

Program Project Award – Targeted Call for New Proposals

The Foundation Fighting Blindness (FFB) expects to fund a limited number Program Project Awards to be awarded June 2024.

The PPA is designed to support collaborative, multi-disciplinary, research studies that engage investigators with different expertise and resources. The PPA is intended to enable studies that are too large or complex for a single investigator to undertake in a reasonable amount of time and to address gaps in our current knowledge or therapeutic options. **The PPA must be unified around a single, well-articulated hypothesis and a clearly defined deliverable(s), relevant to the mission of FFB.** The teams supported by a PPA must be tightly integrated and sharply focused, freely share data and creative ideas, and each be essential to the common goal.

The PPA is not intended to support clinical research unless it is tightly integrated with the other projects and the PPA is not intended to support research cores.

KEY DATES:

LOI Deadline: October 12, 2023
Application Receipt Date: February 27, 2024
Review of Applications: May 2024
Earliest Anticipated Award Date: September 2024

SUBMISSION OF A LETTER OF INTENT

Format

Applicants must submit the completed LOI electronically by **10/12/2023 11:59 PM EDT** via the FFB Application Portal, <https://www.onlineapplicationportal.com/blindness>.

Acknowledgement

Automated acknowledgement of receipt of LOI will be sent upon submission from blindness@onlineapplicationportal.com. Add this address

to your email's safe sender list to avoid messages being sent to the SPAM folder.

FFB Contact for Inquiries

Direct inquiries regarding the application and review process and required application components and forms to grants@FightingBlindness.org.

COMPLETING THE LETTER OF INTENT

- 1. Full Name of Project Leader** One of the senior investigators on the FFB Research Center Program Project Award (PPA) proposal is required by FFB to assume the role of Project Leader. The Project Leader will be the primary contact with FFB, responsible for timely submissions and responses, overall scientific leadership and management of the PPA, and ensuring that progress and financial reporting requirements are met.
- 2. Title of Program**
Please provide a full title for the proposed program for which funding is being requested.
- 3. FFB Research Priority Areas**
The PPA must address a knowledge gap or therapeutic goal identified by the FFB SAB, or an equally significant gap or goal approved by the FFB prior to submission of the PPA proposal. When addressing a therapeutic, the teams should consider the practicalities of the intended clinical use of the deliverable, including which disease it may be intended to treat, formulation, delivery, and dosing, and to the extent possible, the research plan should be designed around the intended clinical use of the therapeutic.
- 4. Inherited Retinal Degeneration Disease(s) that this Research will Impact**
Includes Retinitis Pigmentosa, Bardet-Biedl, Bestrophin Disease, Blue-cone Monochromacy, Cone-Rod Dystrophy, Choroideremia, dry Age-related Macular Degeneration, Leber Congenital Amaurosis, Refsum, Retinoschisis, Stargardt, Usher Syndrome.

5. Overall Research Goal and Hypothesis

Define the overall research goal that addresses a targeted area of research relevant to the mission of the FFB. Clearly state the central hypothesis of the program that will unify each project.

6. Stage of Development

Select one:

- Preliminary Discovery
- Target Identification/Validation
- Biomarker Identification
- Genomics/Proteomics/Metabolomics
- High Throughput Screening/Hits
- Lead Series Identified
- Lead Optimization
- *In Vitro* Confirmation
- Small Animal *in vivo* Testing
- Large Animal *in vivo* Testing
- Early Clinical
- Other

7. Overall Description of the Application (*max 2 pages*)

This section must be prepared and submitted by the Project Leader. Within the limit of two pages, provide an overview of the program. Provide a background of current knowledge relative to the proposed research, with reference to relevant publications. Summarize the objectives of the proposal, and state why they are important and are novel. Describe the established and planned collaborations, and provide a rationale why this application is considered a program project. Explain how interrelated and synergistic the projects are in their work towards a common goal. The overall program must have the potential to achieve much more than the simple sum of its component projects. Describe how the program provides a valuable research training environment for students and fellows.

Summarize proposed mechanisms for data sharing plan.

In regards to overlapping projects and funding sources, describe commitments made by any of the sponsoring institutions associated with this project that will be essential for the successful performance of this program, including the role of other partners or funders. Disclose relevant commitments made by and to those partners, for example, to give the partner preferred access to use a resource. State whether these commitments (collaborative and/or financial) are secured, requested but not yet secured, or are planned but not yet requested. Finally, describe the specifics of how this proposal fits with, integrates and synergizes with another program or activity at any of the sponsoring institutions. Provide a summary of the overlapping program's goals and participants.

8. Individual Project Summaries (*max 1 page*)

The RFA requires a minimum of three PIs, each with an independently fundable project. The Project Leader must be one of those PIs. Each project is allowed a one page summary. Within that one page, the PI must briefly outline the background to the proposed research, its objectives, and provide a summary of the research plan. The PI must provide a rationale describing what is innovative about the project and must describe the anticipated results and outcomes. The project summary should describe how interrelated and synergistic the project is in working toward the overall project goal.

9. Curriculum Vitae

All program applicants (Project Leader, Principal Investigators, and Co-Investigators) with the exception of collaborators, are required to submit CV (NIH biosketch acceptable).

Please note that FFB uses the following definitions for investigators:

- Project Leader is an investigator who will be responsible for overall scientific leadership and management of the PPA, ensuring that progress and financial reporting requirements are met and for submitting the PPA Application to FFB. The Project Leader may, if they wish, nominate a Principal Investigator as a Co-Project Leader

to be responsible with the Project Leader for scientific leadership and management of the PPA. Salary requests up to 30% of the annual project budget are allowed for the Project Leader and co-Leader.

- Principal Investigators are those investigators who will be scientifically responsible for one or more of the individual projects listed. Salary requests up to 20% of the project budget are allowed for the PI of each component.
- Co-Investigators are investigators who may be responsible for a sub-component of a project.
- Collaborators are investigators who provide expertise, resources or services to a project. They do not receive funds from the project. The collaborator must provide a letter to be submitted with the Full Application which describes the specifics of the collaboration.

When uploading pdfs follow these instructions:

- Use an Arial typeface and a font size of 11 points or larger. (A Symbol font may be used to insert Greek letters or special characters; the font size requirement still applies.)
- Type density, including characters and spaces, must not exceed 15 characters per inch.
- Type may be no more than six lines per inch.
- Use 1" margins

Letter of Intent Submission

Applicants must submit the completed LOI electronically by 10/12/2023 11:59PM EST via the FFB Application Portal. Access the FFB Application Portal through the FFB website, <https://www.fightingblindness.org/program-project-award> . Automated acknowledgement of receipt of LOI will be sent upon submission. The Letters of Intent will be reviewed for scientific quality and relevance to FFB's mission and current research priorities. Letters addressing the targeted area identified above and showing clear relevance to translational studies that can accelerate the path toward clinical trials will receive priority consideration. If your Letter of Intent

is selected, the FFB will contact you to request a full application by December 2023. Full applications will be due on 2/27/2024.

PLEASE USE YOUR OWN E-MAIL ADDRESS IF POSSIBLE WHEN SUBMITTING THE LETTER OF INTENT SO THAT WE CAN INFORM YOU IN A TIMELY FASHION IF YOUR APPLICATION HAS BEEN SELECTED FOR SUBMISSION OF A FULL PROPOSAL. IN ADDITION, PLEASE ADVISE US AS SOON AS POSSIBLE OF CHANGES IN E-MAIL ADDRESSES.