2021 Innovations in Aging Research Request for Proposals

Introduction:

Since 2006, the Center on Aging (CoA) has sponsored an annual pilot grant program to promote the development of aging research at the University of Utah. Many of the pilot grants it has supported have led to new externally funded aging research grants – information is available at http://aging.utah.edu/grants/pilot/index.php.

This "Innovations in Aging Research" Request for Proposals (RFP) is different from the traditional CoA Pilot Grant RFP. The CoA leadership recognizes that today there are unprecedented opportunities to advance aging research, and that these advances will most likely be driven by new, interprofessional collaborations in team-based approaches. Moreover, the target of this RFP is to reach beyond a single investigator-initiated award by supporting the development of larger, multi-investigator projects based on a thematic area. The goal of this program is to promote collaborations and provide funding support to enhance preliminary/project data that will allow competitive applications for multi-PI extramural funding by the NIH or other agencies and foundations, such as multi-PI R01s and P01s and center grants (P30, P60 and others).

The recipient the inaugural Innovations award in 2019 was the team of Drs. Ellington, Scammon and Utz for their project titled, "One U for Caregiving Science: Strengthening Partnerships and Leveraging Existing Expertise for Excellence". Their project has been highly successful meeting its objectives to lead the 2020 CoA Research Retreat and in obtaining an NIA K07 award, "Research Collaborative for Family Caregivers of Older Adults" to sustain the caregiving science program. Interested applicants are encouraged to become familiar with their project as an exemplar of the goals for the Innovations awards.

Research Scope:

We invite applications from all areas of collaborative aging research that will lead to competitive extramural multi-PI grant applications. Topical areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- cognitive resilience, impairment and dementia
- impact of mid-life exposures on aging and longevity
- frailty and/or physical frailty
- resilient places: adaptive capacity promotion for healthy aging

1

- value and/or characteristics of becoming an "age friendly health system"
- vascular aging

Proposal Guidelines:

- Proposals must be a collaborative effort involving *at least two* independent investigators or research groups at the University of Utah with each contributing substantially to the scientific development and execution of the project. Aligning with President Watkins promotion of "One U," cross campus (Main and Health Sciences) and/or cross-college investigative teams are highly encouraged.
- Principal investigators must have a Career or Tenure line University of Utah faculty appointment. While Center on Aging membership is not required, applicants are strongly encouraged to apply for membership concurrently with their application. Membership information is available at http://aging.utah.edu/membership/join.php

Proposal Preferences and review criteria:

Preference will be given to applications that:

- Have significant scientific merit
- Have an aging focus and significance
- Include interdisciplinary collaboration, spanning two or more colleges
- Have a high potential for multi-PI extramural funding, preferably from the NIH
- Build new or strengthen existing interdisciplinary partnerships within the University of Utah aging research community and the CoA

Application Instructions:

Proposals should be electronically submitted as single PDF file with **all** components listed below in the following order. [Note: incomplete submissions may disqualify an application]

1. Cover letter that addresses the following aspects of the proposal:
   - How this proposal specifically relates to aging and the significance of its topical focus area to aging research.
   - How the project results will lead to future independent funding and the specific funding sources that will be targeted (targeted RFPs, agencies and projected submission dates).
   - How will the CoA be utilized/play a role?
   - Relationship that PIs or co-investigators have, if any, with the Center on Aging.
   - If this is a resubmission, comment on the major changes made in the revised application.
2. A letter of support from the department head/dean confirming that the principal investigator will receive protected time required to devote to the

proposed project.

3. A brief proposal (2 page limit, plus references on additional pages as needed). Please address Significance, Innovation (include proposed role/contributions for each team member and investigator synergy), and Approach.
4. A plan for extramural funding (1 page limit). This plan must address specific plans including a targeted funding mechanism and/or RFP, leadership plan and collaborative group meeting plan (including evidence of success for currently meeting groups). The plan must also include a timeline for the project's first year, and the group's plan for sustaining its activities for the next 5 years.
5. NIH Biographical sketch for each co-investigator including current and pending support (5 pages max).
6. Proposed project budget (not to exceed up to $50,000), following the guidelines below. Please describe in the budget justification how funds will be distributed between investigators.

Budget Guidelines:

Funding is available for salaries and fringe benefits of post-doctoral fellows, students, technicians, and other non-faculty project personnel, supplies, miscellaneous expenses, and services.

The following items may <u>not</u> be supported with pilot project funds:

- Faculty salary, with the exception of partial summer salary for faculty with a 9-month appointment if there is explicit justification. Faculty effort devoted to the project needs to be provided in the form of protected or release time from clinical or teaching responsibilities. A letter from the principal investigator's department head or dean must be submitted with the application documenting the time or percent effort that the faculty member will have available to dedicate to the pilot grant project.
- Major equipment (cost greater than $5,000)
- Travel not directly needed for the research project (e.g. to conference attendance)

Review and Funding of Proposals:

Proposals will be reviewed by members from the Center on Aging Steering Committee and its Board of Directors who will make final funding decisions based on the project's innovation, scientific merit, collaboration, and alignment with the proposal preferences. All applications will be evaluated based on the review criteria (cited above).

Maximum funding per project is up to $50,000, with a project term of up to two years. <u>Budgets may</u> <u>be reduced as the CoA leadership may determine.</u> Unused funds must be returned to the CoA after the two-year project term. However, recipients can submit, no later than two months before the two-year deadline, an explanation of why the funds have not been spent and a plan to spend out the

remaining funds. A no-cost extension is subject to CoA leadership approval. Grant administration is the responsibility of the Principal Investigators.

Expectations of Award Recipients:

Recipients of this award are expected to formally apply for membership in the Center on Aging, actively participate in its programs, and provide the Center on Aging with:

- A final progress report at the conclusion of the funding period. Final payment of the award will be made upon receipt of this report.
- A financial accounting of how project funds were spent. Financial support from the Center on Aging must be acknowledged in all publications.
- Information pertaining to any publications and grant support resulting from the pilot grant project.
- A research presentation and/or poster at the 2022 Center on Aging Research Retreat.

Timeline:

The proposal should be submitted electronically to Heather Podolan, Center on Aging Program Coordinator at heather.podolan@hsc.utah.edu (office phone: 801-213-4156) by the deadline **Friday, May 7, 2021** 11:59 PM Mountain Standard Time

- We anticipate making funding decisions by mid-June 2021.
- Projects may begin as early as July 1, 2021; the starting date may be negotiated.

Questions may be directed to:
- Heather Podolan, Program Coordinator, heather.podolan@hsc.utah.edu
- Dr. Mark Supiano, Executive Director, mark.supiano@utah.edu
- Any CoA Steering Committee member