

**DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT-MEDICAL
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMAND (DHA R&D-MRDC)
CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS (CDMRP)
FISCAL YEAR 2025 (FY25) MILITARY BURN RESEARCH PROGRAM (MBRP)**

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW PROCEDURES

The FY25 MBRP called for applications in response to funding opportunity announcements (FOAs) for three award mechanisms released in May 2025:

- Discovery Award
- Patient-Centered Research Award
- Technology/Therapeutic Development Award

The MBRP received pre-applications for the Discovery Award, Patient-Centered Research Award and Technology/Therapeutic Development Award in June 2025 and screened them in July 2025. The screening followed the pre-application evaluation criteria specified in the FOAs to determine which investigators to invite to submit full applications. The MBRP received applications in September 2025, and they underwent peer review in October 2025. The MBRP conducted programmatic review in January 2026.

In response to the Discovery Award Program Announcement (PA), the MBRP received 183 pre-applications and invited 45 of these to submit a full application. The MBRP received 42 compliant applications and recommended funding 2 (4.76%) for a total of \$0.40 million (M).

In response to the Patient-Centered Research Award PA, the MBRP received 43 pre-applications and invited 12 of these to submit a full application. The MBRP received 11 compliant applications and recommended funding 1 (9.1%) for a total of \$1.25M.

In response to the Technology/Therapeutic Development Award Broad Agency Announcement, the MBRP received 160 pre-applications and invited 42 of these to submit a full application. The MBRP received 38 compliant applications and recommended funding 4 (10.53%) for a total of \$6.80M.

Table 1 shows submission and award data summarized for the FY25 MBRP.

Table 1. Submission/Award Data for the FY25 MBRP*

| Mechanism | Pre-Applications Received | Pre-Applications Invited (%) | Compliant Applications Received | Applications Recommended for Funding (%) | Total Funds |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|--------------------|
| Discovery Award | 183 | 45 (24.59%) | 42 | 2 (4.76%) | \$0.40M |
| Patient-Centered Research Award | 43 | 12 (27.91%) | 11 | 1 (9.10%) | \$1.25M |
| Technology/Therapeutic Development Award | 160 | 42 (26.25%) | 38 | 4 (10.53%) | \$6.80M |
| Total | 386 | 99 (25.65%) | 91 | 7 (7.69%) | \$8.45M |

*These data reflect funding recommendations only. Pending FY25 award negotiations, final numbers will be available after September 30, 2026.

THE TWO-TIER REVIEW SYSTEM

The CDMRP developed a review model based on recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences report *Strategies for Managing the Breast Cancer Research Program: A Report to the Army Medical Research and Development Command*. The report recommended a two-tier review process that reflects not only the traditional strengths of existing peer review systems but is also tailored to accommodate program goals. The CDMRP adheres to this proven approach for evaluating competitive applications. An application must be favorably reviewed by both levels of the two-tier review system to be funded.

THE FIRST TIER—Scientific Peer Review

The MBRP conducted peer review of the Discovery Award, Patient-Centered Research Award and Technology/Therapeutic Development Award applications in October 2025 utilizing six panels of researchers, clinicians and consumer advocates. The panel members based their evaluations on the criteria specified in the FOAs.

The MBRP conducted a peer review via videoconference for the Discovery Award utilizing two panels, for the Patient-Centered Research Award utilizing a single panel and for the Technology/Therapeutic Development Award utilizing three panels.

Each peer review panel included a Chair, an average of seven scientific reviewers, an average of two consumer reviewers, and a nonvoting Scientific Review Officer. In addition, the Patient-Centered Research Award panel included one bioethicist and two biostatisticians, and one tech transfer specialist; and the Technology/Therapeutic Development Award panel included an average of two tech transfer specialists. The panelists' primary responsibility was to review the technical merit of each application based upon the evaluation criteria specified in the relevant FOA.

Individual Peer Review Panels

The Chair for each panel presided over the deliberations. The panels discussed each individual application. The Chair called on the assigned reviewers for an assessment of the merits of each application using the evaluation criteria published in the appropriate FOA. Following a panel discussion, the Chair summarized the strengths and weaknesses of each application, and the panel members then rated the applications confidentially.

Application Scoring

Evaluation Criteria Scores: Panel members rated each application based on the peer review evaluation criteria published in the appropriate FOA. The panel members used a scale of 10 to 1, with 10 representing the highest merit and 1 the lowest merit, using whole numbers only. The purpose of obtaining the criteria ratings was to (1) place emphasis on the published evaluation criteria and provide guidance to reviewers in determining an appropriate overall score and (2) provide the applicant, the Programmatic Panel and the CDMRP with an informed measure of the quality regarding the strengths and weaknesses of each application. The evaluation criteria scores were not averaged or mathematically manipulated in any manner to connect them to the global or percentile scores.

Overall Score: To obtain an overall score, panel members used a range of 1.0 to 5.0 (1.0 representing the highest merit and 5.0 the lowest merit), with scoring permitted in 0.1 increments. The MBRP averaged the panel member scores and rounded them to arrive at a two-digit number (1.2, 1.9, 2.7, etc.) that corresponds to the following adjectival equivalents used to guide reviewers: Outstanding (1.0–1.5), Excellent (1.6–2.0), Good (2.1–2.5), Fair (2.6–3.5) and Deficient (3.6–5.0).

Summary Statements: The Scientific Review Officer on each panel was responsible for preparing a Summary Statement reporting the results of the peer review for each application. The Summary Statements included the evaluation criteria and overall scores, peer reviewers' written comments, and the essence of panel discussions. The MBRP staff used this document to report the peer review results to the Programmatic Panel. In accordance with DHA R&D-MRDC policy, Summary Statements are available to each applicant after completion of the review process.

THE SECOND TIER—Programmatic Review

The FY25 MBRP Programmatic Panel conducted programmatic review in January 2026. The panel included a diverse group of basic and clinical scientists and consumer advocates, each of whom contributed special expertise or interest in military burn research. Programmatic review is a comparison-based process that considers scientific evaluations across all disciplines and specialty areas. Programmatic Panel members do not automatically recommend funding applications that received high scores at scientific peer review; rather, they closely examine the eligible applications to allocate as wisely as possible the limited funds available. The programmatic review criteria published in the FOAs were as follows: ratings and evaluations of the scientific peer review panels, adherence to the intent of the funding opportunity, program portfolio composition, and relative impact and military relevance. After programmatic review, the MBRP routed the applications recommended for funding to a designated official for review and approval.