# Faculty Pilot Research Project Proposal Guidance

**ASCEND Center for Biomedical Research**

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Overview Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of applications</th>
<th>A faculty member may submit multiple applications.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>The pilot project grants were established to help faculty establish or revive their research program. All topics should be health-related.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Intent Due Date</td>
<td>March 6, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Although a letter of intent is not required, it is encouraged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Intent format/instructions</td>
<td>The letter of intent should include the following information:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Descriptive title of the proposed activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Name(s), address(es), and telephone number(s) of the project director/principal investigator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email the letter of intent to <a href="mailto:ascend@morgan.edu">ascend@morgan.edu</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Due Date</td>
<td>April 1, 2015 (by 11:59 PM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Merit Review</td>
<td>April/May 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earliest Start Date</td>
<td>June 1, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Period</td>
<td>June 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016 (can end earlier)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Instrument</td>
<td>Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipated Number of Awards</td>
<td>Up to 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Award Budget:** Applications may request up to $50,000 (total costs) for one year. Funding for additional years may be available but is not guaranteed, and depends on other applications received and availability of funds. There are no indirect costs.

**Eligibility:** In order to be eligible to apply, the primary researcher must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member at Morgan State University.

**Funding Opportunity Description:** The purpose of the pilot project grants is to help faculty establish or revive their research program. All research topics should be health-related, broadly defined. Proposals that are interdisciplinary, community-based, and that involve undergraduate students are strongly encouraged.

**Application Submission:** Applications must be prepared using the PHS 398 research grant applications forms provided on the ASCEND website (www.morgan.edu/ascend). Email the forms and any related attachments to ascend@morgan.edu.
Questions: If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Gillian Silver, Program Manager, at 443-885-3541, or ascend@morgan.edu.

Formatting specifications: Font and margin specifications must be followed; if not the application may not be reviewed.
- Font size of 11 points or larger.
- NIH requires the use of one of four approved fonts: two serif fonts (Palatino and Georgia) and two sans serif fonts (Arial and Helvetica).
- A symbol font may be used to insert Greek letters or special characters; the font size requirement still applies.
- A smaller font size may be used for figures, graphs, diagrams, charts, tables, figure legends, and footnotes, but this type must follow the font typeface requirement and be readily legible.
- Text should be single-spaced.
- Pages should be single-sided.
- Use ½ to 1-inch margins. No information should appear in the margins, including the PD/PI's name and page numbers.
- Use standard paper size (8 ½” x 11”).
- Consecutively number pages throughout the application. Do not use suffixes (e.g., 5a, 5b).

Language Use:
- Use English and avoid jargon.
- If terms are not universally known, spell out the term the first time it is used and note the appropriate abbreviation in parentheses. The abbreviation may be used thereafter.

Page Limitations: Follow all page limitations instructions provided on the forms, or as follows:
- Face Page: 1 page
- Specific Aims: 1 page
- Research Strategy: 6 pages
- Budget Narrative: 2 pages
- Biosketch: 4 pages (each)

Face Page: Many of the items on the face page are self-explanatory. Some of the items are pre-filled. The signature of the official signing for the applicant organization is not needed at this time.

Description, Project/Performance Sites, Senior/Key Personnel, Other Significant Contributors:

- Project Summary: The Project Summary is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work when separated from the application. State the application's broad, long-term objectives and specific aims, making reference to the health relatedness of the project (i.e., relevance to ASCEND’s goals). Describe concisely the research design and methods for achieving the stated goals. This section should be informative to other persons working in the same or related fields and insofar as possible understandable to a scientifically or technically literate reader. Avoid describing past accomplishments and the use of the first person.
- **Relevance**: Using no more than two or three sentences, describe the relevance of this research to public health. In this section, be succinct and use plain language that can be understood by a general, lay audience.

- **Project/Performance Site(s)**: Indicate where the work described in the Research Plan will be conducted.

- **Senior/Key Personnel**: In addition to the PD/PI, Senior/Key Personnel are defined as individuals who contribute to the scientific development or execution of the project in a substantive, measurable way, whether or not salaries are requested. Typically, these individuals have doctoral or other professional degrees, although individuals at the masters or baccalaureate level should be included if their involvement meets the definition of Senior/Key Personnel. Consultants and those with a postdoctoral role should also be included if they meet the same definition.

  Senior/Key Personnel must devote measurable effort (described in person months) to the project, whether or not salaries are requested. "Effort of zero person months” or “as needed” are not acceptable levels of involvement for those designated as Senior/Key Personnel. Start with the PD/PI(s). List the PD/PI’s last name first. When multiple PIs are proposed, list the contact PI first, then all additional PIs in alphabetical order. Then list all other Senior/Key Personnel in alphabetical order, last name first. For each individual provide name, eRA Commons User Name (if known), organization name (their institutional affiliation), and role on the project. Under role on the project, indicate how the individual will function on the proposed project.

- **Other Significant Contributors**: This category identifies individuals who have committed to contribute to the scientific development or execution of the project, but are not committing any specified measurable effort (i.e., person months) to the project. These individuals are typically presented at "effort of zero person months” or "as needed." Individuals with measurable effort may not be listed as Other Significant Contributors (OSCs). Consultants should be included if they meet this definition.

  A biosketch, including Research Support information, will be required for Senior/Key Personnel and OSCs, as this highlights their relevant accomplishments. Reviewers use these pages to address the "investigator(s)" review criterion.

**Table of Contents**: Provide the page number for each relevant category listed on the Table of Contents. Place page numbers at the bottom of each page, and consecutively number pages throughout the application. Do not include unnumbered pages, and do not use suffixes, such as 5a, 5b.

**Research Plan**

- **Specific Aims**: State concisely the goals of the proposed research and summarize the expected outcome(s), including the impact that the results of the proposed research will exert on the research field(s) involved. List succinctly the specific objectives of the research proposed, e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing
paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop new technology. Specific Aims are limited to one page.

- **Research Strategy:** Organize the Research Strategy into the following sections: Significance, Innovation, Approach, and Impact. Start each section with the appropriate section heading. Cite published experimental details in the Research Strategy section and provide the full reference in the Bibliography and References Cited section. The Research Strategy is limited to six pages (separate from the Bibliography and References Cited).

For the Impact section, provide a detailed personal development plan, describing how data generated with this funding will allow you to expand your research capacity and ability to publish your findings and will enable you to apply for funding through the NIGMS MOORE division SCORE program funding, NIH, NSF or other government or private agencies. If you previously applied unsuccessfully for such funding, specify how ASCEND funding will help you to address reviewer comments. Describe any existing relevant collaborations with investigators at MSU and majority partner institutions or those you plan to establish. If you are a beginning investigator, describe the scientific or career mentorship you currently have or will be seeking. If you are a seasoned investigator applying for “bridge funding,” describe how your research program has or will impact your department’s overall research infrastructure and training capacity. Include evidence of your previous undergraduate and graduate training record, if applicable. If the proposed research is funded, describe how it will affect the following (please be specific and realistic in your assessment):

1) The number of undergraduate research students (funded through other mechanisms) you will be able to train over the course of the funding period;
2) The number of graduate students (funded by other mechanisms) you will be able to train;
3) The infrastructure capacity of your laboratory/research program for future work;
4) The overall research infrastructure in your department;
5) Your ability to engage in interdisciplinary collaborations on- or off-campus;
6) How you plan to disseminate your research results (e.g., through presentations and publications).

- **Bibliography and References Cited/Progress Report Publication List:** List the titles and complete references to all appropriate publications, manuscripts accepted for publication, patents, and other printed materials that have resulted from the project since it was last reviewed competitively. Each reference must include names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. Include only bibliographic citations. Follow scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon in preparing any section of the application. The references should be limited to relevant and current literature. While there is not a page limitation, it is important to be concise and to select only those literature references pertinent to the proposed research.

**Letters of Support:** Provide all appropriate letters of support, including any letters necessary to demonstrate the support of consortium participants and collaborators such as Senior/Key Personnel and Other Significant Contributors included in the grant application. Letters are not required for personnel (such as research assistants) not contributing in a substantive, measurable way to the scientific development or execution of the project. Letters should stipulate expectations for co-authorship, and
whether cell lines, samples or other resources promised in the letter are freely available to other investigators in the scientific community or will be provided to the particular investigators only. For consultants, letters should include rate/charge for consulting services and level of effort/number of hours per year anticipated. In addition, letters ensuring access to core facilities and resources should stipulate whether access will be provided as a fee-for-service. Consultant biographical sketches should be included in the Biographical Sketch section.

**Detailed Budget:** Budgets can include requests for funding for salaries/wages, benefits, supplies, domestic travel, and professional development. Proposals must include a line-item budget and an up to 2-page budget narrative.

Each element listed on the Detailed Budget for Initial Budget Period form must be clearly justified. List only the direct costs requested in this application. Do not include any items that are treated by the applicant organization as Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs according to a Federal rate negotiation agreement, except for those F&A costs included in consortium/contractual costs.

**Personnel**
- **Name.** Starting with the PD/PI(s), list the names of all applicant organization employees who are involved on the project during the initial budget period, regardless of whether a salary is requested. Include all collaborating investigators, individuals in training, and support staff.
- **Role on Project.** Identify the role of each individual listed on the project. Provide budget narrative for ALL personnel by position, role, and level of effort using person months (calendar, academic and/or summer). This includes any “to-be-appointed” positions.
- **Months Devoted to Project.** Enter the number of months devoted to the project. Three columns are provided depending on the type of appointment being reflected: academic, calendar, and/or summer months. Individuals may have consecutive appointments within a calendar year, for example for an academic period and a summer period. In this case, each appointment should be identified separately using the corresponding column. If effort does not change throughout the year, use only the calendar months column. If effort varies between academic and summer months, leave the calendar months column blank and use only the academic and summer months columns. In cases where no contractual appointment exists with the applicant organization and salary is requested, enter the number of months for the requested period.
- **Salary Requested.** Regardless of the number of months being devoted to the project, indicate only the amount of salary being requested for this budget period for each individual listed. Some PHS grant programs are currently subject to a legislatively imposed salary limitation. Any adjustment for salary limits will be made at the time of award. NIH grants also limit the compensation for graduate students. Compensation includes salary or wages, fringe benefits and tuition remission. While actual institutional-based compensation should be requested and justified, this may be adjusted at the time of the award. For more guidance on this policy, see: [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-02-017.html](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-02-017.html).
- **Fringe Benefits.** Fringe benefits may be requested in accordance with institutional guidelines for each position, provided the costs are treated consistently by the applicant organization as a direct cost to all sponsors.
- **Totals.** Calculate the totals for each position and enter the subtotals in each column where indicated.

**Consultant Costs.** Whether or not costs are involved, provide the names and organizational affiliations of all consultants, other than those involved in consortium/contractual arrangements. Include persons
who are confirmed to serve on external monitoring or advisory committees. Include the number of days of anticipated consultation, the expected rate of compensation, travel, per diem, and other related costs.

**Equipment.** List each item of equipment with amount requested separately and justify each purchase.

**Supplies.** Itemize supplies in separate categories, such as glassware, chemicals, radioisotopes, etc. Categories in amounts less than $1,000 do not have to be itemized. If animals are to be purchased, state the species and the number to be used.

**Travel.** Itemize travel requests and justify them. Provide the purpose and destination of each trip and the number of individuals for whom funds are requested.

**Alterations and Renovations.** Itemize by category and justify the costs of essential alterations and renovations including repairs, painting, removal or installation of partitions, shielding, or air conditioning. Where applicable, provide the square footage and costs.

**Other Expenses.** Itemize any other expenses by category and unit cost. These might include animal maintenance (unit care costs and number of care days), participation incentives, donor fees, publication costs, computer charges, rentals and leases, equipment maintenance, service contracts, and tuition remission when budgeted separately from salary/fringe benefits.

**Consortium/Contractual Costs.** Each participating consortium/contractual organization must submit a separate detailed budget for the initial budget period. Consortium arrangements may involve personnel costs, supplies, and other allowable costs, including Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs. Contractual costs for support services, such as the laboratory testing of biological materials, clinical services, or data processing, are occasionally sufficiently high to warrant a similar categorical breakdown of costs. For each budget from a participating consortium/contractual organization, leave the "Consortium/Contractual Direct Costs" category blank and use the "Subtotal Direct Costs" category to total the consortium direct costs. When F&A costs are requested by a consortium organization, enter those costs in the "Consortium/Contractual F&A Costs" category for each supplementary budget. Provide the F&A cost base and rate information in the budget justification section. The "Total Direct Costs for Initial Budget Period" category can be used for the consortium/contractual Total Costs (Direct Costs plus F&A). For the applicant organization budget, list the sum of all consortium/contractual costs (direct and F&A). Insert additional budget page(s) after the overall budget page, numbering them sequentially.

**Budget for Entire Proposed Project Period Direct Costs Only:** Grants that are accepted will be awarded funding for one year (the Initial Budget Period mentioned above). However, applicants may submit requests for up to two or three years of funding (total); continuation years could be funded depending on availability of funds, and only if substantial progress is evident.

**Biographical Sketches:** Refer to the sample biosketch provided. Follow the instructions on the Biographical Sketch Format Page. This section must contain the biographical sketches of all individuals listed as Senior/Key Personnel and Other Significant Contributors, following the order as listed on Form Page 2.
Use the sample format on the Biographical Sketch Format Page to prepare this section. The Biographical Sketch may not exceed 4 pages. This 4-page limit includes the table at the top of the first page. (See sample of a completed Biographical Sketch: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html.)

Complete the educational block at the top of the format page beginning with baccalaureate or other initial professional education, such as nursing, and include postdoctoral training, separately referencing residency training when applicable. For each entry provide the name and location of the institution, the degree received (if applicable) the month and year the degree was received; and the field of study. For residency entries, the field of study section should reflect the area of residency.

Following the educational block, complete sections A, B, C and D:

A. **Personal Statement.** Briefly describe why your experience and qualifications make you particularly well-suited for your role (e.g., PD/PI, mentor, participating faculty) in the project that is the subject of the application. Within this section you may, if you choose, briefly describe factors such as family care responsibilities, illness, disability, and active duty military service that may have affected your scientific advancement or productivity.

B. **Positions and Honors.** List in chronological order previous positions, concluding with the present position. List any honors. Include present membership on any Federal Government public advisory committee.

C. **Selected Peer-Reviewed Publication and Patent Citations.** NIH encourages applicants to limit the list of selected peer-reviewed publications, manuscripts in press, and patent citations to no more than 15. Do not include manuscripts submitted or in preparation. The individual may choose to include selected publications based on recency, importance to the field, and/or relevance to the proposed research. When citing articles that fall under the Public Access Policy, were authored or co-authored by the applicant and arose from NIH support, provide the NIH Manuscript Submission reference number (e.g., NIHMS97531) or the PubMed Central (PMC) reference number (e.g., PMCID234567) for each article. If the PMCID is not yet available because the Journal submits articles directly to PMC on behalf of their authors, indicate "PMC Journal - In Process." A list of these Journals is posted at: http://publicaccess.nih.gov/submit_process_journals.htm. Citations that are not covered by the Public Access Policy, but are publicly available in a free, online format may include URLs or PubMed ID (PMID) numbers along with the full reference (note that copies of publicly available publications are not acceptable as appendix material.)

D. **Research Support.** List both selected ongoing and completed research projects for the past three years (Federal or non-Federally-supported). Begin with the projects that are most relevant to the research proposed in the application. Briefly indicate the overall goals of the projects and responsibilities of the key person identified on the Biographical Sketch. Do not include number of person months or direct costs.

**Resources:** This information is used to assess the capability of the organizational resources available to perform the effort proposed.

- Identify the facilities to be used (laboratory, clinical, animal, computer, office, other). If appropriate, indicate their capacities, pertinent capabilities, relative proximity and extent of availability to the project. Describe only those resources that are directly applicable to the proposed work. Provide any information describing the Other Resources available to the project (e.g., machine shop, electronic shop) and the extent to which they would be available to the project.
• Describe how the scientific environment in which the research will be done contributes to the probability of success (e.g., institutional support, physical resources, and intellectual rapport). In describing the scientific environment in which the work will be done, discuss ways in which the proposed studies will benefit from unique features of the scientific environment or subject populations or will employ useful collaborative arrangements.

• For Early Stage Investigators, describe institutional investment in the success of the investigator, e.g., resources for classes, travel, training; collegial support such as career enrichment programs, assistance and guidance in the supervision of trainees involved with the ESIs project, and availability of organized peer groups; logistical support such as administrative management and oversight and best practices training; and financial support such as protected time for research with salary support.

• If there are multiple performance sites, describe the resources available at each site.

• Describe any special facilities used for working with biohazards or other potentially dangerous substances. Note: Information about Select Agents must be described in the Research Plan, 5.5.11 (Select Agent Research).

Appendices: Graphs, diagrams, tables, and charts should be included in the body of the Research Strategy unless a PDF file is necessary to show detail. Provide a summary listing all of the items included in the appendix. Applicants are prohibited from using the appendix to circumvent page limits in any section of the application for which a page limit applies.

Review Criteria: Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit, and give a separate score for each. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact.

- **Significance:** Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved? How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field? Is the project likely to substantially enhance the engagement of undergraduate students in health research training, sustain their interest, and prepare them to successfully pursue research careers?

- **Investigator(s):** Are the PD(s)/PI(s), collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project? If the project is collaborative or multiPD/PI, do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise? Is the leadership approach, governance and organizational structure appropriate for the project? Are the investigators and partners multidisciplinary? Does the project involve students (graduate, undergraduate or high school)?

- **Innovation:** Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions? Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel to one field of research or novel in a broad sense? Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed? Are the approaches to be used innovative in the ways in which students from diverse backgrounds are engaged and trained? Are factors that contribute to student exit from health research training considered and are innovative
strategies to address these factors included? Are novel and creative approaches to research training and/or mentoring clearly described and likely to substantially increase student participation in research, including students from underrepresented backgrounds? If the proposed model is already in existence, is it being adapted or applied in innovative ways to engage and train students from diverse backgrounds? Have the PD(s)/PI(s) developed innovative ways to engage faculty in research mentoring and teaching across Partnering Institutions?

- **Approach**: Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility and will particularly risky aspects be managed? If the project involves human subjects, are the plans to address 1) the protection of human subjects from research risks, and 2) inclusion (or exclusion) of individuals on the basis of sex/gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as the inclusion or exclusion of children, justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed?

- **Environment**: Will the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Are the institutional support, equipment and other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the project proposed? Will the project benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, subject populations, or collaborative arrangements? Is the project community-based?

**Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research**: Documentation must be provided to show that each investigator involved in the project has participated in training in the responsible conduct of research, whether through OSPR at Morgan State (e.g., CITI), or otherwise.

**Protection for Human Subjects**: For research that involves human subjects but does not involve one of the six categories of research that are exempt under 45 CFR Part 46, the committee will evaluate the justification for involvement of human subjects and the proposed protections from research risk relating to their participation according to the following five review criteria: 1) risk to subjects, 2) adequacy of protection against risks, 3) potential benefits to the subjects and others, 4) importance of the knowledge to be gained, and 5) data and safety monitoring for clinical trials.

For research that involves human subjects and meets the criteria for one or more of the six categories of research that are exempt under 45 CFR Part 46, the committee will evaluate: 1) the justification for the exemption, 2) human subjects involvement and characteristics, and 3) sources of materials. For additional information on review of the Human Subjects section, please refer to the Guidelines for the Review of Human Subjects.

**Inclusion of Women, Minorities and Children**: When the proposed project involves human subjects and/or NIH defined clinical research, the committee will evaluate the proposed plans for the inclusion (or exclusion) of individuals on the basis of sex/gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as the inclusion (or exclusion) of children to determine if it is justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed. For additional information on review of the Inclusion section, please refer to the Guidelines for the Review of Inclusion in Clinical Research.

**Planned Enrollment Report**: If this application involves the Inclusion of Women and Minorities, complete the Planned Enrollment Report.
Vertebrate Animals: The committee will evaluate the involvement of live vertebrate animals as part of the scientific assessment according to the following five points: 1) proposed use of the animals, and species, strains, ages, sex, and numbers to be used; 2) justifications for the use of animals and for the appropriateness of the species and numbers proposed; 3) adequacy of veterinary care; 4) procedures for limiting discomfort, distress, pain and injury to that which is unavoidable in the conduct of scientifically sound research including the use of analgesic, anesthetic, and tranquilizing drugs and/or comfortable restraining devices; and 5) methods of euthanasia and reason for selection if not consistent with the AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia. For additional information on review of the Vertebrate Animals section, please refer to the Worksheet for Review of the Vertebrate Animal Section.

Review and Selection Process: Applications will be evaluated for scientific and technical merit by appropriate Scientific Review Groups convened by ASCEND, in accordance with NIH peer review policy and procedures, using the stated review criteria.

As part of the scientific peer review, all applications:
- May undergo a selection process in which only those applications deemed to have the highest scientific and technical merit (generally the top half of applications under review) will be discussed and assigned an overall impact score.
- Will receive a written critique.

Scoring: For each application that is discussed, a final overall impact score will be given by each eligible committee member (without conflicts of interest) following the panel discussion. Each member’s impact score will reflect his/her evaluation of the potential overall impact of the project in its entirety, rather than an arithmetic formula applied to the reviewer’s scores given to each criterion. The final impact score for each discussed application will be determined by calculating the arithmetic average of all the eligible members’ impact scores, and multiplying the average by 10.

The following will be considered in making funding decisions:
- Scientific and technical merit of the proposed project as determined by scientific peer review.
- Availability of funds.
- Relevance of the proposed project to program priorities.

Appeals of initial peer review will not be accepted for applications submitted in response to this funding opportunity announcement. Following initial peer review, recommended applications will receive a second level of review by NIH officials.

Reporting: Reporting to the ASCEND Center for Biomedical Research is required. The exact reporting requirements will be detailed if the proposal is successful.

Much, but not all, of the text of this guidance come from the PHS 398 guidance provided by US DHHS.