

UPMC Competitive Medical Research Fund (CMRF)
Fiscal Year 2025 Solicitation

CMRF Grant Application Instructions

Applicants must review and follow the [CMRF Policies](#) as well as these Instructions.

Deadline: Applications must be submitted electronically via InfoReady by 5:00 pm, Friday, January 12, 2024.

To apply for a CMRF award, visit <https://upitt.infoready4.com>; use your university login and password after selecting the 'Apply' button. Complete the application form and upload all required documents in PDF format. No paper applications will be accepted. Any uploaded PDF that exceeds the stated page limits or that is not in 11 or 12 point Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype, or Georgia font will not be considered.

A CMRF applicant (Principal Investigator) may only submit one application per year/funding cycle but may serve as Co-Investigator on no more than one additional CMRF application in a given cycle. Multi-PI applications are ineligible for CMRF funding. See detailed information on submission procedures below.

General Instructions, Format, and Guidelines

Type density must be no more than 15 characters per inch, and type must be no more than six lines per inch. Margins in all directions must be at least one-half inch. Text in figures, charts, tables, legends or footnotes may be no smaller than 9-point, and must be in black type and readily legible. **Any application that exceeds the stated page limits or does not conform to the font size/margin guidelines will be withdrawn from consideration without review and without appeal. Sufficient information must be provided for review of the Research Plan; any application having a Research Plan less than 3 pages in length will also be withdrawn from consideration without review and without appeal.**

Please complete all appropriate forms included in the [CMRF Application Packet](#).

The complete CMRF application must be assembled in order as follows, as a single PDF file:

1. Checklist
2. Face Page
3. Cost Share Agreement Page
4. CMRF Eligibility Clarification Page
5. Letter of Support from applicant's Department Chair
6. Abstract Page (see below)
7. Table of Contents
8. Budget with Budget Justification
9. Biographical Sketch(es) of Principal Investigator and all Co-Investigators (see CMRF Policies for definitions)
10. Research Plan
11. Bibliography
12. Letters of Collaboration (if applicable)

13. Appendices

1. Checklist

Please indicate all documents enclosed in the application on the checklist.

2. Face Page

The CMRF Face Page must be signed by the Principal Investigator (applicant) and the Principal Investigator's immediate supervisor. **Applications submitted without signatures will be withdrawn from consideration without review or appeal.** Please answer all questions on the Face Page. If a question is not applicable, enter N/A.

3. Cost Share Agreement Page

Any funds awarded will support direct costs only; no indirect support will be provided. A CMRF award may not be used for salary support for the Principal Investigator or any other faculty level personnel, but Principal Investigator effort must be reflected on the budget page and must be cost shared by the department or other entity that will support such effort. Principal Investigator salary should not be shown on the budget page.

The CMRF Cost Sharing Agreement Page must be signed by the Principal Investigator's department chair or appropriate responsibility center director (*e.g.*, division chief or institute director) who can authorize cost sharing against an Entity-02 or -04 institutional account. This signature certifies acceptance of Principal Investigator cost shared effort and acknowledgement that indirect costs will not be awarded if the application is successful. The institutional account number against which the effort will be charged must also be provided. An applicant who is currently the recipient of a mentored career development award (*e.g.*, K12, K23, *etc.*) may subsume the effort devoted to his or her CMRF project under the career development award as long as the proposed CMRF project is consistent with the career development award. Please contact Dr. Anthony Brickner, Office of Research, Health Sciences at agb10@pitt.edu for verification of eligibility to subsume effort.

4. CMRF Eligibility Clarification Page

This section is not an abstract. It must be used to address the following, where applicable:

- a. **Need for funding from the CMRF for the proposed project.** Describe what role CMRF support would play in the applicant's research and career plans, future grant applications, *etc.*, if an award were made.
- b. **Ongoing Research.** If the CMRF application represents a request for funds to extend an ongoing project into a new direction, it is essential to specify clearly how the proposed project differs from the ongoing research. The source of funding for the ongoing research must be identified, and, if the funding source is not new investigator start-up funds provided by the University of Pittsburgh, the reason(s) why that other source is not available for the proposed CMRF project must be given.
- c. **Investigator Independence.** If the applicant works in the laboratory of a senior investigator, he or she must clearly indicate how CMRF funding will be used to support an independent research program and how the proposed research differs from ongoing activities in the senior investigator's laboratory. CMRF will not fund either the research or personnel of the senior investigator. Rather, the proposed research must be a readily portable project that will be instrumental in establishing the applicant as an independent researcher at Pitt. (Please note: other support information and abstracts for active and pending grant applications of the senior investigator must be included in the Appendix.)

If the spaces provided are insufficient, one additional page may be included for each section of the CMRF Eligibility Clarification Page.

5. Letter of Departmental Support

A letter of departmental commitment to the career development of the applicant from the applicant's department chair is required. This will be one of the criteria used in evaluating the application. Additional letters of support, *e.g.*, from a division chief, may be included. However, letters from division chiefs, research directors, institute directors, or laboratory supervisors will not be accepted in lieu of a department chair's letter of support.

6. Abstract Page

Submit two copies of the abstract – one as a stand-alone PDF file and the other incorporated into the full application packet. All Co-Investigators and Consultants for the proposed CMRF project must be listed on the abstract page.

7. Table of Contents Page

Complete this page last. Pages must be numbered consecutively.

8. Budget

The standard CMRF award is up to \$30,000, to be expended over a period of up to 24 months. However a maximum of \$50,000 may be requested if the Principal Investigator makes a compelling case that the proposed goals cannot be achieved with the standard \$30,000 award. If the costs of the proposed project exceed the CMRF award, the source of funds that will enable completion of the project must be specified. The budget page must reflect the entire budget for the project.

When preparing the budget, please consider the following restrictions:

1. CMRF funds are to be used to support a research project. Purchase of equipment or construction of equipment does not, alone, constitute a research project. Items of equipment exceeding \$500 must be specifically addressed in the Budget Justification section.
2. Personal computer purchase will be approved only when it can be demonstrated that the computer is essential for the proposed work. A request for a computer for routine access to e-mail, word processing, the Internet, and similar will not be approved.
3. Travel expenses may be requested if they are not a significant portion of the budget and only if the Principal Investigator can make a compelling case that the travel is necessary, *i.e.*, that the work cannot be completed if the travel does not occur. Note that travel to attend a meeting is not allowed, unless research for the project must be conducted at that meeting.
4. Publication costs will not be awarded.
5. Salary support for the Principal Investigator or any other named professorial rank investigator may not be requested, but Principal Investigator effort (% or calendar months) on the proposed study must be indicated on the budget page. Do not provide information regarding the salary of the Principal Investigator or any other professorial rank investigator. Please note that the reviewers look critically at the effort of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the effort is adequate for completion of the proposed project.

Applicants must use the budget form included in the application packet and **must complete the Budget Justification section**. An additional continuation page may be included if the Budget Justification section needs additional space. If an amount greater than \$30,000 is requested, a specific statement must be included as to why an award of \$30,000 would be insufficient for the proposed project.

9. Biographical Sketches and Other Support

NIH Biographical Sketches must be included for the Principal Investigator and each named Co-Investigator; see instructions: (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>). These named individuals are not required to have eRA Commons accounts. An applicant working within the laboratory of a more senior investigator must include a biographical sketch for that investigator, even if this person is not listed as a Co-Investigator on the CMRF project. Each biographical sketch of the Principal Investigator and each named Co-Investigator in the project must include a Personal Statement

that describes qualifications and expected contributions to the CMRF project. Each biographical sketch must also list all current and pending support.

An NIH-format Other Support document that specifies the duration and annual direct costs for each of the Principal Investigator's awards must also be included (see <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/othersupport.htm> for instructions). **An applicant working within the laboratory of a more senior investigator must include Other Support information for this person, even if the more senior investigator is not listed as a Co-Investigator on the CMRF project.** A statement addressing potential scientific or budgetary overlap with the CMRF application must be included for each source of support listed. In situations where an overlap exists between the CMRF application and the current support of the applicant or Co-Investigators, the applicant must state the proposed action for resolution of the overlap. Likewise, for overlap that may exist if pending applications are funded, the applicant must state the proposed action for resolution of the overlap if both grants are awarded. If there is no such overlap, clearly state the differences between the funded research and that proposed in the CMRF application.

If any individual, including the Principal Investigator, has no other support, this must be stated explicitly. **Abstracts of current grants and pending applications for the Principal Investigator, for Co-Investigators, and for the senior investigator in whose laboratory the Principal Investigator works (if applicable) are required for the review of the application and must be included as Appendices.** These data are not required for consultants.

10. Research Plan

The Research Plan must be prepared in the style of the current NIH R21 grant application (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/r21.htm>) and contain the following sections:

Introduction (to be included for resubmissions only). A resubmission of a previously unfunded CMRF application must include a brief (one page maximum) introduction to the Research Plan, summarizing the relevant changes or revisions made in response to the reviewers' comments. This Introduction is not included in the page total for the Research Plan.

Specific Aims. One page maximum.

Research Strategy. This section must not exceed six single-spaced pages and must be organized as follows:

(a) Significance

- Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses.
- Explain how the proposed project will enable the applicant to develop hypotheses, preliminary data, and methods necessary to successfully compete for extramural funding.

(b) Innovation

- Explain how the applicant challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms.
- Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions to be developed or used, and any advantage that such use will provide over existing methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.

(c) Approach

- Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include information on how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted.
- Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success.

- Discuss any available preliminary studies, data, and or experience pertinent to this application. Please note, while preliminary data are not required, scientific justification for the proposed project must be provided – this could be from the Principal Investigator’s previous work or from published literature.

Immediately following the Research Plan, include:

Human Subjects (if applicable; two-page maximum)

Vertebrate Animals (if applicable; two-page maximum)

Failure to include required Human Subjects or Vertebrate Animals sections will result in the application being withdrawn from consideration without review and without appeal.

Please refer to CMRF Policies regarding regulatory approvals.

11. Bibliography (no page limit)

12. Letters of Collaboration

Include letters from anyone who has agreed to supply facilities, equipment, or reagents necessary for the proposed research.

13. Appendices

Appendix material may only include the following items. 1) Abstracts for currently funded research and pending applications must be provided for the Principal Investigator and each Co-Investigator. This includes K or other career development awards held by the Principal Investigator. 2) If the applicant works in the laboratory/research group of a more senior investigator, abstracts of the active and pending projects of that senior investigator must be included, even if this person is not a Co-Investigator on the CMRF project. 3) Applicants may include no more than three manuscripts that describe their research relevant to the proposed work. These manuscripts must be accepted for publication. Do not include submitted manuscripts or previously published papers that are freely available online or elsewhere. These manuscripts should be included in the appendix material and must be in PDF format. Please note, however, that reviewers are under no obligation to read these manuscripts.

Submission Process

Complete CMRF applications must be uploaded electronically to InfoReady, in PDF format, by **5:00 pm EST, Friday, January 12, 2024. No exceptions to this deadline will be made, and no supplementary materials will be accepted after the deadline.** A complete application consists of two PDF files; one containing the full application, including the abstract, and the other containing the abstract only. The PDF files must not contain conversion errors and must conform to the font size/margin guidelines listed above. If conversion errors cannot be remedied, please include one representative page in Word format along with the two PDF files to demonstrate that font size/margin requirements are met.

For more information, contact:

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