2017 SP3 (SPORE-Program-Project-Planning) Grant Pilot Award
Masonic Cancer Center, University Of Minnesota

The objective of the SP3 Award is to financially support a multi-disciplinary team of cancer investigators as they organize to develop a research program that will result in the preparation of competitive applications that meet all criteria required to receive an outstanding evaluation of their multi-project research grant application to the NIH SPORE or Program Project grant (P01) mechanisms. Applications that address basic and translational aspects of solid tumor oncology and include utilization of patient material are especially sought.

2017 Masonic Cancer Center Internal Grant Deadlines at a glance:

Applications open: March 20, 2017
Due date for full application: April 24, 2017
Notification of awards: mid-June, 2017
Award start date: July 1, 2017
Project completion date: June 30, 2018
Funding for additional 2 years is contingent upon adequate progress.

1. Purpose

The Masonic Cancer Center’s (MCC) mission to enhance care and advance knowledge is fostered by creating a collaborative research environment focused on the causes, prevention, detection, and treatment of cancer; applying that knowledge to improve quality of life for patients and survivors; and sharing its discoveries with other scientists, students, professionals, and the community. We recognize that our ability to continue to make advances in cancer research is increasingly dependent on the success of interdisciplinary, comprehensive approaches to our research questions.

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) has supported this research approach through Specialized Programs of Research Excellence (SPOREs) in organ-specific cancers and Program Project (P01) Grants. Institutions and investigators receiving these grants have been recognized for their outstanding contributions to enhancing cancer care and advancing cancer knowledge. The MCC Executive Committee and Scientific Council have set a goal for our cancer center to submit highly competitive multi-project, collaborative application within the next 3 years. To reach this goal we have developed the SPORE-Program-Project-Planning (SP3) Masonic Cancer Center internal funding opportunity.

For purposes of this pilot grant, multi-project grants are defined as those with at least two interrelated research projects (unless stated otherwise in the FOA) related to a theme with each capable of standing on its own scientific merit but complementing one another. The proposal must include collaboration and interaction among projects and investigators to achieve a common goal. Most grants also include requests for support for shared/core
resources or facilities that provide services to at least two of the proposed projects.

Please contact Susan Fautsch [mccgrant@umn.edu] for feedback on the appropriateness of a specific agency or organization funding opportunity announcement.

2. Objective

The objective of the **SP3 Award** is to financially support a multi-disciplinary team of cancer investigators as they organize to develop a research program that will result in the preparation of competitive applications that meet all criteria required to receive an outstanding evaluation of their multi-project research grant application to the NIH SPORE or Program Project grant (P01) mechanisms. Applications that address basic and translational aspects of solid tumor oncology and include utilization of patient material are especially sought.

3. Award Information

Each SP3 grant will provide up to three (3) years of funding, for up to **$100,000 direct costs per year**. (The award does not cover indirect costs as it is an internal grant.) After the first year of the award, subsequent years are funded provided adequate progress is made toward the ultimate goal of obtaining a multi-project grant.

For all recipients of these awards, a P01, SPORE, or other multi-project award (e.g. U54, etc.), must be submitted or near submission by the end of the third year of funding. *Adequate progress may be judged based upon an initial review of the SPORE, P01, or other proposal at the NCI.*

4. Eligible Applicants

The lead **Program Director must be a member of the Masonic Cancer Center** with the potential to meet the criteria to lead an NCI-funded P01 SPORE, or similar multi-project grant. Proposals in development for other multi-project funding mechanisms, whether from the National Institutes of Health or other agencies, can also be considered for this award as long as they are clearly cancer focused. However, priority will be given to proposals likely to be funded by the NCI.

5. Award Program Descriptions

**Multiple projects conducting translational research that is organ site specific. (SPORE-like)** Applications are requested from teams of investigators, led by a Cancer Center Member, who have the potential to develop an outstanding application to the NCI organ site specific SPORE program. Successful applicants will present a development plan that allows for submission of their SPORE application prior to end of the 3rd year of funding, June 30, 2020.

In line with the description of the NCI’s SPORE program, we are targeting applications from research teams of investigators with demonstrated ability to conduct translational research in the prevention, etiology, screening, diagnosis, and/or treatment of human cancer, and
outstanding potential to develop (over 3 years) and maintain the infrastructure necessary to successfully compete in the SPORE competitive review process. Our ultimate goal is that the recipient team will be awarded a SPORE within 5 years of receiving this award. Applications may address cancer in any organ site, but each application must be organ site specific. Examples of organ sites include (but are not limited to) leukemias, lymphomas, myelomas, brain, breast, gastrointestinal (GI) system, genitourinary (GU) system, gynecologic (GYN) system, head & neck, lung, ovary, pancreas, prostate, skin, oral cavity & pharynx, bones, joints, soft tissue, eye & orbit, and endocrine system. This program will use the NCI definition of translational research: using knowledge of human biology to develop and test the feasibility of cancer-relevant interventions in humans and/or to determine the biological basis for observations made in individuals with cancer or in populations at risk for cancer.

Required components of an **SP3 SPORE-like** application include a minimum of four translational research projects, and developmental research and career development programs. The application should include the development of one or more additional cores. Both administrative and research support cores are allowed. Each Shared Resource Core must provide support and enhance the productivity, cost-effectiveness, and/or research outcome of at least two of the proposed research projects.

Applicants should consider these fundamental components of the NCI SPORE program when considering their competitiveness.

- SPOREs are designed to foster extended collaborations in critical areas of research among laboratory and clinical or applied scientists.
- Every SPORE is expected to have a robust research base in the respective cancer type, good access to patient populations, and substantial commitment from the applicant institution.
- Inter-SPORE collaborations and collaborations between SPOREs and other NIH programs are strongly encouraged.
- Each SPORE and the "network" of SPOREs are expected to conduct research that will have the most immediate impact possible on reducing incidence and mortality of human cancer.

**Multiple projects with a common research theme. (Program-Project-like)**

Applications are requested from teams of investigators, led by a Cancer Center Member, who have the potential to develop an outstanding application to the NCI P01 mechanism. Successful applicants will present a development plan that allows for submission of their P01 application prior to June 30, 2020.

We are targeting applications from research teams of investigators with demonstrated research ability and research programs may cover any of the broad areas of cancer research, including (but not limited to) cancer biology, cancer treatment, cancer diagnosis, cancer prevention, and cancer control. Basic, translational, clinical, and/or population-based studies in all of these research areas are appropriate. Research teams should demonstrate outstanding potential to develop (over 3 years) and maintain the infrastructure necessary to successfully compete in the P01 competitive review process. Our ultimate goal is that the recipient team will be awarded a program-project-like grant within 5 years of receiving this award.
Note that P01 applications must include at least three related research projects. The projects must share a common central theme, focus, and/or overall objective. In addition to individual research projects, applicants may propose one or more Shared Resource Cores if needed for the proposed research. Both administrative and research support cores are allowed. Each Shared Resource Core must provide support and enhance the productivity, cost-effectiveness, and/or research outcome of at least two of the proposed research projects. New cores may be proposed and/or existing cores may be augmented to support the proposed research.

Applicants may also use the SP3 mechanism to prepare for other multi-project proposals such as a center (or P50) application. The application should make it clear how the SP3 funding will prepare the group for a successful application.

6. The Application Process

The goal of this development award is to support the long-term strategic plan for a team of investigators to build a multi-investigator, multi-disciplinary research program that will successfully compete for multi-project grant funding. Therefore the SP3 application mirrors the appropriate grant that the investigators are planning for. However, to promote effective use of pilot funding, the budget requests should include funds for project/core development and program planning.

FULL APPLICATIONS

The full applications will be due April 24, 2017. The earliest anticipated start date will be July 1, 2017.

CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT ONLINE (link to be provided)

Format for the SP3 applications are separately described below. When appropriate, please use PHS 398 forms (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html)

Applications should be consistently formatted. We suggest the following formatting:
- 11-12 point in Arial or Times New Roman
- Line spacing - single space
- Margins - no smaller than 0.5 inches on all sides
- Page numbers - all pages should be numbered excluding the face page

1. Cover Page on Letterhead

Please include the following information:
- Program Leader(s): names, credentials, departments and roles
- Component (Project & Core leaders: names, credentials, departments and roles
- Title of proposed project
- Link to current RFA/FOA
• to which the development project will eventually apply
• Administrative Department contact person and information
• Signature of PI and Administering department head

2. **Description of the Program Leader (contact PD/PI) (250 words)**
   The Program Lead must be a member of the Masonic Cancer Center, University Of Minnesota with the potential to meet the criteria to lead an NIH SPORE. This brief biographical description should describe the qualities of the candidate that make him/her a good candidate to lead the project.

3. **Abstract, Performance Sites, and Key Personnel List (2 pages)**
   State the proposed program’s broad, long-term objectives, specific aims, and the significance to the field of cancer research. Define the relevance of each proposed project and shared resource core to the overall theme and goals of the program. List all Key Personnel for the entire program, beginning with the PI/PD(s) and then listing all other Key Personnel alphabetically. Include all project and core leaders, co-leaders, co-investigators, and consultants and consortium collaborators (if applicable and if these individuals will devote measurable effort to the project).

4. **Detailed Budget for Initial Period, Entire Proposed Period of Support, and Detailed Budget Justification**
   Prepare a detailed composite budget for all requested support categories for the first year, followed by a budget for the entire period of support (3 years). Funding should be requested to support the organizational and research development of projects and cores.

   Approved budget categories and amount:
   - Up to $100,000/year in direct costs for 1-3 years.
   - Funds may be used for staff salaries (administrators, technicians, students and postdoctoral fellows), fees for internal MCC shared resources, supplies, and other research related expenses.
   - Funds may not be used to pay for the expenses of investigators outside the University of Minnesota, except for travel to the Twin Cities for the purpose of grant planning.
   - Funds may be used for support of faculty salaries up to 10% effort or $20,000, whichever is lower.

5. **Biographical Sketches**
   Compile all biographical sketches after the Overall Budget, starting with the PD(s)/PI(s) followed by all other investigators in alphabetical order.

**Overall Program Organization, Interaction, and Capability (3 pages total)**

**Leadership Team**
The application should describe the program, the scientific qualifications and involvement of the principal investigator as well as his/her scientific and administrative leadership capabilities.

**Multiple PI Leadership Plan (if applicable)**
If the multiple PDs/PIs option is used, the new required section describing the Multiple PI Leadership Plan

**Institutional Commitment**
A statement must be provided that addresses the potential of the research program to establish institutional commitment (beyond MCC), such as departmental or other support, and the potential for the multi-project effort to receive high priority within the institution (relative to other research efforts).

**Program Planning and Evaluation of Activities**
Applications should describe plans to evaluate the translational research productivity of proposed projects and cores. Describe the evaluation plan and proposed actions to be taken. This may include but are not limited to: discontinuation of activities of low productivity; initiation of new activities in response to important translational research opportunities; establishment of collaborations; and utilization of the advice of internal and external advisors

**Research Program Components (Projects & Cores)**
The minimum research base should include significant role/effort of at least a minimum of four investigators who are successful or have the potential to be successful in obtaining peer-reviewed research support directly related to the cancer being investigated. To qualify, respective individuals must currently serve as PIs (or project leaders) on peer-reviewed research grants, or serve as overall chairpersons or site chairpersons on active NCI cooperative group clinical trial(s) or committees directly related to the cancer(s) being investigated by the proposed research grant.

**Research Projects (2 pages each)**
A minimum of three research projects must be proposed. Applicants should consult the agency/organization guidelines for specific requirements of their multi-project application. Reviewers will consider applications that are best positioned to address the criteria and requirements set by the RFA to which they eventually will apply.

**Shared Resource Cores (1 page each)**
Applicants may propose one or more (as needed) appropriate shared technical or administrative resources, or cores. These cores should not duplicate analogous resources already available at MCC. Where appropriate the plan can include proposals to establish new opportunities between current MCC cores and research teams that will lead to specific cores for the planned multi-project application.

**Other RFA-specific Components (2 pages total)**
Multi-project RFAs often include additional guidelines for specific components that are required. These components can include Program Integration and Management,
Development Research Program, Career Development Programs, etc. It is expected that applicants use these 2 pages to describe how their program would meet the guidelines and requirements of these agency-specific components. Applicants should describe the institutional climate for supporting such components and how they will serve as an integral part of the overall program.

Internal/External Advisory Board (1 page)
The applicants must describe a list of at least 2-3 internal advisors who have agreed to serve on an internal advisory board for their research program development. These investigators should have the scientific and career experience necessary to advise the group on how to build a team and plans for a successful application. The application may also describe potential external advisors for the planned application.

7. Criteria for Review

a. Recognized national level leadership overall and for each project leader
b. Harmony of projects into one coherent theme
c. Synergy of projects and expertise within the group
d. Track record of collaboration
e. Likelihood that NCI would take an interest in funding the proposal
f. Quality of available resources and presence of adequate institutional support

8. Review Mechanism

Each mechanism has an internally-selected committee that will review applications. The committee will make recommendations for funding to the Mechanism Lead. In addition, all complete full applications will be reviewed, via mail, by an outside committee of experts with special instructions to choose proposals likely to eventually succeed in obtaining NCI-sponsored funding and rank those in priority order.

9. Contacts

Scientific/Research Contact          Administrative Contact
Dr. Stephen Hecht                  Susan Fautsch
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