ROBERT J. & NANCY D. CARNEY
INSTITUTE FOR BRAIN SCIENCE
BROWN UNIVERSITY

Zimmerman Fund for Scientific Innovation Awards in Brain Science

DEADLINE: AUGUST 31, 2020

The Robert J. and Nancy D. Carney Institute for Brain Science announces a call for proposals for the Zimmerman Fund for Scientific Innovation Awards in Brain Science. *The purpose of these awards is to launch innovative projects that have great potential to advance science and benefit society in ways that have major and lasting impact. Projects that are too risky and early stage to be appropriate for NIH or similar funding mechanism are strongly favored.* The Carney Institute will invest up to $100,000 per project for one year, renewable for a second year on a competitive basis, to support projects that meet these criteria. Innovation Awards in Brain Science are not intended to merely allow collection of preliminary data for a grant proposal, but to catalyze progress on a project with a clear long-term intellectual arc to substantial and lasting impact.

Eligibility

The Innovation Awards in Brain Science are open to all Brown faculty members conducting brain science research at Brown University or its affiliated hospitals. Principal Investigators (PI) must hold a faculty appointment by the anticipated start date of the award. Any basic or translational research project that is within the Carney Institute mission is eligible for consideration. Collaborative interdisciplinary projects with more than one PI are encouraged but not required. Individuals may not participate on more than one application responding to this call for Innovation Awards in Brain Science. Existing award recipients may apply for a second year of funding, or may apply for a new Innovation Award in Brain Science if the existing one will conclude prior to the start of the new award.

Award terms

The maximum allocation for each award will be $100,000 with a one-year term. Awardees may compete for a second year of funding to continue the project. The anticipated start date is January 1, 2021.

Budget

Use of funds is restricted to expenditures required to complete the proposed project. Equipment purchases will be allowed, if well-justified and essential for the project to succeed. Typical allowable expenses include:

- Salaries for students, postdocs and/or research support personnel
- Supplies
- Core facility user fees
- Equipment

Funds cannot be used for:

- Faculty salaries
- Travel to scientific meetings
- Publication costs
- Invited speakers
- Entertainment
- Indirect costs

Junior investigator supplement

Projects involving one or more junior investigator (pre-tenure or, for non-tenure-track faculty, holding a faculty appointment for less than 7 years at the time of submission) as PI/co-PI may request a $32,000 supplement. Only a single $32,000 supplement may be requested per proposal, regardless of the number of junior investigator co-PIs involved. The supplement is intended to provide the junior investigator with additional personnel effort on the project, however other uses may be requested.

Application process

Applications must include the following:

- UFunds Form – Complete all required fields in the application form including summaries of:
    - Project hypothesis
    - Projected impact
    - Expected outcomes
- Cover letter – Include a letter signed by the PI, or co-PIs, containing the title of the proposed project and a brief explanation of how it meets the goals of the Innovation Awards in Brain Science. The cover letter must include name, academic title, institutional affiliation, and address for each PI/co-PI.
- Biographical sketches - NIH or NSF style biosketches are required for the PI/co-PIs and any key personnel named in the proposal. Biosketches must include current and pending support.
- Research Plan - Limited to four single-spaced pages:
    - Project Aims: Succinctly describe the project goals for the 12-month project period. No more than one-half page.
    - Impact: Address the following points
        - What is the problem or critical barrier that you are addressing?
        - If successful, how will the proposed project impact the field and/or address a major need in society?
        - What is the long-term intellectual arc of project? What is the path and timeline from idea to impact?
    - Innovation: Address the following points
        - Describe how the project addresses a significant unanswered scientific question or societal need, in a novel way.

    - Describe how the concepts, tools and techniques, or other outcomes that would ultimately result from the project will have impact beyond a narrow specialized scientific field.
    - Indicate if the project integrates knowledge or approaches from disparate fields in a novel way. If so, describe the specific innovation or value in bridging these fields. Describe any anticipated difficulties in challenging the status quo of those fields.
    - Explain why this is high risk and address how you propose to manage the high risk aspects of the proposed work.
  - Feasibility: Address the following points
    - What is your strategy, what methods will you apply, and what type of analyses will you use? How will you mitigate against experimental bias in design and analyses?
    - Describe the team that will conduct the project, and demonstrate that appropriate expertise and technical capability is available.
    - Provide a timeline and describe the feasibility of this 1 year project.
    - Summarize anticipated potential outcomes
    - Preliminary data may be included in any section of the research plan to demonstrate feasibility.
- Literature Cited: Limited to one page. Include only those publications that provide direct supporting evidence for the impact, innovation, and feasibility of the project.
- Research protections: IRB and IACUC approvals are not required at time of proposal submission but funding for approved projects will not be released until IRB or IACUC approvals are in place.
- Biosafety/Select Agents: Indicate Institutional Safety Committee approvals, if applicable.
- Budget: Itemize and include brief budget justifications. Justifications should clearly indicate how budget items are essential for meeting the project goals.
- Resources: Describe the facilities or other resources available to the PI/co-PIs to carry out the project. Only include the facilities directly required for the execution of this project.

Application deadline

AUGUST 31, 2020 (anticipated start by January 1, 2021)**.** Applications will be submitted through UFunds (faculty logged in with their Brown account and will be able to see the opportunity titled Carney Innovation Awards in Brain Science). If you have any problems with the UFunds platform, please contact Ines Tomas Pereira at ines_tomas_pereira@brown.edu.

Evaluation Criteria

Responsive applications will be evaluated for overall scientific merit based on the following review criteria:

- Impact
- Innovation
- Feasibility

Review Process

The Carney Institute will convene a review committee composed of brain science and innovation experts, with a broad range of expertise, both internal and external to Brown. We strive to convene a committee that includes expertise directly relevant to each proposal, however each application will also be reviewed by reviewers outside the applicant(s) discipline. Applications should be prepared with this in mind, avoiding jargon when possible and providing appropriate context and details for the application to be evaluated by a reviewer not from the immediate sub-field. Applicants are encouraged to focus on making a compelling case for the impact, innovation and feasibility of the project, and to include technical details only to the extent that they demonstrate feasibility. **Innovation is a priority; applications deemed to have high impact and feasibility but low or moderate innovation will receive lower priority than applications with higher innovation.**

Reviewers will be asked to review and score each project according to the evaluation criteria, as well as provide an overall ranking. The committee will meet to discuss the proposals and although detailed written reviews will NOT be provided, reviewers will agree on a consensus set of bullet points that summarizes the strengths and weaknesses in how the applicant conveyed the impact, innovation, and feasibility of the project. The committee will rate the proposals by consensus and make funding recommendations to the Carney Institute. The Carney Director will solicit input from the Carney Executive Committee as necessary and approve final funding decisions.

Midpoint review

PIs of funded projects will be asked to provide a brief interim report to the Carney Institute approximately 6 months into their project period. The purpose of this interim report is to confirm that the project remains feasible or that course corrections in the project plans have been made to continue progress. PIs should indicate in this report any anticipated need to request a no-cost extension for the project.

Questions?

Questions about the Innovation Awards in Brain Science program should be directed to John Davenport (John_Davenport@brown.edu), Managing Director of the Carney Institute.