Request for Proposals for Pilot Collaborations with LMICs in Global Cancer Research or Global Health Research at NCI-Designated Cancer Centers

National Cancer Institute
Center for Global Health
Office of Cancer Centers

Proposal Receipt Date: June 14, 2013

Purpose: The National Cancer Institute (NCI) Center for Global Health and the Office of Cancer Centers requests proposals targeted to promote cancer research and to increase research capacity in low and mid–income countries (LMICs) through collaborations or research partnerships established between the NCI-designated Cancer Centers and foreign institutions.

Through this funding opportunity, the NCI seeks to stimulate cancer research pilot programs in order to expand the reach of Cancer Centers in international settings. These pilots may include research projects, trainings, advanced technologies, development of clinical trial networks, and other focus areas that will help develop cancer research capacity in LMICs. The research proposal should address questions that stem from cancer prevention practice and/or clinical observations in LMICs. It is also anticipated that the new findings or discoveries from this collaboration could improve cancer control, prevention and treatment strategies both in the US and abroad.

The research proposals may pertain to cancer prevention, detection, diagnosis, and treatment as follows (but not limited to):

1. Basic, translational, or clinical research projects (objectives must be achieved during the proposed time frame of the study). This can include formative research and protocol development for community-based and clinic-based intervention studies; development of standard operating procedures to ensure quality assurance and quality control (Q/A and Q/C) measures in these studies, data analysis, statistical analysis plan development, or statistical modeling (e.g., able to be completed in one-year)

2. Training and capacity building programs that develop strategies for knowledge sharing in all areas pertaining to cancer research and patient management. These may include visiting professors, fellows, student exchange program, workshops and training programs in the foreign country. Proposals submitted must outline the contents of the curriculum and indicate the need for this training program in the context of the collaboration. Enhancements or improvements in an existing program of training and capacity building will also be considered with adequate justification for its enhancement and application.

3. Informatics development, data managing, and data sharing to improve research capabilities in LMICs or training in informatics technology that enhances cancer research capabilities and collaborations;

4. Establishment or enhancement of biorepositories or biospecimen resources, adapting best practices to facilities in LMICs, or building informatics to support biorepositories;
5. Retrospective study based on a well-defined scientific rationale or, demonstrating an opportunity to test assays in a unique patient population, if done in a year; and


Areas that will not be supported include:

1. Long term, natural history, or longitudinal observational studies;

2. Quality of life and cost effectiveness analysis;

3. Early discovery or pre-clinical study;

4. Cohort studies, screening programs, or standard of care studies; and

5. Any proposal that cannot be completed within the allowable time frame or, that cannot increase research capacity in the foreign institution(s).

Investigators of successfully competing projects must be able to submit the required mid-year and end-of-year progress reports to the NCI as a condition of award. Separate progress reports are to be received from the NCI-designated Cancer Center and the foreign institution.

**Background:** Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide with a disproportionate burden occurring in mid- to low-income countries. It is estimated by 2020, new cancer cases will reach more than 16 million globally and the majority of this burden will be borne by residents of LMICs. There is a clear need for research that draws from diverse regions of the world to better address global cancer burden. Evidence from this research will help populations not only in LMICs but also in the US. This initiative presents a unique opportunity to strategically develop partnerships between regional institutions and U.S. Cancer Centers. These partnerships can leverage the scientific expertise and leadership in cancer control, prevention, or treatment to address new research directions as opportunities.

**Mechanism:** The NCI intends to utilize a contract mechanism under this initiative. The funds will be awarded to both institutions as a contract for one year with an option to extend to two years. The selection of proposals will be through an internal review process. The review committees will include members from the National Cancer Institute’s Center for Global Health, Office of Cancer Centers, and experts assigned from SAIC-Frederick Inc., the contractor designated to manage the pilot projects.

Only one pilot research project may be engaged in collaboration with a Cancer Center. Foreign institutions may include but not be limited to academic centers, research facilities, hospitals, and networks.

**Funds Available:** The NCI will allocate approximately $1.5M for this initiative. It is expected that 6-8 projects will be awarded to successful applicants. Each proposal will not exceed $200K total costs.
Eligibility: NCI designated Cancer Centers with currently funded P30 award and their collaborative international partner. The pilot proposals must be submitted together (Cancer Center and foreign institution).

Type and Number of Proposals that may be Submitted: NCI-designated Cancer Center may submit only one proposal and it must be submitted jointly with foreign institution. Separate proposals will not be accepted.

Receipt Date: June 14, 2013 - Proposals received after June 14, 2013 will not be accepted.

Allowable Costs: This is a one-time award for one year only. The budget request should not exceed a maximum of $200K in total costs (direct cost plus indirect) per application for one year. The general areas in which costs are allowable are as follows:

1. Salary for principal investigator(s)
2. Administrative costs essential to the planning effort
3. Costs for meetings, retreats, workshops, etc. to facilitate interactions and priority setting
4. Costs for procuring specialized materials/resources/reagents that cannot be accommodated by the Cancer Center shared resources

Proposal Review Process: The proposals will be reviewed for completeness, responsiveness to the Eligibility Requirements and research proposal in response to the Letter RFP by the NCI. Incomplete and/or non-responsive proposals will be returned without further consideration.

Applications that are complete and responsive to the Letter RFP will be evaluated for scientific and technical merit. The review criteria for this initiative are outlined as follows:

1. The extent that the Cancer Center is able to convey a history of prior international collaborations in LMICs. These collaborations need not be in the cancer field but must demonstrate ability to work in LMICs settings and an understanding of the scientific, cultural and policy contexts of research conduct in these settings.

2. The extent that the proposal exhibits a joint effort in project/study designs and outlines the mutual benefit to both partners. The outcome should provide results that can strengthen research programs in LMICs, increase the pool of trained investigators, and reveal unmet needs and the methodology to address them through research. If applicable, it should also include justification of how this research may be relevant to cancer in US populations. Cancer Centers with no history of international collaborations are encouraged to apply as long as they can demonstrate that they can bring a project to fruition within the year

3. The extent of confidence conveyed by the letters of commitment that the institution is committed to this effort and that the NCI-designated Cancer Center Director (and foreign institution official) will encourage and facilitate this collaboration

4. The quality and scientific capabilities of the faculty and trainee(s) of the research team.

5. The feasibility of the one-year time frame to successfully complete or address the research project or topic

6. The quality and significance of the collaborative proposal to address unmet needs in cancer, especially for LMICs and the methodology to address them (e.g., through research)
7. The adequacy and rationale for exploring the area of research defined in the proposal

8. Adequacy of the study design and research plan proposed in the collaborative project

9. Adequacy of administrative support for carrying out day to day operations outlined in the proposal

10. Adequacy of, and rationale for the budget distribution to facilitate and support the objectives of the proposed collaborative project

11. The extent that the proposal can demonstrate fiscal responsibility, adherence to regulatory and human subjects requirements, and best practices in science administration and data integrity

Research progress will be monitored by the NCI Center for Global Health, Office of Cancer Centers, and SAIC-Frederick, Inc.

**Award Criteria:** Criteria that will be used to make award decisions include (1) responsiveness to goals of the initiative, (2) scientific and technical merit, (3) programmatic priorities, and (4) availability of funds

**Application Procedure:**

1. Cover Letter – signed by the PI of the Cancer Center P30 award and should accompany each application and is addressed to Irene Mueller SAIC-Frederick, Inc. *(please see point of contact below).* The cover letter should include:
   - The title of the project
   - Brief description of the project
   - Type of project proposed
   - Total budget requested

2. Format of Proposal
   - Provide 3-5 page narrative that includes (1) rationale for project, (2) describe the collaborative arrangement, (3) facilities/resources at Cancer Center, (4) how this project will promote global cancer research *(e.g., capacity building, sustainable program, addressing in-country needs, etc.)*, and (5) curriculum vitae of key staff or trainee *(if training project)*
   - Overall budget *(including Cancer Center and foreign institution)* and budget justifications. Clearly detailed costs *(Direct and Indirect)* along with a narrative justifying each requested cost must be provided.
   - Study Design and Methods
   - Letters of commitment
     - A letter of commitment from an appropriate institutional official supporting the collaborative project *(both Cancer Center and foreign institution).* If possible, this letter should include any specific allocations of space, facilities, resources
     - A letter of commitment from the Cancer Center Director
   - Statement assuring compliance with applicable NIH policies including those that pertain to contract agreements
   - Plans or processes for evaluating progress at Cancer Center
   - If proposal is a training project, please provide the following:
     - Training curriculum
     - Faculty
     - Advisory Committee
d. Project
  e. Indicate if training is post-doctoral or pre-doctoral
    - If proposal is a new approach resulting from an existing research project, please provide preliminary data
    - If proposal is a clinical study with human subjects participation, please provide:
      a. Notification of IRB approval
      b. Protocol design

Where to send the Cover Letter and Proposal: The cover letter and proposal should be e-mailed via pdf attachment to Irene Mueller. The e-mail subject line should be “Request for Proposals for Pilot Collaborations with LMICs in Global Cancer Research”.

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For clarification and/or questions concerning the scope or programmatic issues, please contact:

Jorge Gomez, MD, PhD  
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For technical questions please contact:

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