National Center of Neuromodulation for Rehabilitation (NC NM4R)
at the Medical University of South Carolina

Request for Application for Pilot Project Grants and Submission Guidelines
2016-2017 Funding Cycle

Key Dates

RFA Release Date: January 13, 2016
Letter of Intent (LOI) Date: February 1, 2016
Send Budget for Review: March 15, 2016
Application due Date: April 1, 2016
Anticipated Award Date: July 1, 2016

Overview: The National Center of Neuromodulation for Rehabilitation (NM4R) at the Medical University of South Carolina (www.musc.edu/ncnm4r) is pleased to announce that it will fund four pilot grants for up to $37,500 for a 12-month period. Through these pilot grant funds, NC NM4R will provide short-term funding for pilot studies designed to promote rehabilitation neuroscience research that utilizes neuromodulatory techniques and methodologies, towards the development of potential new projects that are fundable and sustainable through a competitive NIH research grant application or similar extramural funding mechanisms.

Objective: The principal goal of the NC NM4R Pilot Studies Program is to provide short-term funding for scientifically meritorious, new and innovative projects through a competitive program with open solicitation and peer review. The program will focus on enabling junior, mid-level or senior faculty to explore an area that is distinct from their currently funded research, or expand their areas of biomedical research using neuromodulatory methodologies supported by the NC NM4R.

Eligibility: Principal Investigator should have a full-time faculty or post-doctorial appointment and a doctoral degree in science, research, or health related fields. S/he must be eligible to submit an NIH R01 application or equivalent at his/her institution. S/he should not have other resources adequate for pilot studies in this area.

LOI: The prospective applicant is required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) that consists of project title, key words, description of project (3 sentence maximum) and investigator information (i.e., PI and collaborators’ names, institutional affiliations, sponsoring organizations, and e-mail addresses). LOI will be used to develop the review panel in a timely manner. LOI should be submitted by February 1, 2016 to http://academicdepartments.musc.edu/ncnm4r/loi.html

Inquiries: Aiko K. Thompson, Ph.D. DeAnna L. Adkins, Ph.D.
Dept. Health Sciences and Research Dept. Neuroscience
Medical University of South Carolina Medical University of South Carolina

Budget: Investigator(s) are required to submit preliminary budget to Cindy Gittinger at Gittinck@musc.edu by March 15, 2016. All preliminary budgets will be reviewed for accuracy and to guarantee budgetary compliance.
KEY ELEMENTS OF THE NC NM4R PILOT PROJECT PROGRAM

Pilot Studies grants will support rehabilitation neuroscience research of new directions and/or innovative applications of neuromodulatory methods/technologies. They are designed to promote the growth of the rehabilitation neuroscience that utilizes neuromodulatory techniques and methodologies, by providing NM4R research resources and expertise towards the development of potential new projects that are fundable and sustainable through extramural funding mechanisms. The pilot project program is not designed to provide ongoing support for a long-term project or to provide supplemental support to ongoing funded research projects.

PILOT PROJECTS MUST AIM TO:

- Address an important question in basic, translational and/or clinical research that impacts recovery from stroke, spinal cord injury, or other neurological damage.
- Generate critical preliminary data to support submission of a competitive extramural grant application that will directly utilize a neuromodulatory method or technology.
- The Pilot proposal must focus on a research or technological or methodological area that is distinct from investigators other research, or expands the areas of biomedical rehabilitation research using neuromodulatory methodologies and technologies supported by the NC NM4R.
- Develop or acquire a new method or technology that will directly enhance, advance or replace one or more currently available neuromodulatory methods or technologies supported by NC NM4R.

APPLICATION PROCESS

**Letter of Intent (LOI)**

Although a Letter of Intent is not binding, and does not enter into the review of a subsequent application, the information that it contains allows us to estimate the potential review workload and plan the review process. Prospective applicants are required to submit a LOI that includes the following information:

- Descriptive title of proposed research.
- Name, email address, and telephone number of the PI.
- Complete listing of the investigating team with each individual's academic title, primary department, institution and proposed role on the project.
- Description of project (3 sentence maximum)

The LOI should be submitted to [http://academicdepartments.musc.edu/ncnm4r/loi.html](http://academicdepartments.musc.edu/ncnm4r/loi.html) by February 1, 2016.

PILOT GRANT FULL APPLICATION

*Note: Only use Word documents and then save and upload as PDFs (fillable PDFs will not work).*

1. NIH-formatted Biosketch
• Provide a NIH-formatted Biographical Sketch Format Page. Please use PHS 398 Form Biographical Sketch Format Page in MS Word at: (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/index.htm#biosketch) for all key personnel.

• Convert the Word document to PDF to upload.

2. Project Summary and Relevance

• 30 lines of text for Project Summary, Arial font size 11, at least 0.5 margins, PDF only.

• The Project Summary should 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 relatedness of the project to the NC NM4R. Describe concisely the research design and methods for achieving the stated goals. This section should be informative to others working in the same or related fields and understandable to a scientifically or technically literate reader. Using no more than two or three sentences, describe the Relevance of this research to public health. The Relevance statement should be succinct and written using plain language that can be understood by a general, lay audience.

3. Research Plan

• 5 page limit (1 page for Specific Aims, 3 pages for Research Strategy and 1 page for Additional Review Criteria), Arial font size 11, at least 0.5 margins, PDF only. Revised applications must include a 1 page Introduction at the beginning of the Research Plan (see Resubmission of an Application section for further details).

• The Specific Aims should 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 proposal, e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop a new technology. The Specific Aims section must be limited to one page.

• The Research Strategy section should describe how the data will be analyzed and used to make inferences regarding the Specific Aims. The Research Strategy section must be limited to three pages.
  o The Research Strategy should follow the standard NIH format which includes Significance, Innovation and Approach. Further information can be found in Section 5.5.3 of the PHS Grant Application Guide (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html). The research proposal should be informative enough for reviewers to understand the proposed research without any supporting documents.
  o Applicants should include all the required details based on the grant category and its review criteria within the proposal without referring to additional pages/documents.

• A Biostatistical Justification of sample size should be included for animal studies and any aims that include human tissue samples, patients, or healthy volunteers.
  o The Biostatistical Justification should be placed at the end of the Research Strategy and is not included in the page limit.

• The Literature Cited section should be placed at the end of the Research Strategy and is not included in the page limit.
• The Additional Review Criteria section should include a response, if applicable, to the four points listed below. **The Additional Review Criteria section must be limited to 1 page and 1 support letter.**

1. State how you plan to utilize the NC NM4R methods and/or technologies in this proposal.
2. State how you plan to secure future extramural funding and how you plan to utilize the NC NM4R methods and/or technologies in future grant proposals. Please be sure to state funding agency, mechanism and timeline.
3. Each proposal must include a realistic timeline for completing the proposed project, preparing and submitting at least one manuscript to an appropriate professional journal, and preparing and submitting a competitive grant application by or shortly after the end of the award period.
4. Provide a detailed letter of support from the respective NC NM4R methods and/or technologies collaborator describing how the proposed methodology or technology would be incorporated into the existing NC NM4R methods and/or technologies and managed. Include, if appropriate, a pro forma cost analysis and fee schedule when appropriate.

4. **Budget, Justification and Statement of Intent**
   • **Please Note:** Preference will be given to applications from institutions that agree to 8% indirect cost rate. This demonstrates commitment by the institution to the applicant, represents leveraging of federal funds on behalf of rehabilitation community, and is consistent with investment in junior investigators. It will be at the discretion of the receiving institution to execute the option to waive F&A costs so that full funding of $37,500 can be applied towards the pilot project or direct costs will be $34,722.22 with F&A of $2,777.78.

   • **Statement of Intent to Enter into a Consortium Agreement:** Applicants external to the Medical University of South Carolina must submit a Statement of Intent to Enter into a Consortium Agreement along with their budget. The Statement of Intent must be signed by the Institution’s Signing Official, and should include information contained on the Statement of Intent template which follows this RFA.

   • For the budget, please use PHS 398 Form Page 4: Detailed Budget for Initial Budget Period in MS Word Version (1 page) at [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html). Use continuation pages as needed for the budget justification. Upload the budget, justification and signed Statement of Intent as a single PDF file. The NC NM4R Executive Board reserves the right to reduce requested award amounts.

   • **Personnel Support:** Salary and fringe benefits are allowed for protected time for the PI to conduct the proposed research and/or technical support, such as: Investigator, Mentor, Postdoctoral Fellows, Research Specialists and Study Coordinators.

   • **Non-personnel Research Expenses:** Allowable expenses include research supplies, animal purchase and per diem, institutional core service fees, research subject compensation and transportation, and data analysis/statistical support. All expenses must be directly related to the proposed research.

   • **Unallowable Costs:** General office supplies, computers and laptops, tuition, membership dues and fees, publication costs, subscription costs, mailing costs, and rent.
• **Facilities and Administrative Costs**: Facilities and administrative costs, also known as indirect costs, are not permitted for internal MUSC applicants.

• In-kind budgetary items will be considered as cost-share, and the PI's primary department will be required to provide a letter of support confirming the commitment.

• Post-award management of pilot project funds awarded to internal MUSC applicants will be managed by the NC NM4R Grant Administrator and the College of Health Professions Research Administration team. An individual UDAK will be established for funded pilot projects, and instructions for the process of funding personnel and ordering supplies will be provided upon official notification of award. Funding to external investigators will be provided under a Subcontract/Consortium Agreement to the Receiving Institution.

**5. Submission of Proposal**

• All proposals must be submitted through the South Carolina Clinical & Translational Research Institute (SCRT) web portal: [http://academicdepartments.musc.edu/sctr/programs/pilot_projects](http://academicdepartments.musc.edu/sctr/programs/pilot_projects)

• Select the “Apply” button under the National Center of Neuromodulation for Rehabilitation (NC NM4R) funding opportunity.

• First-time users must create an account at the log-in site. Be sure to provide a full email address. The password to enter the application is “password”.

• Funding Entity code: select “Other”

• Grant Category: select “Discovery”

• The Project Description is the abstract.

For questions or assistance with submission, please contact Cindy Gittinger at Gittinck@musc.edu or 843-792-6236.

**APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA AND PROCESS**

Each application will be reviewed by a two to three reviewers with appropriate expertise. Applications will be scored on the 1-9 point NIH scale and recommendations for funding will be primarily based on these scores. Scoring will focus on four areas: 1) quality of the research (scientific merit, innovation, and impact); 2) relevancy to the mission of the NC NM4R and direct involvement of one or more the NC NM4R resources in the research plan; 3) qualifications of the research team to lead the research effort toward securing extramural funding, and 4) stimulation of collaborative efforts with the NC NM4R investigators. The reviewers will provide a concise, one-page written review of the application’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as recommendations for improvement. The Summary Statement will be sent to the the NC NM4R Program Director, Co-Director, Pilot Program Directors, and the Steering Committee for final decision, and also forwarded to the applicant. In order to maximally fund external applications through the Pilot Studies Program, an extensive effort will be made to utilize the MUSC institutional funds for supporting the top applications from MUSC investigators.

Criteria for funding will include: 1) reviewers recommendations as defined in the Summary Statement; 2) likelihood that the research effort will be productive and lead to extramural funding; 3) utilization of one or more of the NC NM4R resources; and 4) alignment with the mission and aims of the NC NM4R. We aim to fund four proposals per year. Funding recommendations will be made by the Executive Committee, then must be approved by the External Advisory Board and then by NIH program staff. Investigators who are not funded on the initial submission will have the opportunity to submit one revision application in the following RFA cycle.
RESUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION
Applicants will have the opportunity to submit one revised application in response to review comments. Revised applications should be submitted during the following NC NM4R RFA cycle. Investigators submitting an amended application will be expected to address the review critiques using the NIH-modeled Introduction to Resubmission Application, limited to 1 page. The Introduction must summarize all substantial additions, deletions and changes to the application. The Introduction also must include a response to the issues and criticism raised in the Summary Statement. Revisions must be highlighted throughout the revised application to facilitate the re-review process. Substantial scientific changes must be marked in the text of the application by bracketing, indenting or changing typography. Do not underline or shade the changes. Deleted sections should be described but not marked as deletions. If the changes are so extensive that essentially all of the text would be marked, explain this in the Introduction. Additional guidance can be found in section 2.7 “Resubmission” Applications, of the NIH Application Guide SP424 (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/index.htm).
STATEMENT OF INTENT TO ESTABLISH A CONSORTIUM AGREEMENT

Date:

[Subrecipient Name] PI:
Application Title:
Period of Support:
Total Direct Costs: $  
Total F&A Costs: $  
Total Costs: $  

The appropriate programmatic and administrative personnel of each institution involved in this grant application will establish written inter-institutional agreements that will ensure compliance with all pertinent Federal regulations and policies in accordance with the “PHS Grant Policy Statement for Establishing and Operating Consortium Grants”.

The inter-institutional agreements will be consistent with the attached subcontract proposal which consists of a clear description of the work to be performed by the subrecipient institution, along with a corresponding budget and budget justification, and will take in consideration any budget recommendations by the granting agency.

Medical University of South Carolina  
(Prime Institution)  
______________________________

(Consortium Institution)  
______________________________

(Signature)  
(Date)  
Official Authorized to sign for Institution  
R. David Azbill, Assistant Director, ORSP

(Signature)  
(Date)  
Official Authorized to sign for Institution