



To: All UPR Campuses
Call for COBRE Pilot Project Proposals
Deadline: December 1, 2021

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. Toward 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. ***In addition, due to the urgent need to combat the current pandemic, the program strongly encourages submission of research focused on the neurobiology and neuroplasticity related to the COVID-19 disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2.*** Pilot Project Investigators constitute the second of three cadre of investigators harbored by the COBRE Phase 2 Center of Neuroplasticity. **The cadre of Pilot Project Investigators** will be competitively selected and integrated into the **CP3**. It is anticipated that pilot project investigators will reach a level of preparation that will enable them to compete for program subproject or other independent funding support during the course of this cycle. ***Pilot Projects will provide a one to two-year period of funding support (\$50,000 per year) for the research proposed.*** The number of proposals to be approved is limited to three (3), depending on the availability of funds.

The COBRE PHASE 2 Center for Neuroplasticity Center at the University of Puerto Rico hereby announces a call for the submission of individual Pilot Project Proposals for review and selection processes. Principal Investigators (PI) and Proposals judged to be competitive and receiving the due prior approval by the program's EAC and NIH, will be integrated into the Neuroplasticity Center at the UPR MSC by July 1, 2022 or before. The COBRE leadership team will identify investigators who have an exciting, high quality research project and are most likely to be successful in producing high impact publications and grant proposals. Investigators from all eleven (11) UPR campuses are eligible to apply, provided they meet the following investigator's eligibility criteria:

1. Being a faculty investigator at the applicant institution(s) committed to invest in and develop in the thematic area of Neuroplasticity, *including 50% or more of protected time for the research proposed.*
2. Being a junior investigator holding a faculty appointment (or equivalent at a research institute) with emphasis on early-stage investigators (ESI),
 - a. A junior investigator is an individual who does not have and has not previously had an external, peer-reviewed RPG, or Program Project Grant (PPG), or PPG subproject, or equivalent awards from either a Federal or non-Federal source that names that investigator as the PD/PI. These criteria are 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.
 - b. Investigators who have obtained significant support in the form of an RPG or PPG (e.g., NIH R01, K99/R00, or P01, NSF, or other Federal or non-Federal agency awards) would not be considered junior investigators.

3. The investigator's *home institution must demonstrate, in a letter(s) from the Dean, the Provost, or equivalent senior institutional official(s), a clear commitment to support a multi-year faculty appointment for the investigator independent of the outcome of the COBRE grant application.*
 - a. *Examples of strong institutional commitment include a start-up package provided by the institution and/or independent research space within the institution.* Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Research Project)
4. Individuals holding postdoctoral fellowships or other positions that lack independent faculty status are not eligible to lead COBRE research projects.
5. Grants that name an individual as a co-investigator, collaborator, consultant, or to a position other than PD/PI on research grants that allow multiple PD(s)/PIs, do not disqualify that investigator from junior status. 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 not characterized as research grants also do not disqualify the investigator. Since NIH K awards typically require nine person-month commitments, however, *junior investigators that are also K awardees can serve as COBRE Pilot Projects PIs only during the last two years of the K awards when the commitments are allowed to be reduced to six person-months per NIH policy.*
6. 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.

Proposals for internal review must be submitted to the UPR Medical Sciences Campus' Pre-Award Office (irma.roman@upr.edu) by the strict deadline of Wednesday, December 1, 2021, 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 indicate**
 - a. In brief their research career stage, history and plan regarding external funding support,
 - b. indicate in his/her Biographical Sketch their current and previous history of peer-reviewed research support,
 - c. their institutional and NIH eligibility and suitability for the COBRE Pilot Project mechanism,
 - d. protected time for research commitment as required for successful completion of the pilot project, if authorized by NIH, and
 - e. 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>),**
3. include a detailed budget as per NIH guidelines, and
4. appropriately document assurance of full compliance with all applicable federal policies, rules, and guidelines for research involving human subjects, vertebrate animals, and/or biohazards.

Contacts Information

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Approved by:



Principal Investigator/Program Director

COBRE PHASE 2: Center for Neuroplasticity at the University of Puerto Rico

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