

## **Emergency COVID-19 Research Seed Funding**

with option of Continuation Funding

**Applications will be accepted starting today (April 6, 2020)  
and continuously until available funds are expended**

### **About this Emergency Seed Funding Opportunity**

In light of the emergence and spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in California and beyond, the statewide funding programs of the University of California Office of the President (UCOP) Research Grants Program Office (California Breast Cancer Research Program (CBCRP), Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program (TRDRP), California HIV/AIDS Research Program (CHRP)) and the Type 1 Diabetes Research Fund are together making available up to \$2M to immediately support urgent research to mitigate the pandemic.

Brief project proposals for a maximum of \$25,000 direct costs and 6 months duration will be evaluated based on the potential to (a) generate rigorous, actionable science by qualified teams with essential infrastructure support; (b) yield measurable, short-term outcomes that, when taken to scale, can help blunt the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak; (c) address the needs of vulnerable populations, including those with the co-morbid conditions of HIV infection, COPD or other lung diseases, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, or cancer, as well as the medically underserved.

Successful applicants will be eligible to apply for continuation funding prior to the expiration date. These continuation applications will be more substantive and will undergo competitive peer review.

### **About the Research Grants Program Office**

The Research Grants Program Office (RGPO) oversees a broad grantmaking portfolio of over \$100 million a year to support research that is critical to California, the nation, and the world. RGPO programs enhance the University of California's research capacity and excellence, which helps attract top faculty, graduate students, government funding, and companies to our state. These grants also enable health researchers and community agencies to collaborate and solve the most pressing problems in the state. RGPO also provides grants for training undergraduates, graduate and postdoctoral researchers, whose work will benefit California communities.

RGPO is comprised of several grantmaking units, including:

- California Breast Cancer Research Program
- California HIV/AIDS Research Program
- Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program
- University of California Research Initiatives

### **Available Funding**

This request for proposals aims to support rapid research focused on immediate outcomes and deliverables to mitigate SARS-CoV-2 infection or COVID-19 disease severity, especially among those with cancer, HIV, and tobacco-related diseases, and it does so with a special focus on vulnerable populations.

RGPO will review and agree to fund proposals within two weeks of submission (actual receipt of funds will follow). Competitive continuation awards will be available before the end of the award period.

Projects will be reviewed on a rolling basis starting immediately and continuing until all available funds are expended. The project start date is immediately upon notification of award.

## Research Objectives

To address the knowledge gaps identified by the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) and others that may inform immediate efforts to stem the COVID-19 outbreak, RGPO encourages the submission of proposals on topics that include but are not limited to:

- SARS-CoV-2 virus natural history, transmission, and diagnostics, including point-of-care tests
- Data collection and sharing tools (strategy, policy, and technology) that are the precursor to the ability to conduct urgent research on SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19
- Epidemiological studies, including surveillance, contact-tracing, modeling to predict the patterns of the outbreak and risk mitigation efforts, particularly for those at greater risk for infection and adverse associated outcomes
- Clinical management, especially in patients with cancer, HIV/AIDS, or tobacco use and related diseases and its effect on disparities in healthcare access on the severity of the pandemic
- Infection prevention and control (e.g., health care workers' protection, quarantine strategies)
- Development and testing of candidate therapeutics and vaccines for the novel coronavirus, including new immunotherapies, methods of boosting immune to boost responses, virus and reagent mapping, and standardization of animal models to evaluate vaccine efficacy, among others
- Ethical considerations in COVID-19 research and outbreak response
- Behavioral and social aspects in pandemic response, prevention and risk mitigation, economic research, and considerations of the disproportionate including economic considerations and impact effects of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations and marginalized communities
- The impact of smoking and vaping on COVID-19 infection and disease severity
- Susceptibility to infection and severity of COVID-19 infection in patients with lung cancer, COPD, or other diseases
- Tobacco product, e-cigarette and cannabis use cessation during COVID-19 recovery.

## Proposal Requirements

**Defined Outcome:** Each proposal must describe an actionable deliverable achieved within the duration and budget of the grant. These may include products – such as drug candidates, vaccine candidates, rapid point-of-care diagnostics, biospecimen banks, databases, etc. – or an intervention or an evidence-based policy recommendation.

**Vulnerable populations:** Each proposal must address how projects will benefit vulnerable populations who are: at high-risk for COVID-19 infection, unstably housed, or low socioeconomic status.

**Feasibility:** Each proposal should describe access to the required personnel, equipment and resources necessary for the project. Applicants should demonstrate possession of or access to appropriate tools, technologies and specimens as well as personnel available in a continuing shelter-in-place scenario. (e.g. laboratory facilities and equipment, animal facilities, etc.).

**Expertise:** Applicants should submit proposals that describe their relevant qualifications and any past projects related to the proposed activities.

Proposals should involve researchers with appropriate proficiency for the research questions (e.g. virologist, epidemiologist, pulmonologist, community health). Experience with related projects should be referenced.

### Budget

RGPO intends to fund urgent, short-term projects, each with a maximum direct cost of \$25,000 and duration of 6 months.

**Please note that indirect (F&A) costs will not be provided.** For University of California campuses, indirect cost exceptions are not required per Contracts and Grants Manual Section 8-560.

## How We Evaluate Emergency Applications

RGPO scientific staff will review and approve proposals based on the following criteria:

**Impact:** Potential for the project to have a short-term (6-12 months) impact on diagnosis, treatment, or policy. How important is the expected outcome?

**Feasibility:** Are the personnel, supplies, equipment, technology, and needed resources immediately available? Are there adequate plans to conduct the project in a shelter-in-place environment? Do the investigators have the expertise and experience, and institutional resources to carry out the project? Do the investigators have demonstrated expertise and experience in a related topic area?

**Vulnerable Populations:** Does the project address the needs of vulnerable populations who are: at high-risk for COVID-19 infection, unstably housed, or low socioeconomic status?

## Eligibility and Awards

Any individual or organization in California may apply. The project must be conducted primarily in California. We welcome investigators from community organizations, public or privately owned corporations and other businesses, volunteer health organizations, health maintenance organizations, hospitals, laboratories, research institutions, colleges, and universities.

**Multiple applications and grant limits for PIs.** A PI may submit more than one application, but each must propose a unique project. Applicants are limited to a maximum of one (1) grant award as PI.

### Award Decisions

Applicants will be notified of their funding status within two weeks of submission. No written application critique will be provided. Some applications could be placed on a 'waiting list' for possible later funding.

### Pre-funding Requirements

Funds will be advanced as quickly as possible following certification from the recipient institution that the PI and applicant organization will satisfy standard funding requirements in a timely manner.

## Application Process and Instructions

There is no deadline. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis starting immediately and ending when all available funds have been committed.

Applications must be submitted through SmartSimple (<https://ucop.smartsimple.com/>).

### Online Registration

The Applicant must be the Principal Investigator (Applicant) of the proposal and must access SmartSimple to initiate the application process.

### All Users Accessing SmartSimple for the First Time:

When accessing SmartSimple for the first time, all users should click the "Register Here" button under "Principal Investigator Registration" and follow the instructions to enter your institution, name, and contact information.

If you cannot find your institution, click “Search the IRS database” link. If your institution is listed in the IRS database, click the “Select” button (right arrow) to add it to the system and continue to #4. If it is not listed, please contact us to have your institution added to the system. If you need to change the institution that your account is associated with, please contact us. Your user account will be created. You will receive an email with instructions to create a password and complete your account profile.

If you see a pop-up message indicating that an account with your email address already exists, return to the main login page (<https://ucop.smartsimple.com>), and click the “Forgot Password” link. You will receive an email with a link and instructions to reset your password. If you do not receive the password reset email within one hour, please contact us.

### **Returning Users:**

Applicants who have previously registered with SmartSimple enter their username and password under “Login” and click the “Login” button on the SmartSimple homepage.

### **Online Proposal Submission**

Electronic Submission to Signing Official. Once the application is completed and any documents are completed and uploaded, the proposal will be routed to your institution’s signing official.

### **Initiating Your Application in SmartSimple:**

Once logged into the system, click on “Available Funding Opportunities” (upper right). Find the row for the Emergency COVID Research Seed Funding, then click “Apply.” You will then be taken to the Eligibility Check. Once you complete the Eligibility Check, you will be able to start the application process.

Please also consult with your local institutional review board (IRB), institutional animal care and use committee (IACUC), or other research regulatory body if you are proposing work that will require their review to ensure an expedited review.

### **Confidentiality**

RGPO maintains confidentiality for all submitted applications with respect to the identity of applicants and applicant organizations, all contents of every application, and the outcome of reviews. For those applications that are funded, RGPO makes public project titles, principal investigator(s) names, organizations, and award amounts. If the Program receives a request for additional information on a funded grant, the principal investigator and institution will be notified prior to the Program’s response to the request. Any sensitive or proprietary intellectual property in a grant will be edited and approved by the PI(s) and institution prior to release of the requested information.

No information will be released without prior approval from the PI for any application that is not funded.

### **For more information and technical assistance**

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