



# University of Puerto Rico

## **FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT (FOA) Emergency COVID-19 Research Projects Program Call for Proposals - Release Date April 27, 2020**

The Government of Puerto Rico issued Administrative Bulletin No. 2020-020, on March 12, 2020, declaring a state of emergency across our island amid the threat of a global pandemic such as the one posed by the coronavirus (hereinafter, COVID-19). Said order was in effect until March 30, 2020.

In light of the emergency facing Puerto Rico, the Honorable Governor Wanda Vazquez Garced issued Administrative Bulletin 2020-027, which creates the Executive Medical Advisory Task Force, who, as part of their duties, recommended extending the measures taken by the Governor for an additional period in order to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Administrative Bulletin No. 2020-23, hereinafter OE 2020-023, was issued on March 30, 2020 to facilitate the necessary closures both in the government and in the private sector, with the goal of preventing the spread of COVID-19. It was in effect until April 12, 2020. Administrative Bulletin No. 2020-33, hereinafter OE 2020-033, issued on April 12, 2020 is now in effect until May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, in order to provide continuity of mandated state of lockdown.

It is the Government of Puerto Rico's utmost priority to make all necessary efforts to safeguard the health, lives, and safety of all Puerto Ricans.

**The University of Puerto Rico (UPR)**, founded in 1903, is the main public university system of Puerto Rico and a government-owned corporation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

### **Mission**

“In fulfillment of its mission as an institution of higher education, the University offers opportunities and access to academic programs directed to achieve an intellectual, professional and cultural preparation of the highest quality. It aspires to develop responsible citizens that can respond to the challenges of its pertinence and the demand of its offerings, as well as to the sufficiency and efficiency of its resources, so as to allow student success to translate into a true sustainable development of the country.

In the prelude of the third decade of the 21st Century, the University is called upon to undertake innovative and transformative changes of its strengths, in order to respond to the demands of higher education worldwide.

In this context, the University reaffirms its mission, as established in Law No. 1, of January 20th, 1966, as amended.”

*Translated from the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan for the University of Puerto Rico*

The institution consists of 11 campuses and has approximately 51,000 students and 5,300 faculty members. UPR has the largest and most diverse academic offerings in Puerto Rico, with 472 academic programs of which 40 lead to a doctorate. The University of Puerto Rico is the **primary academic and scientific research institution in Puerto Rico**, receiving \$287 million in grants, scholarships, federal aid and research funds yearly.

In light of this fact, Honorable Governor Vazquez Garced has appropriated and allocated to the University of Puerto Rico \$1.7 Million in State funding to allow UPR faculty and researchers to highlight the urgent need for research on the 2019 novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

## **Background**

Coronaviruses are a diverse family of viruses that cause a range of disease in humans and animals, and there are currently no approved coronavirus vaccines or therapeutics. In January 2020, a novel coronavirus, 2019-nCoV, was identified as the causative agent of an outbreak of viral pneumonia centered around Wuhan, China. Current information regarding confirmed cases is changing daily and can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/index.html>) and through other sources. Transmission characteristics and the associated morbidity and mortality are not completely understood, but there is clear evidence of human-to-human transmission. Many other aspects of viral pathogenesis, natural history, and host range are poorly understood. Given this, there is an urgent public health need to better comprehend the 2019-nCoV, particularly to improve understanding of fundamental virology, immunology, and the development of animal models and medical countermeasures.

**Overview:** This Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) is a call for Developmental Research Projects that will provide funding to qualified faculty/researchers within the UPR system. The **projects** will be funded for a maximum of a **12-month period** at amounts ranging from **\$125,000 to \$175,000**. All Research Proposals must address at least one (1) of the priority areas included on Appendix 1 to this FOA. **Grant extensions of 12 additional months will be determined on a case-by-case basis upon receipt of satisfactory progress reports and PI requests.**

An Applicant may submit **only one (1) application** as Principal Investigator (PI). PIs must be full-time faculty with tenure-track or renewable/modified tenure track positions. PIs must demonstrate expertise in the proposed area of research listed in the full Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) by providing evidence of holding specific types of NIH research grants (active grants) or equivalent, or has held research funding within the past five (5) years in the proposed area of research or similar (inactive grants).

The research proposals will go through an expedited peer-review by at least two (2) experts in the field, and will be discussed and ranked by a three-member review committee. Funding recommendations will be based on the technical merit of the applications, as well as the programmatic objectives of supporting quality research to address the current COVID-19 pandemic. More information on selected proposals might be requested prior to award on a case-by-case basis.

Proposals will be submitted electronically through a platform currently under development in coordination with the Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research. **The link to said platform will be provided under a separate notification by May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020.**

**NOTE: Proposals that have been previously submitted to another agency/entity and funded or under consideration of being funded, must indicate so in the narrative and explain how the new proposal is different or complementary to any previously funded research activity.**

## **IMPORTANT DEADLINES**

- Invitations for full proposals: April 27, 2020**
- Platform for proposal submission available by: May 4, 2020**
- Full proposals due by: May 11, 2020 at 11:59 PM (EST) – NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE PROVIDED.**
- Project Start Date: To be determined.**
- Project End Date: 12 months from the start date. Grant extensions of 12 additional months will be determined on a case-by-case basis upon receipt of satisfactory progress reports and PI requests.**

*Proposals that are not compliant with programmatic goals or do not contain the requested information will not be considered and deemed unresponsive to this FOA.*

## **Full Proposal Mandatory Requirements**

### **1. Cover letter** containing the following information:

- Full name, faculty title, and campus affiliation
- Title of project
- The thematic area (*from Appendix 1 herein*)

### **2. One-page abstract** including the health relevance, rationale, hypothesis, specific aims, and a brief description of the research design. Applicants must articulate how the proposed project falls within the scope of one of the FOA thematic areas in response to COVID-19 research.

### **3. Biosketch** (5-page limit) – NIH format will be required (see Appendix 2)

### **4. Project Narrative**

All proposals will follow an **NIH PHS 398** format and will consist of a Face Page, a Project Summary, Specific Aims (1 page), and a six (6) page Research Strategy, including Significance, Innovation, and Approach Sections. Budget, Budget Justification and Facilities and Resources sections are not subject to these page limits.

The NIH guidelines for Human Subjects Research, Vertebrate Animals, Select Agents Research, and Resource Sharing should be followed and included after the Research Strategy, but without the constraints of the proposal page limits. *Applications that do not include these sections will be administratively withdrawn.*

If appropriate, projects should include evidence of having applied for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for Human Subjects Research, IACUC, and Biosafety Committees, as applicable. Projects will not receive funding until the appropriate IRB approvals have been received.

PI and Co-PI salary support are allowed on all projects. Salary for technicians are allowed. Student's may receive salary allowances or stipends, **but not tuition payments**.

### **5. Additional Requirements:** Facilities and Resources (no page limit). It is highly recommended that the Facilities and Resources address measures to minimize exposure or prevention measures to be undertaken to reduce COVID-19 contamination of all facilities, equipment and/or human resources, in compliance with institutional best practices and/or any effective Executive Order. A "Current, Pending and Inactive Support (grants closed within the past five [5] years) Form" for the PI and each Co-PI, as applicable, must be submitted (no page limit – see form in Appendix 3).

## **Allowable Costs**

The following costs are eligible to conduct research and development efforts pertaining to an Eligible Activity as described above:

### **Direct Costs:**

- Personnel Costs: Salaries of key personnel to conduct the work as presented in the proposal.
- Fringe benefits: Only those required by law: social security, federal and state unemployment, and state disability, among others.
- Consultant Fees: Fees for consulting services or any other type of remuneration paid to technical advisors consulted with regard to research and development.
- Materials and supplies: Item of property other than equipment, costing less than \$5,000 each.

- **Equipment**, Item of property that has an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more and an expected service life of more than one year. Equipment purchase must be essential for project and must be fully justified. Although allowable, **equipment acquisition that may delay the outcome of the proposed research because of logistics for purchase are discouraged** due to the fact that a rapid response is expected from projects to be funded.
- **Out-of-Jurisdiction-Travel**: Only if necessary, for the completion of the work proposed. Must be fully justified and itemized by destination and cost. Can include travel-related costs for transportation, lodging, and meals. Allowance for air travel normally will not exceed the cost of round-trip, economy airfares. Travel should not exceed \$5,000 per award. Travel in Puerto Rico (including mileage, meals, lodging) is not allowed. Travel will be subject to compliance to any Executive Orders that may be in effective or promulgated through the duration of the grant by the local or Federal governments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Publication Fees**: given that a required outcome of the proposed research is the publication of at least one (1) peer-reviewed article/publication, funds for said publication are allowed up to a maximum of \$2,000.
- **Sub awards**: to engage a third-party organization, when needed, to perform a scientific or programmatic portion of the sponsored project, will only be allowed among UPR campuses at this time, but must be less than 50% of the costs for the entire grant.

### **Administrative Costs:**

Administrative costs will be allowed at 10%, in accordance to comparable definition at 2 CFR 200.414 – Indirect Costs, Incision (f) of the Federal Uniform Administrative Guidance (UAG), applied to Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC) defined at 2 CFR 200.403 of the UAG.

### **Unallowable Costs**

- Unreasonable costs based on the proposed scope of work. All costs must be fully justified.
- Acquisition of real property;
- Costs incurred pre-award, including proposal preparation costs;
- Maternity or sick leave expenses;
- Redundancy or other terminations costs;
- Contingency costs;
- Hospitality and entertainment costs;
- Relocation expenses.
- Travel in Puerto Rico, including mileage, meals and lodging.
- Direct or indirect support for any lobbying effort or for contribution to the political campaign of any candidate or for contribution to any political party or similar organization.

## Appendix 1: Research Areas of Interest

- **Pathogenesis of the disease**
  - Patterns COVID-19 replication and excretion
  - Host factors (cardiovascular, diabetes, pulmonary, genetics, etc.) predisposing people groups to more severe disease
  - Pathophysiology and immunopathology of the disease and its complications
  - Innate, cellular and humoral immune response
  - Examine virus stability and persistence in the environment
- **Epidemiology**
  - Infectious disease and transmission dynamics
  - Methods to comprehend the determinants of the spread of infectious diseases and the impact of control strategies
  - Local population risk factors, comorbidities and susceptibility factors
  - Molecular epidemiology
  - Development of models regarding public health mitigation measures that could be effective for control or long-term protection
  - Novel assays and logistics for contact tracing and early and prompt detection of the disease
- **Clinical Research**
  - Define and understand the natural history of the disease
  - Optimizing clinical management
  - Population cohort studies including selected vulnerable groups
  - Supportive and specific treatment impact in moderate and severe cases, including clinical recovery and outcomes
  - Manifestations, complications, and long-term consequences of SARS-CoV-2 infection
- **Pharmacology**
  - Detection of novel targets for treating the disease
  - Repurposing of drugs for treating the disease
- **Mental health and social sciences**
  - Assessing the social and economic impact of the disease
  - Concerns related to clinical appraisal of medical countermeasures
  - Operational response at the governmental or health systems levels
  - Impacts of social distancing, curfew, etc., on mental health in general or in specific groups like elderly
  - Effective health communications and behavioral modification campaigns
  - Impact of online education at all levels
- **Data Sciences**
  - Data, artificial intelligence and/or software infrastructure development activities that address COVID-19 challenges
  - Genomic characterization of SARS-CoV-2
  - Artificial intelligence or machine learning approaches to understand the biological pathways of COVID-19 disease.
  - Data sharing
- **Research & Development**
  - Innovative personal protective equipment (PPE)
  - Valves
  - Sample swabs
  - Ventilators
  - Reagents and assays for virus detection

- Point-of-care or rapid, sensitive, and specific diagnostic test or devices
  - Technologies to kill viruses on surfaces
  - Vaccines
  - Novel respiratory therapy devices that reduce aerosol dispersion
  - Techniques for disinfecting PPE
- **Proposals in areas not provided in the list above, but that respond to elucidate, understand or answer questions related to COVID-19 prevention or response will also be evaluated.**

## Appendix 2: NIH Biosketch Template

OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (Rev. 03/2020 Approved Through 02/28/2023)

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Provide the following information for the Senior/key personnel and other significant contributors.  
Follow this format for each person. **DO NOT EXCEED FIVE PAGES.**

NAME:

eRA COMMONS USER NAME (credential, e.g., agency login):

POSITION TITLE:

EDUCATION/TRAINING (*Begin with baccalaureate or other initial professional education, such as nursing, include postdoctoral training and residency training if applicable. Add/delete rows as necessary.*)

INSTITUTION AND LOCATION	DEGREE (if applicable)	Completion Date MM/YYYY	FIELD OF STUDY

**A. Personal Statement**

**B. Positions and Honors**

**C. Contributions to Science**

**D. Additional Information: Research Support and/or Scholastic Performance**

The form can also be accessed at: [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch-blankformat\\_exp%2002-28-2023.docx](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch-blankformat_exp%2002-28-2023.docx)

Full instructions provided at: [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-e/general/g.240-r&r-seniorkey-person-profile-\(expanded\)-form.htm#Instructions](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-e/general/g.240-r&r-seniorkey-person-profile-(expanded)-form.htm#Instructions)

**This file MUST be converted to PDF and uploaded to application platform.**

**Appendix 3: Current, Pending and Closed (Inactive Support Form)**

**CURRENT, PENDING & INACTIVE SUPPORT**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:**

**Who completes this template:** Each principal investigator (PI) and co-principal investigator (Co-PI) specified in the grant request.

**How this template is completed:**

- Record information for active and pending projects, including this proposal, as well as inactive projects within the past five (5) years related to the proposed research.
- All current efforts to which PI/Co-PI(s) have committed a portion of their time must be listed, whether or not salary for the person involved is included in the budgets of the various projects.
- For concurrent projects, the percent of time committed must not exceed 100%.

NAME (List/PI #1 first)	SUPPORTING AGENCY AND AGENCY ACTIVE AWARD/PENDING PROPOSAL NUMBER	TOTAL \$ AMOUNT	EFFECTIVE AND EXPIRATION DATES	% OF TIME COMMITTED OR PERSON/MONTHS	TITLE OF PROJECT
	Active:				
	Pending:				
	Inactive (closed):				

**This file MUST be converted to PDF and uploaded to application platform.**