

## **Houston Methodist / Baylor College of Medicine Collaborative Pilot Grants in Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias**

### **Objectives**

The Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) and Houston Methodist (HM) are working together to support research on Alzheimer's Disease (AD) and AD-related dementias (ADRDs). As part of this collaboration, the institutions have agreed to initiate a pilot grant program to stimulate the development of cross-institutional research teams through targeted investment of seed funds. The three goals of the AD/ADRD Collaborative Pilot Grants are to:

- 1) Promote mutually beneficial partnerships that will lead to productive and long-lasting research collaborations between BCM and HM that positively impact the AD/ADRD field.
- 2) Kick-start or expand research that has a high likelihood of leading to peer-reviewed publications and external funding, including catalyzing a successful NIH-funded Houston AD Research Center Consortium based in the Texas Medical Center.
- 3) Engage HM and BCM trainees in mentored research experiences and team science, and cultivate future leaders in basic, clinical, and translational investigation for AD/ADRDs.

For this pilot round of funding, we anticipate making up to three awards at a maximum of \$80,000 each, including a maximum of \$40,000 for each institution. Each institution is providing a total of \$120,000 in funding. Each award will be for a 12-month period of support.

### **Deadline**

Friday, June 11, 2021, 5:00 PM

### **Eligibility**

Proposals must include one PI from each institution (BCM & HM). Interdisciplinary teams are encouraged to build capabilities and increase competitiveness. Full-time faculty members at HM and BCM are eligible to apply. Other contributors may be listed as co-investigators. Investigators (both PIs and co-investigators) that are new to the AD/ADRD field are encouraged to apply, as one important goal for this program is to attract new researchers into the field. Applications involving PIs who previously received this pilot grant will only be considered if proposing new projects and collaborations (new BCM & HM Co-PI team). The investigative team must include at least one trainee (from either BCM or HM). For this opportunity, trainees may include students working toward advanced degrees (medical/graduate students), post-doctoral fellows, clinical residents, and clinical fellows. Junior faculty that are not yet independent (e.g. Instructors or non-tenure track Assistant Professors), will also be acceptable as trainees, as long as the training/career development goals are clearly justified.

### **Priority Areas**

The research proposal may focus on any significant research question relevant to AD/ADRD that permits the formation of a cross-institutional team. ADRDs include frontotemporal dementia, vascular dementia, and Lewy body dementia (including Parkinson's disease dementia). High-priority research areas include: (1) Precision/Personalized Medicine Strategies to address clinical and pathologic heterogeneity of AD and dementia; (2) Genomics and other integrative multi-scale "-omic" approaches; (3) Basic disease mechanisms (e.g. neuroinflammation) and target discovery, including cross-species approaches that bring together animal model studies with human data (including that collected from patients or from postmortem tissues); (4) Population Health Disparities and Accessibility, including studies focused on minority and underserved groups in Houston's diverse community; and (5) Ethics and Health Policy Implementation. Special consideration may also be given to projects that take advantage of existing institutional research infrastructure, including at HM (i.e. Translational Research Neuroimaging Core, Biorepository/Tissue Bank, or Biomedical Informatics Support Cores) and/or BCM (i.e. Human Genome Sequencing Center, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center, and Knockout Mouse Project). Proposals and projects may also benefit from leveraging AD genomic consortia datasets (<https://www.niagads.org> & <https://adknowledgeportal.synapse.org>) and clinical data (<https://www.alz.washington.edu/>) or biospecimens (<https://ncrad.iu.edu>) from the NIH-funded AD Research Centers program (<https://www.nia.nih.gov/research/adc>).

## **Proposal Preparation and Submission**

Each application is intended to have both a BCM component and an HM component, including a budget for work performed at the respective institutions. Funds will be dispersed from BCM to BCM researchers and from HM to HM researchers, so a separate budget for each institution should be provided. The combined research plan, including the two budgets and budget justifications should be compiled into a single PDF and a copy should be submitted to both institutions (see instructions below). Documents should be formatted for US Letter size (8.5"x11"), with 0.5-inch margins on all sides, and Arial font size 11 pt. Font size of at least 9 pt. must be used for the captions to graphics and tables. Applications should include:

### Cover Page (1 page)

The cover page must identify the proposal title, and identify the co-PIs, any co-investigators (Co-Is), and the designated trainee(s), along with their affiliations and contact information.

### Abstract/Specific Aims (1 page)

NIH-style specific aims presenting background, significance, main project objectives, study team, and potential impact.

### Proposal Narrative (Up to 3 pages, including figures and tables)

The following sections must be included:

- (1) Background and Significance
- (2) Investigative Team and Relevant Expertise, including Trainee and training goals
- (3) Research Methods, specifying the nature of the collaboration and work performed at BCM and HM
- (4) Future directions, including plans for publications and external funding

References Cited are not included in the 3-page limit

### Biosketches (5 pages per investigator)

Provide an NIH-style biosketch for the PI and Co-Is. A NIH-style biosketch is optional, but preferred, for the designated trainee.

### Budget and Budget Justification

Please work with your affiliated pre-award personnel to generate the budget. Funding requests may be up to \$40,000 from each institution (maximum total of \$80,000 but separated into two requests because each institution will manage its budget independently) depending upon the type and scope of research. Although funds will be dispersed from BCM to BCM researchers and from HM to HM researchers, these funds may be spent to accomplish research goals using core services at either institution. In most circumstances, we do not expect to support faculty effort; however, this can be considered in selected cases if adequately justified.

### Letters of Support

If applicable, letters from collaborators may also be included.

### Protections for Human Subjects and Animals

If applicable, describe relevant safeguards and procedures for human subjects and animals, including any relevant IRB / IACUC approval information.

## **Review Process and Criteria**

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee composed of faculty from both BCM and HM. The committee will make recommendations to the institutions, who will be responsible for awarding and administering the grant. Competitive proposals will represent high-quality research of significant benefit to the AD/ADRD field, will involve trainees in cross-institutional work plans at both HM and BCM, and therefore catalyze establishment of the Houston AD Research Center Consortium. Project goals must be (a) attainable within the 12-month period and within the scope of funding, and (b) should generate preliminary data that will increase likelihood of success for external collaborative grants. Successful applications will provide compelling arguments and clear plans to demonstrate these points.

Review of proposals will be conducted by internal reviewers from BCM and HM, bound by confidentiality commitments and research ethics policies of the home institution. NOTE: If you have filed an invention disclosure with your home institution's office of technology transfer pertaining to technology included in your application, consider consultation with your office of technology transfer prior to submission and inform them that you've applied for funding under this RFA.

**The review committee will rank each proposal in five domains:**

- a. Significance and innovation of proposed research
- b. Research approach and methods, including feasibility
- c. Strength of the institutional collaboration and research team, including investigator expertise, track record or potential, and use of trainees/training potential;
- d. Likelihood to result in high-impact publications and/or external grant funding
- e. Prospects for substantive contributions to the high-priority research areas defined above.

**Administration and Compliance**

Project grants will be administered through each institution's office of sponsored programs. Each institution will ensure that the research is conducted in compliance with all applicable federal, state, local and institutional regulations.

**Deliverables, Reporting, and Acknowledgment**

A BCM-HM joint symposium will be jointly organized during 2022 where each investigative team must present the results of the collaboration, explaining the team, the research question, how collaboration across institutions facilitated the investigation, and major findings. Notice must be given of publications or presentations resulting from the award. The grantee must acknowledge institutional support in all publications or presentations resulting from the award in the following manner: "This study was jointly supported by funds from Houston Methodist Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine."

**Proposal Application Procedures, Deadline, and Submission Contact**

The final submitted proposal should consist of a single composite PDF including the sections indicated above. Email this PDF jointly to [CAND-mail@bcm.edu](mailto:CAND-mail@bcm.edu) and [academicaffairs@houstonmethodist.org](mailto:academicaffairs@houstonmethodist.org).

The proposal must be submitted by 5 PM, Friday, June 11, 2021.

**Effective Date**

The institutions will make decisions on each proposal based on the recommendations of the review committee, with a goal of announcing and disbursing funding by August 2021, for the 12-month project period.

Questions related to this program can be directed to Dr. Joseph Masdeu ([jcmasdeu@houstonmethodist.org](mailto:jcmasdeu@houstonmethodist.org)) at HM and Dr. Joshua Shulman ([joshua.shulman@bcm.edu](mailto:joshua.shulman@bcm.edu)) at BCM.