

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

## *RECRUITMENT/SEED FUNDING*

ISSUED BY THE SPINAL CORD INJURY RESEARCH FUND  
ADMINISTERED BY THE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA (MUSC)

### RFP 2016 – R

**Date of Release: October 1, 2015**

**Deadline for Submission: Open**

**Background:** Amendment (Bill S54 44-38-510) to Section 2, Chapter 38, Title 44 of the 1976 SC Code was ratified on July 20, 2000 and authorized the new South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund (SCIRF) provided from a \$100 surcharge on each Driving Under the Influence (DUI) conviction. The SCIRF is administered by the SCIRF Board appointed by the Governor and is attached to MUSC for staff and administrative purposes. The law authorizes the SCIRF to utilize monies to cover basic operating and administrative costs but directed that the balance be provided for spinal cord injury (SCI) research projects.

SCI is a serious cause of disability, results in an increased lifelong risk of secondary health conditions, and is typically associated with elevated risk of mortality. Often traumatic in origin, it may also result from inflammatory, neoplastic, developmental, or rarely infectious causes. The consequences of SCI are legion, including paralysis of legs and arms, even muscles of respiration; loss of sensation and autonomic control; chronic pain; impairment of bowel, bladder, and sexual function; metabolic disorders, such as hypercalcemia; muscle spasticity with contractures of joints, fractures, and heterotopic ossification; complications such as decubitus ulcers, uncontrolled blood pressure, and frequent infections. People with SCI may face extraordinary demands due to the costs of medical care, limitations in rehabilitation resources after profound loss of mobility, and the absence of environmental supports. The families of people with SCI also face additional demands, and the costs of care to families and the residents of South Carolina are extraordinary and ongoing. The long-term goal of this research initiative is to minimize the risk and incidence of SCI, interrupt or reverse the process of SCI, and improve the health and quality of life for residents of South Carolina with SCI.

Areas of potential research interest include: basic neurobiology, including regeneration of cells and axons, modulation of inflammatory and destructive processes, prevention of injury-induced neurotoxicity or secondary injury; pre-clinical studies, including refinement of animal models of SCI; translation of pre-clinical findings into treatment, including pharmacological trials, surgical approaches, and previously unexplored treatments; clinical issues, including diagnostic assessment and monitoring, relationship to other spinal cord disorders and psychological disorders; outcomes of rehabilitation, including therapies (prosthetic, physical, occupational, speech/language, recreational), secondary health conditions, quality of life (technological solutions, functional improvement), and attendant care; epidemiology, including factors affecting incidence, availability, and quality of SCI care in South Carolina; education and prevention, including education curriculum for people and families in appropriate and adequate SCI care (classroom, career), community (prevention of alcohol-related injury, opportunities for therapy and rehabilitation), and health care providers (curriculum at South Carolina colleges and universities, professional education).

**Request for Proposals:** The SCIRF invites applications for *Recruitment/Seed Funding* grants to promote the recruitment of scientists and clinician scientists who specialize in the area of SCI to the state of South Carolina.

## **Funding Mechanism: Recruitment/Seed Funding Grants**

The primary goal of this *Recruitment/Seed Funding* grant is to increase the number of highly qualified SCI researchers in the state. Building a critical mass of SCI investigators that have the capacity and resources to establish research programs in basic and applied sciences is an essential step in facilitating SCI research. Qualified scientists not only contribute to the advancement of the field, but increase the overall capacity within the state to successfully compete for federal research funds that will enhance both the visibility and the scope of SCI research in the state of South Carolina. The SCIRF must assist in the recruitment or provision of seed funds for promising and established researchers if we are to fully address the mission of enhancing the quality of life of citizens of South Carolina with SCI.

Qualifying institutions within the state of South Carolina may apply for a grant to assist in the recruitment or provision of seed funding for a scientist specializing in the area of SCI to the state of South Carolina.

*Recruitment/Seed Funding* grants will not exceed \$125,000 over a 36 month period. Acceptable costs include equipment, salaries support for investigator and research staff, and other direct costs related to performance of the research. Although the individual may be involved with populations other than SCI, the research support is for that directly related to research with participants with SCI. Equipment purchases must be for equipment that will be used for people with SCI consistent with the commitment of investigator effort.

It is recommended that potential applicants contact the Executive Director prior to submission of his/her request to ensure that the requested expenses are consistent with the intention of this announcement. They are also encouraged to contact the Scientific Directors who will evaluate the appropriateness of the credentials of the candidate.

If an institution has special circumstance regarding the recruitment of an exceptional faculty candidate with a well-established history of SCI research where the recruitment may exceed the \$125,000 limit, they are encouraged to contact the Executive Director before submitting an application. The Executive Director will consult with the Scientific Directors regarding the qualifications of the candidate and whether it may qualify as exceptional.

*Recruitment/Seed Funding* grant budgets should be broken down into 3 year time frames with no more than 50% of the funds requested in Year 1. The budgets for Years 2 and 3 should be of the same size. Examples would be to request 50% in Year 1, 25% in Year 2 and 25% in Year 3 or 40% in Year 1, 30% in Year 2 and 30% in Year 3. Under unusual circumstances, such as the requirement of significant equipment, the Board of Directors will consider requests of greater than 50% in Year 1. However, since the purpose of capping funds in Year 1 is to ensure that funds are used for SCI research and can be evaluated on a year-to-year basis, such requests must be fully justified and have no guarantee of acceptance.

**Eligibility and Terms of Support:** *Recruitment/Seed Funding* grant applications will be accepted to recruit scientists to South Carolina who have a terminal professional degree in their field and, in the case of research involving human subjects, have access to an Institutional Review Board. This includes, but is not limited to, faculty members of research and educational institutions throughout the state. Grant applications should be submitted within 12 months of beginning employment/recruitment. Continued funding for the second and third years of the grant is contingent upon satisfactory progress.

**Reporting/Presentations:** Technical Progress Reports are due every 6 months. A Final Report is due within 60 days after termination of the grant. All reports should be submitted to the Executive Director. In addition, all applicants will be required to present their research/findings at a SCIRF meeting and/or Scientific Conference once per grant year.

**Funding:** *Recruitment/Seed Funding* grants will not exceed \$125,000 over a 36-month period. Continued funding for Year 2 and Year 3 is contingent upon progress as indicated in the Technical Progress Reports, with no guarantee of renewal. The SCIRF does not provide support for indirect costs, and any such related costs essential to the proposed research should be included in the direct cost budget request.

**Timeframes:** There is no specific deadline for this competition as we understand that the timing of recruitment of new faculty is based on multiple considerations. Proposals must be submitted within 12 months of beginning employment/recruitment. The review of *Recruitment/Seed Funding* grant proposals will be completed within 120 days following the grant submission. The SCIRF will make money available within 30 days following a recommendation for funding by the Review Committee, approval from the Board of Directors, and receipt of signed acceptance forms from successful applicants.

**Review Process:** *Recruitment/Seed Funding* grant proposals will be reviewed by the Scientific Directors. The SCIRF Board of Directors will consider reviews in making final award decisions.

**Submission Address:** Grant applications should be submitted in PDF form by e-mail to the SCIRF Executive Director.

**Application Format:** The proposal must not exceed 8 pages, not including the Face page, Abstract or the vita/biosketch of the recruit. Because the proposal relates to recruitment/seed funding, sections IV and V are of particular importance. The application format is as follows:

- I. Face page (name, department, proposal title)
- II. Abstract
- III. Background of the project (if applicable) should be according to current NIH format and should describe any preliminary research to be conducted within a 3 year period. Specific elements may include:
  - A. Specific aims and hypothesis
  - B. Background and approach
  - C. Innovation
  - D. Preliminary data (if any)
  - E. Experimental design and expected results of outcome
- IV. Value to the State of South Carolina (benefit to the people of the State and/or plans for obtaining extramural funding and/or compatibility with the SCIRF's primary objectives and initial priorities.)
- V. Background of the candidate and rationale for recruitment. This should include a description of the department and overall academic entity, the role of the individual and the context of the request including any other resources that will be allocated for the individual on the part of the institution.
- VI. References
- VII. Detailed Budget (with narrative justification)
- VIII. Biosketch – abridged NIH format

**Review Criteria:** *Recruitment/Seed Funding* grant proposals will be reviewed according to the following criteria:

1. Overall strengths and weaknesses of the project (if applicable)
2. Strengths and weaknesses of the candidate
3. Likelihood of the candidate ultimately receiving extramural support and/or benefiting the people of South Carolina
4. Relevance to the SCIRF's primary objectives and initial priorities
5. Availability of adequate facilities to conduct the proposed project and to support the career of the research candidate; i.e. environment
6. Appropriateness of the budget

**Number of Awards:** The SCIRF anticipates making up to 4 *Recruitment/Seed Funding* grant awards per year.

**Awarding of Funds:** Projects will be awarded by grant or contract based upon applicable South Carolina policies, procedures, and laws concerning the expenditure of State funds. Grants or contracts are made to the principal investigator's institution, not to any individual or principal investigator.

**For Questions or Additional Information:** Potential applicants should contact Ms. Catherine Leigh Graham, Executive Director, South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund. Questions regarding applied or clinical research should be addressed to Dr. James Krause, Scientific Director, South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund. Basic science questions should be addressed to Dr. Naren Banik, Associate Scientific Director, South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund.

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**FACE PAGE**  
**SOUTH CAROLINA SPINAL CORD INJURY RESEARCH FUND**  
***RECRUITMENT/SEED FUNDING***  
**RESPONSE TO: RFP 2016 – R**

Title of Project:

Name of Principal Investigator:

Institution:

Address:

Date of Employment:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

Is this a resubmission:

Yes  
 No

Total Amount Requested:

Year 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
Year 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
Year 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Contact Person:

Phone of Contact Person:

Signatures

Principal Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized Institutional Official: \_\_\_\_\_