1, 2015. Projects should begin no later than November 1, 2015.

If I am awarded funds how do I receive them?
Successful applicants will receive an official award notice from the Graduate Education and Research Office no later than September 1, 2015 with instructions to a) complete a Request for Organization Number form as is required for all account set-up for internal and external funding and b) coordinate with the Grants Office and Controller's Office to arrange an award set-up meeting. All necessary information for account set up and expending funds will be available and discussed in that meeting.

Will project (time) extensions be granted if additional time becomes necessary, and how are they obtained?
Yes. Official requests for time extensions to complete projects should be submitted to the Associate Provost for Graduate Education and Research and may be granted should the request be compelling

enough. Dependent upon the length of request, a plan for participation in the symposium will be developed (either presenting progress to date or waiting until the subsequent year to present). The new timeline can be developed with the Grants and Contracts Office and approved by the Associate Provost for Graduate Education and Research.

What are allowable expenses for the budget?
Allowable costs include summer salary for faculty, release time (i.e. adjunct costs), summer pay for students, minimal travel vital to project success and/or data dissemination, supplies and contractual services (i.e. honoraria for participants, postage/printing expenses, journal publication costs).

Is submission to an external funding source a requirement?
Submission to sponsors for subsequent external funding is required. The purpose of the PRIME fund is to enhance multi-disciplinary scholarly activity at NMU. Funds should be considered seed money for a larger-scaled project; thus all funded projects are expected to seek external funding. Plans for future and/or sustained funding should be as clear and thorough as possible. In the case of projects involving mostly art disciplines whose major deliverable is an art display or literary publication, applications to external entities to either publish the work or display the art are considered equal to a submission for external funding.

Do I have to know what funding call/source I will submit to before I submit to PRIME?
A specific funding source need not be identified by the time a PRIME proposal is submitted; however thorough plans for future and/or sustained funding is a parameter of evaluation so the stronger the plan the better. It is highly encouraged that teams work with the Grants and Contracts Office on this component of the proposal/project.

If I have questions, comments, or concerns about this program, to whom do I send them?
Contact Erica Lynn Franich, director of the Grants and Contracts Office, at efranich@nmu.edu or extension 2456.