Overview

The Center for Biomedical Neuroscience, in partnership with the Institute for Integration of Medicine & Science (IIMS), is soliciting proposals for pilot project awards. The intent of this program is to promote multi-disciplinary collaborative research in Neuroscience, leading to productive projects likely to compete successfully for national grant support. A long-term goal of the CBN is to foster successful funding of multi-PI projects (e.g., Center Grants, Program Project Grants, linked R01s, multi-PI R01s, etc. from NIH, or the equivalent from other funding agencies). Therefore, pilot proposals that have the potential to lead to such projects, and that represent collaborations between two or more investigators will be viewed favorably. Proposals can be basic, clinical, or translational in nature. This program is supported by the Center for Biomedical Neuroscience (CBN) and the Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA).

Funding expectations

It is anticipated that up to $150,000 will be available to fund 3 proposals submitted in response to this solicitation, depending on continued availability of current support for this program.

Eligibility

The project must be clearly in the field of Neuroscience. The PI must hold a faculty-level appointment at the UTHSCSA. CBN membership is not a requirement for submission of a proposal, but should the grant be awarded, the PI will become a member of the CBN. There is no cost for membership. Members receive periodic communication from the CBN regarding seminars, special events, and other relevant news, and members participate in CBN activities, including the spring scientific research retreat.

Funding cannot have been obtained previously from any source for the same project. Previous recipients of CBN pilot project awards may apply again, but the new project must be distinct and a substantial departure from, not simply an extension of the previously funded project.

Submission, terms, and conditions

An individual may submit no more than one project as a Principal Investigator and one as a Co-Investigator in a submission cycle.

A letter of intent (LOI) is due Friday, September 26, 2014 at 5pm and should include the title of the project, principal investigator (PI), Co-I(s), a few sentences describing the project, a list
of 4-5 keywords, and 3 to 4 potential reviewers from UTHSCSA, but not from the same department or research group as the PI (download LOI form from http://iims.uthscsa.edu/cbn.html). The LOI is required for planning purposes, but will not serve as a screening tool for proposal submission (i.e. all PIs submitting the LOI should then proceed to full proposal preparation). The deadline for receipt of the full application is **Friday, October 24, 2014 at 5 pm.** LOIs and full proposals should be submitted electronically, each in a single PDF file attached to an email message sent to cbn@uthscsa.edu. Please do not send multiple documents!

Awards will be made for a one-year project period starting on or about January 1, 2015. A one-page progress report must be provided 12 months after the initiation of funding. For projects involving the use of human subjects or vertebrate animals, no expenditures will be permitted until the CBN/IIMS is provided with a copy of the official letter of approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), respectively. Investigators are encouraged to submit IRB and IACUC protocols early in order to avoid significant delays in project initiation. Applicants must also be up to date on compliance with institutional conflict of interest disclosure policies.

**Budget and financial policies**

The maximum budget for these one-year awards is $50,000, although proposals with smaller budgets will be considered and reviewed under the same criteria. Facilities and Administrative (F&A, indirect cost) expenses will not be reimbursed. Funds may not be used to support the salary of the PI or faculty-level collaborators. Although the PI (and Co-I, if applicable) should be listed in the personnel section of the summary page, there is no minimum effort requirement. Salary (plus associated fringe benefits) may be requested for non-faculty support staff, including post-doctoral fellows. Other allowable expenses include: equipment essential for the project, including computer hardware; consumable laboratory supplies; animal purchase and per diem costs; core facility fees; consultation fees; computer time; software; publication/presentation expenses; costs related to human subject enrollment and management (listed as “Patient Care Costs” on budget page); and other expenditures that can be justified as being essential for the completion of the project. **Travel and meeting-related expenses are not allowed.** Account management will be centralized within CBN and IIMS, with expenditures and encumbrances committed as they are incurred.

**Application requirements and format**

Applications should be prepared using the templates provided (adapted from PHS Form 398) at http://iims.uthscsa.edu/cbn.html. Font size should be no smaller than 11 point, preferably Arial or Times New Roman. The font size for figures, figure legends, charts, and tables may be smaller, but must be clearly legible. Margins all-around should be at least 0.5". Pages should be numbered sequentially. The length of the Research Plan (narrative, with illustrations included) is limited to 4 single-spaced pages. The organization of the proposal should be as follows:

- Cover page (p. 1)
- Project summary (appropriate for scientific peers in the field) and key personnel (p. 2)
- Budget (p. 3)
- Budget justifications (p. 4; maximum 1 page)
- Biographical sketch for PI (maximum 4 pages; for NIH templates, format, and samples see http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html)
• Biographical sketches for other key personnel (maximum 4 pages each)
• Other Support Page (include all other support) for the PI (follow NIH guidelines)
• Other Support Pages for other key personnel
• Research plan (maximum 4 pages; use continuation page template)
  o Hypothesis and specific aims
  o Background and significance
  o Preliminary data
  o Work proposed (including statistical analysis, pitfalls, alternatives)
• Literature citations (maximum 1 page)
• Collaborative, interdisciplinary features of the project (maximum 1 page)
• Additional Information (maximum 1 page) to include:
  o Any past CBN and/or IIMS pilot project funding; grants obtained or submitted as a result
  o Prospects and specific plans for outside funding based on this project
• Letters of support from core directors or Research Imaging Institute (if applicable)
• Letters of collaboration (optional)
• Appendices are not allowed
• A UTHSCSA Certificate of Proposal (COP) is not required

Review process and criteria
Applications will go through a two-tiered system of review. Initial scientific review will be performed by a Scientific Review Committee, including appropriate content experts and representatives from the CBN membership and other UTHSCSA faculty as relevant to the project. Proposals will be reviewed and scored based on the following criteria:

• Extent of meaningful interdisciplinary collaboration
• Likelihood of future NIH or other competitive external funding
• Novelty / innovation
• Strength of the research proposal, including factors such as:
  o Design
  o Feasibility
  o Preliminary data (to the extent available)
  o Impact and significance to the field
• Investigators
• Environment and Facilities

Additional criterion (not scored, but must be satisfactory for funding)
• Protection of human subjects and experimental animals

Following the scientific review, scored proposals will undergo the second level of programmatic review, performed by the CBN Steering Committee. Funding decisions will be based on scientific merit, as well as programmatic considerations, e.g., prospects for multi-disciplinary collaborative funding, breadth of the pilot project portfolio, balance among program areas and disciplines, etc.