West Virginia University Health Sciences Center
Visual Sciences Center of Biomedical Research Excellence
Project Lead Program

Visual Sciences Center of Biomedical Research Excellence (VS-CoBRE) Project Lead Grant Award Competition Funding Opportunity Announcement

Overview Information
Participating Organization(s): National Institutes of Health (NIH), West Virginia University (WVU) Health Sciences Center

Components of Participating Organizations: National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), VS-CoBRE at WVU

Funding Opportunity Title: Project Leads focused on Visual Science
Activity Code P20 Research Project

Announcement Type: Project Lead grants for VS-CoBRE

Amount of Award: Up to $200,000 per year for two years. A third year of funding is possible as a Project Lead on the Phase 2 VS-CoBRE, if the submission is successful.

Funding Opportunity Purpose: The purpose of this funding opportunity announcement (FOA) is to support basic and translational pilot projects focused on visual sciences, which utilize the Visual Function and Morphology (VFM) Core, enable acquisition of preliminary data for a federal grant application, and cultivate a team of new investigators as potential project leads (PLs) for our Center of Biomedical Research Excellence.

KEY DATES
Posted Date(s): November 11, 2024
Open Date (Earliest Submission Date): November 11, 2024
Application Due Date(s): December 2, 2024
Earliest Start Date: February 1, 2025
Award End Date: January 31, 2027 (Year 3 contingent upon phase two project renewal.)

Summary:

The Visual Sciences Center of Biomedical Research Excellence (VS-CoBRE) expects to support up to two projects each for up to $200,000 in direct costs per year for two years. Applications will be reviewed for scientific rigor, impact, and feasibility based on the budget and the scope of work specifically covered by that support.

Applications must describe a research project that aligns with the scientific theme of the VS-CoBRE and will provide preliminary data for a substantial extramural research project grant application. Preference will be given to projects that benefit from the Visual Function and Morphology (VFM) Core at WVU. This competition is open to all full-time, tenure- or clinical-track, or tenured faculty at WVU (see specifics on Eligibility below). Priority will be given to junior investigators.

Eligibility: Clinical faculty or basic science tenured or tenure-track full-time faculty members who have not had an R01 or equivalent funding are eligible. New or Early-Stage (Junior) investigators are strongly encouraged to apply. Please see the eligibility criteria here: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-19-313.html

Individuals currently receiving support from the VS-CoBRE as Project Leaders, Mentoring faculty, or Core facility directors or managers may not serve as Pilot Project PIs. Investigators receiving significant support from an IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE) program or a Clinical and Translational Research (CTR) program are not eligible to apply. Investigators cannot receive research support from multiple CoBREs simultaneously.

Project areas that fall within the scientific focus of the VS-CoBRE will advance our understanding of processes that maintain our vision and disorders leading to visual impairment, including diseases that disproportionally affect the population of West Virginia such as age-related visual disorders, glaucoma, retinal degenerative diseases, and diabetic retinopathy.

Criteria for evaluation of CoBRE applications: The primary criteria for NIH grant review may be found at:
https://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/guidelines_general/Review_Criteria_at_a_glance.pdf

Additional CoBRE-specific review criteria include:
- Likelihood of the project becoming competitive for R01-level funding from any extramural agency
- Likelihood of producing a publishable result in a timely manner
- Relevance to the VS-CoBRE theme

- A clear, detailed plan for utilization of the VFM Core (see accompanying slides for a list of capabilities present in the VFM Core)
- Background, experience, and career status of the applicant
- Track record of past research, grant applications, and any research funding
- Identification of an appropriate research team to ensure success

General Terms and Conditions of VS-CoBRE Project Lead Awards:

1. The Project Lead must commit at least 50% effort toward the project. Additional funds may be used for consumable supplies, core facility user fees, services, or small laboratory hardware, and small equipment (i.e., items costing < $5000). Larger equipment costs must be well justified, and the equipment should be accessible for other members of the vision research community.
2. Personnel costs for technical support are allowable, but preference will be given to applications that name specific individuals who are assured to be on-site and eligible to work at the beginning of the funding period. Postdoctoral support will be considered only under special circumstances.
3. If the project is funded, support (stipend and fringe) for a graduate student (in years 3 and beyond) working on the project will be covered by the HSC Office of Research and Graduate Education for the duration of the pilot grant.
4. Travel costs are allowed for essential research-related travel, such as collaborative project support, and for relevant scientific meeting attendance.
5. Investigators receiving CoBRE project support are REQUIRED to participate in the weekly visual sciences-focused research meetings, the Annual Visual Sciences Retreat, and the Regional Eye Conference. Project leaders are encouraged to participate in the Vision Seminar Series, Ophthalmology Grand Rounds, and other activities organized or sponsored by the VS-CoBRE.
6. Project leaders will actively participate in the mentoring program and periodic assessments established by the VS-CoBRE.
7. A semi-annual progress report (~1 page in length, including publications, presentations, and grant applications submitted or awarded) is required from each CoBRE Project Leader.
8. PI agrees to submit grant applications that are based on results obtained from the Project research supported through the VS-CoBRE.
9. Participation in grant writing for a Phase 2 CoBRE submission is expected of all Project Leaders unless they are successful in obtaining R01-level funding prior to the Phase 2 submission deadline.
10. Term and budget adjustments: The CoBRE Director reserves the right to make term and budget adjustments in accordance with the intent of the VS-CoBRE program and NIH policies concerning scientific overlap of projects. For example, if a CoBRE investigator receives his/her own R01 grant, the CoBRE grant may be reduced to adjust for overlap, up to and including a 100% reduction in CoBRE support.
11. Unanticipated new requirements. By accepting CoBRE funds, awardees agree to comply with all requirements not already mentioned that may be imposed on the VS-CoBRE by NIH or other institutional authorities during the course of the funding.

To Apply:
Prepare and submit a complete Project Lead application.

The Application should include the following components:
- Project Summary (30-line abstract)
- A list of key/senior personnel and their role on the project
- Facilities and Resources: include major equipment available to project, and a paragraph on planned use of the VFM Core.
- Updated Biosketch in NIH format. Include Biosketches of key personnel and other significant contributors
- Detailed budget and budget justification (use NIH budget form)
- Research Plan (Use Continuation Format Page) should have the following components
  - Proposed a 5-year research plan despite the 2-3 year anticipated funding period
  - Specific aims: limit to 3 specific aims. (1 page)
  - Research Strategy (6 pages maximum)
    - Background and Significance
    - Innovation
    - Preliminary data (if any; not required)
    - Approach
    - Experimental design
    - Anticipated Results, data analysis,
    - Alternative approaches
    - Please note NIH's emphasis on "scientific rigor and reproducibility" https://grants.nih.gov/reproducibility/index.htm).
    - Research plan should explain how the proposed aims will support a future application for an NIH, NSF (or equivalent) research project grant.
  - Bibliography (short, less than 35 references)

Follow formatting guidance for NIH grants (generally, Arial 11-point font, 0.5" page margins). Smaller font is acceptable for figure legends if legible at 100% scale. All figures and lettering must be large enough to be clearly legible at 100% scale.

If your research involves vertebrate animals, you must have IACUC approval or have submitted an appropriate animal protocol for review. Complete the Vertebrate Animal Section.

If your research involves human subjects, you must have IRB approval of have submitted an appropriate IRB protocol for review. Complete the Human Subjects Section.

Please compile your application into a **single PDF** document. **Submit your complete application package before 5 PM on December 2, 2024, to Caitlin Cather (ccather1@hsc.wvu.edu).**

Review Process

- All applications will be sent to three referees, who will evaluate proposals for scientific merit and for the potential that the work will lead to a competitive NIH proposal. Consideration of the scope of work proposed within the allowable budget will be rigorously considered.
- Reviewers will be asked to assign priority scores and provide NIH-style reviews.
- After receipt of written reviews, Dr. Ramamurthy and the Internal Advisory Committee will identify the most meritorious projects that also align with the thematic work in the VS-CoBRE and the use of the VFM Core.
- The identified projects will then be sent to the External Advisory Committee (EAC), where scientific merit will be reviewed.
- Once complete, all reviews, EAC recommendations and copies of relevant compliance approvals (see below) will be submitted to NIGMS for programmatic and administrative review for approval of the final project selection.

Compliance Approvals. If selected for funding, applicants must document IACUC, IBC and/or IRB approval of their proposed research and demonstrate compliance with other regulatory guidelines, e.g., lab safety, biohazards, occupational health, etc. This process is to ensure compliance with federal regulations.