

The Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute Visionary Neuroscience Program

Program Description

The Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute (OBI) Visionary Neuroscience Program at UT Southwestern Medical Center is offering a new internal grant mechanism to support highly innovative new research that because of its novelty and risk profile is not suitable for NIH funding. These research projects must feature OBI Investigators from at least two different Departments. Some level of interaction between basic science and clinical faculty is desirable but not required.

The Visionary Neuroscience Program will support research in either of two areas: research aimed at 1) advancing fundamental insight into biology relevant to brain disease; or 2) translating scientific discovery into the clinical arena. Preference will be given to proposals in the following areas:

- Cell and molecular mechanisms of neurodegenerative disease;
- Delineation and/or modulation of normal and disease-altered brain circuits;
- Development of diagnostic tests;
- Identification of biological markers of disease;
- Determination of the effectiveness of drugs; and/or, the development of devices that could be used in the detection, treatment, prevention, or tracking of neurodegenerative diseases.

Award Information

- Estimated Number of Awards: up to one award, subject to availability of funds. Note that if a proposal of sufficient quality is not received, no award will be made.
- Maximum Total Funding Per Project: up to \$500,000 (up to \$250K/year; maximum project duration: 3 years)
- Submission Deadline: December 1, 2022

Eligibility

- Single PI and multi-PI applications are allowable
- PI (or one of the multi-PIs) must be an approved OBI Investigator
- Only one proposal is allowable per PI
- Proposals must include Co-Investigators or Key Personnel from two or more UT Southwestern departments

Program Timeline

September 1, 2022	Request for proposals (RFP) released
December 1, 2022	Applications due
February 1, 2023	Awards announced
March 1, 2023	Funds available, Grant performance period begins
March 1, 2024	1 st Formal progress report due to OBI
October TBD 2024	OBI Funded Grants Retreat – Progress Report Update
March 1, 2025	2 nd Formal progress report due to OBI
October TBD 2025	OBI Funded Grants Retreat – Progress Report Update
March 1, 2026	End of grant period, all funds expensed
June 1, 2026	Final report due to OBI

Proposal Submission Instructions

Submit all applications through the online Microsoft Forms link, here: [Microsoft Forms - OBI Visionary Neuroscience Program application](#)

Regulatory Compliance

Projects are subject to applicable federal, state, and local regulation, as well as UTSW policy. It is the PI responsibility to ensure compliance with UTSW Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and

Use Committee (IACUC), Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), export control, conflict of interest, and UTSW safety regulations and approvals.

Application Components

	Component	Format limit
1.	Project summary	250 words
2.	Specific aims	1 page
3.	Innovation and Synergy	1 page
4.	Research strategy	6 pages
5.	Key references	2 pages
6.	Budget	<i>Use attached template</i>
7.	Budget justification	2 pages
8.	Biographical sketches from PI/Co-PI	5 pages per biosketch NIH template - Biosketch

All documents will be single-spaced, no less than 12 point Times New Roman font, 1" margins on all document sides

1. Project Summary

Include a summary of the project's broad, long-term objectives and specific aims, and a description of the research design and methods. In this section, use layman terminology for a short, succinct description of the proposed work. Avoid both descriptions of past accomplishments and the use of the first person. Please be concise.

2. Specific Aims

State concisely the goals of the proposed research with expected outcomes, including the impact that the results of the proposed research will have on the research fields involved. List succinctly the specific objectives of the research proposed.

3. Innovation and Synergy

Explain the innovation and novelty of the project to make clear why it is unsuitable for traditional funding mechanisms. Also highlight the specific expertise brought by the different investigators and how joining forces brings synergistic value to the project.

4. Research Strategy (as for NIH R01)

Describe concrete plans for the research project, including this information:

- Project introduction
- Overall approach to the project by describing strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used
- Description of methods
- Description of facilities and resources needed, with indication about their availability

5. Key References

This attachment should include any references cited in (3) Research Strategy. References should include PubMed Central (PMC) reference number. References should be limited, relevant, and concise.

6. Budget

Use the attached Budget template, in Excel: [OBI Budget Template - Excel](#)

7. Budget Justification

This form includes details for all expenditures and budget line items (i.e. time and effort, materials, supplies, travel) needed to support the research project.

8. Biographical Sketches

Biographical sketches are required for all PI and Co-PI applicants, following non-Fellowship NIH template, found here: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>

Budget Considerations

Funds may be utilized for direct expenditures in accordance with the following:

- Salary support is allowable for individual(s) who are making significant effort towards the goal of the proposed research.
- Fringe benefits are allowable in proportion to salary charged to the award.
- Consumable scientific items — materials and supplies
- Core Facility Services – costs associated with services performed by a recognized UT Southwestern Core Facility
- Publication Expenses* — Expenses for publishing the results of research accomplished with funding provided by this award
- Expenses related to animal research and human subjects research, including compensation to human subjects.
- Contracts for activities outside of UT Southwestern (must be clearly and convincingly described as necessary for successful execution of the proposed project). Consultant fees and/or related expenditures are allowable, excluding any overhead costs.

The following are excluded as direct expenditures:

- General office supplies, equipment or expenses
- Building construction, alteration, renovation, rent or utilities
- Student tuition or fees
- Membership dues
- Overhead
- Payments of salaries to non-UT Southwestern personnel
- Refreshments
- Domestic and international travel

*Any publication or presentation resulting from this award should acknowledge the support from the Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute at UT Southwestern Medical Center.

Grant Administration

The PI (applicant) is responsible for the administration of grant funds. All grant expenditures must conform to state and university regulations and approvals. In particular, the PI must be certain that over-expenditures do not occur, and that all funds are fully expended according to programmatic deadlines. All work must be completed within the performance period.

Peer Review

Applications will be reviewed by an external OBI Grant Review Committee. This committee is appointed by OBI leadership. Proposals will be evaluated based primarily on innovation and creativity, the potential for the project to open a new research direction, and ability and importance of the interdisciplinary team to carry out the work rigorously and definitively.

NIH grant review criteria, updated for OBI: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/critiques/rpg.htm>

Progress Report and Final Research Retreat

The first formal, written progress report will be requested by OBI leadership in June 2026. Please refer to the above Project Timeline for deadlines regarding progress reports and presentations.

Contact Information

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