

Bern Center for Precision Medicine (BCPM)

Second Call for Pilot Projects

Table of Contents

Deadlines	2
Purpose.....	2
Award Amounts.....	2
Applicant Eligibility	3
Proposal Eligibility	3
Review Criteria	3
Terms of the Award	4
RFA Application Format	4
Expenditure Guidelines	4
Grant Guidelines	5

Deadlines

Release date: Wednesday, July 10, 2019

Application due: Monday, September 23, 2019

Award announcement: Monday, December 16, 2019

Start of projects: January 2020

Applications should be submitted as a single e-mail attachment in PDF format to applications@bcpm.ch by Monday, September 23, 2019 before 17.00h Central European Time (CET). The subject line of the e-mail should read "**BCPM Project Application 2nd round**". Receipt will be confirmed by e-mail. Incomplete applications or those received after the deadline will not be considered. Questions can be addressed to Timo Staub (timo.staub@bcpm.ch, +41 31 632 83 25).

Purpose

Based on recent discussions with BCPM membership, we have selected two new topics for this second call. In general, 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 therapeutic outcomes, diagnosis of disease, or prevention of disease. Successful projects should offer a prospect for an impact outside of the University of Bern (see review criteria below).

Topic 1: Reproducibility in Biomedical Research. A number of technologies require optimization for inter- and intra- platform reproducibility. Examples could be in the area of genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics, metabolomics, flow cytometry or immunohistochemistry. This call topic would entertain proposals that explore variability with the goal of improving pre-analytic and/or analysis using platforms for Precision Medicine. Successful proposals will use limited high-quality samples to test issues that might affect variability in testing. We encourage the use of samples from the Bern biobanks. The BCPM will have a list of available platforms that would be ideal for testing. We anticipate funding 5 proposals and applicants can ask for up to CHF 50'000 per project.

Topic 2: Integrating Data from Multiple Platforms. Multi-platform studies offer the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of biologic processes. This second topic seeks Precision Medicine proposals that use at least 2 platforms to generate pilot data for a larger study. An example of a study would be to show how integrating proteomics and genomics might provide more insight into a specific disease entity. Despite being a small pilot project, we anticipate that the costs of running samples on at least two platforms will require larger budgets. We anticipate funding 3 projects for up to CHF 200'000. Applicants need to provide an informatics plan with their research proposal as well as plans as to how they would use the data to support an external grant application.

Award Amounts

Topic 1: Up to five proposals, amount between CHF 25'000 and CHF 50'000.

Topic 2: Up to three proposals, amount between CHF 100'000 and CHF 200'000.

Applicant Eligibility

- This RFA is open to investigators with a primary appointment at the University of Bern and/or the Inselspital.
- Investigators already active in the field of precision medicine (e.g., via a present or future SPHN grants) are highly encouraged to apply.
- Primary Investigators who already have a research project funded by the BCPM are not eligible for this call.

Proposal Eligibility

- Proposals must address one of the two Topics (described above).
- Partnerships between basic and clinical scientists are encouraged but not required.
- The interconnection and re-use of current research infrastructure is encouraged.
- Use of biobank samples (see www.biobankbern.ch) is encouraged for both Topic areas but not required.
- Technical platform work (e.g., genomics, proteomics) should be performed at the Inselspital and/or the University of Bern. Data generated elsewhere can be included in the integrative analysis but cannot be funded using resources from the present grant.

Review Criteria

For this second call and moving forward, the BCPM will establish a Scientific Review Committee (SRC). Applications will first be screened by the SRC for overall completeness and feasibility. Only applications which meet the criteria listed in the two Topic areas will be considered. SRC will select the most competitive applications for external review by impartial experts who have no conflict of interest with the proposed research.

The projects will be evaluated on the basis of scientific merit, feasibility, the potential to develop into a successful Precision Medicine project, and overall translational impact:

- External impact: Likelihood that the project could lead to an independently funded project within the next 1-2 years (e.g., via a peer-reviewed grant application such as SPHN, SNF, or ERC, or via an industry partnership to help take findings into the arena of patient care). Alternatively, likelihood that the project could lead to peer reviewed publications in scientific journals of international renown within the next 1-2 years.
- Pre-existence of an innovative, unfunded or only partially funded project in the broad field of Precision Medicine that may directly impact clinical care within the next 5 years.

With respect to topic 2:

- The establishment of an interdisciplinary approach to successfully help 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.

Terms of the Award

Funds may be used only to cover project supplies and personnel other than the PI(s). There are no indirect costs. Funding will be contingent on obtaining the appropriate protocols (e.g., ethical approval).

If a grant is awarded, the PI(s) must agree to provide a semi-annual and annual progress report, including plans for securing external funding. Presentation at the BCPM meeting held yearly. Applicants can apply for a second year of funding or a no cost extension for up to one year.

RFA Application Format

The RFA template contains the following fields:

- Applicant contact data
- Title and description of the proposed Precision Medicine project including background, preliminary data (if there is such data), specific aims, and a summary of experimental plans.
- How will you ensure that your project fits in the framework of the current grant, and has an external impact.
- Planned use of up-to-date diagnostics and research methodologies such as Genome Sequencing, Computational Biology, Biostatistics, Mass Spectrometry, Biospecimen/Pathology, etc.
- Few budget figures and justification.
- Biography sketches for key personnel.
- References.

Expenditure Guidelines

Allowable expenditures:

- Costs for analysis such as next generation sequencing (NGS), mass spectrometry, etc.
- Salary support for research personnel working on this project
- Costs for biostatistical analysis
- Laboratory supplies and expenses
- User fees for Core Facilities.

Non-allowable expenditures:

- PI salary support
- 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
- Computer and software purchases
- ITS services
- Non-medical services to patients

- Publication costs, including reprints
- Purchasing or binding of periodicals and books
- Dues and membership fees in scientific societies
- International travel and conference/meeting expenses

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. Publications resulting from the research supported by this grant contain the acknowledgment "Supported by the Bern Center for Precision Medicine".
2. Written progress reports, including financial status, are required and must be provided at 6 months after grant initiation. Grantees will be notified at least one month prior to the deadline.
3. Any additional publications or additional grants resulting from the grant must be reported.
4. Given the intent of this funding mechanism, it is expected that the funds will be expended during the one-year duration of the grant. No-cost extensions are possible, but not encouraged. Any such requests must be received in writing, with justification, 60 days before the original end date of the grant and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
5. The funds awarded shall be used solely for the purposes specified in and in strict compliance with the application submitted and as executed by the recipient.
6. Grant funds will be distributed via fund transfers annually or semi-annually.
7. Grant recipients must respond to requests for information about their grant from the scientific leadership and administrative staff.
8. Recipients might be asked to participate in progress update meetings to describe their research.