Duke Specialized Program in Research Excellence (SPORE) in Brain Cancer

Developmental Research Program (DRP)

Request for Applications

The National Cancer Institute–funded SPORE in Brain Cancer at Duke University is requesting applications for pilot projects for funding through the SPORE Developmental Research Program (DRP).

Purpose

The DRP of the Duke University SPORE in Brain Cancer supports promising individual or collaborative pilot research projects that have a translational[1] potential and are likely to generate new knowledge with a high probability to impact the diagnosis, treatment and/or prevention of adult and/or pediatric brain tumors. In accordance with NIH provisions, all funded DRP projects that have strong translational potential may become full projects in the SPORE. Although both clinical and laboratory research projects are eligible for funding, the translational emphasis of the program requires that the hypotheses in all projects have the potential to impact the incidence and mortality of brain cancer or improve the quality of life for primary brain cancer patients. These projects, however, do not have to reach a human endpoint during the funding period, but should, ideally, utilize human cells or tissues, and/or, have the potential to translate to the human context. The resources of the Duke SPORE in Brain Cancer, including the SPORE Biospecimen, Pathology, and Immune Monitoring Core, are available to all investigators and those interested in utilizing these resources should consult with the appropriate Core leaders. Innovative, high risk / high gain projects are encouraged. We particularly encourage women and minority investigators, investigators from minority and other area institutions, as well as individuals who have not previously worked in the brain tumor field to apply. Applications for scientific teams and scientists exploring new areas of investigation are encouraged. Duke is an equal-opportunity employer, and we value diversity in all of its many facets and meanings.

Eligibility[2]

Applicant(s) must hold a faculty or equivalent position at Duke University or at their institutions, universities, or research organizations at the time of the application.

Current recipients of an award from the Duke Brain SPORE DRP may submit a competitive renewal application for a second year of funding. This will be contingent upon productivity and successful completion of the work during the first-year award. In addition to the criteria outlined for new applicants, competitive renewal applications should include a progress report and a description of the proposed work to be accomplished in the second year.

Application Process

The DRP application process will occur in two stages.

Stage 1: Interested investigators will submit a 1–2 page summary for the proposed project. References are not included in the page count. The summary should include a brief introduction/background, hypothesis and specific aims, brief outline of research approach, 1–2 figures showing preliminary data (if available), and a brief

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[1] *Translational: A term to describe the process by which the results of research done in the laboratory are used to develop new ways to diagnose and treat disease.*

[2] *We are also offering SPORE Career Enhancement Program (CEP) grant awards. The CEP typically supports either junior faculty or established investigators who wish to enhance or refocus their careers on translational research in brain cancer. Please reference the CEP RFA and apply for that award if it is more applicable.*

statement of the brain cancer relevance and translational potential of the proposed research. A project title and NIH biosketch of the principal investigator(s) should also be included. Projects will be reviewed and up to six candidates will be selected for Stage 2. **Please submit your application as a single document.**

Stage 2: Candidates selected for this stage will be invited to give a brief presentation (10–15 minutes) about their project. Specific details will be sent upon advancing to this stage.

Final Selection Process

Proposals will be reviewed using the criteria of Significance, Innovation, Investigators, Environment, and Approach, as defined in the NIH-style review system. The SPORE PIs, DRP Director, and the Oversight Committee will assign scores on a scale of 1–9. Additional criteria will be considered include:

- Compatibility with the goals and objectives of the Duke SPORE in Brain Cancer, other Duke SPORES, and the DCI.
- Potential for translation.
- Potential for development into a full SPORE project or an independently funded project such as an R01.

Selected projects will be asked to submit a complete application on the NIH PHS398 (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html), following the NIH R21 format, which will be due before funding is issued**.** The application should include: a face page, a detailed one-year NIH budget[3] with budget justification, an abstract of the project (narrative not required), biosketches of PI(s) and other key personnel, a Specific Aims page and a Research Strategy. The Research Strategy should be a maximum of 6 pages, excluding references, and should have the following components:

- **Significance:** Explain the importance of the problem or the critical barrier to progress in translational cancer research that the proposed project addresses.
- **Innovation:** Explain how the project challenges and seeks to shift current translational research or clinical practice paradigms.
- **Investigator(s):** Describe the qualifications of the project leader and his/her prior involvement in brain tumor research and the qualifications of any co-investigators.
- **Approach:** Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the aims of the project. Include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted.

Preliminary data can be included at any appropriate places in the Research Strategy. Standard NIH sections on Resources, Human Subjects (including the Inclusion of Women and Minorities and Children consistent with institutional and NIH provisions) and Vertebrate Animals are required. All necessary IACUC, IRB, and any other institutional approvals will be required to be on file prior to an award. Therefore, given the short, one- or two-year term of this award, applicants are encouraged to ensure that these approvals are sought after in a timely fashion. This will expedite award distribution and start of the project.

Funding

Each selected project will be funded at $50,000 to $100,000 per year for a minimum of one year, renewable for a maximum of two years. Funding decisions will be made in August and communicated directly to the Principal Investigator. The project period will be September 1, 2023–August 31, 2024.

Application Deadline

The **Stage 1** deadline for all applications is **noon on Friday June 9, 2023**. Late applications will not be accepted. All applications will be submitted electronically as a single document to:
Steve Keir, DrPH, MPH, MMCi, Scientific Administrator, at stephen.keir@duke.edu and
Katie Preston, PMP, Project Planner, at katie.preston@duke.edu

Notice of Award and Award Management

Award notification will be made by written communication from the SPORE in Brain Cancer PI or Administrator. The SPORE administrative team, working with the DRP leadership, will handle all matters related to the administration of the award.

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[3] *Please note, if you are a Duke faculty or staff member, there are no indirects.*