

I. OVERVIEW OF THE FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Program Announcement for the Department of Defense

Defense Health Program

Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs

Vision Research Program

Investigator-Initiated Research Award

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: HT9425-23-VRP-IIRA

**Assistance Listing Number: 12.420 Military Medical
Research and Development**

SUBMISSION AND REVIEW DATES AND TIMES

- **Pre-Application Submission Deadline:** 5:00 p.m. Eastern time (ET), July 14, 2023
- **Invitation to Submit an Application:** September 2023
- **Application Submission Deadline:** 11:59 p.m. ET, November 8, 2023
- **End of Application Verification Period:** 5:00 p.m. ET, November 13, 2023
- **Peer Review:** January 2024
- **Programmatic Review:** March 2024

This program announcement must be read in conjunction with the General Application Instructions, version 803. The General Application Instructions document is available for downloading from the Grants.gov funding opportunity announcement by selecting the “Package” tab, clicking “Preview,” and then selecting “Download Instructions.”

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II. DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

II.A. Program Description

Applications to the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Vision Research Program (VRP) are being solicited by the U.S. Army Medical Research Acquisition Activity (USAMRAA) using delegated authority provided by United States Code, Title 10, Section 4001 (10 USC 4001). The execution management agent for this program announcement is the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) at the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command (USAMRDC). The VRP was initiated in 2009 to fund impactful military-relevant vision research that has the potential to significantly improve the healthcare and well-being of military Service Members, Veterans, their family members and caregivers, and the American public. Appropriations for the VRP from FY09 through FY22 totaled \$164.95 million (M). The FY23 appropriation is \$20M.

The proposed research must be relevant to active-duty Service Members, Veterans, military beneficiaries, and/or the American public.

The goal of the VRP is to transform visual system trauma care for our Armed Forces and the nation. Eye injury accounted for approximately 15% of all injuries from battlefield trauma sustained during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Surveillance data from the Department of Defense (DOD) showed more than 275,000 eye injuries in the U.S. Armed Forces between 2000 and 2017. More than 6,000 of the injuries were categorized as having a high risk of blindness. In addition, statistics from the Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence show that, through the third quarter of 2022, more than 468,000 Service Members have been diagnosed with traumatic brain injury (TBI), which can have significant impact on vision even when there is no injury to the eye.

The FY23 VRP challenges the scientific community to design innovative research that will significantly advance the understanding, prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, and/or treatment of eye injury or visual dysfunction associated with military exposure. Research outcomes are expected to ultimately improve the care of Service Members and Veterans as well as the American public.

II.A.1. FY23 VRP Focus Areas

To meet the intent of the award mechanism, applications to the FY23 VRP Investigator-Initiated Research Award (IIRA) must address research in one or more of the following Focus Areas:

- Understanding and treatment of eye injury or visual dysfunction as related to military exposure.
- Diagnosis, stabilization, and treatment of eye injuries in austere environments and prolonged field care settings

- Restoration of visual function after military exposure-related vision loss or severe visual impairment

II.A.2. Award History

The VRP IIRA mechanism was first offered in FY18. Since then, 265 IIRA applications have been received, and 59 have been recommended for funding.

II.B. Award Information

The FY23 VRP IIRA is intended to support studies that will yield highly impactful discoveries or major advancements in the research and/or patient care of eye injury and/or visual dysfunction as related to military exposure.

Applications involving multidisciplinary collaborations among academia, industry, the military services, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and other federal government agencies are highly encouraged.

To support research projects at different stages and the exploration/development of ideas of different maturity levels, two different funding levels are available under this program announcement. *When submitting the pre-application, it is the responsibility of the applicant organization to select the funding level that is most appropriate for the research proposed. The funding level should be selected based on the stage and maturity level of the research project, rather than the amount of the budget.*

- **Funding Level 1** supports exploratory, innovative, high-risk/high-reward research that is in the earliest stages of idea development. Research must have the potential to yield new avenues of investigation, such as new approaches, new research tools, or new paradigms.
 - Preliminary data are *not required*. However, *applicants must provide solid rationale for the research idea, supported by literature*.
 - The investigating team must have sufficient expertise to test the research idea.
- **Funding Level 2** supports the advancement of more mature research toward clinical translation. The research idea or solution should be innovative or novel, or offer significant refinements, improvements, or new applications of existing ideas or solutions, as applicable.
 - Funding Level 2 applications may focus on any phase of research from basic through translational.
 - *Preliminary data supporting the readiness and feasibility of the proposed research are required.*

Research involving human subjects and human anatomical substances is permitted; however, *the IIRA may not be used to conduct clinical trials.*

A clinical trial is defined as a research study in which one or more human subjects are prospectively assigned to one or more interventions (which may include a placebo or another control) to evaluate the effects of the interventions on biomedical or behavioral health-related outcomes. Studies that do not seek to measure safety, effectiveness, and/or efficacy outcome(s) of an intervention are not considered clinical trials.

Applicants may consult the following resource documents as applicable:

- [Blast Term Dictionary and Guidance Documents for Blast Injury Research](#)
- [A Primer for Conducting Department of Defense \(DOD\) Funded Human Research with Military Populations](#)
- [A Beginner's Guide to Army Healthcare System](#)

A description of health services across the range of military operations can be found in the [Joint Health Services Joint Publication 4-02](#).

The types of awards made under the program announcement will be assistance agreements. An assistance agreement is appropriate when the federal government transfers a “thing of value” to a “state, local government,” or “other recipient” to carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by a law of the United States instead of acquiring property or service for the direct benefit and use of the U.S. government. An assistance agreement can take the form of a grant or cooperative agreement. The level of involvement on the part of the DOD during project performance is the key factor in determining whether to award a grant or cooperative agreement. If “no substantial involvement” on the part of the funding agency is anticipated, a grant award will be made (31 USC 6304). Conversely, if substantial involvement on the part of the funding agency is anticipated, a cooperative agreement will be made (31 USC 6305), and the award will identify the specific substantial involvement. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, collaboration, participation, or intervention in the research to be performed under the award. The award type, along with the start date, will be determined during the negotiation process.

The anticipated direct costs budgeted for the entire period of performance for an FY23 VRP IIRA-Funding Level 1 should not exceed **\$260,000**. The anticipated direct costs budgeted for the entire period of performance for an FY23 VRP IIRA-Funding Level 2 should not exceed \$750,000. Refer to [Section II.D.5, Funding Restrictions](#), for detailed funding information.

Awards will be made no later than September 30, 2024. For additional information refer to [Section II.F.1, Federal Award Notices](#).

The CDMRP expects to allot approximately \$0.832M to fund approximately two VRP IIRA-Funding Level 1 applications, and \$6M to fund approximately five VRP IIRA-Funding Level 2 applications. Funding of applications received is contingent upon the availability of federal funds for this program as well as the number of applications received, the quality and merit of the applications as evaluated by scientific and programmatic review, and the requirements of the government. Funds to be obligated on any award resulting from this funding opportunity will be available for use for a limited time period based on the fiscal year of the funds. It is

anticipated that awards made from this FY23 funding opportunity will be funded with FY23 funds, which will expire for use on September 30, 2029.

Following selection of projects for VRP funding, the VRP may share FY23 IIRA applications and reviews with the National Eye Institute (NEI) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for independent funding consideration. Additional or separate application information may be required by the NEI. The number of applications to be considered for funding by the NEI is indeterminate and contingent upon NEI's determination of the quality of applications and funding availability.

Research Involving Animals: All research funded by the FY23 VRP IIRA involving new and ongoing research with animals must be reviewed and approved by the USAMRDC Office of Human and Animal Research Oversight (OHARO) Animal Care and Use Review Office (ACURO), in addition to the local Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) of record. IACUC approval at the time of submission is *not* required. *Allow at least 3 to 4 months for ACURO regulatory review and approval processes for animal studies.* Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 1, for additional information..

Research Involving Human Data, Human Anatomical Substances, Human Subjects, or Human Cadavers: All DOD-funded research involving new and ongoing research with human data, human anatomical substances, human subjects, or human cadavers must be reviewed and approved by the USAMRDC OHARO, Office of Human Research Oversight (OHRO), prior to research implementation. This administrative review requirement is in addition to the local Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Ethics Committee (EC) review. Local IRB/EC approval at the time of application submission is *not* required; however, local IRB/EC approval is necessary prior to OHRO review. Allow up to 3 months to complete the OHRO regulatory review and approval process following submission of *all required and complete* documents to the OHRO. Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 1, and the OHARO web page https://mrhc.health.mil/index.cfm/collaborate/research_protections/hrpo for additional information.

As of January 20, 2020, U.S. institutions engaged in non-exempt cooperative research *must* rely on a single IRB to review and approve the portion of the research conducted at domestic sites in accordance with Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46.114(b) (45 CFR 46.114[b]). If the proposed, non-exempt research involves more than one U.S.-based institution, a written plan for single IRB review arrangements must be provided at the time of application submission or award negotiation. The lead institution responsible for developing the master protocol and master consent form should be identified and should be the single point of contact for regulatory submissions and requirements.

Use of DOD or VA Resources: If the proposed research involves access to active-duty military and/or VA patient populations and/or DOD or VA resources or databases, the application must describe the access at the time of submission and include a plan for maintaining access as needed throughout the proposed research. Refer to [Section II.D.2.b.ii, Full Application Submission Components](#), for detailed information. Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 1, for additional information.

Rigor of Experimental Design: All projects should adhere to accepted standards for rigorous study design and reporting to maximize the reproducibility and translational potential of preclinical research. Core standards are described in Landis, SC, et al. 2012. A call for transparent reporting to optimize the predictive value of preclinical research. *Nature*, 490:187-191 (<https://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v490/n7419/full/nature11556.html>). While these standards were written for preclinical studies, the basic principles of randomization, blinding, sample-size estimation, and data handling derive from well-established best practices in research and should be applied consistently across basic and translational studies.

II.C. Eligibility Information

II.C.1. Eligible Applicants

II.C.1.a. Organization: All organizations, including foreign organizations, foreign public entities, and international organizations, are eligible to apply.

Government Agencies Within the United States: Local, state, and federal government agencies are eligible to the extent that applications do not overlap with their fully funded internal programs. Such agencies are required to explain how their applications do not overlap with their internal programs.

As applications for this program announcement may be submitted by extramural and intramural organizations, these terms are defined below.

Extramural Organization: An eligible non-DOD organization. Examples of extramural organizations include academic institutions, biotechnology companies, foundations, federal government organizations other than the DOD, and research institutes.

Intramural DOD Organization: A DOD laboratory, DOD military treatment facility, and/or DOD activity embedded within a civilian medical center. ***Intramural Submission: An application submitted by a DOD organization for an intramural investigator working within a DOD laboratory or military treatment facility or in a DOD activity embedded within a civilian medical center.***

The USAMRAA makes awards to eligible organizations, not to individuals.

II.C.1.b. Principal Investigator

Independent investigators at all academic levels (or equivalent) may be named by the organization as the Principal Investigator (PI) on the application.

An eligible PI, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, or citizenship status, must be employed by or affiliated with an eligible organization.

The CDMRP strongly encourages all PIs to participate in a digital identifier initiative through Open Researcher and Contributor ID, Inc. (ORCID). Registration for a unique ORCID identifier can be done online at <https://orcid.org/>.

II.C.2. Cost Sharing

Cost sharing/matching is not an eligibility requirement.

II.C.3. Other

Organizations must be able to access **.gov** and **.mil** websites in order to fulfill the financial and technical deliverable requirements of the award and submit invoices for payment.

For general information on required qualifications for award recipients, refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 3.

Refer to [Section II.H.2, Administrative Actions](#), for a list of administrative actions that may be taken if a pre-application or application does not meet the administrative, eligibility, or ethical requirements defined in this program announcement.

II.D. Application and Submission Information

Submission of applications that are essentially identical or propose essentially the same research project to different funding opportunities within the same program and fiscal year is prohibited and will result in administrative withdrawal of the duplicative application(s).

Exception: Applicants to the FY23 VRP IIRA - Funding Level 2 are permitted to simultaneously submit the same project as part of an application to the FY23 VRP Focused Translational Team Science Award (FTTSA) (Funding Opportunity Number: HT9425-23-VRP-FTTSA). The scope and budget of the IIRA - Funding Level 2 and the FTTSA applications must be appropriate for the respective award mechanism. Accepting multiple awards to support the same project will not be allowed.

Inclusion of classified research data within the application and/or proposing research of which the anticipated outcomes may be classified or deemed sensitive to national security concerns may result in application withdrawal. Refer to the General Application Instructions Appendix 2, Section E.

II.D.1. eBRAP and Grants.gov

The electronic Biomedical Research Application Portal (eBRAP) (<https://ebrap.org>) is a secure web-based system that allows PIs to submit their pre-applications, view and verify extramural full applications submitted to Grants.gov (<https://grants.gov>), receive communications from the CDMRP, and submit documentation during award negotiations and throughout the period of performance. eBRAP also allows intramural organizations to submit full applications following pre-application submission.

Grants.gov is a federal system required to be utilized by agencies to receive and process extramural grant applications. Full applications may only be submitted to Grants.gov after submission of a pre-application through eBRAP.

Contact information for the eBRAP Help Desk and the Grants.gov Contact Center can be found in [Section II.G, Federal Awarding Agency Contacts](#).

Extramural Submission:

- Pre-application content and forms must be accessed and submitted at eBRAP.org.
- Full application packages must be accessed and submitted at Grants.gov.

Intramural DOD Submission:

- Pre-application content and forms must be accessed and submitted at eBRAP.org.
- Full application packages must be accessed and submitted at eBRAP.org.

Note: Applications from an intramural DOD organization or from an extramural federal government organization may be submitted to Grants.gov through a research foundation.

II.D.2. Content and Form of the Application Submission

Submission is a two-step process requiring both ***pre-application*** (eBRAP.org) and ***full application*** (eBRAP.org or Grants.gov) as indicated below. The submission process should be started early to avoid missing deadlines. There are no grace periods. Full application submission guidelines differ for extramural (Grants.gov) and intramural (eBRAP.org) organizations (refer to [Table 1, Full Application Guidelines](#)).

The application title, eBRAP log number, and all information for the PI, Business Official(s), performing organization, and contracting organization must be consistent throughout the entire pre-application and full application submission process. Inconsistencies may delay application processing and limit or negate the ability to view, modify, and verify the application in eBRAP. If any changes need to be made, the applicant should contact the eBRAP Help Desk at help@eBRAP.org or 301-682-5507 prior to the application submission deadline.

II.D.2.a. Step 1: Pre-Application Submission Content

During the pre-application process, eBRAP assigns each submission a unique log number. This unique eBRAP log number is required during the full application submission process.

To begin the pre-application process, first select whether the submitting organization is extramural or intramural, then confirm your selection or cancel. **Incorrect selection of extramural or intramural submission type will delay processing.**

If an error has been made in the selection of extramural versus intramural and the pre-application submission deadline has passed, the PI or Business Official must contact the eBRAP Help Desk at help@eBRAP.org or 301-682-5507 to request a change in designation.

All pre-application components must be submitted by the PI through eBRAP (<https://eBRAP.org>). Because the invitation to submit an application is based on the contents of

the pre-application, *investigators should not change the title or research objectives after the pre-application is submitted.*

The applicant organization and associated PI identified in the pre-application should be the same as those intended for the subsequent application submission. If any changes are necessary after submission of the pre-application, the applicant must contact the eBRAP Help Desk at help@eBRAP.org or 301-682-5507.

PIs with an ORCID identifier should enter that information in the appropriate field in the “My Profile” tab in the “Account Information” section of eBRAP.

The pre-application consists of the following components, which are organized in eBRAP by separate tabs (refer to the General Application Instructions, Section II.B, for additional information on pre-application submission):

- **Tab 1 – Application Information**

Submission of application information includes assignment of primary and secondary research classification codes, which may be found at <https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review and confirm the codes prior to making their selection.

- **Tab 2 – Application Contacts**

Enter contact information for the PI. Enter the organization’s Business Official responsible for sponsored program administration (the “person to be contacted on matters involving this application” in Block 5 of the Grants.gov SF424 Research & Related Form). The Business Official must be either selected from the eBRAP list or invited in order for the pre-application to be submitted.

Select the performing organization (site at which the PI will perform the proposed work) and the contracting organization (organization submitting on behalf of the PI, which corresponds to Block 5 on the Grants.gov SF424 Research & Related Form) and click on “Add Organizations to this Pre-application.” The organization(s) must be either selected from the eBRAP drop-down list or invited in order for the pre-application to be submitted.

It is recommended that PIs identify an Alternate Submitter in the event that assistance with pre-application submission is needed.

- **Tab 3 – Collaborators and Key Personnel**

Enter the name, organization, and role of all collaborators and key personnel associated with the application.

[FY23 VRP Programmatic Panel members](#) should not be involved in any pre-application or application. For questions related to panel members and pre-applications or applications, refer to [Section II.H.2.c, Withdrawal](#), or contact the eBRAP Help Desk at help@eBRAP.org or 301-682-5507.

- **Tab 4 – Conflicts of Interest**

List all individuals other than collaborators and key personnel who may have a conflict of interest in the review of the application (including those with whom the PI has a personal or professional relationship).

- **Tab 5 – Pre-Application Files**

Note: Upload documents as individual PDF files unless otherwise noted. eBRAP will not allow a file to be uploaded if the number of pages exceeds the limit specified below.

- **Preproposal Narrative (two-page limit):** The Preproposal Narrative page limit applies to text and non-text elements (e.g., figures, tables, graphs, photographs, diagrams, chemical structures, drawings) used to describe the project. Inclusion of URLs that provide additional information to expand the Preproposal Narrative and could confer an unfair competitive advantage is prohibited and may result in administrative withdrawal of the pre-application.

The Preproposal Narrative should include the following:

- **Research Idea/Rationale:**

- **Funding Level 1:** Describe the research idea to be explored and the rationale. Concisely explain how the idea may yield new avenues of investigation, such as new approaches, new research tools, or new paradigms.
- **Funding Level 2:** Describe the proposed research, rationale, and the preliminary data supporting its readiness and feasibility. Concisely explain how it is designed to advance a line of research toward clinical translation.
- **Both Funding Levels:** Explain how the research idea meets the intent of the FY23 VRP IIRA and aligns with one or more of the [FY23 VRP Focus Areas](#).

- **Objective(s)/Hypothesis(es), Specific Aims, and Approaches:** Concisely state the project’s objective(s)/hypothesis(es), specific aims, and describe the scientific approaches. Include a description of controls, as appropriate. As applicable, identify the animal models to be studied, the data to be analyzed, and/or the human subject population to be engaged during the study.

- **Impact:** Describe the anticipated short- and long-term impact of this study on the field of visual system trauma research and/or care.

- **Personnel:** Briefly state the qualifications of the PI and key personnel. Clearly demonstrate that the investigating team has sufficient expertise that is appropriate for the research idea and the proposed phase/type of study.

- **Pre-Application Supporting Documentation:** The items to be included as supporting documentation for the pre-application *must be uploaded as individual files* and are limited to the following:
 - **References Cited (one-page limit):** List the references cited (including URLs if available) in the Preproposal Narrative using a standard reference format that includes the full citation (i.e., author[s], year published, reference title, and reference source, including volume, chapter, page numbers, and publisher, as appropriate).
 - **List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Symbols:** Provide a list of abbreviations, acronyms, and symbols used in the Preproposal Narrative.
 - **Key Personnel Biographical Sketches (six-page limit per individual):** *All biographical sketches should be uploaded as a single combined file.* Biographical sketches should be used to demonstrate background and expertise through education, positions, publications, and previous work accomplished.

- **Tab 6 – Submit Pre-Application**

This tab must be completed for the pre-application to be accepted and processed.

Pre-Application Screening

- **Pre-Application Screening Criteria**

To determine the technical merits of the pre-application and the relevance to the mission of the Defense Health Program (DHP) and the VRP, pre-applications will be screened based on the following criteria:

- **Research Idea/Rationale:**
 - **Funding Level 1:** How well the research idea is supported by a rationale. To what extent it is designed to yield new avenues of investigation.
 - **Funding Level 2:** How well the proposed research is supported by preliminary data and a rationale. To what extent it is designed to advance a line of research toward clinical translation.
 - **Both Funding Levels:** How well the research idea meets the intent of the FY23 VRP IIRA and aligns with one or more of the [FY23 VRP Focus Areas](#).
- **Objective(s)/Hypothesis(es), Specific Aims, and Approaches:** Whether the proposed research has clear objective(s)/hypothesis(es). To what extent the specific aims and approaches form a coherent research plan to address the objective(s)/hypothesis(es).
- **Impact:** To what extent the short- and long-term outcomes of the proposed study, if successful, will impact the field of visual system trauma research and/or care.

- **Personnel:** To what extent the investigating team has sufficient qualification and expertise to perform the proposed research.
- **Notification of Pre-Application Screening Results**

Following the pre-application screening, PIs will be notified as to whether or not they are invited to submit applications; however, they will not receive feedback (e.g., a critique of strengths and weaknesses) on their pre-application. The estimated timeframe for notification of invitation to submit an application is indicated in [Section I, Overview of the Funding Opportunity](#). Invitations to submit a full application are based on the Pre-Application Screening Criteria listed above.

II.D.2.b. Step 2: Full Application Submission Content

Applications will not be accepted unless notification of invitation has been received.

The CDMRP cannot make allowances/exceptions to its policies for submission problems encountered by the applicant organization using system-to-system interfaces with Grants.gov.

Each application submission must include the completed full application package for this program announcement. The full application package is submitted by the Authorized Organizational Representative through Grants.gov (<https://grants.gov/>) for extramural organizations or through eBRAP (<https://ebrap.org/>) for intramural organizations. See Table 1 below for more specific guidelines.

II.D.2.b.i. Full Application Guidelines

Extramural organizations must submit full applications through Grants.gov. Applicants must create a Grants.gov Workspace for submission, which allows the application components to be completed online and routed through the applicant organization for review prior to submission. Applicants may choose to download and save individual PDF forms rather than filling out webforms in Workspace. A compatible version of Adobe Reader **must** be used to view, complete, and submit an application package consisting of PDF forms. If more than one person is entering text into an application package, the **same version** of Adobe Reader software should be used by each person. Check the version number of the Adobe software on each user's computer to make sure the versions match. Using different versions of Adobe Reader may cause submission and/or save errors – even if each version is individually compatible with Grants.gov. Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III, and the “Apply For Grants” page of Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>) for further information about the Grants.gov Workspace submission process. Submissions of extramural applications through eBRAP may be withdrawn.

Do not password protect any files of the application package, including the Project Narrative.

Table 1. Full Application Submission Guidelines

| Extramural Submissions | Intramural DOD Submissions |
|--|--|
| Application Package Location | |
| <p>Download application package components for HT9425-23-VRP-IIRA from Grants.gov (https://grants.gov) and create a Grants.gov Workspace. Workspace allows online completion of the application components and routing of the application package through the applicant organization for review prior to submission.</p> | <p>Download application package components for HT9425-23-VRP-IIRA from eBRAP (https://ebrap.org).</p> |
| Full Application Package Components | |
| <p>SF424 Research & Related Application for Federal Assistance Form: Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III.A.1, for detailed information.</p> | <p>Tab 1 – Summary: Provide a summary of the application information.</p> <p>Tab 2 – Application Contacts: This tab will be pre-populated by eBRAP; add Authorized Organizational Representative.</p> |
| <p>Descriptions of each required file can be found under Full Application Submission Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachments • Research & Related Personal Data • Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded) • Research & Related Budget • Project/Performance Site Location(s) Form • Research & Related Subaward Budget Attachment(s) Form | <p>Tab 3 – Full Application Files: Upload files under each Application Component in eBRAP. Descriptions of each required file can be found under Full Application Submission Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachments • Key Personnel • Budget • Performance Sites <p>Tab 4 – Application and Budget Data: Review and edit proposed project start date, proposed end date, and budget data pre-populated from the Budget Form.</p> |
| Application Package Submission | |
| <p>Create a Grants.gov Workspace. Add participants (investigators and Business Officials) to Workspace, complete all required forms, and check for errors before submission.</p> <p>Submit a Grants.gov Workspace Package. An application may be submitted through Workspace by clicking the “Sign and Submit” button on the “Manage Workspace” page, under the “Forms” tab. Grants.gov</p> | <p>Submit package components to eBRAP (https://ebrap.org).</p> <p>Tab 5 – Submit/Request Approval Full Application: After all components are uploaded and prior to the full application submission deadline, enter your password in the space provided next to “Enter Your Password Here” and press the “Submit Full Application” button. eBRAP will notify your Resource</p> |

| Extramural Submissions | Intramural DOD Submissions |
|--|--|
| <p>recommends submission of the application package at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date to allow time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.</p> <p>Note: If either the Project Narrative or the budget fails eBRAP validation or needs to be modified, an updated Grants.gov application package must be submitted via Grants.gov as a “Changed/Corrected Application” with the previous Grants.gov Tracking ID prior to the application submission deadline. Do not password protect any files of the application package, including the Project Narrative.</p> | <p>Manager/Comptroller/Task Area Manager or equivalent Business Official by email. Do not password protect any files of the application package, including the Project Narrative.</p> |
| <u>Application Verification Period</u> | |
| <p>The full application package submitted to Grants.gov may be viewed and modified in eBRAP until the end of the application verification period. During the application verification period, the full application package may be modified with the exception of the Project Narrative and Research & Related Budget Form.</p> | <p>After eBRAP has processed the full application, the organizational Resource Manager/Comptroller/Task Area Manager or equivalent Business Official and PI will receive email notification of this status and will be able to view and modify application components in eBRAP. During the application verification period, the full application package may be modified with the exception of the Project Narrative and Research & Related Budget Form. Your Resource Manager/Comptroller/Task Area Manager or equivalent Business Official should log into eBRAP to review and to approve prior to the application verification deadline.</p> |
| Further Information | |
| <p>Tracking a Grants.gov Workspace Package. After successfully submitting a Workspace package, a Grants.gov Tracking Number is automatically assigned to the package. The number will be listed on the “Confirmation” page that is generated after submission.</p> <p>Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III, for further information regarding Grants.gov requirements.</p> | <p>Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV, for further information regarding eBRAP requirements.</p> |

The full application package must be submitted using the unique eBRAP log number to avoid delays in application processing.

II.D.2.b.ii. Full Application Submission Components

- **Extramural Applications Only**

SF424 Research & Related Application for Federal Assistance Form: Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III.A.1, for detailed information.

- **Extramural and Intramural Applications**

Attachments:

Each attachment to the full application components must be uploaded as an individual file in the format specified and in accordance with the formatting guidelines listed in the General Application Instructions, Appendix 4.

For all attachments, ensure that the file names are consistent with the guidance. Attachments will be rejected if the file names are longer than 50 characters or have incorrect file names that contain characters other than the following: A-Z, a-z, 0-9, underscore, hyphen, space, and period. In addition, there are file size limits that may apply in some circumstances. Individual attachments may not exceed 20 megabytes (MB), and the file size for the entire full application package may not exceed 200 MB.

- **Attachment 1: Project Narrative (page limit varies by funding level: see below for page limit): Upload as “ProjectNarrative.pdf”.** The page limit of the Project Narrative applies to text and non-text elements (e.g., figures, tables, graphs, photographs, diagrams, chemical structures, drawings) used to describe the project. Inclusion of URLs (uniform resource locators) that provide additional information to expand the Project Narrative and could confer an unfair competitive advantage is prohibited and may result in administrative withdrawal of the application.
 - **Page Limit:** Page limits for the Project Narrative are correlated with the application’s funding level:
 - **Funding Level 1:** 6-page limit
 - **Funding Level 2:** 12-page limit

Describe the proposed project in detail using the outline below:

- **Background/Rationale:** Provide a sound scientific rationale for the proposed research.
 - **Funding Level 1:** Describe the idea that the proposed research will explore and develop, clearly stating the objective(s) to be reached and/or the hypothesis(es) to be tested. Present sufficient literature to support the rationale for testing the idea.

Explain how the proposed research has the potential to yield new avenues of investigation, such as new approaches, new research tools, or new paradigms. Preliminary data are allowed but not required.

- **Funding Level 2:** Describe the proof-of-concept finding(s) that the proposed research aims to move forward to the next phase of development, clearly stating the objective(s) to be reached and/or the hypothesis(es) to be tested. Present sufficient preliminary data and critical analysis of literature to support the readiness of the objective(s), the soundness of the hypothesis(es), and the feasibility of the approach(es). Explain how the proposed research is innovative or novel or offers significant refinements, improvements, or new applications of existing ideas or solutions.
- **Specific Aims:** Concisely explain the project’s specific aims. Explain how the aims address the objective(s) and/or hypothesis(es) of the proposed research.
- **Research Strategy:** Describe the experimental design, methods, and analyses, including appropriate randomization, blinding/masking, and controls. Provide sufficient detail so that the appropriateness and feasibility of the research strategy can be fully evaluated.
 - If cell lines or animals are to be used, justify the selection of the proposed cell line(s) or animal model(s). Be specific as to why the cell line or animal model was chosen over other cell lines or models, how it is appropriate for addressing the study aims, and how it is relevant to human visual biology and/or injury. Further details of research involving animals will be required in [Attachment 8: Animal Research Plan](#), as applicable.
 - If human subjects or human biological samples will be used, describe the study population and include a detailed plan for the recruitment and retention of subjects or the acquisition of samples. Further details of research involving human subjects or human biological substances will be required in [Attachment 9: Human Subjects/Samples Acquisition and Safety Procedures](#), as applicable. *This award may not be used to conduct clinical trials.*
 - Describe the statistical plan and the rationale for the statistical methodology. Provide a sample size estimate and the method by which it was derived, including power analysis calculation, if applicable.
 - Describe measures to be taken to reduce bias and achieve reproducible and rigorous results, including controls, blinding, randomization, and data handling, as applicable.
 - Address potential problems that may arise and present alternative methods and approaches.
 - Explain how the research can be completed within the proposed period of performance.

- **Attachment 2: Supporting Documentation: Combine and upload as a single file named “Support.pdf”.** Start each document on a new page. If documents are scanned to PDF, the lowest resolution (100 to 150 dpi) should be used. The Supporting Documentation attachment should not include additional information such as figures, tables, graphs, photographs, diagrams, chemical structures, or drawings. These items should be included in the Project Narrative.

There are no page limits for any of these components unless otherwise noted. Include only those components described below; inclusion of items not requested or viewed as an extension of the Project Narrative will result in the removal of those items or may result in administrative withdrawal of the application.

- **References Cited:** List the references cited (including URLs, if available) in the Project Narrative using a standard reference format that includes the full citation (i.e., author[s], year published, title of reference, source of reference, volume, chapter, page numbers, and publisher, as appropriate).
- **List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Symbols:** Provide a list of abbreviations, acronyms, and symbols.
- **Facilities, Existing Equipment, and Other Resources:** Describe the facilities and equipment available for performance of the proposed project and any additional facilities or equipment proposed for acquisition at no cost to the award. Indicate whether government-furnished facilities or equipment are proposed for use. If so, reference should be made to the original or present government award under which the facilities or equipment items are now accountable. There is no form for this information.
- **Publications and/or Patents:** Include a list of relevant publication URLs and/or patent abstracts. If articles are not publicly available, then copies of up to five published manuscripts may be included in Attachment 2. Extra items will not be reviewed.
- **Letters of Organizational Support (two-page limit per letter is recommended):** Provide a letter (or letters, if applicable) signed by the Department Chair or appropriate organization official, confirming the laboratory space, equipment, and other resources available for the project. Letters of support not requested in the program announcement, such as those from members of Congress, do not impact application review or funding decisions.
- **Letters of Collaboration (if applicable) (two-page limit per letter is recommended):** Provide a signed letter from each collaborating individual or organization demonstrating that the PI has the support or resources necessary for the proposed work. If an investigator at an intramural organization is named as a collaborator on an application submitted through an extramural organization, the application must include a letter from the collaborator’s Commander or Commanding Officer at the intramural organization that authorizes the collaborator’s involvement.

- **Letter of Commitment (if applicable) (two-page limit per letter is recommended):** If the proposed study involves use of a commercially produced investigational drug, device, or biologic, provide a letter of commitment from the commercial entity indicating the availability of the product for the duration of the study, support for the proposed phase of research, and support for the indication to be tested.
- **Intellectual Property:** Information can be found in the 2 CFR 200.315, “Intangible Property.”
 - **Intellectual and Material Property Plan (if applicable):** Provide a plan for resolving intellectual and material property issues among participating organizations.
 - **Commercialization Strategy (if applicable):** Describe the commercialization plan. The plan should include intellectual property, market size, financial analysis, strengths and weaknesses, barriers to the market, competitors, and management team. Discuss the significance of this development effort, when it can be anticipated, and the potential commercial use for the technology being developed.
- **Data and Research Resources Sharing Plan:** Describe how data and resources generated during the performance of the project will be shared with the research community. Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 2, Section K, for more information about the CDMRP expectations for making data and research resources publicly available.
 - All TBI clinical research projects are required to report data to the Federal Interagency TBI Research (FITBIR) informatics system (<https://fitbir.nih.gov/>) on a quarterly basis. There is no direct charge to users of the FITBIR Informatics System. A project estimation tool (<https://fitbir.nih.gov/jsp/contribute/fitbir-costs.jsp>) is available to help estimate costs and manpower needs that may be associated with data submission.
- **Data Management Plan (two-page limit):** Describe the data management plan in accordance with Section 3.c Enclosure 3, [DoD Instructions 3200.12](#).
 - For Extramural Applications: Refer to General Application Instructions, Section III.A.2, Attachments Form, Attachment 2, Supporting Documentation, for more detailed information.
 - For Intramural Applications: Refer to General Application Instructions, Section IV.A.1, Application Component – Attachments, Attachment 2, Supporting Documentation, for more detailed information
- **Quad Chart:** Provide a Quad Chart for the proposed project. The format for the quad chart is available on the eBRAP “Funding Opportunities & Forms” web page at <https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>.

- **Use of DOD Resources (if applicable):** Provide a letter of support signed by the lowest-ranking person with approval authority confirming access to active-duty military populations and/or DOD resources or databases.
- **Use of VA Resources (if applicable):** Provide a letter of support from the VA Facility Director(s) or individual designated by the VA Facility Director(s), such as the Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development (ACOS/R&D) or Clinical Service Chief, confirming access to VA patients, resources, and/or VA research space. For VA PIs, if the VA non-profit corporation is not identified as the applicant institution for administering the funds, include a letter from the VA ACOS/R&D confirming this arrangement and identifying the institution that will administer the funds associated with the proposed research.
- **Attachment 3: Technical Abstract (one-page limit): Upload as “TechAbs.pdf”.** The technical abstract is used by all reviewers. Abstracts of all funded research projects will be posted publicly. ***Do not include proprietary or confidential information.*** Use only characters available on a standard QWERTY keyboard. Spell out all Greek letters, other non-English letters, and symbols. Graphics are not allowed.

Programmatic Reviewers rely on the technical abstract for appropriate description of the project’s key aspects. Therefore, clarity and completeness within the space limits of the technical abstract are highly important.

Technical abstracts should include the following elements:

- **Research Idea/Rationale:** Present the ideas and scientific rationale behind the proposed research. Clearly indicate whether the proposed research is exploring early ideas that have the potential to yield new avenues of investigation, or is advancing more mature research toward clinical translation. Describe how the proposed research aligns with one or more of the [FY23 VRP Focus Areas](#).
- **Objective(s) and/or Hypothesis(es):** Clearly state the objective(s) to be reached and/or the hypothesis(es) to be tested.
- **Specific Aims:** State the project’s specific aims.
- **Study Design:** Briefly describe the study design, including appropriate controls.
- **Impact:** Briefly describe how the proposed project, if successful, will impact the field of visual system trauma research and/or care.
- **Attachment 4: Lay Abstract (one-page limit): Upload as “LayAbs.pdf”.** The lay abstract is used by all reviewers. Abstracts of all funded research projects will be posted publicly. ***Do not include proprietary or confidential information. Do not duplicate the technical abstract.*** Use only characters available on a standard QWERTY keyboard. Spell out all Greek letters, other non-English letters, and symbols. Graphics are not allowed.

The lay abstract is an important component of the application review process because it addresses issues of particular interest to the consumer advocate community. Lay abstracts should be written using the outline below in a manner *readily understood by readers without a background in science or medicine*. Minimize use of acronyms and abbreviations, where appropriate.

- Clearly describe the rationale, objective, and aims of the application.
- Describe the anticipated short-term and long-term outcomes of the proposed research. Explain how the outcomes will impact the field of visual system trauma research and/or care.
 - If applicable, how will the proposed research open new avenues of investigation? Why is that important?
 - If applicable, how will the proposed research make significant advancements toward clinical translation?
- **Attachment 5: Statement of Work (three-page limit): Upload as “SOW.pdf”.** The suggested Statement of Work (SOW) format and examples specific to different types of research projects are available on the eBRAP “Funding Opportunities & Forms” web page (<https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>). Recommended strategies for assembling the SOW can be found at <https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>.

For the IIRA mechanism, refer to the “*Suggested SOW Strategy Generic Research*” document for guidance on preparing the SOW and use the blank SOW format titled “Suggested SOW Format”. The SOW must be in PDF format prior to attaching.

- **Attachment 6: Impact Statement (one-page limit): Upload as “Impact.pdf”.** Describe how the short-term and long-term outcome(s) of the proposed research, if successful, will advance the field of visual system trauma research, advance patient care, improve quality of life, contribute to the development or validation of evidence-based policy or guidelines, or otherwise impact the visual health of Service Members, Veterans, and the American public. This should be written with a broad audience in mind, including readers without a background in science or medicine.
- **Attachment 7: Relevance to Military Health Statement (one-page limit): Upload as “Military.pdf”.** Explain how the proposed research is responsive to the healthcare needs and quality of life of Service Members and Veterans with eye injury and/or visual impairment and/or to their family members and caregivers.

As applicable, include the element(s) below:

- Identify any element(s) or special consideration(s) related to the applicability of the ultimate outcome of the research in the military operational environment (e.g., battlefield, Battalion Aid Stations, Forward Support Medical Battalions). Applicants may consult [A Beginner’s Guide to Army Healthcare System](#) and the [Joint Health](#)

[Services Joint Publication 4-02](#) for descriptions of health services across the range of military operations.

- If active-duty military, Veteran, or military family member population(s) will be used in the proposed research project, describe the population(s), the appropriateness of the population(s) for the proposed research, and the feasibility of using the population.
- If applicable, provide a description of how the knowledge, information, products, or technologies gained from the research could be implemented in a dual-use capacity to both benefit the civilian population and address a military need.
- **Attachment 8: Animal Research Plan (required if the proposed research involves the use of animals; no page limit): Upload as “AnimalPlan.pdf”.** Describe the animal research that will be conducted. Applicants should not submit a verbatim replica of the protocol(s) to be submitted to the IACUC as the Animal Research Plan. Consult the ARRIVE (Animal Research: Reporting *In Vivo* Experiments) guidelines 2.0 (<https://arriveguidelines.org/arrive-guidelines>) to ensure that animal research is adequately planned for and will be adequately reported. The Animal Research Plan should address the following points for each proposed animal study:
 - Briefly describe the research objective(s) of the animal study. Explain how and why the animal species, strain, and model(s) being used can address the scientific objectives and, where appropriate, the study’s relevance to human biology. If dogs or cats are proposed, provide the source of the animals.
 - Summarize the procedures to be conducted. Describe the interventions to minimize discomfort, distress, pain, and injury. These include analgesia, anesthesia, sedation, palliative care, and humane endpoints. Identify methods of euthanasia. If the method is not consistent with the [American Veterinary Medical Association Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals](#), provide justification.
 - Describe how the study will be controlled. Identify the ages, sex, and total number of animals by species to be used.
 - Describe the randomization and blinding procedures, and any other measures to be taken to minimize the effects of subjective bias during animal treatment and assessment of results. If randomization and/or blinding will not be utilized, provide justification.
 - Provide a sample size estimate for each study arm and the method by which it was derived, including power analysis calculations.
 - Describe how data will be handled, including rules for stopping data collection, criteria for inclusion and exclusion of data, how outliers will be defined and handled, statistical methods for data analysis, and identification of the primary endpoint(s)/outcome measures.

- Describe how data will be reported and how it will be assured that the documentation will support potential regulatory filing, if applicable.
- **Attachment 9: Human Subjects/Samples Acquisition and Safety Procedures (required if the proposed research involves human subjects or human biological samples; no page limit): Upload as “HumProc.pdf”.** Include the components listed below as applicable.
 - **Study Population and Recruitment Process:** Describe the study population (i.e., Service Members/Veterans/civilians, approximate number, age ranges, sex/gender, racial and ethnic groups, and other pertinent demographic characteristics), criteria for inclusion/exclusion, and the methods that will be used for recruitment/accrual/retention of human subjects.
 - Describe the rationale for the selection of subjects. Provide justification related to the scientific goals of the proposed study for limiting inclusion of any group by age, race, ethnicity, or sex/gender.
 - **Women and Minorities in the Study:** Consistent with the Belmont Report, “Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects,” and congressional legislation, special attention is given to inclusion of women and/or minorities in studies funded or supported by the USAMRDC. This policy is intended to promote equity both in assuming the burdens and in receiving the benefits of human subjects research.
 - ❖ Describe the strategy for the inclusion of women and minorities as appropriate to the objectives of the study, including a description of the composition of the proposed study population in terms of sex/gender, race, and ethnicity, and an accompanying rationale for the selection of subjects. Studies utilizing human biospecimens or datasets that cannot be linked to a specific individual, gender, ethnicity, or race (typically classified as exempt from IRB review) are exempt from this requirement.
 - ❖ Provide an anticipated enrollment table(s) with the proposed enrollment distributed on the basis of sex/gender, race, and ethnicity. The Public Health Service (PHS) Inclusion Enrollment Report is a three-page fillable PDF form, which can be downloaded from eBRAP at <https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>.
 - Demonstrate that the research team has access to the proposed study population. If applicable, discuss past efforts in recruiting human subjects from the target population for previous clinical studies. Address any potential barriers to accrual and plans for addressing unanticipated delays.
 - Describe how the subject-to-group assignments process will be conducted (e.g., randomization, block randomization, stratified randomization, age-matched controls, alternating group, or other procedures), if applicable.

- Include a detailed description of and justification for the compensation plan if the human subjects will be compensated for participation in the study.
 - *For clinical studies proposing to recruit military personnel, refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 1, for more information on recruitment process and considerations, payment, and confidentiality. If a non-military population will be used for the proposed clinical study, explain how results obtained will be applicable to military personnel.*
- **Informed Consent Process:** Describe the plan for obtaining informed consent from human subjects. Include relevant draft process documents. **Provide a draft, in English, of the Informed Consent Form.**
 - **Screening Procedures:** List and describe any evaluations (e.g., laboratory procedures, history, or physical examination) that are required to determine eligibility/suitability for study participation and the diagnostic criteria for entry.
 - **Risks/Benefits Assessment:** Identify all foreseeable study risks (physical, psychological, social, legal, and other). Discuss the importance of the knowledge to be gained in relation to the risks to subjects. Clearly describe measures of risk management and plans for emergency response. Describe known and potential benefits, which may or may not be direct to subjects, in relation to risks.
- Note: Payment and/or other compensation for participation are not considered benefits and must be addressed in Study Population and Recruitment Process.*
- **Human Samples:** Describe the types and source(s) of specimens, records, or data to be collected and evaluated. Include information about specimen storage (i.e., location, duration, special handling conditions). Describe the identifiers that will be associated with the human specimens and data, and provide a list of who has access to subjects’ identities. Describe how individually identifiable private information will be protected.
 - **Attachment 10: Representations, if applicable (extramural submissions only): Upload as “RequiredReps.pdf”.** All extramural applicants must complete and submit the Required Representations template available on eBRAP (<https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>). For more information, see the General Application Instructions, Appendix 5, Section B, Representations.
 - **Attachment 11: Suggested Collaborating DOD Military Facility Budget Format, if applicable: Upload as “MFBudget.pdf”.** If a military facility (Military Health System facility, research laboratory, medical treatment facility, dental treatment facility, or a DOD activity embedded with a civilian medical center) will be a collaborator in performance of the project, complete a separate budget, using “Suggested Collaborating DOD Military Facility Budget Format”, available for download on the eBRAP “Funding Opportunities & Forms” web page (<https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>), including a budget justification, for each military facility as instructed. The costs per year should be included on the Grants.gov Research & Related Budget Form under

subaward costs. Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III.A.8, for detailed information.

- **Extramural and Intramural Applications**

To evaluate compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 USC 1681[a] et seq.), the DOD is collecting certain demographic and career information to be able to assess the success rates of women who are proposed for key roles in applications in science, technology, engineering, and/or mathematics (STEM) disciplines. To enable this assessment, each application must include the following forms completed as indicated.

Research & Related Personal Data: For extramural submissions (via Grants.gov), refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III.A.3, and for intramural submissions (via eBRAP), refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.A.2, for detailed information.

Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded): For extramural submissions (via Grants.gov), refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III.A.4, and for intramural submissions (via eBRAP), refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.A.3, for detailed information.

- PI Biographical Sketch (six-page limit): Upload as “Biosketch_LastName.pdf”. The suggested biographical sketch format is available on the “Funding Opportunities & Forms” web page (<https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>) in eBRAP. The NIH Biographical Sketch may also be used. All biographical sketches should be submitted in uneditable PDF format.
- PI Previous/Current/Pending Support (no page limit): Upload as “Support_LastName.pdf”.
 - For extramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III.A.4, for detailed information.
 - For intramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.A.3, for detailed information.
- Key Personnel Biographical Sketches (six-page limit each): Upload as “Biosketch_LastName.pdf”.
- Key Personnel Previous/Current/Pending Support (no page limit): Upload as “Support_LastName.pdf”.

Research & Related Budget: For extramural submissions (via Grants.gov), refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III.A.5, and for intramural submissions (via eBRAP), refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.A.4, for detailed information.

Budget Justification (no page limit): Upload as “BudgetJustification.pdf”. The budget justification for the entire period of performance must be uploaded to the Research & Related Budget after completion of the budget for Period 1.

Project/Performance Site Location(s) Form: For extramural submissions (via Grants.gov), refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III.A.6, and for intramural submissions (via eBRAP), refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.A.5, for detailed information.

- **Extramural Applications Only**

Research & Related Subaward Budget Attachment(s) Form (if applicable): Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III.A.7, for detailed information.

- **Extramural Subaward:** Complete the Research & Related Subaward Budget Form through Grants.gov. (Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III.A.7, for detailed information.) Verify subaward budget(s) and budget justification forms are present in eBRAP during the application verification period. If these components are missing, upload them to eBRAP before the end of the application verification period.
- **Intramural DOD Collaborator(s):** Complete the “Suggested Collaborating DOD Military Facility Budget Format” and upload to Grants.gov attachment form as Attachment 11. (Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.A.4, for detailed information.) Each Intramural DOD Collaborator should include costs per year on the Grants.gov Research & Related Budget Form under subaward costs.

II.D.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)

The applicant organization must be registered as an entity in SAM (<https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>) and receive confirmation of an “Active” status before submitting an application through Grants.gov. *As of April 2022, all federal awards including, but not limited to, contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements will use the UEI generated through SAM.gov.* Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III, for further information regarding Grants.gov requirements.

II.D.4. Submission Dates and Times

All submission dates and times are indicated in [Section I, Overview of the Funding Opportunity](#). Pre-application and application submissions are required. The pre-application and application submission process should be started early to avoid missing deadlines. There are no grace periods. Failure to meet either of these deadlines will result in submission rejection.

Applicant Verification of Full Application Submission in eBRAP

For Both Extramural and Intramural Applicants: eBRAP allows an organization’s representatives and PIs to view and modify the full application submissions associated with them. Following retrieval and processing of the full application, eBRAP will notify the organizational representatives and PI by email to log into eBRAP to review, modify, and verify

the full application submission. eBRAP will validate full application files against the specific program announcement requirements, and discrepancies will be noted in an email to the PI and in the “Full Application Files” tab in eBRAP. eBRAP does not confirm the accuracy of file content. Application viewing, modification, and verification in eBRAP are strongly recommended, but not required. It is the applicant’s responsibility to review all application components and ensure proper ordering as specified in the program announcement. ***If either the Project Narrative or the budget fails eBRAP validation or needs to be modified, an updated full application package must be submitted prior to the application submission deadline. The Project Narrative and Research & Related Budget Form cannot be changed after the application submission deadline.*** Other application components may be changed until the end of the application verification period. Verify that subaward budget(s) and budget justification forms are present in eBRAP during the application verification period. If these components are missing, upload them to eBRAP before the end of the application verification period. After the end of the application verification period, the full application cannot be modified.

Extramural Submission: The full application package submitted to Grants.gov may be viewed and modified in eBRAP until the end of the application verification period. During the application verification period, the full application package, ***with the exception of the Project Narrative and Budget Form,*** may be modified.

Intramural DOD Submission: After eBRAP has processed the full application, the organizational Resource Manager/Comptroller/Task Area Manager or equivalent Business Official and PI will receive email notification of the status and will be able to view and modify application components in eBRAP. During the application verification period, the full application package, ***with the exception of the Project Narrative and Budget Form,*** may be modified. The Resource Manager/Comptroller/Task Area Manager or equivalent Business Official should log into eBRAP to review and to approve the application package prior to the application verification deadline.

For All Submissions: Verify that subaward budget(s) with budget justification are present in eBRAP during the application verification period. If these components are missing, upload them to eBRAP before the end of the application verification period.

II.D.5. Funding Restrictions

The maximum period of performance is 2 years for Funding Level 1 and 3 years for Funding Level 2.

The anticipated direct costs budgeted for the entire period of performance should not exceed **\$260,000 for Funding Level 1** or **\$750,000 for Funding Level 2**. If indirect cost rates have been negotiated, indirect costs are to be budgeted in accordance with the organization’s negotiated rate.

All direct and indirect costs of any subaward or contract must be included in the total direct costs of the primary award.

The applicant may request the entire maximum funding amount for a project that may have a period of performance less than the maximum **2** years for **Funding Level 1** or **3** years for **Funding Level 2**.

For this award mechanism, direct costs may be requested for travel including:

- Travel in support of multidisciplinary collaborations.
- Travel for one investigator to travel to one scientific/technical meeting per year to present project information or disseminate project results from the FY23 VRP IIRA.

Must not be requested for:

- Clinical trial costs

For Funding Level 2, direct costs must be requested for:

- Travel costs for the PI to present project information or disseminate results at one DOD-sponsored meeting to be specified by the program office during award negotiations (e.g., the Military Health System Research Symposium). For planning purposes, it should be assumed that the meeting will be held in the Central Florida Area. Costs associated with travel to this meeting should be included in year 2 or 3 of the budget. This is in addition to the scientific/technical meeting described above.

For extramural awards with an intragovernmental component, direct transfer of funds from an extramural award recipient to a DOD or other federal agency is not allowed except under very limited circumstances. Funding to intramural DOD and other federal agencies will be managed through a direct funds transfer. Intramural applicants are responsible for coordinating through their agency's procedures the use of contractual or assistance funding awards or other appropriate agreements to support extramural collaborators.

Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III.A.5, for budget regulations and instructions for the Research & Related Budget. *For federal agencies or organizations collaborating with federal agencies, budget restrictions apply as are noted in the General Application Instructions, Section III.A.5.*

II.D.6. Other Submission Requirements

Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 4, for detailed formatting guidelines.

II.E. Application Review Information

II.E.1. Criteria

II.E.1.a. Peer Review

To determine technical merit, all applications will be evaluated according to the following **scored criteria**, which are of equal importance:

- **Impact**
 - To what extent the proposed research will advance the field of visual system trauma research, change the standard of care, improve the quality of life, contribute to the development or validation of evidence-based policy or guidelines, or otherwise impact the visual health of Service Members, Veterans, and the American public.
- **Research Idea**
 - **Funding Level 1:**
 - To what extent the idea of the proposed research, including the objective(s) and/or hypothesis(es), is based on sound rationale and critical analysis of literature.
 - To what extent the proposed research has the potential to yield new avenues of investigation.
 - **Funding Level 2:**
 - To what extent the idea of the proposed research, including the objective(s) and/or hypothesis(es), is based on sound rationale and critical analysis of literature and preliminary data.
 - To what extent the proposed research is innovative or novel or offers significant refinements, improvements, or new applications of existent ideas or solutions.
- **Research Strategy**
 - To what extent the specific aims are appropriate to address the objective(s) and/or hypothesis(es) of the proposed research.
 - To what extent the experimental design methods and analyses are appropriate and feasible.
 - If applicable, how well the animal study is designed to achieve the study objectives, including the choice of animal model(s) and the endpoints/outcome measures, and how well the animal model chosen is relevant to human visual biology or injury.
 - If applicable, how well the human study is designed to achieve the study objectives, including description of and access to the study population(s) or sample(s), plans for subject recruitment, consent, screening and retention, and plans for addressing ethical and regulatory considerations.
 - If applicable, whether the strategy for the inclusion of women and minorities and distribution of proposed enrollment is appropriate for the proposed study.
 - To what extent the statistical plan, including sample size estimate, is appropriate.

- How well the proposed research is designed to reduce bias and achieve reproducible and rigorous results.
- If applicable, whether data will be appropriately reported and documented to support a regulatory filing.
- How well the application acknowledges potential problems and addresses alternative approaches.
- Whether the research can be completed within the proposed period of performance.
- **Personnel**
 - To what extent the backgrounds, expertise, and past accomplishments of the PI and key personnel are appropriate to accomplish the proposed research project.
 - Whether the levels of effort by the PI and key personnel are appropriate for the successful conduct of the proposed project.
- **Environment**
 - To what extent the scientific environment is appropriate for the proposed research project.
 - How well the research requirements are supported by the availability of and access to facilities and resources (including collaborative arrangements).
 - To what extent the quality and level of institutional support are appropriate for the proposed research project.

In addition, the following **unscored** criteria will also contribute to the overall evaluation of the application:

- **Budget**
 - Whether the **direct** costs exceed the allowable direct costs as published in the program announcement.
 - Whether the budget is appropriate for the proposed research.
- **Data and Resources Sharing**
 - Whether the data and resources generated during the performance of the project will be shared with the research community.
- **Application Presentation**
 - To what extent the writing, clarity, and presentation of the application components influence the review.

II.E.1.b. Programmatic Review

To make funding recommendations and select the application(s) that, individually or collectively, will best achieve the program objectives, the following criteria are used by programmatic reviewers:

- Ratings and evaluations of the peer reviewers
- Relevance to the mission of the DHP and FY23 VRP, as evidenced by the following:
 - Adherence to the intent of the award mechanism, including alignment with at least one of the [FY23 VRP Focus Areas](#)
 - Relative Impact
 - Relevance to military health
 - Program portfolio composition

II.E.2. Application Review and Selection Process

All applications are evaluated by scientists, clinicians, and consumers in a two-tier review process. The first tier is **peer review**, the evaluation of applications against established criteria to determine technical merit, where each application is assessed for its own merit, independent of other applications. The second tier is **programmatic review**, a comparison-based process in which applications with high scientific and technical merit are further evaluated for programmatic relevance. Final recommendations for funding are made to the Commanding General, USAMRDC. *The highest-scoring applications from the first tier of review are not automatically recommended for funding. Funding recommendations depend on various factors as described in [Section II.E.1.b, Programmatic Review](#).* Additional information about the two-tier process used by the CDMRP can be found at <https://cdmrp.health.mil/about/2tierRevProcess>. An information paper describing the funding recommendations and review process for the award mechanisms for the VRP will be provided to the PI and posted on the CDMRP website.

All CDMRP review processes are conducted confidentially to maintain the integrity of the merit-based selection process. Panel members sign a statement declaring that application and evaluation information will not be disclosed outside the panel. Violations of confidentiality can result in the dissolving of a panel(s) and other corrective actions. In addition, personnel at the applicant or collaborating organizations are prohibited from contacting persons involved in the review and approval process to gain protected evaluation information or to influence the evaluation process. Violations of these prohibitions will result in the administrative withdrawal of the organization's application. Violations by panel members or applicants that compromise the confidentiality of the review and approval process may also result in suspension or debarment from federal awards. Furthermore, the unauthorized disclosure of confidential information of one party to another third party is a crime in accordance with 18 USC 1905.

Following selection of projects for VRP funding, the VRP may share FY23 IIRA applications and reviews with the NEI of the NIH for independent funding consideration. Additional or separate application information may be required by NEI. The number of applications to be considered for funding by NEI is indeterminate and contingent upon NEI's determination of the quality of applications and funding availability.

II.E.3. Integrity and Performance Information

Prior to making an assistance agreement award where the federal share is expected to exceed the simplified acquisition threshold, as defined in 2 CFR 200.1, over the period of performance, the federal awarding agency is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is available in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS).

An applicant organization may review FAPIIS, accessible through SAM, and submit comments to FAPIIS on any information about the organization that a federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently available in FAPIIS.

The federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards when determining a recipient's qualification prior to award, according to the qualification standards of the Department of Defense Grant and Agreement Regulations (DoDGARs), Section 22.415.

II.E.4. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

All application review dates and times are indicated in [Section I, Overview of the Funding Opportunity](#).

Each PI and organization will receive email notification of posting of the funding recommendation in eBRAP. Each PI will receive a peer review summary statement on the strengths and weaknesses of the application.

II.F. Federal Award Administration Information

II.F.1. Federal Award Notices

Awards supported with FY23 funds are anticipated to be made no later than September 30, 2024. Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 2, for additional award administration information.

After email notification of application review results through eBRAP, and if selected for funding, a representative from the USAMRAA will contact the Business Official authorized to negotiate on behalf of the PI's organization.

Pre-Award Costs: An institution of higher education, hospital, other non-profit or for-profit organization may, at its own risk and without the government's prior approval, incur obligations

and expenditures to cover costs up to 90 days before the beginning date of the initial budget period of a new award. Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III.A.5.

Only an appointed USAMRAA Grants Officer may obligate the government to the expenditure of funds. No commitment on the part of the government should be inferred from discussions with any other individual. **The award document signed by the Grants Officer is the official authorizing document.**

Federal Government Organizations: Funding made to federal government organizations (to include intramural DOD organizations) will be executed through the Military Interdepartmental Purchase Request (MIPR) or Funding Authorization Document (FAD) process. Transfer of funds is contingent upon appropriate safety and administrative approvals. Intramural applicants and collaborators are reminded to coordinate receipt and commitment of funds through their respective Resource Manager/Task Area Manager/Comptroller or equivalent Business Official.

II.F.1.a. PI Changes and Award Transfers

Unless otherwise restricted, changes in PI or organization will be allowed at the discretion of the USAMRAA Grants Officer, provided the intent of the award mechanism is met.

An organizational transfer of an award will not be allowed in the last year of the (original) period of performance or any extension thereof.

Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 2, Section B, for general information on organization or PI changes.

II.F.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Applicable requirements in the DoDGARs found in 32 CFR, Chapter I, Subchapter C, and 2 CFR, Chapter XI, apply to grants and cooperative agreements resulting from this program announcement.

Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 2, for general information regarding administrative requirements.

Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 5, for general information regarding national policy requirements.

Refer to full text of the latest [DoD R&D General Terms and Conditions](#) and the [USAMRAA General Research Terms and Conditions: Addendum to the DoD R&D General Terms and Conditions](#) for further information.

Certification Regarding Disclosure of Funding Sources. The proposing entity must comply with Section 223(a) of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, which requires that the PI, Partnering PIs (if applicable), and all key personnel:

- Certify that the current and pending support provided on the application is current, accurate, and complete;
- Agree to update such disclosure at the request of the agency prior to the award of support and at any subsequent time the agency determines appropriate during the term of the award; and
- Have been made aware of the requirements under Section 223(a)(1) of this Act.

False, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may result in criminal, civil, or administrative penalties (18 USC 1001).

II.F.3. Reporting

Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 2, Section A, for general information on reporting requirements. ***If there are technical reporting requirement delinquencies for any existing USAMRAA-sponsored awards at the applicant organization, no new awards will be issued to the applicant organization until all delinquent reports have been submitted.***

Annual progress reports and quad charts as well as a final progress report and quad chart will be required.

The Award Terms and Conditions will specify whether additional and/or more frequent reporting is required.

Award Expiration Transition Plan: An Award Expiration Transition Plan must be submitted with the final progress report. Use the one-page template “Award Expiration Transition Plan,” available on the eBRAP “Funding Opportunities & Forms” web page (<https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>) under the “Progress Report Formats” section. The Award Expiration Transition Plan must outline if and how the research supported by this award will progress and must include source(s) of funding, either known or pending.

PHS Inclusion Enrollment Reporting Requirement (*only required for clinical research studies*): Enrollment reporting on the basis of sex/gender, race, and/or ethnicity will be required with each annual and final progress report. The PHS Inclusion Enrollment Report is available on the “Funding Opportunities & Forms” web page (<https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>) in eBRAP.

Awards resulting from this program announcement may entail additional reporting requirements related to recipient integrity and performance matters. Recipient organizations that have federal contract, grant, and cooperative agreement awards with a cumulative total value greater than \$10M are required to provide information to FAPIIS about certain civil, criminal, and administrative proceedings that reached final disposition within the most recent 5-year period and that were connected with performance of a federal award. These recipients are required to disclose, semiannually, information about criminal, civil, and administrative proceedings as specified in the applicable Representations (see General Application Instructions, Appendix 5, Section B).

II.G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts

II.G.1. eBRAP Help Desk

Questions related to program announcement content or submission requirements as well as questions related to the pre-application or intramural application submission through eBRAP should be directed to the eBRAP Help Desk, which is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ET (closed on most U.S. federal holidays). Response times may vary depending upon the volume of inquiries.

Phone: 301-682-5507

Email: help@eBRAP.org

II.G.2. Grants.gov Contact Center

Questions related to extramural application submission through Grants.gov portal should be directed to the Grants.gov Contact Center, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (closed on U.S. federal holidays). Note that the eBRAP Help Desk is unable to provide technical assistance with Grants.gov submission.

Phone: 800-518-4726; International 1-606-545-5035

Email: support@grants.gov

Sign up on Grants.gov for “send me change notification emails” by following the link on the “Synopsis” page for the program announcement or by responding to the prompt provided by Grants.gov when first downloading the Grants.gov application package. If the Grants.gov application package is updated or changed, the original version of the application package may not be accepted by Grants.gov.

II.H. Other Information

II.H.1. Program Announcement and General Application Instructions Versions

Questions related to this program announcement should refer to the program name, the program announcement name, and the program announcement version code 803a. The program announcement numeric version code will match the General Application Instructions version code 803.

II.H.2. Administrative Actions

After receipt of pre-applications or applications, the following administrative actions may occur:

II.H.2.a. Rejection

The following will result in administrative rejection of the pre-application:

- Preproposal Narrative exceeds page limit.
- Preproposal Narrative is missing.

The following will result in administrative rejection of the application:

- Submission of an application for which a letter of invitation was not received.
- Project Narrative exceeds page limit.
- Project Narrative is missing.
- Budget is missing.

II.H.2.b. Modification

- Pages exceeding the specific limits will be removed prior to review for all documents other than the Preproposal Narrative and Project Narrative.
- Documents not requested will be removed.

II.H.2.c. Withdrawal

The following may result in administrative withdrawal of the pre-application or application:

- An FY23 VRP Programmatic Panel member is named as being involved in the research proposed or is found to have assisted in the pre-application or application processes including, but not limited to, concept design, application development, budget preparation, and the development of any supporting documentation. *A list of the FY23 VRP Programmatic Panel members can be found at <https://cdmrp.health.mil/vrp/panels/panels23>.*
- The application fails to conform to this program announcement description.
- Inclusion of URLs, with the exception of links in References Cited and Publication and/or Patent Abstract sections.
- Page size is larger than 8.5 inches x 11.0 inches (approximately 21.59 cm x 27.94 cm).
- To preserve the integrity of its peer and programmatic review processes, the CDMRP discourages inclusion of any employee of its review contractors having any role in the preparation, research or other duties for submitted applications. For FY23, the identities of the peer review contractor and the programmatic review contractor may be found at the CDMRP website (<https://cdmrp.health.mil/about/2tierRevProcess>). Applications that include names of personnel from either of these companies may be administratively withdrawn.

- Personnel from applicant or collaborating organizations are found to have contacted persons involved in the review or approval process to gain protected evaluation information or to influence the evaluation process.
- Applications from extramural organizations, including non-DOD federal agencies, received through eBRAP may be withdrawn.
- Applications submitted by an intramural DOD organization may be withdrawn if the intramural organization cannot coordinate the use of contractual, assistance, or other appropriate agreements to provide funds to extramural collaborators.
- Application includes research data that are classified and/or proposes research of which the anticipated outcomes may be classified or deemed sensitive to national security will be considered for application withdrawal
- Submission of the same research project to different funding opportunities within the same program and fiscal year, while recognizing the specific [exception](#) to this withdrawal criteria as stated in II.D, Application and Submission Information.
- The invited application proposes a different research project than that described in the pre-application.
- A clinical trial is proposed.
- The PI does not meet the eligibility criteria.

II.H.2.d. Withhold

Applications that appear to involve research misconduct will be administratively withheld from further consideration pending organizational investigation. The organization will be required to provide the findings of the investigation to the USAMRAA Grants Officer for a determination of the final disposition of the application.

II.H.3. Application Submission Checklist

| Application Components | Action | Completed |
|--|--|-----------|
| SF424 Research & Related Application for Federal Assistance (extramural submissions only) | Complete form as instructed | |
| Summary (Tab 1) and Application Contacts (Tab 2) (intramural submissions only) | Complete tabs as instructed | |
| Attachments | Project Narrative: Upload as Attachment 1 with file name "ProjectNarrative.pdf" | |
| | Supporting Documentation: Upload as Attachment 2 with file name "Support.pdf" | |
| | Technical Abstract: Upload as Attachment 3 with file name "TechAbs.pdf" | |
| | Lay Abstract: Upload as Attachment 4 with file name "LayAbs.pdf" | |
| | Statement of Work: Upload as Attachment 5 with file name "SOW.pdf" | |
| | Impact Statement: Upload as Attachment 6 with file name "Impact.pdf" | |
| | Relevance to Military Health Statement: Upload as Attachment 7 with file name "Military.pdf" | |
| | Animal Research Plan: Upload as Attachment 8 with file name "AnimalPlan.pdf" if applicable | |
| | Human Subjects/Samples Acquisition and Safety Procedures: Upload as Attachment 9 with file name "HumProc.pdf" if applicable | |
| | Representations (extramural submissions only): Upload as Attachment 10 with file name "RequiredReps.pdf" | |
| | Suggested Collaborating DOD Military Facility Budget Format: Upload as Attachment 11 with file name "MFBudget.pdf" if applicable | |
| Research & Related Personal Data | Complete form as instructed | |

| Application Components | Action | Completed |
|--|--|-----------|
| Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded) | Attach PI Biographical Sketch (Biosketch_LastName.pdf) to the appropriate field | |
| | Attach PI Previous/Current/Pending Support (Support_LastName.pdf) to the appropriate field | |
| | Attach Biographical Sketch (Biosketch_LastName.pdf) for each senior/key person to the appropriate field | |
| | Attach Previous/Current/Pending (Support_LastName.pdf) for each senior/key person to the appropriate field | |
| Research & Related Budget (extramural submissions only) | Complete as instructed. Attach Budget Justification (BudgetJustification.pdf) to the appropriate field | |
| Budget (intramural submissions only) | Suggested DOD Military Budget Format, including justification | |
| Project/Performance Site Location(s) Form | Complete form as instructed | |
| Research & Related Subaward Budget Attachment(s) Form, if applicable | Complete form as instructed | |

APPENDIX 1: ACRONYM LIST

| | |
|----------|---|
| ACOS/R&D | Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development |
| ACURO | Animal Care and Use Review Office |
| ARRIVE | Animal Research: Reporting <i>In Vivo</i> Experiments |
| CDMRP | Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs |
| CFR | Code of Federal Regulations |
| DHA | Defense Health Agency |
| DHP | Defense Health Program |
| DOD | Department of Defense |
| DoDGARs | Department of Defense Grant and Agreement Regulations |
| eBRAP | Electronic Biomedical Research Application Portal |
| EC | Ethics Committee |
| ET | Eastern Time |
| FAD | Funding Authorization Document |
| FAPIIS | Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System |
| FITBIR | Federal Interagency Traumatic Brain Injury Research |
| FTTSA | Focused Translational Team Science Award |
| FY | Fiscal Year |
| IACUC | Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee |
| IIRA | Investigator-Initiated Research Award |
| IRB | Institutional Review Board |
| M | Million |
| MB | Megabytes |
| MIPR | Military Interdepartmental Purchase Request |
| NEI | National Eye Institute |
| NIH | National Institutes of Health |
| OHARO | Office of Human and Animal Research Oversight (previously Office of Research Protections) |
| OHRO | Office of Human Research Oversight (previously Human Research Protection Office) |
| OASD(HA) | Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs |
| ORCID | Open Researcher and Contributor ID, Inc. |
| PDF | Portable Document Format |
| PHS | Public Health Service |
| PI | Principal Investigator |
| RDT&E | Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation |
| SAM | System for Award Management |

| | |
|---------|--|
| SOW | Statement of Work |
| STEM | Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Mathematics |
| UEI | Unique Entity Identifier |
| URL | Uniform Resource Locator |
| USAMRAA | U.S. Army Medical Research Acquisition Activity |
| USAMRDC | U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command |
| USC | United States Code |
| VA | Department of Veterans Affairs |
| VRP | Vision Research Program |