BCPM Call for Cancer Research Projects

Table of Contents

Deadlines ......................................................................................................................................... 2
Submission instructions ................................................................................................................ 2
Purpose ............................................................................................................................................ 2
Budget ............................................................................................................................................ 3
Applicant Eligibility ......................................................................................................................... 3
Proposal Eligibility .......................................................................................................................... 3
Selection Criteria ............................................................................................................................. 3
Expenditure Guidelines .................................................................................................................. 4
Grant Guidelines ............................................................................................................................. 4
Deadlines

**Release date:** Monday, December 6, 2021  
**Application due:** Friday, February 18, 2022, 17.00h CET  
**Decision announcement:** Friday, June 10, 2022  
**Start of projects:** July 2022 (or later, depending on ethical approval)  
**Maximum project duration:** 24 months

Submission instructions

Project proposals are to be submitted using the official template (see the Call for Projects section on [www.bcpm.unibe.ch](http://www.bcpm.unibe.ch)). Applications must be submitted as a single PDF document to info@bcpm.unibe.ch. The subject line of the e-mail should read “BCPM Project Application”. Receipt will be confirmed by e-mail.

Incomplete or non-compliant applications, or those received after the deadline will not be considered. Please direct questions to Timo Staub (timo.staub@bcpm.unibe.ch, +41 31 632 83 25).

Purpose

The BCPM is soliciting applications for innovative interdisciplinary pilot projects that address key challenges in the field of cancer research. Projects may focus on fundamental, translational or clinical research. A successful project should address topics relevant to Precision Medicine.

Possible research areas could be but are not limited to the following topics: overcoming resistance to immuno-therapy or targeted therapy for the treatment of metastatic cancer; new systemic treatments for metastatic cancer including those targeting the currently ‘undruggable’; mechanisms of resistance to current and investigational therapies (e.g., immune system, radiation, and chemotherapy); biomarker development that guide therapy (i.e. predictive); untangling the tumor microenvironment in relation to overcoming immune checkpoint blockade resistance; bioinformatics approaches for novel analysis of genomic/transcriptomic/proteomic or other cancer-relevant data sets; pilot studies for population-based cancer studies;

Funding is expected to establish important areas of excellence in Precision Medicine in Bern. The ultimate, long-term goal is to accelerate the discovery and development of interventions intended to improve prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease.

The call addresses independent group leaders working at the University or the University Hospital of Bern. Successful pilot projects should offer a prospect for an external impact (see review criteria below).

Where relevant, PIs must collaborate with the core facilities/platforms of the University of Bern and Inselspital. Check out the platform list on the BCPM website for more information: [https://www.bcpm.unibe.ch/research/platforms/biobank_bern/](https://www.bcpm.unibe.ch/research/platforms/biobank_bern/).
Budget

The total budget for this call is CHF 1’200’000 (1.2 Mio). Applicants may request between CHF 100’000 and CHF 300’000. Funding will be contingent on obtaining the appropriate protocols (e.g. ethical approval).

Applicant Eligibility

- This RFA is open to independent group leaders with a primary appointment at the University of Bern and/or the Inselspital.
- Each project must have at least two PIs, ideally from different disciplines, to allow for an interdisciplinary or translational approach.
- Investigators who already received funding from the BCPM in prior calls are not eligible for this call.

Proposal Eligibility

- Proposals must be compliant with the specifications mentioned in the template.
- An interdisciplinary or translational approach is required.
- A link to precision medicine is required.

Selection Criteria

Applications will first be screened for overall completeness and formal compliance. Only eligible applications will be considered. Proposals will then be evaluated by the Scientific Review Board (SRB). External, impartial experts will also be involved. The projects will be evaluated on the following basis:

- External impact: Likelihood that the project will lead to an independently funded project (e.g., via a peer-reviewed grant application such as SNF or SPHN, or via an industry partnership to help take findings into the arena of patient care). Alternatively, likelihood that the project will lead to clinical translation, or peer reviewed publications in scientific journals of international renown.
- Pre-existence of an innovative, unfunded or only partially funded project in the broad field of Precision Medicine that may directly impact clinical care.
- The establishment of an interdisciplinary approach to successfully complete the pilot project and transition to a more expansive project.
- The project addresses an important question in the area of Precision Medicine.
- Ideally, high-risk/high-reward type of research.
● Originality or socioeconomic significance: Is the proposed research project original, innovative, and/or of socioeconomic importance?

● Choice of methodology: Have the most appropriate methods for realization of the project been chosen?

● Feasibility: Is the project feasible in terms of finances, human resources, organizational issues and time frame?

Expenditure Guidelines

Allowable expenditures:

● Costs for laboratory supplies and expenses such as materials, reagents, cryogenic vials, next generation sequencing (NGS), mass spectrometry, etc.

● User fees for core facilities. Expenditures for facilities outside of Bern are to be kept to a minimum.

Non-allowable expenditures:

● Salary support for PIs, co-PIs and any other participating researchers.

● Secretarial/administrative personnel

● Capital costs/equipment, including maintenance/service contracts

● Office furniture and supplies

● Construction, renovation, or maintenance of buildings/laboratories

● Rental of laboratory or office space

● Personal computers

● Non-medical services to patients

● Purchasing of periodicals and books

● Dues and membership fees in scientific societies.

Grant Guidelines

To responsibly manage funds, the following guidelines have been instituted. **Acceptance of an award indicates agreement to abide by these guidelines.** Failure to abide by these guidelines will jeopardize eligibility for future grants and/or BCPM Membership:

1. Proposals must respect the application template given with the call. Ideally, we also get background information, preliminary data, hypotheses, methods, significance, and synergy opportunities between project PIs.

2. If a grant is awarded, the PIs must agree to provide a final progress report, including an overview about the results which have been reached (publication, clinical outcome, etc.). A presentation might also be required.
3. Publications resulting from the research supported by this grant must contain the acknowledgment “Supported by the Bern Center for Precision Medicine”.

4. Any additional publications or grants resulting from the present grant must be reported.

5. The funds awarded shall be used solely for the purposes specified in the grant, in strict compliance with the application submitted and as executed by the recipient.

6. Grant money from the BCPM comes from a University business credit (Betriebskredit), and cannot be transferred to a University third party credit (Drittmittelkredit). It can only be transferred to another Betriebskredit. If relevant, BCPM funds may be managed at the Inselspital, but you are not allowed to re-direct BCPM funds from the Inselspital back to a Drittmittelkredit at the University.

7. Grant recipients must respond to requests for information from the scientific leadership and administrative staff about their project.

8. Recipients might be asked to participate in progress update meetings or conferences to describe their research.