COBRE Pre-application Webinar

October 27, 2021
3:00 – 4:30 PM
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Q&A via Chat Window, moderated by Fed Bernal
Overview of IDeA COBRE Program

IDeA Program
Build research capacity in states and territories with lower levels of NIH funding

Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE)
• Support a broadly themed research center
• **129** distinct COBRE awards totaling **$245,410,659**
• 3 sequential phases, 5 years each
• [IDeA Dashboard](https://www.nigms.nih.gov/Research/DRCB/Pages/DRCB-IDeA-Interactive-Portfolio-Dashboard.aspx) tracks all funded awards
Read the FOA - it is NOT a P01

Communicate with institutional leaders BEFORE completing your application

- The COBRE program develops principal investigators and builds research infrastructure – you want your COBRE to be part of the institution’s strategic plan
- You/the COBRE need institutional commitments, especially to replenish the pipeline of quality Research Project Leaders, to be successful
- You get salary but not research support from the COBRE– a service to the institution that deserves recognition and support
- You are must maintain independent research grant support to be eligible for the next phases

Leverage other NIH-supported resources, especially current COBRE, INBRE, and IDeA-CTR programs in your institution/state
## COBRE Notices

### Required C&P Attachments for PD/Pl(s)/Research Project Leaders (RPLs)

<table>
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<th>NOT-GM-21-039 (COBRE 1)</th>
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### COVID-19 Flexibility

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### PD/PI and RPL Eligibility

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<th>NOT-GM-20-004 (COBRE 1)</th>
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### Notices of Special Interest for COBRE 1

- **NOT-GM-21-062** (Data Science)
- **NOT-GM-21-056** (Women’s Health)
Current and Pending Support for PD/PI and Research Project Leaders

New NIH Biosketch format makes it optional to report on current, pending, and prior support

• Information is vital to determining eligibility of PD/PI and Research Project Leaders (RPLs)

NIGMS issued a Notice for each COBRE

• PD/PI (COBRE 1/2/3): Attachment for Current and Pending Support
• Each RPL (COBRE 1/2): Attachment for Current, Pending, and Prior Support

Effective January 2022, the application cannot be reviewed without the attachments
COBRE Phase 1

due date: January 27, 2022
Develop a critical mass of investigators (RPL - Research Project Leader)

- Develop a pool of investigators with expertise in a thematic scientific area
- Get RPLs ready to compete for peer-reviewed external funding
- Pilot Projects are optional for Phase 1 (see NOT-GM-20-042)
- Funding for new hires is available (see NOT-GM-20-042)

Develop research infrastructure in a broadly thematic scientific area

- Scientific Cores that support the theme
- Career Development Guidance/Mentoring Plans
Recruitment Concerns

• COVID-19 has caused hiring freezes as institutions tighten budgets
• Recruitment of COBRE junior faculty keeps the pipeline flowing
• Less competition can benefit COBRE institutions during searches
• Budgetary flexibility can provide additional funding for new faculty

NOT-GM-20-042 & NOT-GM-20-043

• Only 2 Research Project Leaders required
  • Majority (more than 50%) must be JIs
• Doubled recruitment funding ($400K/year)
  • Can recruit at senior level, too
• Doubled Pilot Project funding ($400K/year)
• Applies to applications & current awards
• No change to annual budget - $1.5M DC
Institutional Eligibility

Hold $\leq 2$ active COBRE 1 and/or COBRE 2 awards at the time of submission

- COBRE 3s do not count toward the cap
- Grants in no-cost extension are active grants
- No more than 3 active COBRE 1/2s are allowed at any time
- The theme cannot be a repeat of a prior COBRE award

Lead $\leq 5$ research projects and/or cores from COBRE 1/2s through subcontracts

Signed letter from VP for Research is *required* and must address these points
Established biomedical or behavioral research scientist

• Must be a faculty member at the applicant institution at the time of submission
• No more than 2 PD/PIs – requires 3-mo minimum effort, 6-mo total for all PD/PIs

PD/PI of an active peer-reviewed research grant related to the COBRE theme

• Grant must be awarded to the applicant institution
  • If MPI, qualifying grant for the second PD/PI can be to a different institution
• Can be from federal or non-federal sources
• Grants in no-cost extension are active grants
Required Program Components

Overall Plan for the Center

• Organizational Plan

• Plan for Advisory Committees
  • External Advisory Committee (EAC) required (nationally recognized scientists)
    • Describe the expertise you seek but don’t provide any names!
  • Optional Internal Advisory Committee – to help the PI with administration

• Mentoring Plan – including what to do if progress of a research project is sub-optimal

• Evaluation Plan – benchmarks & milestones

Administrative Core

• Management plan that covers administrative, fiscal, and scientific aspects

• Optional – Pilot Project Program (open to faculty at all ranks)

2 – 5 Research Projects (see NOT-GM-20-042)
*Optional Program Components

Research Core(s) for resources/facilities – typically included but *optional

- *If scientific theme is rural health, Community Engagement and Outreach (CEO) Core is required
- Core Directors must have correct expertise
- Using/modifying/expanding existing resources is encouraged but duplication is not
- Cores should support the RPL projects and the scientific theme

Alteration and Renovation

- Must be relevant to the scope of the proposed research

Recruitment Costs – *they are available* (see NOT-GM-20-042)

- Must be relevant to the scope of the proposed research
- Can be for faculty at any level
These are not a condensed R01

- Six pages to describe research question, approach, and connection to COBRE theme
- Preliminary data helpful but not required – reviewers gauge this by career stage
- Milestones: RPL is required to submit a research grant application in Year 2. Is expected to get a grant and graduate from COBRE funding by Year 3

Must include 2 - 5 Research Projects

- Avoid naming RPLs who are proposed/supported as RPLs on other COBREs
- Projects should make good use of the Research Cores
- Identify any new areas for scientific growth with appropriate mentorship
Research Project Leader (RPL) Eligibility

RPL must hold independent faculty appointment (or equivalent) at time of submission

- Includes tenure-track & other types of *multi-year* appointments
- Postdocs & others without independent appointments are not eligible
- Majority (2 of 2, 2 of 3, 3 of 4, or 3 of 5) MUST be Junior Investigators

**Junior Investigators**

- Cannot be PD/PI of *any* prior/current external peer-reviewed research grant; other roles are OK
- NIH R03, R15, R21, & mentored NIH Ks are OK but not K99/R00 or non-mentored Ks
- Non-NIH seed and career development grants are OK – NIGMS will verify the RFA

**Established Investigators**

- ONLY eligible if new line of research is *significantly different* from current investigative program
- Cannot intend to maintain grants in the current area

NOT-GM-20-004
Tip 1: Individualized Letter of Support from home institution for each RPL is *required*
- Written by Dean, Provost, or other Senior Official
- Must demonstrate multi-year commitment to the RPL whether or not the COBRE is funded
- Examples of strong institutional commitment: start-up package, independent research space

Tip 2: Request 5 years of support for each COBRE 1 RPL slot so that the replacement RPL can be funded after the initial one graduates
- RPL research plan and timeline can make it clear that the goal is for the project to continue after Year 3 with independent grant support
- Can also be covered in the Budget Justification
### Not-GM-21-056

Supporting Women’s Health Research in the IDeA States through the COBRE1 Program

- Women and children in IDeA states have poorer health outcomes
- Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) coordinates WH research across the NIH
- Intends to support one COBRE
- Broadly themed, address 1 or more goals of the Strategic Plan for WH Research "Advancing Science for the Health of Women"

### Not-GM-21-062

Supporting Data Sciences in the IDeA States through the COBRE1 Program

- Need innovative approaches to working with large research datasets
- Office of Data Science Strategy (ODSS) leads the NIH Strategic Plan for Data Science
- Intends to support one COBRE
- Broadly themed in multiple areas of data science, including machine learning, deep learning, artificial intelligence and virtual reality technologies

Applications to these NOSIs also receive full consideration for funding by NIGMS
COBRE Phase 2

Fed Bernal, PhD
**Strengthen the Center through further improvement in research infrastructure**

- Support existing or establish new core facilities that are essential to support the research of the Center

**Continue the development and support of a critical mass of investigators with expertise in the Center's scientific interest areas**

- Develop a pool of investigators with expertise in a thematic scientific area
- Get RPLs ready to compete for peer-reviewed external funding
Program Components

Overall Plan for the Center

• **Program Accomplishments** during COBRE Phase 1 support
  Research productivity, # of publications from RPLs and PPLs, transition of JIs to independent funding, recruitment of faculty, improvement of research infrastructure, use of core facilities

• **Center Organization and Management Plan**
  How components interact with each other and with other programs and resources at the institution

• **Letter** that outlines the institutional commitment of resources to support the COBRE throughout Phase 2 and to maintain these resources beyond the period of grant support

**Administrative Core**

• Management plan that covers administrative, fiscal, and scientific aspects

• Pilot Projects Program (open to faculty at all ranks)

**Research Cores (Optional)**

**Research Projects**

• Research projects will be required
COBRE Phase 3

Crina Frincu, PhD
COBRE Phase 3: Program Objectives

**Facilitate** transition of research core resources into sustainable core facilities

- Provide support for the cores to become independent service research facilities

**Sustain** the research environment by providing support for pilot projects program

- Centers and their investigators are expected to compete for other sources of funding

- ✓ New Application (P30) - Not a Renewal of Phase 2 (P20)
- ✓ Phase 3 Budget is ½ that of COBRE Phase 1 and 2
Required Program Components

Overall Plan for the Center
- **Program Accomplishments** in the last 10 years of COBRE support
- **Center Organization and Management plan** including anticipated scientific & core needs
- **Letters** describing institutional commitment to maintain these resources

Administrative Core
- Leadership and Governance: COBRE PI may be assisted by Program Coordinator (PC)

Scientific/Technical Core(s)
- Core(s) should be unique and not duplicate services or facilities that already exist
- **Sustainability plans** for beyond Phase 3 must be included

Pilot Projects Program
- Leadership and Governance: COBRE PI may be assisted by Program Coordinator (PC)
Program Components

Pilot Projects Program is Required in Phase 3

- Governance, oversight, and evaluation procedures that include the EAC
- Career and research guidance activities for Pilot Project Leaders must be included
- Effectiveness of dissemination and review process of previous program must be described
- Include metrics #applicants and #awardees per cycle; #grant applications submitted by Pilot Project Leaders and #funded; resulting publications
- Do not include specific projects in the application

Pilot Project Lead Eligibility

- Faculty investigators of any rank are eligible
- New and early-stage investigators should be given priority
- Individuals holding postdoctoral training positions are not eligible
PI Eligibility – COBRE Phase 3

The current PI may continue to serve in this role, or a new PI may be appointed.

- on-going research program supported by extramural funding
- faculty member at the applicant institution at the time of application

Also, the PI should have experience in:

- mentoring & administration
- developing a pilot projects program
- selecting the core directors
- resolving disputes arising in the usage of the core facilities
- making final budget decisions
The COBRE Review Process

Nina Sidorova, PhD

Scientific Review Branch
STEP 1 - ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

• Review of all COBREs is organized by the NIGMS Scientific Review Branch (SRB)

• All applications go through Administrative Review by the Program Officers and Scientific Review Officers

  • All applications deemed non-compliant/not eligible are withdrawn

To avoid your application being withdrawn:

• Read *current* FOA (*including NOTs*) carefully!

• Try to apply a few days prior to a deadline then check your application and edit it if needed
Applications are divided among Special Emphasis Panels (SEPs)

- Number of panels depends on the number of applications
- Reviewer Orientation Meetings: same material is given to all reviewers

Reviewer Assignments

- At least three reviewers are assigned to each application – usually more
  - Overall: three primary reviewers
  - At least two reviewers are assigned to each of the components
    - Cores, Individual Research Projects (or Pilot Projects Program for COBRE Phase 3)
    - If A&R is requested (allowed for Phase 1), an architect is assigned

Process

Assigned reviewers comment for each component, then panel discusses the Overall

Voting: All panelists vote on the Overall Center only (not individual components)
• Pay close attention to the FOA Section V (Application Review Information) when crafting your application. Critique templates have criteria/questions copied and pasted from FOA for each of the components.

• **DO NOT duplicate** letters of support. It makes already long applications **MUCH** longer.

• **Avoid “cheerleading”** letters of support that do not add substance – you might eliminate good reviewers!

• List the names of people submitting letters for each of the components.

• **Indicate the Core or Project Title at** the beginning of each component summary (*if you have enough space*). Reviewers have access to full applications **but not in Recruitment Phase** when only summaries are available.

• **Use the PHS Assignment form** to indicate expertise needed but **DO NOT** suggest reviewer names. You may provide names of those who **SHOULD NOT** review your application.
COBRE GRANTEES AND APPLICANTS ARE POTENTIAL REVIEWERS

PLEASE **REPLY** when SROs contact you! *Silence IS NOT GOLDEN*

While **YES** is our favorite answer, quick **NO** is also helpful.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!**
Financial Management of COBREs

Christy Leake, Grants Management Lead
The PD(s)/PI(s) may not use COBRE funds to support research activities in his/her laboratory. This includes supplements.

- He/she is not eligible for research project support from this COBRE or any other COBRE (including all three phases), INBRE, or IDeA-CTR award.

COBRE Research Project Leaders cannot receive simultaneous support from the same COBRE award as Pilot Project Leaders, nor can COBRE Pilot Project Leaders receive simultaneous support from the same COBRE award as Research Project Leaders.

COBRE Research Project Leaders and Pilot Project Leaders cannot receive simultaneous support from other IDeA awards

- Includes INBRE, IDeA-CTR, or a different COBRE
Funds cannot be used by or for collaborators at institutions in non-IDeA states or foreign sites

• However, funds may be used in other IDeA and non-IDeA states or foreign sites for fee-for-service activities

Consortium: A formalized agreement whereby a research project is carried out by the recipient and one or more other organizations that are separate legal entities

Fee For Service: Providing a routine service to the grantee such as data processing, routine analytical testing services or management services
Questionable Costs

Honorarium – not allowable when it is used to confer distinction on a speaker

General Supplies – only costs directly related to the grant and/or project are allowable as direct costs

Meals/Food – only allowable as part of meeting necessary for disseminating information

All costs must be allowable, reasonable, allocable, necessary and be accorded consistent treatment
Unallowable Costs

- **Incentive costs** – only allowable for research subjects
- **Proposal Costs** – not allowable as a direct cost on a grant
- **Stipends** – only allowable on NIH NRSA training and fellowship grants; “Compensation of Students” is an allowable cost on the grant
- **Scholarships** – not allowable on NIH grants
- **Cost of living (COLA) Increases** – requests for inflationary increases will be eliminated from the awarded budgets for competing awards. However, requests associated with special needs (e.g., equipment, added personnel or increased effort) will continue to be considered.
Thank you!

Please enter your questions into the chat box.