

**VCU**

Pilot Project Program

Submission & Budget Guidelines

The Massey Cancer Center (MCC) offers funding for pilot projects to encourage new collaborative cancer research projects. 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 MCC is spent. The intent is to support critical searching experiments 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 of the collaborating investigators should be a MCC member.
- A collaborating investigator can submit only one project during a funding cycle. Clinical/Scientific advisory roles are allowed on more than one application. If a shared resource director or biostatistician is providing a defined service and/or consultation on a project, their role is considered advisory, and if there is a consultation fee, it should be part of the budget. This does **not** make the project collaborative. In such cases, the consultant can be on multiple projects but in order to meet the guidelines, the pilot application still needs at least 1 additional collaborator whose role meets the definition of the co-investigator.
- Applications from investigators with active pilot projects or active multi-investigator projects will be administratively disqualified unless the active projects are ending before awards are issued for the current round.

Research Project Eligibility

The initial submission of an application will only require a brief description of the concept and submitting investigators. These initial concepts will be screened administratively for suitability to the pilot project mechanism. The following aspects will be used in this screening:

- Pilot project funds are not meant to be bridge funding nor to extend the funding available for an established study.
- Proposed projects must not fall within the specific aims of a currently funded project of any of the collaborating investigators.
- Established researchers and senior faculty must demonstrate how this project would represent a change in focus for them.

Research Project Criteria

The intent of these pilot projects is to provide initial funding for new, collaborative projects with significant involvement of at least two independent investigators. The cancer center is particularly interested in projects that span disciplines. **For the current funding cycle, special emphasis will be given to projects involving immunology, obesity, inflammation and metabolism, tumor microenvironment/microbiome research and population based sciences. Preference will be given to projects that have at least one aim that addresses cancer disparities or focuses on minority health research. At least one project will be awarded in the cancer prevention and control area, with priority given to inter-programmatic projects showing a CPC investigator collaborating with a member of another MCC program.**



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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 funding organization. **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. Other factors considered in the review will be areas of expertise of the collaborating investigators, synergism between and among the collaborating investigators, and value of the project to the cancer research priorities of the Massey Cancer Center.

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 and/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 fall under the priority areas for the center, namely **immunology, obesity, inflammation and metabolism, tumor microenvironment/microbiome research and disparities-related research. Projects with high potential for translation are also desirable.**

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 any amount 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



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- 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/course books and periodicals
- Subscriptions to periodicals
- Membership dues
- Rental of office or laboratory space
- Recruiting and relocation expenses
- Construction, renovation, or maintenance of buildings/laboratories
- Food costs associated with meetings or conferences held by investigative team
- Travel

Submission Guidelines

All interested investigators are required to submit a **Pre-Application Form by July 1, 2019** prior to submission of the Full Application. Applications that fit the purpose of this program will be invited to submit a **Full Application by the August 1, 2019 due date.**

The full application should include a detailed description of your proposed project in a **single PDF file, following the correct order and format listed 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. Smaller budgets are also acceptable.
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.



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5. In the case where investigators have previously received MCC pilot project support, include a brief summary of the publications and externally funded projects that resulted from previous pilot funding.
6. Biographical Sketch (use PHS 398 suggested format) - Submit biosketches for all project investigators.
7. 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 Pilot Projects will be **October 1, 2019**. Projects are awarded for a one year period.
- A 10 minute presentation is required 6 months after the start date of the project to provide a quick update to the senior leadership of the cancer center.
- Awardees are expected to seek prior approval for any changes in the budget.
- Any extension requests require prior approval from the Director of Research Administration & Operations and Associate Director of Basic Research.
- A progress report is required within 30 days after the project end date.
- After termination of the project, awardees will be asked to provide periodic updates regarding publications and extramural grant applications that result from work supported by the pilot funds.
- Awardees are expected to obtain IACUC and/or IRB approval before undertaking any animal and/or human subjects research.
- **Any resulting publication must cite the MCC support grant (P30 CA106059) and have a PMCID. Failure to cite the P30 or obtain a PMCID number will jeopardize any future pilot funding for all authors.**

Submission Deadlines

The deadline for submitting a completed Pre-Application Form is **July 1, 2019**.

The deadline for those submitting a Full Application is **August 1, 2019**.

***Please email a complete copy of your Pre-Application Form and Full Application to mccsubmission@vcu.edu. For questions, please contact Olivia Patterson at opatterson@vcu.edu or (804) 628 - 3400.**