



RTRN SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

RELEASE DATE: February 24, 2010

MANDATORY LETTER OF INTENT RECEIPT DATE: May 15, 2010

APPLICATION RECEIPT DATE: June 15, 2010

PEER REVIEW PERIOD: June-August 2010

EARLIEST ANTICIPATED AWARD DATE: August 1, 2010

Principal Changes in the FOA

1. Each joint application must show utilization of the Data and Technology Coordinating Center. A letter of support from the DTCC director must be included in the application.
2. Applicants may submit only one application, as principal investigator.
3. Applicants may request funds to plan a collaborative project ("Planning Grants").

PURPOSE OF THE FOA

A primary strategic goal of the RCMI Translational Research Network (RTRN) is to facilitate the conduct of inter-institutional, cross-disciplinary translational research among investigators at the 18 RCMI grantee institutions. To this end, the RTRN Small Grants Program has been developed to promote inter-institutional collaborations by providing modest funding for short-term, self-contained research projects, including feasibility studies; secondary analysis of existing data; and development of research methodology and technology. In particular, this Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) requires *inter-disciplinary collaborative research projects* across two or more RCMI institutions that utilize the infrastructure of the Data and Technology Coordinating Center (DTCC) and that link the basic sciences and clinical medicine, integrate research discoveries with innovative medical applications, and develop improved patient-care practices through community engagement. Examples include, but are not limited to, collaborations across the life sciences, public health, clinical research, epidemiology, biostatistics, pharmacology, biomedical informatics, computational biology, ethics, behavioral science, biomedical imaging and bioengineering, law and health economics. The expectation is that preliminary data generated from the RTRN Small Grants Program will be leveraged into full-fledged NIH grant applications. Moreover, the RTRN Small Grants Program awardees will form a pool of translational researchers, who in turn will help to mentor the next generation of investigators at the RCMI grantee institutions.

MECHANISM OF SUPPORT

Support will be provided through a subcontracting mechanism from the RTRN to the applicant institution(s). The applicant will be solely responsible for planning, directing, and executing the proposed project. The earliest anticipated award date for the 2010-2011 cycle is August 1, 2010. This FOA is a recurring annual solicitation.

FUNDS AVAILABLE

The RTRN will commit \$300,000 to fund six or more new and renewal grants to RCMI investigators to generate preliminary data in emerging research areas that advance our understanding of biological systems, reduce the burden of disease, and improve human health. In addition, funds will be provided for Planning Grants, to allow RCMI investigators to plan an inter-institutional collaborative research project. Applicants may request an annual budget with direct costs of up to \$50,000 for collaborative projects or up to \$10,000 for planning grants. No provisions for indirect costs will be allowed. Because the nature and scope of the proposed research will vary from application to application, it is anticipated that the size of each award will also vary. Grant support through the RTRN Small Grants Program may be used for salary for the principal investigator(s) and technical support personnel, small equipment, supplies and travel.

ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS

Any faculty member of the 18 RCMI grantee institutions, holding a doctoral degree and possessing the skills, knowledge and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research, is invited to develop an application for support. An applicant may submit only one application, as the lead principal investigator. Individuals from under-represented racial and ethnic groups, as well as individuals with disabilities, are encouraged to apply. Collaborating principal investigators can include faculty from partnering institutions and/or community partners. An individual who currently serves as principal investigator on an NIH research project grant (R01) or program project grant (P01, P20, P60, U54 or similar) is ineligible to apply as the lead principal investigator.

APPLICATION PROCESS

A Letter of Intent is mandatory (due on May 15, 2010), but is not binding. The Letter of Intent must include the name(s) of the principal investigator(s), the names and full addresses of the lead and collaborating institutions, and a brief, one- paragraph project abstract (with three key words). Applications must be submitted electronically to yanagiha@pbrc.hawaii.edu, as a single pdf file, and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. (Hawaii time) on June 15, 2010. Paper applications will not be accepted.

The full research proposal will take the form of an abbreviated NIH application, using PHS398 form pages (version 06/09). The Specific Aims are limited to one (1) page and the Research Strategy component may not exceed four (4) pages (typed single-spaced using 11-pt. Arial on one side of the page). All tables, graphs, figures, diagrams, charts and other displays must be included within the five-page limit. Also, the five-page application must include a communications plan and a time-line for seeking subsequent or supplemental extramural support. Moreover, the application must include information on services provided by the DTCC. For applications submitted by junior faculty, an additional requirement will be the designation of a collaborator or senior mentor and a brief description of a mentoring plan. Preliminary data are not required, particularly in applications proposing pilot or feasibility studies that are innovative with potential for high impact.

Not counted in the five-page limit are biosketches and other support information of the principal investigator(s) and all key personnel, an itemized budget with justification, and, if applicable, full descriptions of Protection of Human Subjects from Research Risk; Inclusion of Women, Minorities and Children in Research; Care and Use of Vertebrate Animals in Research; and Biohazards and Select Agents. For applications involving the use of human subjects, a Targeted/Planned Enrollment Table Format Page must be included. Finally, a letter from the DTCC director is mandatory. Other letters of support are optional.

SCIENTIFIC REVIEW

Individuals with subject-matter expertise selected from the membership of the RTRN External Advisory Committee (EAC) and EACs of RCMI grantee institutions will review all applications. In addition, RCMI Program Directors will also serve as reviewers. In all cases, individuals with conflicts of interest, either real or perceived, will not be assigned as reviewers.

Applications that demonstrate a trans-disciplinary approach and show convergence of expertise within the applicant institution or between collaborating institutions will be considered highly responsive to this FOA.

An NIH-type reviewing and 9-point scoring system will be used. Briefly, the initial merit review of applications for support through the RTRN Small Grants Program will be based on the use of DTCC infrastructure and on the six following criteria: significance, approach, innovation, investigators, environment, and collaborations and partnerships.

Significance: Does this study address an important health problem? If the aims of the application are achieved, how will scientific knowledge or clinical practice be advanced? What will be the effect of the study on the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventive interventions that drive this field?

Approach: Are the conceptual or clinical framework, design, methods and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, well reasoned and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problems and consider alternative strategies?

Innovation: Is the project original and innovative? For example: Does the project challenge existing paradigms or clinical practice or address an innovative hypothesis or critical barrier to progress in the field? Does the project develop or employ novel concepts, approaches, methodologies, tools or technologies?

Investigators: Are the investigators appropriately trained and well suited to conduct the proposed study? Is the proposed research appropriate to the experience level of the principal investigator and other researchers? Does the investigative team bring complementary expertise to the project?

Environment: Does the scientific environment in which the study will be performed contribute to the probability of success? Does the proposed study benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, or subject populations, or employ useful collaborative arrangements? Is there evidence of institutional support?

Collaborations and Partnerships: Has the applicant included collaborations with investigators from other institutions? Do the investigators from the collaborating institution(s) have the appropriate academic qualifications, research experience, and productivity to make contributions to the success of the proposed project? Has the applicant described how they will use the RTRN to facilitate collaborations focused on health disparities research? If applicable, are plans included to address regulatory hurdles? Is there a commitment to and plans for participating in the development, adoption, and implementation of best practices through the RTRN, National Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) Steering committees, and other national consortia and networks, where appropriate?

FUNDING DECISION

Funding decisions will be based on priority scores, with awards being given preferentially to applications that arise from existing RTRN cluster activities, as well as to applications from RCMI grantee institutions that are ineligible for RCMI Infrastructure for Clinical and Translational Research (RCTR) funding. Also, to more broadly promote translational science, one award will be made to each of the cluster areas (cardiovascular and related diseases; neurological disorders and mental health; HIV/AIDS and infectious diseases; cancer and immunological diseases; obesity and metabolic syndromes; community-based participatory research). Continuation of support for RTRN Small Grants projects will depend on scientific productivity and progress and will be provided on a competitive basis. Each recipient of support from the RTRN Small Grants Program will be required to submit a written summary of research productivity and progress to be included in the RTRN annual progress report. These summaries will form an important part of the annual non-competing continuation progress report to NCRR.

INQUIRIES

We encourage inquiries concerning this FOA and welcome the opportunity to answer questions from prospective applicants.

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