Request for Applications: Rapid-Response Translational Research Projects to Address COVID-19 Pandemic

The CTSI and the Office of the Senior Vice President for Health Affairs invite applications for translational research projects that can be rapidly mobilized to help address the COVID-19 pandemic. This RFA is designed to support projects that can be accomplished in six months or less and will contribute new knowledge that can inform the COVID-19 response and/or lay critical groundwork for subsequent research while extramural funding opportunities emerge.

This RFA invites applications across the full spectrum of clinical and translational research, including preclinical research; clinical research conducted with human subjects or on material of human origin (e.g., tissues, specimens, cognitive phenomena); epidemiological and behavioral studies; outcomes research and health services research; and the development of new technologies and methodologies. It is expected that research supported by this mechanism will result in one or more publications in a peer-reviewed journal and provide critical preliminary data to support extramural applications.

Funding Availability and Timeline

The CTSI anticipates making a total of up to $2 million available to support six-month awards of up to $100,000 each, dependent on quality of applications received and budget availability. The CTSI will accept applications on a rolling basis from April 1-April 30, 2020, or until available funds are fully committed. The CTSI is administering this RFA with support provided through the University of Florida's "Creating the Healthiest Generation" Moonshot initiative, UF Health, UF College of Medicine, and UF CTSI.

Areas of Interest

Applicants are encouraged to develop research projects that address translational, clinical and supply chain issues emerging from the COVID-19 response at local, state and national levels. Local and state clinical research priorities include diagnostics, pathogenesis, prevention and therapeutics. At the national level, NIH institutes and centers are publishing "Notices of Special Interest" that highlight COVID-19 urgent research needs identified for support through the NIH's competitive revision and administrative supplement mechanisms (see "Funding Opportunities Specific to COVID-19" on https://grants.nih.gov/grants/natural_disasters/corona-virus.htm).

A link to additional COVID-related funding opportunities can be found on the CTSI COVID-19 Updates webpage at: https://www.ctsi.ufl.edu/covid-19-updates/

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must be a UF faculty member. If research involves human subjects, applicants must also meet UF IRB Investigator qualifications.

Award Criteria

Funding decisions and priority will be based on one or more of the following criteria:

- Contributes new knowledge that can inform the COVID-19 response and/or lay critical groundwork for subsequent research to address the COVID-19 pandemic
- Can realistically be completed in six months or less with appropriate safeguards in place
- Supports multidisciplinary collaboration
- Encourages the development or use of emerging methodologies and technologies
- Allows for rapid acquisition or analysis of proof-of-principle data to proceed with full-scale investigations
- Shows significant promise in securing external funding

Review Process

- Reviewers will assign each proposal an overall score using NIH scientific review criteria.
- A funding committee will make final funding decisions based on reviewer scores and other criteria and principles described in this RFA.
- Investigators will receive a final notice of award or non-award.

Budgeting and Spending Guidelines

- Funds can only be used for direct costs.
- Subcontract awards to external institutions/collaborators are not permitted due to the abbreviated project period.
- Funds can be used for faculty effort provided that total faculty effort does not exceed 30% of the total project budget.
- Funds cannot be used for the following: student tuition or other education-related expenses; equipment, computer or software purchases; travel; manuscript submissions.
- Funds are non-transferable and must be used for activities detailed in the application and final approved budget.
- Funds must be used in the 6-month period following award notification. Any un-spent funds will be returned to the CTSI at the end of the 6-month funding period.
- Funds requested for CTSI services will be provided as non-transferable credit.
- Continued funding during the award period is contingent on compliance with awardee requirements and adequate progress in meeting the project timeline.

For budgeting questions and information, send all inquiries to CTSI-covidpilot@ahc.ufl.edu.

Awardee Requirements

- It is expected that all research supported by CTSI Pilot Awards will result in one or more publications in a peer-reviewed journal and will provide critical preliminary data to support extramural applications.
- Compliance: Awardees must be in compliance with all IRB, IACUC and/or Biosafety policies, including the latest UF Research guidance for conducting research during the COVID-19 pandemic. Key COVID-related resources and guidelines:
  - UF Research: https://research.ufl.edu/covid-19-updates.html
  - UF IRB: http://irb.ufl.edu/index-covid-19-resources.html
  - UF Office of Clinical Research: https://clinicalresearch.ctsi.ufl.edu/covid-19/
- Post-Award Management: The CTSI plans to engage awardees in regular Zoom meetings to facilitate rapid and safe rollout of projects and active project management.

- Progress Reporting: For all studies, awardees must submit final progress reports within 90 days of project completion.
- OnCore: For clinical studies, utilization of the OnCore clinical trials management system is a requirement. Investigators must enter all protocol and project information into OnCore, including enrollment and accrual data.
- Resource Sharing: Projects involving model organisms and/or genomic data must comply with NIH policies on sharing model organisms and genomic data.
- Dissemination: Awardees are expected to present their research during the annual UF CTSI Research Day and at scientific meetings, and to publish findings in peer-reviewed journals. Awardees must ensure that electronic versions of any peer-reviewed manuscripts arising from CTSI-funded research and accepted for publication are deposited in NIH's PubMed Central.
- Funding Acknowledgment: All presentations and publications resulting from work funded by this RFA must include a funding citation, which will be specified in the award letter.
- Project Changes: Awardees must notify the CTSI at CTSI-covidpilot@ahc.ufl.edu during the funding period if there is a significant change in the scope of work that would affect the outcome of the project or necessitate re-budgeting.

Application Instructions

[Download the Application Instructions and Forms.](#)

Applications must include the following:

- Cover form signed by the principal investigator and the PI's department chair
- Page 2:
  - Abstract (200 words)
  - Impact and Next Steps (200 words): Summarize potential translational impact of the project and next steps, including specific extramural funding targets.
- Research Strategy (up to 3 pages), to include:
  - Significance, Innovation, Approach: For approach, include statistical design and methodology.
  - Safety Plan: If research involves use of virus, handling of infectious materials, and/or direct contact with human subjects, please describe safety precautions that will be implemented to ensure the safety of research teams and/or participants. If not applicable please specify NOT APPLICABLE.
  - Project Timeline and Continuity Plan: Include a realistic project timeline with milestones that can be achieved in six months. Identify personnel, supplies and on-campus facilities/access that would be essential for project completion, and specify any contingency plans that would be needed to ensure project completion amid evolving response to COVID-19 pandemic.
- List of key personnel
- NIH biosketches for senior/key personnel; if PI is an early-stage investigator, please also include mentor biosketch(es).
- Budget and justification

Contact for Questions

CTSI-covidpilot@ahc.ufl.edu