REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS #3

TCU BUILDING BRIDGES GRANT PROGRAM

A Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) grant-funding opportunity Developed in partnership with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

PROJECT TITLE: TCU Building Bridges Grant Program

PROPOSAL DUE DATE: 11:59 PM Eastern Time (ET) July 14, 2025

FUNDING AMOUNT: Multiple awards of up to $68,600 are available

ELIGIBILITY: Funds are available to faculty led teams from all accredited Tribal Colleges & Universities. Multiple proposals from the same institution are permitted, however, each proposal shall have a unique PI and be a separate, stand-alone, and complete document to enable NASA to properly evaluate it.

ESTIMATED CONTRACT PERIOD: October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2026 or up to 2 years from date of award, depending on the scope of the project. Projects designed for shorter periods of time will receive equal consideration.

SUBMIT PROPOSALS TO: Buildingbridges@aihec.org

All communications concerning this RFP must be directed only to the RFP Program Director via email (Kathy DePalma at kdepalma@aihec.org). Any other communication will be considered unofficial and non-binding. Consultants are to rely on written statements issued by the RFP Coordinator. This RFP is available at the AIHEC website. All RFP amendments and/or Consultant questions and AIHEC answers will be posted to these sites as well as shared via the optional Listserv.

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Introduction

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), in partnership with The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), is excited to announce The TCU Building Bridges Grant Program, a Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) grant-funding opportunity that is being made available exclusively to Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). Specifically, grants of up to $68,600 will be awarded to TCUs that prepare and respond to this call for proposals.

It is NASA's goal that the NASA AIHEC Bridges program will enhance the ability of TCUs to provide high quality STEM education programs, participate in collaborative STEM research initiatives, and ensure the inclusion of American Indians and Alaskan Natives in a well-prepared NASA STEM workforce.

NASA & AIHEC's Programmatic Goals

The NASA AIHEC Bridges Program seeks STEM program enrichment projects such as course and curriculum development, research activities, and student engagement with the overall goal of broadening TCU students' participation in STEM. NASA AIHEC Bridges Program funded projects are expected to address at least two of the three program goals:

1. Increase the number of Tribal College students engaging in STEM research and education activities. (Examples: internships, externships, Experiential Learning Opportunities (ELOs), Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REUs))
2. Increase the enrollment of Tribal College students in STEM degree programs and pursuing STEM career pathways.
3. Strengthen the capacity of the Tribal College to deliver STEM courses, degrees and curriculum.

In addition to addressing the stated goals above, each proposal must demonstrate how they will align to at least one of the following NASA Office of STEM Engagement Goals below:

1. Strategic Goal 1.0: Create unique opportunities for a diverse set of students to contribute to NASA's work in exploration and discovery.
2. Strategic Goal 2.0: Build a diverse future STEM workforce by engaging students in authentic learning experiences with NASA's people, content and facilities.
3. Strategic Goal 3.0: Attract diverse groups of students to STEM through learning opportunities that spark interest and provide connections to NASA's mission and work.

Priority areas for support will include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Research experiences for undergraduates (REUs);
- STEM program instrumentation/equipment acquisitions;
- Course and curriculum enhancements (new courses, delivery support technologies)
- Professional development for TCU faculty, undergraduate, and graduate students, including conferences and workshops;
- In person, hybrid or virtual NASA Internships for TCU students which must be funded at the same level of set NASA Intern cost amounts, as shown in the tables below:

Summer Intern Costs	Stipend
Undergraduate Full-time	**$8,200**
Graduate Full-time	**$9,900**

Fall/Spring Intern Costs	Stipend
Undergraduate Full-time	**$13,120**
Graduate Full-time	**$15,840**
Undergraduate Part-time	**$6,560**
Graduate Part-time	**$7,920**

In person, hybrid, or virtual
NASA internships for TCU students.
Intern stipends must not be below the figures in these tables. These are the official NASA intern costs set by the agency.
Please Note: proposing institutions can budget for additional costs to support interns such as travel and housing stipends

Summer Internships: 10 weeks in duration
Spring/Fall Internships: 16 weeks in duration

- NASA Internship support could also include budget for the following:
  - support for travel to and from NASA center for intern
  - additional housing stipend
  - faculty mentor stipend
- Additional opportunities to increase TCU students' STEM identity, primarily at the undergraduate level, including K-12 participation in STEM enrichment activities, conferences, workshops and competitions.

If awarded, grantees will also receive ongoing technical assistance from both AIHEC as well as NASA to support program success.

Application Cycle & Timeline

To guide the application process, and to understand the campus experiences of TCU staff and further professional learning for applicants, four webinars and workshops will be held to provide guidance, highlight best practices, offer resources, outline expectations, and address questions. TCU faculty and staff who are interested but are not ready to submit a project are encouraged to attend workshops and learn more about the program.

Milestones	2025 - 2026 Award											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
RFP/Call for Proposals w/Rubric					19							
Information Session + Q & A					29							
Webinar 1 - Community of Practice						4						
Webinar 2 - Building a Competitive Proposal						11						
Webinar 3 - Budget Development						25						
Webinar 4 - Office Hours							9					
Proposals Due							14					
Selection								1				
Ongoing TA for Awardees												
Award Period Begins										1		

Proposal Preparation & Submission

The proposal narrative should be organized in a way that provides a detailed description of the proposed project. Narrative should be no more than 10 pages in length, and should contain the following elements:

Section 1: Project Title and abstract (1 page) – Please include a title for your project and a short summary abstract- up to 250 words- describing your project in brief. In your project summary, please include:

- Institution – The TCU(s) that will be carrying out the project
- Principal Investigator(s) – The name and title of the faculty/staff member(s) leading the project.
- Co Principal Investigator(s) - The name and title of the faculty/staff member(s) co-leading the project. (optional)
- Collaborators and Partner Institution(s) - The names and titles of individual collaborators or partners and/or the names of collaborating/partnering institutions and organizations. (optional)
- Project Duration – The estimated duration of your project.

TCU faculty who completed a pre-application can use the same abstract as the one written for the pre-application.

Section 2: Engaging Community & Building Capacity (1 – 3 pages)

- Learning: outcomes for community or TCU students – Discuss how this project will impact the lead institution and community. For example, if students are working on the project, what knowledge or skills will they obtain? How many students will the project support and impact? Will they receive course credit? How will this project support their successful entry into a STEM career in the future?
- Alignment: contribution to larger TCU or department mission and goals
    - Clearly demonstrate how this project will address two of the three stated NASA AIHEC Bridges programmatic goals.
    - Clearly demonstrated how this project advances existing goals for STEM within a department, division, team, office within the lead institution.
    - The proposals should also demonstrate alignment to at least one of the stated NASA Office of STEM Engagement Strategic Goals.

- Project staffing and biographical sketch – Please provide a minimum of one paragraph biography of each project staff member, including the names, anticipated project roles, and professional titles (such as faculty member, student, coordinator, analyst, etc.). Include any information related to each project member's capacity to perform their role, including relevant experience, certifications, or coursework. The lead PI will need to also submit a current and robust Curriculum Vitae (CV).

Section 3: Creating the Story (maximum of 3 pages)

- Landscape Discussion/Statement of Purpose – Discuss the current state of the field in relationship to your area of interest, including what needs may exist in the field or areas that are underexplored. Describe the overarching goals of the project, specifically addressing the question: What learning, community, institutional or research gaps in the STEM field does this project seek to fill?
- Project Scope – Provide a detailed summary of the project plan, including key milestones, research questions and methods as applicable, outputs and deliverables. If this project is meant to continue larger ongoing or in-progress work, please describe efforts that have been completed to date, and what aspects of the work this project hopes to continue.

Section 4: Building the Scaffolding

- Budget narrative – Write a budget justification narrative that clearly describes anticipated expenditures and how they are necessary for the project. For each budget category, provide appropriate details taking care to be as specific as possible. Be sure to address any vague items such as 'supplies'. This will precede the budget table.
- Budget table - Applicants should provide a concise list of anticipated expenditures. NASA Bridges funds may be used for the support of the following:
    - TCU students, faculty, and staff - proposal budgets should clearly indicate key personnel roles and responsibilities
    - Subject matter expert consultants
    - Research-related equipment, travel, and materials
    - Professional development program registrations and associated travel costs
    - The budget must clearly include information documenting approved overhead/general and administrative (G&A) rate.
    - NASA and AIHEC will provide a sample budget template. Applicants will not lose points for using their own template, as long as it is clear and concise.

  In the table, be sure to include the item, a brief description if necessary, and the anticipated total cost of the item or service. For staff and personnel time, include both the total amount as well as a per diem or hourly rate.

Budget Guidelines and Funding Restrictions

- Funding for the Principal Investigator's (PI) salary must not exceed 15% of the proposer's total budget.
- A maximum of 20 percent of the total budget may be used for infrastructure (equipment and laboratory facilities).
- A maximum of 15 percent of the total budget may be used for acquiring direct NASA services related to the conduct of research (i.e., cost for use of NASA unique facilities, etc.).
- A maximum of five (5) percent of the total budget may be distributed to NASA Centers that are partnering with institutions.
    - These funds may not be used for NASA civil servant salaries or travel.
- The lead TCU shall retain and utilize of 100 percent of the total budget. No subawards will be allowable under these grants.

Section 5: Planning, Implementing & Celebrating (maximum of 3 pages)

- Implementation timeline – Provide a detailed timeline for the project, including anticipated key dates for milestones, deliverables, and other important project tasks. The timeline can be written or represented visually.
- Storytelling – Discuss how the project will deliver any final products such as reports, media or presentations, as well as how such deliverables may be shared with other TCUs, the broader research community, or general public. If no tangible products are being developed, video or audio logs and diaries are acceptable. In addition, be sure to include clear metrics of success for the project along with a simple evaluation plan. It is important to be able to demonstrate evidence of success in reaching stated goals.

Proposal Scoring & Selection Process

Proposals will be evaluated by a merit review panel composed of the proposers' professional peers (government and non-government), including STEM education and evaluation experts, who have been screened in advance for any conflicts of interest. An award decision will be made 6 weeks after application deadline. Proposals must be submitted by July 14, 2025 to be considered for this cycle of awards.

Selection criteria include:

- Ability to clearly address two of the three NASA AIHEC Bridges Programmatic Goals and alignment to one NASA Office of STEM Engagement goal;
- Degree to which the project is part of the college's overall STEM plan or encourages the development of such plan;
- Demonstrates an achievable timeline for project activities over the period of performance, including measurable metrics of success;
- Feasibility of the project: appropriateness of projects or technologies proposed;
- Clearly identifies all members of the partnership and how each member will contribute towards the research efforts of the proposed activity;
- Student engagement and an overall goal to broaden participation in STEM;
- Align with budget guidelines and requirements;
- Describe how the proposed budget is allocable, allowable, and reasonable.

A sample rubric will be shared with prospective Applicants ahead of the deadline.