

Center for Neuroplasticity at the University of Puerto Rico

Funded by:



To: All UPR Campuses

Call for Pilot Project Proposals

The NIH-NIGMS Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) Program seeks to augment and strengthen institutional biomedical research capabilities by expanding and developing biomedical faculty research capability through support of a multidisciplinary center led by a peer-reviewed, NIH-funded investigator with expertise central to the theme of the grant proposal. **The COBRE PHASE 2: Center for Neuroplasticity at the University of Puerto Rico** aims to:

- Foster development of junior investigators into competitive researchers working on projects with broad biomedical significance.
- Provide a state-of-the-art instrumentation core that combines imaging and electrophysiological approaches and expertise.
- Sustain a COBRE Administrative Core that supports programmatic activities and promotes interdisciplinary collaborations at the basic and translational levels.

In this second phase, the COBRE Center will define pathways and benchmarks for basic and translational research across the UPR system and ensure the sustained growth and evolution of a program that will advance the trajectory of competitive biomedical research in Puerto Rico over the next decades.

Towards these ends, the **COBRE Pilot Project Program (CP3)** seeks to advance the Center's goals of fostering development of junior investigators into competitive researchers working on projects with direct biomedical significance; and to further the continued development of a competitive research culture, whilst focusing on the thematic of Neuroplasticity. Pilot Project Investigators constitute the second of two cadre of investigators to be harbored by the COBRE Phase 2 Center of Neuroplasticity. **This second cadre of Pilot Project Investigators** will be competitively selected and integrated into the Pilot Projects Program. It is anticipated that pilot project investigators will reach a level of preparation that will enable them to compete for full subproject support during the course of this cycle. ***Pilot Projects will provide a two-year period of funding support (\$50,000 per year) and will require the junior investigators to devote 50% or more of protected time for the research proposed.***

The COBRE PHASE Center for Neuroplasticity Center at the University of Puerto Rico hereby announces a call for the submission of individual Pilot Project Proposals for review, competition and selection processes. Principal Investigators (PI) and Proposals judged to be competitive, and receiving the due prior approval by NIH, will be integrated into the Neuroplasticity Center at the UPR MSC by July 1, 2019. The number of proposals to be approved is limited to three (3), as per NIH-NIGMS-COBRE Program guidelines. Investigators from all eleven (11) UPR campuses are eligible to apply, provided these meet the following investigator's eligibility criteria:

1. A junior investigator must hold a faculty appointment (or equivalent at a research institute) at the time that the award is made.
2. Postdoctoral fellows or other positions that do not carry independent faculty status at the applicant institution will disqualify that individual and his/her research project from further consideration and will not be reviewed.
3. The INBRE investigators are not eligible to receive simultaneous research funding as COBRE project investigators. Similarly, COBRE investigators may not receive simultaneous research project support from an INBRE or other COBRE award.

4. The junior, early stage investigators to be prioritized and considered for the CP3 are defined as an individual who does not have and has not previously had an external, peer-reviewed RPG or Program Project Grant (PPG) from either a Federal or non-Federal source that names that investigator as the PD/PI. The criteria is consistent with the directives of the 21st Century Cures Act, the Next Generation Researchers policy requiring institutes and centers (ICs) to prioritize awards that will fund Early Stage Investigators (ESIs), among others.
5. Examples of **eligible** and **non-eligible** investigators are: **Eligible:** (1) the Junior Investigator is part of a grant that name the individual as a co-investigator, collaborator, consultant, or to a position other than PD/PI or PD/PI on research grants that allow multiple PD(s)/PIs, do not disqualify that investigator. And, (2) The Junior Investigator is the PI of an Academic Research Enhancement Award (AREA) grants, exploratory/pilot project grants (such as NIH R03 and R21 awards), mentored career development awards (such as NIH K01 and K08 awards), or other Federal or non-Federal funding whose purpose is to provide preliminary support in anticipation of a RPG or PPG also do not disqualify the investigator. **NOT Eligible:** (1) investigators who have managed to obtain significant support in the form of a RPG or PPG (e.g., NIH R01, K99/R00, or P01, NSF, or other Federal or non-Federal agency awards) are not eligible. Each Project Lead should indicate in his/her Biographical Sketch their current and previous history of peer-reviewed research support.

Proposals for internal review must be submitted to the UPR Medical Sciences Campus' COBRE/CRECED Office by the strict deadline of Friday, February 1, 2019, 3:00PM. NO proposals will be accepted after this deadline. By the specified deadline, a hardcopy and electronic file of the proposal must be sent to the COBRE Pilot Project Director, Dr. Walter I. Silva Ortiz (walter.silva@upr.edu). **The COBRE Pilot Projects proposals submitted must:**

1. **be accompanied by a cover letter, where the investigators clearly indicates**
 - a. In brief their research career stage, history and plan regarding external funding support,
 - b. their institutional and NIH eligibility and suitability for the COBRE Pilot Project mechanism,
 - c. protected time for research commitment as required for successful completion of the pilot project, if authorized by NIH, and
 - d. provide a list of three potential reviewers from outside Puerto Rico with no conflicts with the proposing PI (all reviewers will be required to sign a no-conflict of interest document).
2. **follow the NIH format for R03 proposals (see <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/r03.htm>.)**

The COBRE Pilot Projects Review will require: an initial administrative review, to assure compliance with COBRE Program guidelines, and three (3) additional levels of review. A first level review performed by external *ad hoc* scientists with expertise in the neuroplasticity arena. The CP3 Director will submit the resulting recommendations to the COBRE PI/PD for his evaluation and submission to a second level of review to be done by the program's External Advisory Committee (EAC). After EAC's evaluation, the COBRE PI/PD will submit the Pilot Projects recommended for approval to NIH-NIGMS for the Final Prior Approval of the Pilot Projects.

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Approved by:

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