REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS

REFERENCE: FY 2018-19

PROGRAM GUIDELINES
CATALYZER RESEARCH GRANTS
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Program Overview

The **Catalyzer Research Grant Program (CRG)** aims to help local researchers increase their probabilities of success in securing federal funding for their research and development activities. It is well acknowledged by scientists that R&D funding in Puerto Rico could be significantly increased if local researchers are provided with adequate resources that enabled them to arrive at critical milestones in their research endeavors. In particular, the CRG will provide bridge funding to help researchers accomplish the following to enhance the proposal competitiveness:

- Obtain reproducible and robust preliminary results
- Address any recommendations from previous grant reviewers to improve the R&D project to strengthen its position to obtain the grant
- Secure reagents, laboratory materials, collaborations or additional technical training necessary for the proposed goals

Expected Results

By strengthening local researcher’s position for the submission of highly competitive R&D grants (within the 15-18 months after receiving the CRG), the Program's expectations will be proposals successfully awarded from private and/or federal agencies (e.g. National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, among others) in order to stimulate the development of Puerto Rico’s knowledge-based economy.

Eligibility

The CRG is open to researchers in public and private universities, colleges, and affiliated non-profit research institutions located in Puerto Rico. Ideal candidates fall into one of the following categories:

- Junior faculty (within their first five years of their faculty appointment) with a competitive publication record, seeking to secure their first grants*
- PI's with a successful track record of securing funding in their primary research topic, but now embarking in a new research topic and seeking to secure a grant*
- PI’s that applied for highly competitive federal funding*, that had their proposal favorably reviewed, but fell short of being funded. In this case, the PI should provide a copy of the evaluated proposal and the evaluations.

Applicants must submit a project plan designed to allow them to complete experiments suggested by previous reviewers or generate new data that will strengthen the competitiveness of the proposal.
*The types of grants the CRGs seek to bridge are those grants that qualify for tax exemptions under Law 101.*

**Award Terms**
Recipients will receive up to $70,000. Applicants must specify in their applications the intended use of the grant funds in their research activity and explain how these efforts can enhance their success probabilities in obtaining federal R&D funding.

Applicants that receive funds should submit their proposals to a private or federal R&D program within the next 15-18 months of the award date. CRGs are not renewable. Other CRGs applications from the same PI will not be considered until evidence of resubmission of the improved proposal, resulting from the original CRG, is submitted to the Trust.

**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 however the entity may request a no cost extension. Construction of research facilities and similar capital expenditures are not allowable uses of funds under this Program.

**Allowable Costs**
The following costs are eligible under this program:

**Direct Costs:**
- **Personnel Costs**: salaries of key personnel to conduct the work as presented in the proposal.
- **Fringe benefits**: only those required by law: social security, federal and state unemployment, state disability, etc.
- **Consultant/Services Fees**: Fees for consulting services or any other type of remuneration paid to technical advisors consulted with regard to research and development.
- **Materials and supplies**
- **Equipment**, item of property that has an acquisition cost of $5,000 or less and an expected service life of more than one year. Equipment purchase must be essential for project and must be fully justified.
- **Out-of-Jurisdiction-Travel**: Only if necessary for the completion of the work proposed. Must be fully justified and itemized by destination and cost. Can include travel-related costs for transportation, lodging, and meals. Allowance for air travel normally will not exceed the cost of round-trip, economy airfares.
All travel must be pre-approved by the Trust. Travel should not exceed $5,000 per award. Travel in Puerto Rico (including mileage, meals, lodging) is not allowed.

The following costs are not eligible:

- Unreasonable costs based on the proposed scope of work. All costs must be fully justified.
- Indirect costs.
- Subawards.
- Acquisition of real property.
- Costs incurred pre-award, including proposal preparation costs.
- Maternity or sick leave expenses.
- Redundancy or other terminations costs.
- Contingency costs.
- Hospitality and entertainment costs.
- Journal subscription costs.
- Relocation expenses.
- Travel in Puerto Rico, including mileage, meals and lodging.
- Direct or indirect support for any lobbying effort or for contribution to the political campaign of any candidate or for contribution to any political party or similar organization.

**Application Review Process**

Applications will be reviewed for completeness and for responsiveness to this program. Incomplete or non-responsive applications will not be considered.

An external peer review group of highly qualified individuals with the appropriate scientific expertise will be convened by the Trust to evaluate applications that are complete and responsive to the award program*. The Scientific Peer Reviewer will be responsible for evaluating application’s scientific and technical merit and provide a final score for the Trust's Board of Director’s Grants Committee to be considered when making funding decisions.
*At least 2 Peer Reviewers will be assigned per application*

**Evaluation Criteria**
Unless specified differently by the CRG, review criteria will be as detailed below.

- **Project Status.** Is the application contingent upon the researcher submitting a plan to secure federal funding? Is the current status of the project suitable to secure federal funding within the next 15-18 months? In the case that the PI had applied for competitive federal funding, does the submitted application address the comments and suggestions of its previous peer review?

- **Approach and Technical Merit.** Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Does the plan identify key milestone(s) to be reached during the funding period?

- **Innovation/Relevance.** Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches, instrumentation, or interventions? Are they novel to one field or novel in a broad sense? Will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved?

- **Investigator(s).** Are the applicant's capability and experience commensurate and relevant to the proposed work? Do they have sufficient expertise to execute the proposed project and show meaningful results? Do they established adequate collaborations (if specified)? In the case of a PI/Team entering a new research topic, do they have a strong track record that would support their lack of experience in the new area? Is the institutional support, equipment, facilities, or other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the project proposed?

- **Budget Justification.** Are the budget, project duration, and level of effort proposed appropriate for the CRG (15-18 months to submission or re-submission)? Is clearly stated how the award will benefit the project and enhance the proposal to obtain a highly competitive federal award?

**Application Scoring and Critique**
Reviewers assign a score for each review criterion for each application.

- **Criteria Scores.** Each criterion is rated on a 9-point scale from 1 (best) to 9 (worst), where intermediate values are treated as equal steps along the scale. Decimal scores are not allowed.
• **Final Scores.** The final score for each proposal will be determined by adding the individual criteria scores. This total score will range from 5 (best) to 45 (worst).

**Final Ranking and Decision**
The Grants Program Team will compile the total scores from all reviewers, determine the final ranking and complete a final report to the Board of Trustee’s Grants Committee that will make a final decision regarding awards.

**Feedback to Applicants**
All applicants will receive a copy of the CRG Review and Critique form. Copies will not include the reviewer’s names or any other identifying information. These materials will be sent directly to the principal investigator.

**Procedures for Responding to Applicant Inquiries**
Applicants who have questions regarding the review of their application will be directed to the Grants Program Specialist. If the applicant is not satisfied with the Grants Program Specialist's feedback, the inquiry will be directed to the Trust's CEO. The Trust's CEO will review the process on how the proposal was handled in order to determine if there was an irregularity. If the CEO determines that there was an irregularity, the application will be re-reviewed. A re-review consists of a review of the same application, not a revised version, during the next review cycle.