Bern Center for Precision Medicine (BCPM)

Request for Applications (first call for pilot projects)

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Deadlines

Release date:  Friday, Feb 15, 2019
Q&A session during the BCPM Town Hall Meeting:  Wednesday, March 6, 18h
Application due:  Tuesday, April 2, 17:00
Start of projects:  Monday, 17 June

Applications should be submitted as a single e-mail attachment in PDF format to claudia.requeta@dbmr.unibe.ch by Tuesday, April 2, 17:00. The subject line of the e-mail should read “BCPM Pilot Project Application”. Receipt will be confirmed by e-mail. Incomplete applications or those received after the deadline will not be considered. Questions can be addressed to Timo Staub (timo.staub@dbmr.unibe.ch, +41 31 632 83 25).

Purpose

The BCPM is soliciting applications for one-year pilot projects. The primary goal of this RFA is to support innovative translational research projects that address key challenge areas in Precision Medicine.

Pilot funding is expected to establish important areas of excellence in Precision Medicine in Bern. The ultimate, long-term goal is to accelerate the discovery and development of interventions intended to improve therapeutic outcomes, diagnosis of disease, or prevention of disease.

Examples of relevant applications might include but are not limited to projects that address population-based genetic screening for associations with clinical traits, pharmacogenetics studies, oncology related studies linking genomics with outcome, treatment, or prevention.

Successful pilot projects should offer a prospect for an impact outside of the University of Bern (see review criteria below).

Award Amounts

Up to CHF 100,000 for one year may be requested. Three to six awards will be given, depending on the quality of the applications.

Applicant Eligibility

- This RFA is open to investigators with a primary appointment at the University of Bern and/or the Inselspital.
- Investigators already active in the field of precision medicine (e.g., via a present of future SPHN grant) are highly encouraged to apply.
Proposal Eligibility

- Proposals must address critical translational questions related to Precision Medicine.
- Partnerships between basic and clinical scientists are encouraged but not required.
- The utilization of the next generation sequencing services of the future Clinical Genomics Lab or the Next Generation Sequencing Platform of the University of Bern (http://www.ngs.unibe.ch/) is encouraged.

Review Criteria

Applications will first be screened for overall completeness and feasibility, and then evaluated by impartial expert reviewers who have no conflict of interest with the proposed research, involving at least two unbiased reviewers and a biostatistician if needed.

Projects will be evaluated on the basis of scientific merit, feasibility, the potential to develop into a successful Precision Medicine project, and overall translational impact:

- Pre-existence of an innovative, unfunded or only partially funded project in the broad field of Precision Medicine that that may directly impact clinical care within the next 5 years.
- External impact: Likelihood that the project could lead to an independently funded project within the next 1-2 years (e.g., via a peer-reviewed grant application such as SPHN, SNF, or ERC, or via an industry partnership to help take findings into the arena of patient care). Alternatively, likelihood that the project could lead to peer reviewed publications in scientific journals of international renown within the next 1-2 years.
- The establishment of an interdisciplinary approach to successfully help complete the pilot project and transition to a more expansive project.
- The project addresses an important question in the area of Precision Medicine.
- Ideally, high-risk/high-reward type of research.

Terms of the Award

Funds may be used only to cover project supplies, and personnel other than the PI(s). There are no indirect costs. Funding will be contingent on obtaining the appropriate protocols (e.g., ethical approval).

If a grant is awarded, the PI(s) must agree to provide a semi-annual and annual progress report, including plans for securing external funding. Presentation at the BCPM meeting held yearly. Applicants can apply for a second year of funding or a no cost extension for up to one year.
RFA Application Format

The RFA template contains the following fields:

- Applicant contact data
- Description of the proposed Precision Medicine project including background, preliminary data (if there is such data), specific aims, and a summary of experimental plans.
- How will you ensure that your project might have an external impact during the next 1-2 years (grant application, industry partnership, scientific publication, patient outcome, etc.).
- Planned use of up-to-date diagnostics and research methodologies such as Next Generation Sequencing (NGS), Computational Biology, Biostatistics, Mass Spectrometry, Biospecimen/Pathology.
- Short budget estimation and justification.
- Biography sketches for key personnel.
- References.

Expenditure Guidelines

Allowable expenditures:

- NGS experimental costs (price lists can be found on http://www.ngs.unibe.ch/ and on https://goo.gl/fDkce1)
- Salary support for research personnel working on this project
- Salary support for biostatistical analysis
- Laboratory supplies and expenses
- User fees for Core Facilities

Non-allowable expenditures:

- PI salary support
- Secretarial/administrative personnel
- Capital costs/equipment, including maintenance/service contracts
- Office furniture and supplies
- Construction, renovation, or maintenance of buildings/laboratories
- Rental of laboratory or office space
- Computer and software purchases
- ITS services
- Non-medical services to patients
- Publication costs, including reprints
- Purchasing or binding of periodicals and books
- Dues and membership fees in scientific societies
- International travel and conference/meeting expenses
Grant Guidelines

To responsibly manage funds, the following guidelines have been instituted. **Acceptance of an award indicates agreement to abide by these guidelines.** Failure to abide by these guidelines will jeopardize eligibility for future grants and/or BCPM Membership:

1. Publications resulting from the research supported by this grant contain the acknowledgment “Supported by the Bern Center for Precision Medicine”.

2. Written progress reports, including financial status, are required and must be provided at 6 months after grant initiation. Grantees will be notified at least one month prior to the deadline.

3. Any additional publications or additional grants resulting from the grant must be reported.

4. Given the intent of this funding mechanism, it is expected that the funds will be expended during the one-year duration of the grant. No-cost extensions are possible, but not encouraged. Any such requests must be received in writing, with justification, no less than 60 days before the original end date of the grant and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

5. The funds awarded shall be used solely for the purposes specified in and in strict compliance with the application submitted and as executed by the recipient.

6. Grant funds will be distributed via fund transfers annually or semi-annually.

7. Grant recipients must respond to requests for information about their grant from the scientific leadership and administrative staff.

8. Recipients might be asked to communicate their research project via the BCPM, e.g. during the inauguration event on May 20, 2019 (marketplace or speech).

9. Recipients might be asked to participate in progress update meetings to describe their research.