



Researchers Startup Funds Program **Guidelines**

Program Overview

The ***Researchers Startup Funds Program (RSFP)*** focus on providing matching funds to institutional recruitment packages to help universities in Puerto Rico to attract and recruit outstanding scientists that are well established in their field of research and are interested in working in Puerto Rico. This program is structured in a flexible way to enable institutions, in collaboration with the Trust, foster the recruitment, retention and development of World-class research in Puerto Rico. This program can be used both for the relocation of a scientists to Puerto Rico, or for the initiation of satellite (or mirror) research programs in Puerto Rico for researchers maintaining their appointments at other institutions (following success stories from North America, Europe and Asia). Scientists considered for the program must have demonstrated a sustained, high level of productivity and how their expertise, research accomplishments, and contributions will enhance Puerto Rico's competitiveness in the global knowledge economy.

Expected Program Outcomes and Results

The expected results of this program include:

1. Position Puerto Rico at the forefront of certain science fields identified as strategic to the national science and technology agenda, as defined by the Trust and the Puerto Rico's Public Policy on Science, Technology and Innovation;
2. Recruitment of a scientific workforce—including the sponsored candidate, as well as his staff, trainees, and collaborators—that enhances Puerto Rico's research expertise and/or are capable of bringing additional research funds;
3. Setup of important laboratory infrastructure;
4. Leverage Trust funds as measured vis-à-vis the amount of additional funds brought to Puerto Rico as a direct result of the startup funds provided.
5. Increase in the amount of scientific and intellectual property outputs (e.g. science papers, invention disclosures, patents and other forms of intellectual property).

Eligibility

Institutional Eligibility

This RSFP is open to all academic research institutions registered in Puerto Rico. Applicant institutions must be in the process of recruiting the PI for an independent



faculty position (or equivalent) at the time of submission. Applicant institutions must provide documentation confirming the independent status of each nominated candidate. In addition, the applicant institution must certify that each candidate will devote a minimum of 75 percent effort to research endeavors. If this minimum research commitment is reduced, the Trust reserves the right to forfeit the award.

Principal Investigator Eligibility

Applications will only be accepted for PIs who have been officially nominated by an eligible recruiting institution in Puerto Rico. Applicants should be under consideration for recruitment to an independent faculty appointment (or equivalent position) at an institution in Puerto Rico. Independent faculty position means a post where research is a primary responsibility of the faculty member (at least 75% effort). At academic institutions with tenure track appointments, independent investigators must be recruited to tenure-track positions.

The proposed candidates must be a recognized leader in his/her particular field with an outstanding record of original contributions, or if the candidate is a new investigator, he or she must have had a strong track record as a graduate and postdoctoral student and have been selected in a competitive, open and well-advertised process driven by the recruiting institution. A peer-review committee established by the Trust will ultimately decide eligibility of the candidate for the program.

Award Terms

Awards in response to the RSFP will be made to the Research Institution. An annual report is required and awards are not renewable.

At least 75 percent of the recipient's full-time professional effort must be devoted to his/her research program and the remainder devoted to other research-related, clinical, and/or teaching pursuits consistent with the objectives of the award.

The amount of the award will be jointly determined by the recruiting institution and the Trust. Funding should not exceed the projected budget needs beyond the first five years of the position.

Use of Funds

These funds will be considered discretionary funds, to be used by the researchers for their work as the researchers deems appropriate. The funds are not renewable, but they also do not expire (if the researcher does not use the funds immediately, they can be allocated for later use). Funding request maximum is \$300,000 per year, and a



cumulative budget for no more than five years (\$900,000 maximum for the total grant).

Allowable costs include:

- Up to 50% salary and fringe benefits for the PI. Cost sharing of at least 50% is required from the Institution for salary and fringe benefits.
- Expenditures for laboratory operations, including salaries and benefits for lab personnel, research supplies including specialized reagents, animal costs, minor equipment purchases (less than \$5,000 per item), service agreements on equipment, research-related support services, and travel expenses (up to \$5,000/year per individual) related to the research program.
- Laboratory Relocation expenses. Expenditures in this category are only permitted in the first grant year and will be paid as reimbursements following submission of receipts.
- Major research equipment (moveable equipment costing more than \$5,000 per item) necessary for conducting the proposed research. Institutional commitment of 33% for matching funds is required.
- Other costs necessary for the research program

Application Review Process

We recommend the Academic Institution to first approach the Trust's Executive Director or program designee, to express their interest in participating in the project. It is not necessary at this stage to have a specific candidate.

Applications will be submitted on behalf of the candidate by the Academic Institution President, and the Chancellor of the particular campus or unit. Applications will be reviewed for completeness and for responsiveness to this program. Incomplete or non-responsive applications will be returned to the applicant without further consideration.

An external peer review group convened by the Trust will evaluate applications that are complete and responsive to the award program for scientific and technical merit. We note that in the review process, the Trust will be evaluating, not only the candidate, but also the capacity of the institution to support the candidates development and research program. **On that note, a strong statement of support on behalf of the institution towards the candidate, with specific resources**



identified to protect and foster the candidates research program, is key in the success of the application.

Evaluation Criteria

I. Candidate

- ☐ A consistent record of outstanding research productivity, which might include programmatic research funding, a record of influential scientific publications, patents and/or other scholarly activities;
- ☐ Recognition as a world-class scientist as judged by peers, or if a new investigator, potential to become a leader in his/her field;
- ☐ Ability to lead a productive research program relevant to the target areas;
- ☐ Ability to develop and maintain a high quality environment for training and mentoring investigators;
- ☐ The candidate's involvement in science education, industry collaborations, and/or technology transfer;
- ☐ Likelihood of continue and significant contributions to scientific knowledge.

II. Career Development, Research Plan and Education Activities

- ☐ Scientific and technical merit of the research plan;
- ☐ Significance of the research plan and the probability of significant contributions;
- ☐ Long-term substantive plan for future research and/or industry collaborations;
- ☐ Consistency of the career development plans with the candidates' career goals; and
- ☐ Quality of plans for mentoring, science education, and/or technology transfer activities.

II. Institutional Environment and Commitment to the Candidate

- ☐ Adequacy of the facilities and general environment as it relates to the proposed research and career development program;
- ☐ Availability of collaborative opportunities with other investigators;
- ☐ Institutional support to the candidate's commitment to research and research training.

Application Process



The Academic Institution President and the Chancellor of the particular campus or unit will submit applications on behalf of candidates.

The Academic Institution's campus/unit must have a demonstrated commitment to research and a commitment to the continuing development of the candidate as an independent scientist. This requirement also applies to the department in which the investigator will have his/her appointment. The institution must provide assurance that the candidate is an integral part of its research and academic program.

The Academic Institution will be requesting information essential to an assessment of the effectiveness of this initiative. Accordingly, recipients will be notified that they will be required to submit progress reports on various aspects of their recruitment, publications, support from research grants or contracts, honors and awards, professional activities, and other information helpful in evaluating the impact of the program. Site visits by External Advisors may also be conducted.

Candidates will be selected through a competitive search process that includes external reviewers selected by the Trust.

You may send your questions about the RSFP through grants@prsciencetrust.org. Answers will be provided in 48 to 72 hours.