FY23 Weill Cornell Medicine
Mastercard Pilot Grant Program Guidelines

Extended Deadline: November 18, 2022

1.   Objective

The objective of the Weill Cornell Medicine Mastercard Diversity Mentorship Pilot Grant Program is to provide support for early career URiM faculty interested in pursuing a career as physician-scientists or translational scientists. The program provides funding during the crucial period of career development during the early years of the first faculty position at Weill Cornell. Applicants must be Instructors or Assistant Professors at WCM.

2.   Description

The Mastercard Pilot Grant Program focuses on URiM faculty who have a promising research project but have not yet garnered a federal career-development award (the so-called K-award), or the equivalent. As used herein URIM is defined by the NIH as being underrepresented populations in science and medicine and includes:

- Racial and ethnic groups that have been shown to be under-represented in health-related sciences (Blacks or African Americans, Hispanics or Latinos, American Indians or Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders)
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, defined as those who meet <u>two or more</u> of the following criteria:
    - Were or currently are homeless, as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
    - Were or currently are in the foster care system, as defined by the Administration for Children and Families
    - Were eligible for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Programs for two or more years
    - Have/had no parents or legal guardians who completed a bachelor's degree
    - Were or currently are eligible for Federal Pell grants
    - Received support from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) as a parent or child
    - Grew up in one of the following areas: a) a U.S. rural area, as designated by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer, or b) a Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services-designated Low-Income and Health Professional Shortage Areas (qualifying zipcodes are included in the file). Only one of the two possibilities listed can be used as a criterion for the disadvantaged background definition.

Please see https://diversity.nih.gov/about-us/population-underrepresented for more detailed definitions of URiM faculty.

Candidates can apply for a year of research funding, thus freeing them from clinical obligations and supporting their ability to collect preliminary data needed for a competitive K award application. The program targets faculty at the Instructor or Assistant Professor rank, and will fund approximately five (5) faculty per year. Because federal career-development grants carry substantial weight in the promotion process in academic medicine, the Mastercard Pilot Grant Program's impact will extend beyond the funding period, fostering career growth opportunities for URiMs in science not otherwise provided in the current system.

Applications must include a letter of support from either the candidate's Department Chair, Division Chief, and/or Center and Institute Director for the Mastercard Pilot Grant Program. Letter requirements are described in 5.i., below. The number of awards possible for a given Department, Division or Institute is not limited. Department Chairs, Division Chiefs, and/or Center and Institute Directors are encouraged to provide letters for all eligible candidates under their purview that are qualified and interested in applying.

3. **Important Dates**

   Application deadline: November 18, 2022

   Eligibility Criteria

   - Applicants must hold a MD, PhD, MD/PhD, or equivalent doctoral degree and seek additional research training under the supervision of a sponsor or sponsors with the intent of embarking on an independent research career.

   - Applicants must be Assistant Professors or Instructors, based full-time at Weill Cornell Medicine. Faculty members with appointments at HSS, MSKCC, Houston Methodist Hospital, Memorial Hospital, WCM Qatar, and Burke Neurological Institute are not eligible to apply.

   - Applicants must devote a minimum of 40% of their full-time appointment/effort to research. Surgeons that are interested in applying for this award must have at least 25% of their time dedicated to research activities. The letter of support from the Center/Institute Director, Division Chief and/or Department Chair included in the application (5.i., below) must attest to the protected research time.

   - Applicants are encouraged, but not required to be working on the proposed project in their current laboratory or research group at the time the proposal is submitted.

   - The applicant's career goals must be aligned with submission of an application for an NIH K01, K08, K12, K22, K23, or K25 award, DOD/AHA/ACS career award, or equivalent within approximately 18 months of initiation of the Mastercard Pilot Grant funding.

   - Eligibility for the Mastercard Pilot Grant Program requires the applicant meet all the criteria mandated by NIH to apply for the award. Current NIH policies require that, by the time of the K award, candidates for the K01, K08, K12, K22, K23, and K25 must be U.S. citizens, non-citizen U.S. nationals, or have been lawfully admitted for permanent residence. Refer to NIH guidelines for the additional information.

   - Applicants cannot concurrently hold a departmental, foundation or other type grant whose purpose is the development of a K award (e.g. CTSC KL2, Jump Start, DOM Fund for the Future award). Concurrent departmental support for other purposes is acceptable.

   - To be eligible, applicants must be physicians, scientists, or physician-scientists from populations that are under-represented in science and medicine (URiM) who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents at the time of the application deadline; have excelled in their education; are now completing or have completed their formal clinical training; are committed to pursuing academic careers; and are committed to improving the health status of the underserved, decreasing health disparities, or serving as role models for students and faculty from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. Preference will be given to physicians, scientists, and physician-scientists who have recently completed their formal clinical training.

   - Applicants must identify one or more faculty mentor with whom a research plan will be developed. The mentor's experience in the supervision of trainees and the adequacy of the mentor's research environment and support will be strongly considered. Once these linkages have been established, the applicant and proposed mentor may begin the application process.

   For specific questions regarding eligibility or application materials, please contact the Office of Faculty Development at facultydevelopment@med.cornell.edu.

4. **Support**

   Funding may be used to cover research related expenses including salary support for the candidate, personnel research expenses such as salaries for technical personnel, supplies, equipment, publication costs, and travel related to professional development conferences. The funding guidelines are listed below:

   - Salary/Fringe: Up to $50,000 for salary and fringe for the candidate

   - Project support: Up to $50,000

   - Maximum annual award amount: $50,000

   - Funding period: December 2022-December 2023

5. **Application**

   a. NIH style Biosketch

   b. Candidate's current and pending support

   c. Detailed budget for a one-year period (PHS 398 FP4)

   d. Candidate's background, career goals and objectives (1 page)

   e. Candidate's plan for Career Development including a timeline for K submission (1 page)

   f. Research plan (max 3 pages)
      - Prepared according to NIH 2009 revised PHS 398 guidelines. Begin each section of the Research Plan with a section header (e.g., Introduction, Specific Aims, Research Strategy, etc.). The Research Strategy Section should be composed of three distinct sections – Significance, Innovation, and Approach; the approach section may include preliminary data. Please include the title of your project. The research plan should include sufficient information needed for evaluation of the project independent of any other document. Be specific and informative and avoid redundancies. **Limit to three (3) pages.**

   g. Letter of Support from Faculty Mentor (1 page)
      - Describe the primary mentor's research qualifications and previous experience as a research supervisor. The statement must include a description of the mentoring plan for the candidate.

   h. Mentor's Biosketch

   i. Letter of support from the Center/Institute director, Division Chief and/or Department Chair.
      - The letter of support from the Center/Institute director, Division Chief and/or Department Chair is weighed heavily in determining the success of the application. The letter should explicitly state that the applicant has at least 40% protected time (25% for surgeons) dedicated to research. Other topics should include 1) a brief description of the candidate's research plan; 2) a career development plan; 3) assessment of scientific environment in which the work will be performed; 4) evidence of institutional commitment in terms of space, equipment, protected time and other resources 5) the level of enthusiasm for the candidate's likelihood for career success.

   j. Statement of Eligibility, which establishes the basis for the candidate's eligibility as an individual from an underrepresented background group as well a statement of commitment to fostering a diverse healthcare workforce in the WCM community.

6. **Application deadline and submission**

   Applications should be submitted to FacultyDevelopment@med.cornell.edu as **a single pdf file** using the naming convention: PI LASTNAME_DEPARTMENT.pdf.

7. **Review Criteria**

   a. Each proposal will be evaluated based upon the candidate's qualifications, the sponsor and training plan, the environment, and the scientific proposal.

   b. The strength of the letters of support from faculty mentor and from the department chair, division chief, or center/institute director.

   c. Particular attention will be directed at whether the applicant has the potential for a successful, independent research career and potential for garnering future NIH or other federal awards

   d. The qualifications of the applicant, including suitable career stage, relevant research experience, prior scientific publications, demonstrated commitment to fostering a diverse workforce, and related accomplishments.

   e. Scientific merit of the research proposal.

   f. The training environment including the quality of the opportunity presented by the project for the candidate to acquire new approaches, techniques, and methods.

   g. The mentor's relevant research expertise, previous training record, and specific plan for training the applicant, as well as resources and environment.

   h. The commitment of the division and/or department to the development of basic scientists, physician and

translational scientists, as reflected in a commitment to provide sufficient space, resources, and protected time to promote the development of young investigators.

8. **Restrictions and reporting conditions:**

   a. The goal of the Mastercard Pilot Grant Program is to support junior faculty for up to two years of research. Upon the receipt of a K-award, or the equivalent, the Mastercard Pilot Grant Program funding will be terminated.

   b. Awardees are required to attend 5 events per year for the Mastercard Mentoring Program.

   c. Each awardee in the first year of the program must submit a research progress report by January 31, 2024. Progress reports must include:

      i. A two-page narrative consisting of the following sections: Major goals of the project; accomplishments under these goals; and goals for the coming year.

      ii. A list of quantifiable measures of progress resulting from Mastercard Pilot Grant Program funding, such as new publications, new related funding, invited presentations, awards or honors, service on national or international committees, academic promotion, etc.

      iii. A current "other support" document listing pending and active grants

      iv. Progress toward applying for K award (including a timeline)