Center of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) for Reproductive Health:

Pilot Project Award Program – Request for Applications

The response to women’s reproductive health requires a broad and balanced research strategy aimed at expanding knowledge and technology in reproductive medicine. The overarching research goals of this COBRE application include the use of well-defined pre-clinical and human models to understand mechanisms mediating preeclampsia, gestational diabetes and prematurity, identification of functional predictive biomarkers, and application of contemporary computational approaches to enhance our understanding of the networks and pathways underlying these devastating pregnancy complications.

This Pilot Project Grant Program is to identify and train faculty in women’s reproductive health who have demonstrated the potential to become independent investigators. This objective will be pursued by identifying promising individuals, providing extended formal research training and support in an incubator type environment, supplementing their continuing research experiences with formal career development, and providing access to robust, specialized educational experiences to complement their research interests.

Resources are available to fund four research projects at $25,000 each for a six month period.

Funds are intended to support pilot research which will lead to future federal support. They are to support new research conducted by investigators who have not been the PI of RO1 grants or other comparable awards. The guidelines for submitting proposals and for selecting recipients are outlined below.

Eligibility
• All proposals should be relevant to women’s reproductive health research with a focus on pre-clinical and human models, placental biology, biomarkers for adverse pregnancy outcomes, and IVF pregnancies.
• All investigators with a faculty appointment at Brown University, affiliated hospitals or any institution of higher education in Rhode Island are eligible to apply. The principal investigator must have an active faculty appointment (fellows, students and postdoctoral fellows are not eligible). For the purpose of eligibility, an investigator is defined either as (1) an individual who does not have or has not previously had an external, peer reviewed Research Project Grant (RPG) or Program Project Grant (PPG) from either a Federal or non-Federal source that names that investigator as the PI or (2) an established investigator who is making a significant change to his/her career.
• With respect to item (1), grants that name an individual as a co-investigator, collaborator, consultant, or to a position other than Principal Investigator do not disqualify that investigator. Starter grants (such as NIH's FIRST award mechanism, R29), Academic Research
Enhancement Award grants (AREA, R15), exploratory/pilot project grants (such as NIH R03 and R21 awards), career development awards (such as NIH K01 and K08 awards), or other Federal or non-Federal funding whose purpose is to provide preliminary support in anticipation of a RPG or PPG also do not disqualify the investigator.

• Senior Investigators who have managed to obtain significant support in the form of a RPG or PPG (e.g., NIH R01 or P01, or other Federal or non-Federal agency awards) are not eligible to apply.

Application Directions:

The proposal should include the following items presented in the following order ALL on NIH PHS 398 forms or continuation sheets (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html)

**The following nine items must be sent as one PDF file.**

1. Face Page
2. Abstract/Summary, Continuation Format Page
3. Research Plan, Continuation Format Page
   - Specific Aims = 1 Page
   - Research Strategy = 6 Pages
     - Significance
     - Innovation
     - Approach
4. Detailed Budget for Initial Budget Period, Form Page 4
5. Budget Justification, Continuation Format Page
   The budget justification should have itemized categories of expenses for which award funds will be used and a brief description for these expenses.
   **PI salary support and indirect costs are not permitted. Expenditures for equipment require prior approval.**
6. Biographical Sketch, Biographical Sketch Format Page
   Current NIH biosketch for all key personnel named in the project. Each person’s contribution to the project should be clearly outlined in their personal statement.
7. Current and approved IRB and/or IACUC protocol letters, if applicable.
8. Strategy for seeking subsequent external support, Continuation Format Page
   The description should include a statement of intent to submit a proposal as one of the outcomes of the project.
9. A letter indicating endorsement from the proposer’s department chair should address the proposal’s importance and the candidate’s suitability for the award. This letter of support should include a commitment from the chair for adequate time and resources to complete the project.

Criteria for Selection
The overall merit of the research project will be considered and evaluated by the Internal Advisory committee of the COBRE for Reproductive Health. Where appropriate, outside reviews will be sought. All applications will be peer reviewed and scored according to the NIH Scoring Criteria.
The final selection will be made based on the following criteria:
• Relevance to the focus area of reproductive health.
• Innovation and creativity.
• The plan and potential for research support from external sponsors.
• The likelihood that the proposed project will be completed during the award period.
• Appropriateness of proposed budget.
Award Conditions
Award funds may be used to support reasonable and necessary costs for the collection of pilot research data.
• All reports and notifications should be addressed to the Program Coordinator, Mr. Lincoln Cox (LCox@wihri.org).
• Final progress reports are due in March and should include scientific results and findings and plan to submit a proposal to an external sponsor based on this award. Unused funds will be transferred back to the COBRE.
• Investigators should indicate in the Biographical Sketch their current and all previous history of peer-reviewed research support.
• Award amount is limited to $25,000 and should be well justified. Applicants are encouraged to discuss application plans with the Program Director or Program Coordinator listed below.
• Budgets should be planned for a six month funding period.
• The Awards are NOT transferable to institutions outside of Rhode Island. If the principal investigator transfers to a non-eligible institution, the remaining pilot project grant funds will be transferred back to the COBRE for Perinatal Biology.
• Any significant changes in the proposal or allocation of funds must be approved by the COBRE Program Director in writing.
• All grant recipients are expected to attend monthly COBRE Investigator seminar series and to present the results of their research from this award in the seminar series.

Procedure for Submitting Proposals
The proposals and supporting documents should be submitted via email no later than September 1, 2017. Selections will be announced by September 15, 2017. This is a six month award period from October 1, 2017 – March 31, 2018.

Email for submission:
Megan Boudreau: Meboudreau@wihri.org
Phone: 401 430-8003

Questions regarding proposals and scientific relevance to women’s reproductive health:
Surendra Sharma, MD, PhD: SSharma@wihri.org
Principal Investigator / Program Director
Phone: 401 430-8004

Acknowledgement
The COBRE for Reproductive Health is supported by Grant Number P20 GM121298 from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences of the National Institutes of Health.