Program Announcement

Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs

Neurofibromatosis Research Program (NFRP)

Investigator-Initiated Research Award

Funding Opportunity Number: W81XWH-08-NFRP-IIRA

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I. HELPFUL INFORMATION

A. Contacts

1. Program announcement, proposal format, or required documentation: To view all funding opportunities offered by the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP), perform a Grants.gov basic search using the CFDA Number 12.420. Submit questions as early as possible. Response times will vary depending upon the volume of inquiries. Every effort will be made to answer questions within 5 working days.

Phone: 301-619-7079
Fax: 301-619-7792
Email: cdmrp.pa@amedd.army.mil

2. eReceipt system: Questions related to pre-application components through the CDMRP eReceipt system should be directed to the eReceipt help desk, which is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern time.

Phone: 301-682-5507
Website: https://cdmrp.org
Email: help@cdmrp.org

3. Grants.gov contacts: Questions related to submitting applications through the Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov/) portal should be directed to Grants.gov help desk. Deadlines for proposal submission are 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on the deadline date. Therefore, there is an approximate 3-hour period during which the Grants.gov help desk will NOT be available. Please plan ahead accordingly, as the CDMRP help desk is not able to answer questions about Grants.gov submissions.

Phone: 800-518-4726, Monday to Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Eastern time
Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov will notify Principal Investigators (PIs) of changes made to this Program Announcement and/or Application Package ONLY if the PI clicks on the "send me change notification emails" link and subscribes to the mailing list on the Opportunity Synopsis Page for this announcement. If the PI does not subscribe and the Application Package is updated or changed, the original version of the Application Package may not be accepted.

B. National Technical Information Service

The technical reference facilities of the National Technical Information Service (www.ntis.gov) are available for the purpose of surveying existing knowledge and avoiding needless duplication of scientific and engineering effort and the expenditure thereby represented. All other sources also should be consulted to the extent practical for the same purpose.

C. Commonly Made Mistakes

- Not obtaining or confirming the organization's DUNS number well before the proposal submission deadline.
- Not obtaining or confirming the organization's registration with the Central Contractor Registry (CCR) well before the proposal submission deadline.
- Failing to request "send me change notification emails" from Grants.gov.
- Not contacting HELP DESKS until just before or after deadlines.
- Not completing the pre-application submission before the mandatory pre-application deadline (pre-application remains in draft status).
- Using an incorrect Grants.gov application package to submit a proposal through Grants.gov. Each Program Announcement/Funding Opportunity requires a specific application package.
- Uploading attachments into incorrect Grants.gov forms.
- Attaching files in the wrong location on Grants.gov forms.
- Submitting attachments that are not PDF documents, except for the R&R Subaward Budget Attachment(s) Form.
- Exceeding page limitations.
- Failing to submit a proposal 48-72 hours before the deadline so that Grants.gov can provide notification of errors and allow for resubmission of application package.
- Failing to submit proposal by submission deadline.

II. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Program History and Objectives

The Neurofibromatosis Research Program (NFRP) was established in 1996 to promote the understanding, diagnosis, and treatment of neurofibromatosis. Appropriations for the NFRP from Fiscal Year 1996 (FY96) through FY07 totaled $182.3M. The FY08 appropriation is $8M.

The vision of the FY08 NFRP is to find and fund the best research to decrease the clinical impact of neurofibromatosis. The NFRP challenges the scientific community to design innovative research that will foster new directions for, address neglected issues in, and bring new investigators to the field of neurofibromatosis research. Scientific ventures that represent under-investigated avenues of research or novel applications of existing technologies are highly sought. The NFRP encourages proposals involving multidisciplinary and/or multi-institutional collaborations and alliances.

The NFRP's objective within this context is to fund a balanced portfolio of scientifically meritorious research related to all aspects of NF1, NF2, and Schwannomatosis. The NFRP seeks proposals from all areas of laboratory, clinical, behavioral, and epidemiologic research as well as environmental sciences, nursing, occupational health, alternative therapies, public health and

policy, ethics, and economics. Proposals that address the needs of minority, low-income, rural, and other underrepresented and/or medically underserved populations are strongly encouraged.

B. Award Description

The NFRP Investigator-Initiated Research Award (IIRA) mechanism was created in FY96. Since then, 263 Investigator-Initiated Research Award proposals have been received, and 82 have been recommended for funding**.**

The NFRP Investigator-Initiated Research Award supports basic and clinically oriented research that will (1) provide insight into the development of NF and related diseases, (2) result in substantial improvements over today's approach to the diagnosis and treatment of neurofibromatosis and/or Schwannomatosis, and (3) enhance the quality of life of persons with those diseases. Proposals must include preliminary data relevant to NF and the proposed project. In addition, if appropriate, a clear statistical plan of analysis should be included. Clinical trials are not acceptable under this mechanism. PIs wishing to apply for funding for a clinical trial should utilize the Clinical Trial Award mechanism.

The FY08 NFRP encourages proposals that specifically address critical needs of the NF community in the following areas:

- Translational research such as the development or preclinical testing of therapeutic agents for the treatment of neurofibromatosis;
- Complications of neurofibromatosis with high mortality such as childhood neoplasms, malignant peripheral nerve sheath tumors, and cerebrovascular abnormalities;
- Complications of neurofibromatosis with high morbidity such as skeletal maladies, learning deficits, hormone-associated effects, and pain;
- Refinement and standardization of imaging techniques and biomarkers for use in future clinical trials.

Optional Collaborator: The FY08 NFRP strongly supports collaborative research between basic scientists and clinical researchers, and between academic scientists and industry scientists. Collaborations that bring new perspectives from other disciplines or bring new investigators into the NF field are also strongly encouraged. These types of collaborations will qualify for a higher level of funding as described in Section II.D. **For the proposal to qualify for the higher level of funding, the PI must submit a PI Statement of Collaboration in addition to the letter of collaboration from the collaborator. The PI Statement of Collaboration must clearly identify the collaborating PI and address the following requirements:**

- The collaborator must significantly contribute to the project such that the proposed work could not be accomplished without his/her involvement.
- If the PI of the proposal does not have NF research experience, the collaborator must have experience in NF research as demonstrated through publications and/or funding history.
- The collaborator must be ***at or above*** the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent).

- At least a 10% level of effort is required of the collaborator. Contribution of the collaborator should be reflected in the proposal's budget.

C. Eligibility

PIs must be at or above the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent). Refer to Application Instructions, Appendix 1, for general eligibility information.

D. Funding

Funding for an Investigator-Initiated Research Award can be requested for up to $525,000 for direct costs for up to a 3-year performance period, plus indirect costs as appropriate.

Funding for an Investigator-Initiated Research Award that includes a qualified collaborator can be requested for up to $625,000 for direct costs for up to a 3-year performance period, plus indirect costs as appropriate.

Within the guidelines provided in the Application Instructions, funds can cover:

- Salary
- Research supplies
- Equipment
- Clinical costs
- Travel to scientific/technical meetings
- Travel between collaborating institutions

The CDMRP expects to allot approximately $3.0 million (M) of the $8M FY08 NFRP appropriation to fund approximately 3-4 Investigator-Initiated Research Award proposals, depending on the quality and number of proposals received. Funding of proposals received in response to this Program Announcement/Funding Opportunity is contingent upon the availability of Federal funds for this program.

E. Award Administration

Refer to the Application Instructions (Appendix 5) for general award administration information.

III. TIMELINE FOR SUBMISSION AND REVIEW

Proposal submission is a two-step process consisting of (1) pre-application submission and (2) proposal submission. ***Pre-application submission is a required first step***.

- **Pre-application Submission Deadline: 5:00 p.m. Eastern time, March 26, 2008**
- **Proposal Submission Deadline: 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, April 9, 2008**
- **Peer Review: June 2008**
- **Programmatic Review: September 2008**

Awards will be made approximately 4 to 6 months after receiving the funding notification letter, but no later than September 30, 2009.

IV. SUBMISSION PROCESS

Proposal submission is a two-step process consisting of (1) a pre-application submission through the CDMRP eReceipt system (https://cdmrp.org/) and (2) a proposal submission through Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov/).

Submission of the same research project to different award mechanisms within the same program or to other CDMRP programs is discouraged. The Government reserves the right to reject duplicative proposals.

A. Step 1: Pre-Application Components and Submission

The pre-application consists of the components discussed below. All pre-application components must be submitted electronically through the CDMRP eReceipt system by ***5:00 p.m. Eastern time on the deadline***. Refer to the Application Instructions for detailed information.

1. Proposal Information
2. Proposal Contacts
3. Collaborators and Conflicts of Interest (COI)
4. Letter of Intent (LOI) Narrative

B. Step 2: Proposal Components and Submission

Proposal submission will not be accepted unless a pre-application was submitted by the pre-application deadline. Proposals must be submitted electronically by the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) through Grants.gov (www.grants.gov). No paper copies will be accepted.

Each proposal submission must include the completed Grants.gov application package of forms and attachments identified in www.grants.gov for the US Army Medical Research Acquisition

Activity (USAMRAA) program announcement. In addition to the specific instructions below, please refer to the Application Instructions for detailed requirements of each component.

The package includes:

1. **SF-424 (R&R) Application for Federal Assistance Form**

2. **Attachments Form**

   - Attachment 1: Project Narrative (20-page limit)

     Describe the proposed project in detail using the outline below. ***Proposals must include preliminary data relevant to NF and the proposed project.***

     - **Background:** Present the ideas and reasoning behind the proposed research, to include relevant literature citations. Describe previous experience most pertinent to this proposal.
     - **Hypothesis or Objective**: State the hypothesis to be tested or the objective to be reached.
     - **Specific Aims:** Concisely explain the project's specific aims. If this proposal is part of a larger study, present only tasks that the DOD award would fund.
     - **Research Strategy:** Describe the experimental design, methods, and analyses including appropriate controls in sufficient detail for analysis. Address potential problem areas and present alternative methods and approaches. If human subjects or human biological samples will be used, include a detailed plan for the recruitment of subjects or the acquisition of samples. ***This award may not be used to conduct clinical trials.***

   - Attachment 2: Supporting Documentation
     - References Cited
     - Acronyms and Symbol Definitions
     - Facilities & Other Resources
     - Description of Existing Equipment
     - Publications and/or Patent Abstracts (5-document limit)
     - Letters of Institutional Support
     - Letters of Collaboration (if applicable)
     - PI Statement of Collaboration (required if requesting higher level of funding)
     - Intellectual and Material Property Plan (if applicable)
   - Attachment 3: Technical and Public Abstracts
   - Attachment 4: Statement of Work (SOW)
   - Attachment 5: Impact Statement

Describe the impact of this study on the concepts and methods that drive the field(s) and/ or the impact on the treatment and/or management of NF and/or Schwannomatosis. Explain the potential clinical applications, benefits, and risks.

- Attachment 6: Innovation Statement

Summarize how the proposal is innovative. The following examples of ways in which proposals may be innovative, ***although not all-inclusive***, are intended to help PIs frame the innovative features of their proposals:

  - Study concept – Investigation of a novel idea and/or research question.
  - Research method or technology – Use of novel research methods or new technologies, including technology development, to address a research question.
  - Existing methods or technologies – Application or adaptation of existing methods or technologies for novel research or clinical purposes, or for research or clinical purposes that differ fundamentally from those originally intended.

Investigating the next logical step as an incremental advancement on published data is not considered innovative.

- Attachment 7: Federal Agency Financial Plan (if applicable)

3. **Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded Form)**

   - PI Biographical Sketch (four-page limit)
   - PI Current/Pending Support
   - Key Personnel Biographical Sketches (four-page limit each)
   - Key Personnel Current/Pending Support

4. **Research & Related Budget Form**

   - Budget Justification

5. **Research & Related Project/Performance Site Location(s) Form**

6. **R&R Subaward Budget Attachment(s) Form (if applicable)**

V. INFORMATION FOR PROPOSAL REVIEW

A. Proposal Review and Selection Overview

All proposals are evaluated by scientists, clinicians, and consumer advocates using a two-tier review process. The first tier is a scientific peer review of proposals against established criteria for determining scientific merit. The second tier is a programmatic review that compares submissions to each other and recommends proposals for funding based on scientific merit and overall goals of the program. Additional information about the two-tier review process used by the CDMRP may be found at http://cdmrp.army.mil/fundingprocess

The peer review and program review processes are conducted confidentially and anonymously to maintain the integrity of the merit-based selection process. Each tier review requires panelists to sign a non-disclosure statement attesting that proposal and evaluation information will not be disclosed outside the panel. Violations of the non-disclosure statement can result in the dissolving of a panel(s) and other correcting actions. Correspondingly, institutional personnel and PIs are prohibited from contacting persons involved in the proposal review process to gain protected evaluation information or to influence the evaluation process. Violations of this prohibition will result in the administrative withdrawal of the institution's proposal. Violations by panelists or PIs that compromise the confidentiality or anonymity of the peer review and program review processes may also result in suspension or debarment of their employing institutions from Federal awards.

The Government reserves the right to review all proposals based on one or more of the required attachments or supporting documentation (e.g., Impact Statement, Innovation Statement, etc.).

B. Review Criteria

1. Peer Review: All proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria, which are listed in order of decreasing importance:

- **Research Strategy and Feasibility (preliminary data are required)**
  - How well the preliminary data and rationale supports the research project.
  - How well the hypotheses or objectives, aims, experimental design, methods, and analyses are developed.
  - How well the PI acknowledges potential problems and addresses alternative approaches.
  - If the proposal includes the Optional Collaborator, how well the nature of the collaboration supports the research project.
- **Impact**
  - How the proposal addresses a critical problem in neurofibromatosis and/or Schwannomatosis research or patient care.
  - How the project makes an original and important contribution to the goal of advancing research on the treatment of neurofibromatosis and/or Schwannomatosis or on the quality of life of patients.
- **Personnel**
  - The appropriateness of the levels of effort by the PI and other key personnel to ensure success of this project.
  - How the PI's record of accomplishment demonstrates his/her ability to accomplish the proposed work.
  - **Optional Collaborator(s) (if applicable)**

- Whether the collaborator's experience, expertise, and involvement in the study significantly contributes to the project such that the proposed work could not be accomplished without his/her efforts.
- Whether the collaborator meets the criteria for an optional collaborator as verified by the PI Statement of Collaboration (i.e., the collaborator possesses appropriate NF research experience if the PI does not; the collaborator is at or above the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent); the collaborator is contributing at least a 10% level of effort).

- **Innovation**
  - How the proposed research is innovative in one or more of the following ways: Concept or question, research methods or technologies, adaptations of existing methods or technologies, or other ways.
  - How the project proposes new paradigms or challenges existing paradigms.
  - How the proposed research represents more than an incremental advance upon published data.
  - How the potential gain justifies the perceived risk.
- **Environment**
  - The appropriateness of the scientific environment for the proposed research.
  - How the research requirements are supported adequately by the availability of and accessibility to facilities and resources (including collaborative arrangements).
- **Budget**
  - How the budget is appropriate for the proposed research.

2. Programmatic Review: Criteria used by the Integration Panel (IP) to make funding recommendations that maintain the program's broad portfolio include:

- Ratings and evaluations of the peer reviewers,
- Programmatic relevance,
- Relative innovation and impact,
- Program portfolio balance, and
- Adherence to the intent of the award mechanism.

Scientifically sound proposals that best fulfill the above criteria and most effectively address the unique focus and goals of the program will be identified by Integration Panel members and recommended for funding to the Commanding General, USAMRMC.

VI. COMPLIANCE GUIDELINES

Compliance guidelines have been designed to ensure the presentation of all pre-applications and proposals in an organized and easy-to-follow manner. Peer reviewers expect to see a consistent,

prescribed format. Failure to adhere to formatting guidelines makes documents difficult to read, may be perceived as an attempt to gain an unfair competitive advantage, and may result in preapplication or proposal rejection. **Pre-applications or proposals missing required components as specified in the Program Announcement/Funding Opportunity may be administratively rejected.**

The following will result in administrative rejection of the entire proposal:

- Project Narrative exceeds page limit.
- Project Narrative is missing.
- Margins are less than specified in the formatting guidelines.
- Print Area exceeds that specified in the formatting guidelines.
- Spacing is less than specified in the formatting guidelines.
- Budget and/or budget justification are missing.
- FY08 IP members are included in any capacity in the pre-application process, the proposal, budgets, and any supporting document. A list of the FY08 IP members may be found at http://cdmrp.army.mil/research

For any other sections of the pre-application or proposal with a defined page limit, pages exceeding the specified limit will be removed and not forwarded for peer review.

Material submitted after the submission deadline, unless specifically requested by the Government, will not be forwarded for peer review.

Proposals that appear to include plagiarized information will be withheld from further consideration pending institutional investigation. The institution will be requested to perform an investigation and provide those findings to the Grants Officer for a determination of the final disposition of the application.