FY2018 Translational Cancer Biology and Signaling (TCBS): Research Program Pilot Grant Award Program

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

**Objective**

The primary purpose of this pilot grant award program is to support the acquisition of preliminary data that will lead to external grant funding and published work. Research projects should further the TCBS mission to conduct high impact research in areas related to the four Program aims:

1. Characterize, image, and model cell signaling pathways in normal and cancer cells, particularly focusing on normal and mutated cell surface receptors and their closely coupled signaling partners as well as intracellular trafficking and organelle-specific contributions to carcinogenesis;

2. investigate the contributions of cell-cell interactions and the microenvironment in cancer initiation, progression and metastasis;

3. define the roles of the immune response and linked inflammatory processes in both solid tumors and leukemia, with a focus on therapeutic antibody strategies; and

4. Translate our discoveries to the development of therapeutic interventions against cell signaling targets and pathways, with integrated correlative science studies.

Priority will be given to projects that involve intra-programmatic and inter-programmatic collaborations. We are also interested in projects that use UNM Comprehensive Cancer Center (UNMCCC) Shared Resources [http://cancer.unm.edu/research/shared-resources/] and provide training opportunities.

**Eligibility**

All members of the Translational Cancer Biology and Signaling Research Program are eligible to apply.

**Term of Funding**

These awards are intended to provide funding for innovative projects that can be completed within 1 year – funding for a second year may be possible and will be contingent on productivity during the initial funding period and competition with new applications. The number and amount of awards will depend upon the quality of the proposals received and available funding. Expenditures may begin at any time after the official start date but generally all funds should be expended within one year of receipt. Successful applicants must produce a 1-2 page 6-month progress report as well as a 2-3 page final report within 30-days of completing the project.
Awards may be up to $25,000 each. The number of projects awarded will depend on quality of applications and the availability of funds.

**Key Dates**

- Application Due Date: **July 17, 2017**
- Estimated Earliest Start Date: **September 1, 2017**

**Allowable Costs**

The award(s) should be used for research activities and cannot be used for faculty salary support or for the purchase of large equipment. Funding is available for salaries and fringe benefits of post-doctoral fellows, students, technicians, and other non-faculty project personnel costs. Laboratory supplies and other related research non-personnel expenses are appropriate with the exception of: travel to scientific meetings (local research travel is allowed); office furniture and equipment; and, computers.

**Format**

Proposals should be submitted in one PDF file and include the following items:

**Application Components:**

1. **Cover letter** that addresses the following aspects of the proposal:
   a. Title of proposed research project and how it specifically relates to the aims of the TCBS Program, and its potential significance or relevance to the field.
   b. PI, co-investigators, and trainees’ involvement in UNM TCBS activities.
   c. Proposed study’s UNMCCC inter-programmatic and/or intra-programmatic collaborations.
   d. Indicate from which NIH/NCI extramural support program(s) you will ultimately be seeking support, and why you anticipate that the research supported by this pilot grant will leverage external support. Include planned submission date(s) for the application.
   e. How the project will include training of a doctoral student or postdoctoral fellow (if applicable).
   f. Use of UNMCCC Shared Resources (if applicable).

2. **Face Page** (2 pages). Complete the application’s face page (see template Application Face Page) and be sure to include a 100 to 150 word abstract typed in 11-point Arial font.

3. **Narrative** (3-page limit). The research project narrative must include the following content: (1) Hypothesis (2) Specific Aims, (3) Background and Significance, (4) Research Plan

4. **Human Subjects** or **Vertebrate Animals** (if applicable) – half a page each.

5. **Literature Cited** (No page limit).

6. **Biographical Sketches** (new NIH format) Provide complete bio-sketches in NIH specific format for all key personnel – including personal statement.

7. **Budget and Budget Justification.** The application must include a detailed budget and budget justification. The NIH version can be used: Form Page 4: Detailed Budget for Initial Budget Period: [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html).
Application Process

1. Proposals should be submitted electronically in one PDF by July 17, 2017 at 5 PM to: UNMCC-PilotProgram@salud.unm.edu. Late applications will not be accepted but additional calls may be issued if there are insufficient applications for the first call.

2. Application narratives should not exceed 3 single-spaced, typewritten pages. Note that the face page, references, biographical sketches, and budgets are not included in this page limit. Additional supportive attachments are allowed, but they must be pertinent (i.e. protocols, IRB/IACUC approvals, letters of support, etc…).
   - Complete the face page in the template provided (Application Face Page).
   - The required font for the proposal is 11-point Arial.
   - Margins must be at least 0.50 inches wide on all four sides of each page.
   - Attach biographical sketches (new NIH format) for all key research personnel.
   - If available, please attach copies of the IRB approval and approved protocols for the project. All applicants are encouraged to submit IRB applications at the same time as the funding application due the potentially long time-line for IRB approval. Funds will not be released without IRB approval.

3. Incomplete proposals or those that exceed the page limits (not including attachments) will not be considered.

4. The applications will be reviewed by UNMCC TCBS Steering Committee members and invited content-expert members as needed. Anonymous reviews will be made available to all applicants.

If the proposed research makes use of a UNMCCC Shared Resource, the applicant should include a letter of support from that unit. These can be letters, notes, or emails from the relevant Shared Resource Director. The indication/note can be brief but must make clear that the shared resource is willing to work with the investigator(s) on the proposed project.

Application Review Process:

Proposals for the Research Program Awards will be screened by TCBS Co-leaders and scored by a committee that includes TCBS Co-leaders and selected members. All applications will be reviewed for specific scientific merit and for their appropriateness in meeting the scientific aims of the TCBS Program.

The following ten criteria will be considered in the review process:

1. Scientific merit
2. Technical soundness
3. Innovation
4. Potential for translation of research to the clinic or population
5. Transdisciplinary interaction
6. Potential for reducing cancer incidence and mortality
7. Collaborative interactions with other UNMCC members
8. Appropriateness of the proposed budget and potential for future NCI grant funding
9. Use of the UNMCCC Shared Resources
10. Relevance to the UNMCCC catchment area (NM)

Each reviewer will assign a score of 1 (exceptional) to 9 (poor) for each of the standard NIH criteria, considering all of the above criteria.

If a proposed project lies outside the expertise of the Program Leaders/committee members, an ad hoc external reviewer will be asked to review the application.

**Selection of Awardees**

The UNMCCC Research Program Leaders will make the selections, with final approval by the UNMCCC Senior Leadership, who will review recommendations from all Programs, assess in the context of broad Center goals, and insure lack of redundancy. Proposals with the best (i.e., lowest) mean priority scores will be considered for funding. Proposed budgets will be scrutinized and may be reduced at the discretion of the Program Leaders. The maximum award is $25,000 for one year. Funding for a second year may be possible and will be contingent on productivity during the initial funding period and competition with new applications.

**Award Management**

If awardees apply for and receive an additional year of funding, second year payments are contingent upon receipt of progress reports and publications and on their approval by the Program Leaders. The progress report at the end of the first year of funding will be a component of a new application for the second year of funding. *All funds must be spent within the 12 month period*; unused funds will be returned to the central Cancer Center budget for redistribution during the next budget cycle. If the Program Leaders terminate an award for non-compliance or non-performance, remaining balances will be returned to the Program Leaders for redistribution within the next award cycle.

**Change In Status Of Awardee**

Awards must remain solely with the designated awardee and cannot be transferred to any other personnel. If a recipient decides to discontinue his or her work in the TCBS Program, the award will be terminated as described above, and unused funds will be returned to the UNMCCC. Likewise, if an investigator awardee changes institutions during the funding period, the award cannot be transferred and the remaining balance will be returned to the central UNMCCC budget.

**Expectations of Award Recipients**

Recipients of these awards are expected to actively participate in UNMCCC activities such as seminars, meetings, and retreats. Awardees will be expected to present their research findings at a TCBS Program Update Meeting. All correspondence should be sent to UNMCC-PilotProgram@salud.unm.edu including:

- All required progress reports (6-month, and final), and all additional requests for updates for the TCBS Program Leaders, Senior Leadership, and/or Administration.
- A financial accounting of project funds.
- Annual reports for up to 5 years of funding and publications (with PMCID numbers) resulting from the award.
Additionally, recipients are expected to appropriately acknowledge the pilot funding. *All material derived from the research supported by UNMCCC funding that is published or presented must carry a statement that credits the Cancer Center Support Grant P30CA118100 and Shared Resources, where appropriate.* Publications that cite the Cancer Center Support Grant funding will be included in progress reports to NCI.

Any questions about this pilot grant program can be directed at the TCBS Program Leaders, Drs Bridget Wilson [BWilson@salud.unm.edu](mailto:BWilson@salud.unm.edu) and Eric Prossnitz [EProssnitz@salud.unm.edu](mailto:EProssnitz@salud.unm.edu)