College of Medicine and University of Cincinnati
Special Coronavirus (COVID-19) Research Pilot Grant Program
Application Instructions (2020–21)

DEADLINES
Applications Due: Wednesday, March 25, 2020
Notification and funding of Awards: April 1, 2020
To be spent by March 31, 2021

In early December 2019, the first cases of pneumonia of unknown origin were detected in Wuhan, the capital city of the Hubei province in China. Since then it has been public health emergency of international concern and is now the cause of the current pandemic. COVID-19 rapidly spread from as single city to the entire country in just 30 days. COVID-19 is a positive single strand RNA virus that enters the host cell and the uncoated genome is transcribed and translated. New virions form by budding from host cell membranes. There are many clinical unknowns regarding COVID-19 including time of incubation; when it can be transmitted; and its proclivity for different segments of the population.

The State of Ohio is beginning its rise in COVID-19 cases and this presents an opportunity to learn more about the biological and clinical aspects of this viral infection. The UC Office of Research headed by Dr. Pat Limbach and the College of Medicine’s Office of Research have committed at least $225,000 to fund pilot projects that focus on all research aspects of COVID-19, including basic, translational, and clinical research as well as population research, for example. THIS CALL FOR PROJECTS IS ON AN EXPEDITED SUBMISSION AND REVIEW BASIS. PLEASE NOTE THE SUBMISSION DATE OF MARCH 25.

1. **Deadlines:** Applications are due March 25, 2020 by midnight. This is not negotiable.

2. **Funding pools:** Funding for this program is derived from the UC Office of Research and the Dean’s Office of Research, College of Medicine. Applicants are being asked to request funding in modules of $25,000 (see “Budget” section 14, below). The number of awards may range from 2 to 10, depending on the number of requests.
   - Please note that there are additional sources of funding coming available (see Appendix for emerging options to date)—these UC/UC COM Pilot funds will most likely be utilized for starting projects while seeking additional funding from other sources.

3. **Project priorities:** This special program seeks to support the development of innovative studies that will contribute significantly to our knowledge of COVID-19’s biology or pathology; its population kinetics; studies that will have a significant impact on treatment or diagnosis; on management of the infection or its prevention. A wide spectrum of projects can be considered relevant. Priority will be given to those projects that carry the highest potential for a critical finding or impact. Projects with well-developed concepts where additional data are required for proposal submission and/or where innovative ideas require additional testing are also responsive.

4. **Eligibility:** Applications will be accepted from UC paid, full-time faculty member whose appointment is at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine and where said faculty member will submit any resulting application for funding to an outside agency through UC’s Sponsored Research Services. Investigators from affiliated institutions, e.g. VAMC, CCHMC or Colleges may be collaborators but not the principle investigator.
5. **Collaborations**: Collaborations among investigators spanning disciplines and programs are encouraged, including those between basic scientists and clinicians to foster the development of translational research projects.
   - For projects that involve biospecimens from subjects, please be aware that the Office of Research may work with awardees to have a single unified IRB protocol, so as to minimize burden for potential subjects and their families.

6. **Feasibility**. Projects narratives must have a section on feasibility, especially if it is a study involving patient enrollment; use of humanized mice or other animal models; or dependent on a certain number of samples. Proof of availability will be seen as highly responsive. For example, having an IRB protocol approved (or submitted), humanized coronavirus mice already in LAMS; use of available archived samples; etc.

7. **Additional support**. Applications where the department of the submitting faculty or medical facility (e.g. UCMC) supports the project through such means as additional funds, in kind agreements, or other innovative means will be favorably considered in the review, but are not required.

8. **Acknowledgement**. Applicants who have received this funding will be required to recognize the source in subsequent publications.

9. **IRB and IACUC** - If applicable, applicants must submit for IRB or IACUC approval immediately, those who do not do so within one week from time of award will be declared ineligible. This process has been accelerated due to the pandemic, and time is of the essence to carry out meaningful research. These awards are intended to provide funding for one year and the lack of such approval can significantly delay the start of the proposed studies.

10. **Overview of review process**: This is an expedited review. At least 3 faculty members with sufficient expertise will evaluate the proposals within a 1-week time period. The applicant rankings and scores will be reviewed by COM Office of Research which is the final decision authority. Some budget cuts may be made during this phase if necessary.

11. **Supplemental items**: Supplemental items may be submitted if they are responsive to the RFA, e.g. proof of purchase or per diem of humanized mice.

12. **Submission of applications**: Use NIH margins and font requirements. All applications must be submitted as one collective email attachment (.pdf) to Brieanne Sheehan, Brienne.Sheehan@uc.edu, with “Special Coronavirus (COVID-19) Research Pilot Grant Program” in the subject line. An email confirmation of receipt will be returned to the applicant.

13. **Composition of applications**: Current standard PHS 398 forms for budget, biosketch and other support should be used. See attachment.

Applications must include:

a. **Face page** (see attachment and check all appropriate IBC, IACUC, IRB, or Radiation Safety approvals or indicate pending if submitted).

b. **Budget** (use PHS 398 form provided, see attachment). The budget must be in increments of $25,000 (modules) that can stand alone. The $25K modules can be tied together to signify additional phases of the study. For example, Module 1: Enrollment of 100 subjects with blood draw and storage. Module 2: COVID-19 testing. Module 3: Analysis of biomarkers in COVID-19 positive and negative patients.

c. **Budget justification** Use this section to describe the Modular strategy. Please state what will be accomplished if only given $25K, and describe each additional $25K module would lead to additional results/success.

d. **Biosketch** (s) (include PI and co-investigators; use PHS 398 form attached)
e. **Hypothesis, Specific Aims, Background and Significance, Anticipated Impact, Research Design and Methods, Feasibility** must be within a 3-page limit.

f. **Statement** of departmental or other institutional support (limit to 1 page)

g. **Literature cited** (limit to 1 page)

14. **Funding restrictions:** Funds may not be used to support faculty salaries, travel, meetings, or publication costs

15. **Recipients of Internal Research support** are asked to assist the Office when requested (i.e. providing grant reviews, attending College of Medicine events, etc.). Recipients are expected to report metrics associated with the award, such as a funded grant or publication, when solicited by the Office of Research.

For questions regarding these instructions, please contact Brieanne Sheehan at the College of Medicine Office of Research, Brieanne.sheehan@uc.edu, 513-479-5676.
APPENDIX—EMERGING COVID RESEARCH FUNDING

National Science Foundation (NSF)
- NSF encourages the research community to respond to the COVID-19 challenge through existing funding opportunities. In addition, we invite researchers to use the Rapid Response Research (RAPID) funding mechanism, which allows NSF to receive and review proposals having a severe urgency with regard to availability of or access to data, facilities or specialized equipment as well as quick-response research on natural or anthropogenic disasters and similar unanticipated events. Requests for RAPID proposals may be for up to $200K and up to one year in duration. Well-justified proposals that exceed these limits may be entertained.

National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- The emergency funding package included $826 million for the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), intended to be used primarily for vaccine research and development. NIAID is currently using two mechanisms to award funding to investigators for work within this scope: non-competitive administrative supplements and, for the first time, competitive Urgent Awards. More information about these two opportunities, as well as a list of NIAID’s research priorities related to COVID-19, can be found here.
- The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) received $10 million in funding in the emergency supplemental package, but no details are available yet on how this funding will be awarded. We also anticipate that, in the coming weeks and months, additional Institutes and Centers will be issuing opportunities for administrative supplements for research on COVID-19 that is related to their underlying programmatic priorities.

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Infectious Diseases Rapid Response Fund received $300 million in the COVID-19 emergency supplemental package. This fund was created in FY 2019 and had roughly $100 million in reserve funding prior to the emergency supplemental. This funding can be used to prevent, prepare for, and respond to an infectious disease emergencies, domestic or international.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)/ Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA)
- The Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released an Easy Broad Agency Announcement (EZ-BAA) on February 5 seeking proposals for the development of novel COVID-19 diagnostics. The solicitation notes that “the diagnostics must utilize platforms already cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, with a viable plan to meet requirements for the FDA to consider Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) within 12 weeks of an award.” The solicitation is available at https://beta.sam.gov/opps/6d5f514d69c94f60ae277f4ec33ca68d/view.

Gates Foundation
- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Wellcome, and Mastercard committed up to $125 million in seed funding to speed-up the response to the COVID-19 epidemic by identifying, assessing, developing, and scaling-up treatments. The COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator will play a catalytic role by accelerating and evaluating new and repurposed drugs and biologics to treat patients with COVID-19 in the immediate term, and other viral pathogens in the longer-term. By providing fast and flexible funding at key stages of the development process, the Accelerator will de-risk the pathway for new drugs and biologics for COVID-19 and future epidemic threats, ensuring access in lower-resource countries. https://www.gatesfoundation.org/Press-Releases/2020/03/COVID-19-Therapeutics-Accelerator

Other agencies around the world: https://sciencebusiness.net/news/covid-19-funding-bodies-around-world-pledge-new-money-virus-research