
Pilot Project Program

Submission & Budget Guidelines

Together, the Pauley Heart Center and Massey Cancer Center are offering a one-time funding opportunity for a pilot project grant to stimulate NEW collaborative research initiatives that will take on a life of their own after the funding 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. The topic area for this submission will include the field of Cardio-Oncology and is open to address issues related to immunology, obesity, inflammation and metabolism, biomedical engineering, imaging, exercise physiology, behavioral science, or population-based sciences.

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 an MCC member or an investigator eligible for MCC membership.
- A Massey investigator may only hold one active pilot research award at a time. Exceptions may be granted for an NCI Catalyst award when the research focus is completely different from other funded Massey pilot awards

Research Project Eligibility

- Pilot project funds are not intended to be used as bridge funding or 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.
- Each applicant is required to include a biostatistician collaborator as part of the proposal to assist with design and statistical methods. Please contact Dr. Dipankar Bandyopadhyay (bandyop@vcuhealth.org), director of the MCC Biostatistics Shared Resource, as soon as possible to have a statistician assigned to you.

Research Project Criteria

The intent of these pilot projects is to provide initial funding for new, collaborative projects with significant involvement of multiple independent investigators. The Massey Cancer Center and the Pauley Heart Center are particularly interested in projects that span disciplines. **For the current funding cycle, special emphasis will be given to projects involving cardio-oncology as it pertains to immunology, obesity, inflammation and metabolism, biomedical engineering, imaging, exercise physiology, behavioral science, or 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.**

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 a federal (NIH, DoD, etc.) or major non-profit (e.g., American Heart Association, Susan Komen Foundation) 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 research priorities of the respective Centers.

Reviewers are instructed to look for:

- Significance of an important clinically relevant impact
- INNOVATION
- 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 both centers as noted above
- **Projects with high potential for translation are also desirable**

Note for 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 the 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

This Pilot Project award is 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
- 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 Full Application by the September 19, 2023 due date to megan.blackwell@vcuhealth.org

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. *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.
3. *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.
4. 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.
5. *Biographical Sketch (use PHS 398 suggested format)* - Submit biosketches for all project investigators.
6. *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 this Pilot project will be **March 1, 2024**. Projects are awarded for a 12-month 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 sponsoring centers.
- Awardees are expected to seek prior approval for any changes in the budget.
- Any extension requests require prior approval from the Centers' leadership.
- 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 CA016059), acknowledge the Pauley Heart Center Pilot Funding support, and obtain a PMCID number. Failure to cite and acknowledge support or to obtain a PMCID number will jeopardize any future pilot funding for all authors.**

Sample language: *Funding support for this research project was provided by the VCU Massey Cancer (supported in part with funding from NCI's Cancer Center Support Grant P30 CA016059) and the VCU Pauley Heart Center.*

Submission Deadline

The deadline for submitting a completed Application is **September 19, 2023**.

***Please email any questions and a complete copy of your Full Application to megan.blackwell@vcuhealth.org**