

To: Faculty Researchers  
From: Mujdat Cetin – Center Director  
Subject: Collaborative Research (CIR Request for Proposals (RFP))  
Deadline: May 15, 2026

**Research proposals requested:** The University of Rochester Center of Excellence in Data Science and AI (“Center”) is a NYSTAR (Empire State Development Division of Science, Technology and Innovation) designated Center of Excellence (CoE) funded by New York (NY) State. The Center’s goal is to stimulate economic growth in NY State by promoting technology transfer from our universities to companies operating in NY. Accordingly, proposed projects must involve a NY industry partner that is actively engaged with the project, providing assessment of economic impact of the project, and possibly financially co-sponsoring the research (although this is not a requirement). The deadline for submission of proposals is **May 15, 2026**.

Who may apply: The Center’s Collaborative Research Funding Program is open to Principal Investigators (PIs) from the University of Rochester and other universities in New York. Persons eligible to be PIs should be holding full time faculty positions or full-time positions enjoying similar responsibilities, rights, and privileges. Note that only University PIs are eligible for funding. The Center does not award funds to companies.

**Types of projects considered:** Center support spans a broad range of data science related research areas and technologies including but not limited to: artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, data mining, and statistical and computational methods. Applications and domains of interest include, but are not limited to: health analytics and digital health; imaging and image understanding; optics; computer/human vision; life sciences and biomedicine; human-data-system interfaces (including human-computer interaction, augmented and virtual reality, robotics); complex systems and network data science; economics and business data analytics; AI-augmented learning and work; security and defense. All proposals are required to have an industry partner that will document the economic benefits associated with the CoE project.

**Award specifics:** The maximum budget allowed in this solicitation is \$70,000 per project. Successful projects can receive further funding for extensions of the original work in future years. This requires the submission of a new proposal in future funding cycles. Principal Investigators of funded projects will have priority access to a dedicated BlueHive computing partition featuring new high-performance nodes equipped with NVIDIA Hopper H100 GPUs. This partition is reserved exclusively for CoE PIs and their project teams to work on research related to their CoE-funded projects. PIs should consider this resource in their work and budget planning.



Equipment purchased is considered the property of the Center. F&A on Center awarded funds is restricted to 15% on payroll expenses only. New York State encourages sourcing supplies and services from certified Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) or veteran-owned businesses within the state. Travel is limited to activities directly related to the funded research.

Travel is allowed with specific stipulations. All travel reimbursement requires detailed documentation. Travel outside New York State must receive prior approval from NYSTAR. To submit for approval the following information is required:

- Name of the traveler and their role in the CoE project
- Purpose of travel
- Destination
- Travel dates
- Estimated expense breakdown (e.g., air travel, land travel, hotel, conference cost, number of nights)
- Relevance of the travel to the goals of the CoE project

Additionally, to ensure alignment with the goals of the Centers of Excellence (CoE), we request the following details:

- What percentage of time does the traveler work with/for the centers?
- At the conference, will the traveler represent the companies or the CoE?
- Are there any potential impacts for the centers from attending (e.g., new business partnerships)?
- How many New York State companies are expected to attend the conference?
- Conference agenda

Selection of proposals for awards: Proposals will be reviewed by anonymous reviewers. Award decisions will be made based on the recommendations of the reviewers and the availability of funds. The criteria for evaluation will be:

- a. Scientific and technical merit (50%)
- b. Potential economic impact on the state of New York(50%)
- c. Demonstrated technical accomplishments and economic impact (for continuing projects)
- d. Consistency with the technical scope and interests of the Center

Scientific and technical merit: The scientific and technical quality of the proposed fundamental or applied research or development activities is key. The proposal should clearly and succinctly state the problem, objectives, technical contributions, methodology, work plan and deliverables of the project.

Economic impact: Ranking will be strongly dependent on the potential of the proposed project to generate economic impact in one or more categories including new or retained jobs, increased revenues, cost savings, external fund acquisition, and capital investments.



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& Artificial Intelligence



Note that economic impact is equal in weight to scientific and technical merit. PIs are strongly encouraged to work closely with industrial partners on the Economic Impact portion of their proposals to provide realistic quantitative estimates of the expected impact. Industry partners will be asked to report on the economic impact resulting from the project annually for five years. If there appears to be a continuing impact, the Center will request ongoing reports. The letter of support from the industry partner should indicate their willingness to submit an annual economic impact report.

Proposal submission: All proposals must be submitted by email as attachments using the forms on the CoE web site: <https://www.rochester.edu/coe/research/>. Please note: Documentation of company commitment must accompany the proposal. In particular, the company partner should provide a letter of collaboration indicating their willingness to be involved and provide economic impact reporting. Proposals must be sent to Margaret Urzetta ([margaret.urzetta@rochester.edu](mailto:margaret.urzetta@rochester.edu)) by **May 15, 2026**.

Questions: Questions about any aspect of the Center's Collaborative Research Funding Program may be addressed to Center Director, Mujdat Cetin, at [mujdat.cetin@rochester.edu](mailto:mujdat.cetin@rochester.edu).