Pilot Project Program – SPECIAL CALL

Submission & Budget Guidelines

The Massey Cancer Center (MCC) offers a special round of funding for pilot projects to encourage new inter-programmatic research collaborations between those conducting research in the area of Cancer Prevention & Control (CPC) and those conducting research in another area supported by the Massey research program. The purpose of these pilot project grants is to stimulate NEW research initiatives that will take on a life of their own after the funding provided by the Cancer Center is gone. The intent is to support critical research that will lay the groundwork needed for grant applications to external peer reviewed funding organizations.

Investigator Eligibility

- The project must involve two or more independent investigators, each of whom substantively contribute to the research. At least one investigator must have membership in the CPC Program and one investigator with membership in one of the other MCC Programs (i.e., Cancer Cell Signaling (CCS), Cancer Molecular Genetics (CMG), Developmental Therapeutics (DT), or Radiation Biology & Oncology (RBO)).
- An investigator can submit only one project as PI (or Co-PI) during a funding cycle. Although collaborative roles are acceptable on additional projects, applicants should be aware that unless there is fundamentally different science on the additional projects for which support is sought, submission of such additional projects may detract from review of their primary request.

Research Project Criteria

The purpose of this call for concepts is to foster new inter-programmatic research collaborations between those conducting research in the area of CPC and those conducting research in another area supported by a Massey Program (i.e., CCS, CMG, DT, or RBO).

Ranking will be by peer review, based on novelty and scientific merit. A major criterion will be the perceived probability that the pilot project will lead to the submission of a fundable research grant application to NIH or similar major source of grant funds. An ideal pilot project will be designed to conduct preliminary studies needed before submitting a full grant application to a nationally peer reviewed sponsor. It is not the purpose of this program to serve as the sole source of funding for small projects, but rather to allow the gathering of preliminary data needed for the investigators to prepare a successful grant application for a larger study. Other factors to be considered in the review will be the areas of expertise of the collaborating investigators, synergism between/among the collaborating investigators, and value of the project to the cancer research priorities of the MCC.

Reviewers are instructed to look for:

- INNOVATION, first and foremost
- two or more investigators on a project, each of whom substantively contributes to the research
- interactive projects that bridge disciplines or expertise
- projects that ARE going to result in grant applications
- projects that are likely to be funded when submitted in grant application form after (and
because of the utilization of the pilot project funds

- projects that are clearly cancer research, although we ask you to view this concept with an inclusive, rather than exclusive, eye. By virtue of the nature of some of the funding currently available, projects that involve translational research, particularly those with emphasis on breast cancer, lung cancer, ovarian cancer, head and neck cancer, or prostate cancer, will receive special consideration. However, all aspects of cancer research will be considered, and the Cancer Center continues to be committed to all areas of modern cancer research.

Trends in prior review success

This funding is meant to support pursuit of specific experiments needed as preliminary data for extramural funding applications to NIH or similar peer review bodies. Reviewers are NOT expecting to find complete grant applications in these pilot applications, and past experience has shown downgrading of review scores for broad multiyear projects that read like a complete 5 year grant, or a condensed form of an already submitted NIH grant. The most successful applications are those that explain the concept of the research, give the preliminary data available to date, explain where the project is going in broad terms, and then explain the specific experiments needed to support the hypotheses to an NIH peer review body. Projects seeking pilot data for resubmission applications to NIH should discuss how the project would address peer review critique received from the NIH.

All applicants will receive reviewers’ comments at the end of the review process regardless of whether they receive funding.

Funding Limits

MCC Pilot Project awards are for up to $50,000 for a one year project period.

Allowable expenses include the following:

- Research/laboratory supplies
- Shared Resource expenses
- Technical or laboratory staff salaries (including fringe benefits)
- Stipends (including fringe benefits where applicable)
- Animal costs
- Patient care costs and stipends
- Research related contractual agreements
- Software (prior approval required)

Non-Allowable expenses include the following:

- Faculty salaries
- Equipment (including computers)
- Equipment maintenance and service contracts
- Secretarial/administrative salaries
- Graduate and undergraduate student tuition and student fees
- Textbooks/coursebooks and periodicals
- Subscriptions to periodicals
Questions regarding your proposed budget can be addressed Farah Mirza at (804) 628-1750 or fmirza@vcu.edu.

Submission Guidelines

All interested investigators are required to submit a Pre-Application Form by **October 17, 2013** prior to submission of the Full Application. Applications that fit the purpose of this program will be asked to submit a Full Application by the **November 4, 2013** due date.

The full application should be a detailed description of your proposed project, following the format below:

1. Title and Lay language description of the proposed project. In the event of funding, this statement will be provided to donors to demonstrate the use of funds.

2. If the project was previously submitted for pilot funding but was not awarded, provide a one page overview of how it has been revised to address the reviewers’ critique.

3. Budget (use PHS 398 Form Page 4)- submit a 12-month budget and brief justification. The total budget should not exceed $50,000.

4. Research Plan (not to exceed 5 pages, excluding references)- discuss the scientific basis and specific goals of the pilot project, providing sufficient detail for reviewers to judge the potential for the project to obtain extramural funding after completion. To ensure appropriate consideration of your application, you should address in your research plan (a) the cancer relevance of the proposed research, if this is not evident from the subject matter, (b) the role and specific, individual responsibilities of each of the project investigators, (c) how this project differs from any similar ongoing, funded research of the investigators, including grants on which they may be co-investigators, (d) any changes in pending funding for similar research since the submission of the research concept for this project, and (e) to the extent possible, specific plans for applying for and obtaining future support as a result of this project.

5. Statement detailing future plans for grant submissions.

6. In the case of those investigators who have previously received Massey Cancer Center pilot project support, a brief summary of the publications and externally funded projects that resulted from that funding.

7. Biographical Sketch (use PHS 398 suggested format)- submit biosketches for all project investigators.

8. Other Support (use PHS 398 format example)- document other support for each project investigator, including a statement of the specific aims for all funded projects.
Copies of the PHS forms and samples may be accessed at http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html

Award

- The earliest start date for MCC SPECIAL Pilot Projects will be December 1, 2013. Projects will be awarded for a one year period.
- A 10 minute presentation would be required 6 months after the start date of the project to provide a quick update for senior leadership of the Cancer Center.
- Awardees are expected to seek prior approval for any changes in the budget.
- Any extension requests will require prior approval from the Director of Research Administration & Operations and Associate Director of Basic Research.
- A progress report will be required one month after the project end date.
- The Cancer Center will expect upon request periodic updates from the awardees after termination of the project regarding publications and extramural grant applications that resulted from work supported by the pilot funds.

Submission Deadline

The deadline for submitting a completed Pre-Application Form is October 17, 2013.

The deadline for submitting a completed Full Application is November 4, 2013.

Please email a complete copy of your Pre-Application Form and Full Application to Farah Mirza, at fmirza@vcu.edu.

For additional information, or to discuss eligibility, please contact either of the Program Co-Leaders, Cathy J. Bradley, PhD, at (804) 828-5217 or at cjbradley@vcu.edu; or, Jennifer Elston Lafata, PhD, at (804) 628-3293 or at jelstonlafat@vcu.edu