



Forethought: The RTI \$5M+ Research Collaboration Challenge

Overview

For over 60 years, North Carolina's Research Triangle region has been a model research ecosystem on a global scale. The Research Triangle stands apart from other similar efforts for its successful collaboration among universities, businesses, and government organizations in innovation-led economic development and talent attraction and for the significant transformation that the region experienced as a result. Today, the region is home to multiple institutions of national and international renown and has a reputation for education, discovery, and innovation by virtue of the forethought and investments made decades ago. To build on this legacy of positive change through collaboration, RTI International seeks to catalyze investments to address the collective unprecedented issues we face that demand regional collaboration and intentional investment to ensure future success.

To build on a foundation of recent investments in successful university collaborations and help stimulate transformational change for the next 60 years, RTI's Board of Governors—under the auspices of the RTI University Research Collaboration Committee (URCC)—welcomes Expressions of Interest (EOI) in *Forethought: The RTI \$5M+ Research Collaboration Challenge*. We seek innovative and compelling research projects that meld scientific rigor, technical proficiency, and innovative methods to help solve the world's most critical problems. This future-focused competition is intended to draw on and, eventually, contribute to the distinctive intellectual and institutional resources and culture of the Research Triangle region.

Under the leadership of Dr. Christy Shaffer and Dr. Peter Lange, the URCC is committed to stimulating and supporting visionary, impactful research collaboration among RTI and area universities. To accomplish this, RTI and the URCC have developed *Forethought: The RTI \$5M+ Research Collaboration Challenge*. Through this challenge, we will invest in our collective future by expanding existing partnerships and forging new ones that leverage existing resources and optimize knowledge-based growth. RTI and our partners will commit to supporting at least one team that presents a compelling project for regional collaboration and transformational innovation. We seek bold, visionary project proposals that address critical societal issues.

RTI's History

Founded in 1958—with support from North Carolina government, education, and business leaders—RTI maintains close ties with Duke University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, North Carolina Central University, North Carolina State University, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and other institutions.

Funding

RTI is committing \$5 million in initial funding. Partners are committed to investing additional funds to help build and scale the selected program area(s).

Key Dates

- Due date for EOI: Thursday, April 8, 2021
- Due date for invited full proposals: TBD
- Final oral presentations: TBD
- Funding begins: TBD

Application Process

To help identify bold ideas that have the potential to meaningfully impact critical societal issues, this challenge is structured as a three-step application process that includes (1) an EOI intended to crowd-source innovative ideas, (2) selection of applicants invited to submit full proposals, and (3) a final oral presentation round. This challenge also draws on our region's intellectual and material resources.

Applicants can fully construct their regional teams in Step 1, if they already have a multi-institutional collaborative group. Alternatively, for sufficiently compelling ideas selected to advance to Step 2, members of the URCC and designees listed in the Inquiries section will draw directly from their institutional knowledge to help researchers at RTI and universities network with each other.

Please visit the application portal (<https://forethought.rti.org>) for more information about the application process.

1. Expression of Interest (EOI)

Upload an EOI that is no more than two pages for electronic submission to the application portal (<https://forethought.rti.org>) on or before Thursday, April 8, 2021.

- Nonstudent researchers affiliated with any of the following institutions are eligible to be principal investigators (PIs): RTI, Duke University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, North Carolina Central University, North Carolina State University, and The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- The EOI should provide a title and description of the proposed bold, visionary project—as well as a

- discussion of the project's potential impact on societal issues and the national science and technology enterprise.
- The EOI should cite evidence that the area PI(s) has/have current and/or prior relevant experience as a researcher and collaborator.
- There is no budget requirement for the EOI.
- Along with the EOI, submit each PI's curriculum vitae as a PDF.

2. Strengthening Ideas, Forming Multi-Institutional Teams, and Building Budgets

Additional details will follow.

3. Final Oral Presentations

Additional details will follow. Invited teams should include **significant representation from RTI and at least three of the following institutions:**

- Duke University
- North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
- North Carolina Central University
- North Carolina State University
- The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Inquiries

Visit the application portal (<https://forethought.rti.org>) for information about key dates and the application process. Specific questions regarding this opportunity may be directed to the following individuals:

RTI:

Dr. Jacqueline M. Olich, Vice President, University Collaborations
jolich@rti.org

Duke University:

Dr. Krishna Udayakumar, Associate Professor, Global Health and Medicine and
Director, Duke Global Health Innovation Center
krishna.udayakumar@duke.edu

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University:

Dr. Sanjiv Sarin, Director, University Collaborations and Corporation Partnerships and
Professor, Industrial and Systems Engineering
sarin@ncat.edu

North Carolina Central University:

Dr. Michael Page, Director, External Affairs
mpage@ncsu.edu



North Carolina State University:
Dr. Mark Schmidt, Associate Vice Chancellor, Partnerships
maschmi2@ncsu.edu

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:
Don Hobart, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research
hobart@email.unc.edu

Additional Information

Why did RTI decide to create this regional challenge call?

RTI and our Board of Governors, including representatives from the universities involved in *Forethought: The RTI \$5M+ Research Collaboration Challenge*, believe that we can create greater innovation and impact by working together. Understandably, each institution looks to build capabilities within. We intend for this challenge to bring together researchers and capabilities across our region to build an impactful program on a scale that could not be done by any one institution alone. A successful team needs to lay out a convincing vision that demonstrates appreciation of regional priorities and what is true multi-institutional collaboration. Proposals with strong interdisciplinary features will be reviewed more favorably.

Who will review the proposals?

The URCC, with additional support from leaders within RTI and the universities, will review proposals. URCC members include the following:

- Dr. Christy Shaffer (Committee Chair), General Partner, Hatteras Venture Partners
- Dr. Peter Lange (Committee Vice Chair), Thomas A. Langford University Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Public Policy and Provost Emeritus, Duke University
- Dr. Warwick Arden, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, North Carolina State University
- Thomas F. Darden, President and Chief Executive Officer, Cherokee Investment Partners
- Dr. Sally Kornbluth, Provost, Duke University
- Dr. Terry Magnuson, Vice Chancellor for Research, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Dr. Harold L. Martin Sr., Chancellor, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
- Peter M. Scott III (Board Chair), Former CFO, Progress Energy; Former President and CEO, Progress Energy Services Company

How many awards will be made?

Our intent is to quickly and significantly build and scale the program area selected. This will require the mobilization of not only financial resources, but also other resources—which may include infrastructure support and other services. We anticipate at least one team emerging from this challenge.

What criteria will the selection committee use to choose the winning team(s)?

We will evaluate teams according to the following criteria:



- 1) Does the concept clearly articulate a major societal issue and proposed solution?
- 2) Does the proposal demonstrate (1) the engagement of teams across institutions and (2) the capabilities and value that the various organizations bring to the consortium? Does the proposal explain in sufficient detail how the teams will work together synergistically to accomplish the proposed objectives?
- 3) Does the proposed solution involve development of new and innovative approaches—including technological solutions, as well as humanistic issues and approaches that overcome obstacles for technological adoption?
- 4) What is the potential for societal impact?