FY22 Accelerated Collaborative Research Nucleus (ACORN) Program Call

Purpose: The purpose of this program is to increase collaboration between recent university faculty hires and early career Sandia National Laboratories (Sandia) staff in Sandia mission-relevant research areas. A secondary goal of this program is to enhance university recruiting of top faculty, especially those that are US citizens.

Projects: ACORN will provide funding for university faculty to collaborate with a Sandia Principal Investigator (PI) as part of a Sandia Laboratory Directed Research and Development Program (LDRD) project. The ACORN collaboration will be supplemental to and support a larger Sandia (core) LDRD project which has been approved for funding.

Funding: Funding will be allocated up to $100K per year per project, however funding for FY22 is only $81K. It is expected that the university will receive 80-90% of the funds, with the remaining funds held at Sandia to support the Sandia PI's engagement efforts. The faculty member and the Sandia PI should determine the actual amount of funding needed, and budgets will be scrutinized for reasonableness. Funds must be spent in the fiscal year in which they are awarded. Funds are expected to be available by October following the project selection, and all costing invoices must be submitted to Sandia by the beginning of the following September. Funds not spent or invoiced outside of this time frame will not be paid by Sandia – they will not carry over to the following year.

Duration: Project duration and funding allocation will be from 2 to 3 years. This is driven by the approval cycle of the Sandia LDRD program, which will fund the projects. However, funding could be terminated sooner if the core LDRD is not continued or if issues arise during the collaboration.

Availability: One new ACORN project may be available at each school each year and no more than three concurrent ACORN projects will be available at each school at any time. The number of active projects may be limited by the choice of the Sandia NM Partnerships Manager and Campus Executive. If no suitable proposals are received, Sandia may elect not to fund a new ACORN project in any year.

Limitations: University faculty must have been affiliated with the university for less than 5 years at the start of the project. The faculty member must be a US citizen or a permanent resident of the US who is on track to acquire US citizenship. All students supported by the project must be US citizens. Project funds can only cover labor and laboratory supplies for the proposed R&D – not computers or equipment.

Desired: It is desired for the faculty member to spend at least the first summer working on-site with the Sandia PI. Students working on the project are encouraged to work summer(s) at Sandia as well. Project funding should cover the costs required for the faculty and student(s) to work at Sandia as well as time worked at the university – they will not receive further payment for the summer work at Sandia.

Process:

August	The Sandia NM Partnerships Manager will prepare a list of funded LDRDs for the new fiscal year, with short descriptions of each. The list will be prioritized based on alignment with agreed Sandia/university research directions.
September	The Sandia NM Partnerships Manager will send out the list of new projects to university leadership to distribute to new faculty members (< 5 years at university). Sandia PI contact information will be provided, and eligible faculty members should connect with relevant PIs to identify potential collaborations. The faculty member and PI should work closely to develop a collaborative research proposal. A template for the proposals will be provided.
September	After agreeing on the proposed work, the Sandia PI will complete the proposal and submit it to the Sandia NM Partnerships Manager. A copy of the faculty member's CV should also be submitted with the proposal. Proposal selection will be made by the NM Partnerships Manager and Campus Executive. After selection, the Sandia PI and faculty member will be notified, and the PI will submit a contract for the work.
October	Funds are available to the faculty member(s) and students for spending after contract approval.
May	Project reviews of work completed and in progress will be conducted for all funded projects.

For questions, or further information, please contact Diane Peebles, NM Partnerships Manager – depeebl@sandia.gov, 505-845-8087.

Approved for Unlimited Release, SAND2019-0797O.

Supported by the Laboratory Directed Research and Development program at Sandia National Laboratories, a multimission laboratory managed and operated by National Technology and Engineering Solutions of Sandia, LLC., a wholly owned subsidiary of Honeywell International, Inc., for the U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration under contract DE-NA-0003525.