



The National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing Biopharmaceuticals

NIIMBL eXperience Program Expansion Request for Applications WF RFA 2026.01

RFA Release: April 30, 2026

Applications Due: July 20, 2026

Target Decision Date: August 1, 2026



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1. Executive Summary

The mission of the National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing Biopharmaceuticals (NIIMBL) is to accelerate biopharmaceutical manufacturing innovation, support the development of standards that enable more efficient and rapid manufacturing capabilities, educate and train a world-leading biopharmaceutical manufacturing workforce to support growth of the domestic industrial base. Launched in 2019, the NIIMBL eXperience program is an all-expenses paid biopharmaceutical manufacturing immersion program for first- and second-year college students actively enrolled in a degree program. This program is open to all U.S. citizens, first- or second-year college students, regardless of race, gender, or ethnicity. NIIMBL encourages proposals and intends to fund up to one proposal in every region of the United States (e.g., Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, Midwest, and West).

For questions, please contact projectcalls@niimbl.org.

New Submission Hub: NIIMBL has launched a new Submission Hub. Applicants are required to register before submitting an application; to do so, **please contact projectcalls@niimbl.org to request user access**. We recommend registering several days or weeks in advance of the submission deadline to avoid delays. Visit the new NIIMBL Submission Hub: <http://gateway.niimbl.org/>

All templates and guides can be found at: <https://www.niimbl.org/workforce/niimbl-experience-rfa/>

Funding opportunity: This Request for Applications (RFA) is a rapid response proposal call. The purpose is to conduct the NIIMBL eXperience program in different areas of the country. We intend to do this by funding NIIMBL academic or non-profit Member organizations to serve as regional lead organizations that will plan, recruit students, and run a NIIMBL eXperience program in their region. Applicants to this RFA will apply to serve as a regional lead organization by proposing a program that provides exposure to the biopharmaceutical manufacturing industry through hands-on training, mentoring, tours, and engagement with “hosts” from professional associations, industry, and academic partners. NIIMBL does not intend to be prescriptive regarding the exact program structure to allow for creativity and flexibility in design but identified lead organizations must work directly with NIIMBL to achieve all program requirements and milestones as described in Section 2. Funding of teams who have run prior NIIMBL eXperience programs will be considered.

Application submissions must include a budget and budget justification and a maximum-three-page proposal that describes the following:

1. The proposed regional partnership
2. An outreach and student recruitment plan
3. A tentative program design
4. Available support infrastructure for logistics
5. How the proposed program aligns with organizational and regional goals

Other requirements that will be required are listed below in this announcement. Proposals must be submitted via the [Proposal Submission Hub](#). Applications must be received no later than Monday, July 20, 2026, at 5pm EDT. Submissions received after the deadline, or otherwise non-compliant with the submission requirements, will not be considered. The Proposal Phase concludes with a decision to fund or not fund the proposal by NIIMBL. Applicants will be notified of the funding decision. A timeline for the project call is provided below.



Table 1. Timeline

EVENT	DATE
RFA Release Date	April 30, 2026
Applications Due	July 20, 2026
Anticipated Award Decision & Notification to Teams	August 1, 2026
Project Start Date	October 1, 2026

Total Amount to be Awarded: NIIMBL anticipates making a maximum of 5 awards, each with a maximum NIIMBL budget not to exceed \$100,000. NIIMBL encourages proposals and intends to fund up to one proposal in every region of the United States (e.g., Northeast, MidAtlantic, Southeast, Midwest, and West). Teaming and coordination are strongly encouraged. See Sections 3 and 5 for additional details on allowable and unallowable costs, as well as required cost-share considerations.

2. Program Expectations

Each selected lead organization will design and implement a one-week eXperience program in its region that is aligned with Section 2a Program Design Requirements and Section 2b. Implementation Timeline, found below. The proposal budget and budget justification should account for all expenses incurred by the regional lead organization in fulfilling program requirements. Second tier subcontracts will not be authorized, but contributions from partner organizations can be used as cost share.

a. Program Design Requirements

Proposed regional programs should meet the following requirements:

- **Program Elements:** All program elements must have a clear educational / professional development purpose. In keeping with previous NIIMBL eXperience programs, regional programs must incorporate the following elements:
 - **Industry Hosts:** Approximately 2-5 industry partner organizations to “host” students in a variety of activities including tours, networking sessions, career advice, career journey panels, and job opportunities/pathways into the industry.
 - **Hands-on Training:** At least one hands-on educational session focused on biopharmaceutical manufacturing.
 - **Professional Association Engagement:** Involvement of a professional association to deliver a personal branding workshop as well as mentoring. NIIMBL strongly encourages the involvement of at least one professional association (e.g., NSBE, SHPE, SACNAS, ISPE, PDA).
 - **Social Media Engagement:** Opportunities for the regional lead organization, students, hosts, and partner organizations to leverage social media tools to broaden the reach and impact of the program.
- **Student Recruitment / Regional College Engagement:** While students will be welcome to apply to any NIIMBL eXperience program regardless of proximity, NIIMBL strongly encourages regional lead organizations to form recruiting relationships with area colleges and universities with a focus on first- and second-year students. While NIIMBL will help market the program nationally, recruiting local students will 1) reduce travel costs and administrative burden to the regional lead

organization as well as 2) provide direct benefit to the local community.

- **Cohort Size:** The program design will accommodate a cohort size of 8-15 students.
- **Student Costs:** The program will be free for participating students. All logistics expenses (housing, travel, food, transportation, materials) will be arranged for and paid by the regional lead organization. Regional lead organizations will arrange and coordinate transportation for all participating students.
- **Student Stipend:** Participating students will receive a \$1,000 stipend from the regional lead organization.
- **Program Timing:** The program will occur no later than June 2027 to ensure students can still take advantage of other summer internship opportunities.

b. Program Implementation Timeline

Regional lead organizations will commit to the following planning and implementation timeline. Milestones and go/no-go decisions corresponding to each of the following elements should be built into a final workplan that is agreed upon during project kick-off.

- **Orientation, Workplan Development, & Best Practice Sharing (Oct 2026):** If selected for funding, regional lead organizations will meet with NIIMBL staff to kick off the project. The regional lead organization will be expected to provide an overview of the proposed regional program. NIIMBL will provide information on eXperience program requirements, share implementation best practices, and provide outreach/branding materials and guidelines. In addition, NIIMBL and the regional lead organization will set and agree upon key milestones, implementation dates, and a project meeting cadence. A formal work plan with milestones, timelines, responsibilities, and any required budget or cost share will be agreed upon. Awarded project teams will be expected to complete contracting within 30 days after formal notification of the award. NIIMBL reserves the right to rescind offers of funding to awarded project teams that have not completed contracting within that time frame.
- **Student Outreach and Recruitment (Oct 2026 - February 2027):** Following initial partnership orientation and best practice sharing, as well as approval of the workplan with NIIMBL, the regional lead organization will conduct extensive outreach and form relationships and partnerships with local schools to solicit student applications in its region. NIIMBL will 1) provide some guidelines and assets for marketing, 2) conduct national-level marketing, 3) maintain a NIIMBL eXperience web site that links to regional programs, and 4) manage the online application process.
- **Student Application Review and Selection (March 2027):** NIIMBL will manage the application review process leveraging existing infrastructure. After the application deadline, NIIMBL will evaluate applicants and discuss proposed cohorts with regional lead organizations. NIIMBL will make a final selection of students. Once a final cohort has been selected, NIIMBL will notify students and



facilitate connection to the regional lead organization regarding their specific program.

- **Program Development (October 2026 - May 2027):** The regional lead organization will successfully develop their proposed eXperience program in partnership with industry hosts, professional associations, and other regional partners. NIIMBL will provide guidance and support by sharing best practices. In addition, NIIMBL will facilitate relationships with NIIMBL large industry member “hosts” when possible.
- **Program Preparation & Logistics (March - May 2027):** Upon final student cohort selection, NIIMBL will provide cohort contact information to the regional lead organization. At that point, the regional lead organization will successfully manage all logistics associated with implementing the proposed program. This includes, but is not limited to 1) cohort communication, 2) program session logistics with all partners and hosts, 3) student travel to program as necessary (e.g., airfare, bus, train), regional transportation to/from host sites and activities, 4) meals, 5) housing, 6) staff/chaperones, and 7) distribution of student stipends. NIIMBL will provide guidance and share best practices as necessary or requested.
- **Program Evaluation (June 2027):** Upon completion of the regional eXperience program, NIIMBL and the regional lead organization will evaluate program success by administering a survey to all regional participants. Lead organizations will distribute participant surveys designed by NIIMBL. Lead organizations will also be required to complete an evaluation survey.

3. Eligibility Information

Eligibility: Applications for regional lead organizations will only be accepted from NIIMBL member academic or non-profit organizations in good standing. Applications should identify anticipated partner organizations (e.g., academic institutions supplying students, professional associations, host companies). We recognize not all partners may be identified at the time of application submission. NIIMBL membership is not required, but will be viewed favorably, for partner organizations hosting or providing a required element of the program.

Cost Share: Higher cost share ratios (i.e., ratio = \$\$ of cost share: \$\$ requested from NIIMBL) will be reviewed favorably. The documentation of cash or in-kind cost share commitment should be included in the budget that is submitted as part of the application. Cost sharing must be consistent with NIIMBL Bylaws and Membership Agreements. Project teams should be aware that the institutional cost share requirements for NIIMBL member organizations vary based on institution type (e.g., industry, academic/non-profit organization) and tier level. Each project team member must individually meet their requirements per their Membership Agreement.

4. Application Instructions

Proposals must be submitted via the [Proposal Submission Hub](#). Applications must be received no later than Monday, July 20, 2026, at 5pm EDT. Submissions received after the deadline, or otherwise non-compliant with the submission requirements, will not be considered.

Please see the complete list of required application elements listed below in this announcement (**Section**



5). The Proposal Phase concludes with a decision to fund or not fund the proposal by NIIMBL. Applicants will be notified of the funding decision.

Proposers must mark their application submission as “NIIMBL Confidential,” in accordance with the NIIMBL Bylaws.

Note: NIIMBL has launched a new Submission Hub. To access it, a one-time registration is required. Please contact projectcalls@niimbl.org to request access. Please allow sufficient time to complete the registration process. We recommend registering at least several days or weeks before the application deadline to ensure access. Visit the new NIIMBL Submission Hub: <http://gateway.niimbl.org/>.

5. Application Elements

The full proposal must address and include the following:

a. Regional Program Description Narrative

The regional program description narrative *must not exceed three pages*. Your regional program narrative must describe your proposed program in alignment with the program expectations outlined in Section 2. In particular, describe:

- The **proposed program design** aligned with Section 2. This should include key partners, hands-on training component, professional society involvement, and anticipated industry “hosts.” All activities should have a clear educational / professional development purpose. There is no requirement to have all partners identified as part of the application. However, if partners have been identified, they should be noted as well as any prospective members that the applicant is seeking partnership with.
- An **outreach and recruitment plan** for recruiting local students (include targeted schools as well as established/existing relationships that can be leveraged). While students will be welcome to apply to any NIIMBL eXperience program regardless of proximity, NIIMBL strongly encourages regional lead organizations to form recruiting relationships with area colleges and universities with a focus on reaching students in the local community. While NIIMBL will help market the program nationally, recruiting local students will 1) reduce travel costs and administrative burden to the regional lead organization as well as 2) provide direct benefit to the local community.
- **Program logistics infrastructure** including available resources and envisioned support to manage program logistics such as food, housing, student travel to program including airfare, train, or bus fare if necessary, local transportation during program, stipend distribution, etc.
- How the proposed program will integrate with existing regional goals and activities such as internship programs, summer camps, undergraduate/graduate program recruitment, or other diversity initiatives.

b. Required Proposal Documents

Budget / Budget Justification: Provide a [Project Budget Template](#) (.xlsx) and a [Total Project](#)



[Cost Justification](#) (.docx) for the regional lead organization, and any partner organization committing cost share, cash or in-kind to the proposed project.

- Allowable expenses include, but are not limited to, staff time for program development and implementation, participant support costs, (per 2 CFR 200.75) (including but not limited to transportation costs, meals, housing, and stipends), and other allowable program expenses. All activities should have a clear educational / professional development purpose. Lead organizations are encouraged to include travel for one representative, to attend the NIIMBL National Meeting, which occurs in Washington, DC.
- All costs and cost share must be in line with federal cost account standards, 2 CFR 200.
- The Project Cost Justification (Budget Narrative) is a companion to the budget (spreadsheet) and should include a description of each line item (expense and cost share) documented in the budget and show the calculations used to derive the costs. Each item must correspond to specific activities described in the proposal narrative. Make sure the cumulative totals for each category correlate with the budget tables.
- The use of NIIMBL templates is required. They are available for download here - [Project Budget template](#) and [Total Project Cost Justification template](#). Please also see the [NIIMBL Guide to Cost Share](#).

Biosketches: Provide a biosketch for the project lead at the regional lead organization. While no format is prescribed, biosketches should include, at a minimum, training and background, employment history, and details relevant to the proposed application.

Subrecipient Commitment Form: The proposing organization must submit either a Subrecipient Commitment Form or a Letter of Intent. If your organization is a federal agency or is a participant in the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) Clearinghouse, your organization should submit a Letter of Intent.

All other organizations requesting NIIMBL funding and committing cost share are required to complete and submit the Subrecipient Commitment Form.

Large Industry partners who are only providing a leveraged cost share commitment, volunteer participating organizations essential to complete the project or from an end user of the developed technology, and state cost share commitments should complete a Letter of Commitment.

Letters of Support: While no format is prescribed, letters of support from any identified partner organizations (e.g., professional society chapter, regional colleges and universities, industry hosts, or hands-on training provider) should include acknowledgement of willingness to participate in NIIMBL eXperience and main contact person (including email and phone).



6. Application Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Region/Location
- Proposed regional partnership model and the ability of regional partners to meet NIIMBL's program goals and program requirements as document in Section 2
- Breadth and number of identified program partners
- Evidence of previous success with student outreach, summer camps, and related experiences
- Availability of staff resources to support program administration and logistics
- Budget – requested funding and cost share (a high-cost share ration will be viewed favorably)

7. Award/Post-Award Process

If project is selected for award:

- NIIMBL will convene a meeting with the regional lead organization to discuss the contracting process and any additional documentation and deadlines. Because of the need to quickly begin program design and student recruitment, NIIMBL will process contract documentation immediately after notification of award is disseminated, with the intent to fully execute within 30 days. Funded regional teams will be required to submit a final report within 30 days from completion of the program.