ASTRO-BCRF Career Development Award to End Breast Cancer

Purpose:
The ASTRO-BCRF Career Development Award (CDA) is a joint effort to advance the field of radiation oncology in novel ways through the support of talented early-career scientists performing radiation oncology-related and breast cancer research. The aim of the CDA is to support the next generation of researchers and to significantly improve outcomes and quality of life for breast cancer patients.

The award will provide up to $100,000 per year for 2 years. Neither ASTRO nor BCRF will pay indirect costs as part of this award. One award will be funded.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Applicants (PhD, MD, MD/PhD, DO) must have no more than 5 years in a faculty appointment (no higher than Assistant Professor) at the start of the grant term on July 1, 2020. Residents, early stage postdoctoral fellows, or other trainees will not be eligible to apply. However, if at the time of application submission, the trainee has secured documentation of an independent faculty position not dependent on funding from this mechanism, the application will be accepted for review.
- Applicants must be employed by a recognized US research institution at the time the application is submitted.
- The applicant must be an ASTRO member in good standing at the time the grant begins.
- Transdisciplinary collaborations are encouraged but must include at least one radiation oncologist, radiation or cancer biologist, or physicist.
- Applicants must designate a mentor, preferably one at the same institution, who will provide guidance and support for the successful completion of the proposed research project. Mentors should be senior investigators with a minimum of R01 or equivalent level funding and provide a letter of support detailing their oversight and support. A letter outlining the mentoring plan is required with this application.
- Because of the focus on progression to independence as a researcher, applicants should propose a period of study and career development consistent with his/her previous training and suited to their career development needs.
- The goal of this grant is to provide funds to establish a research career. Therefore, we encourage those without extensive extramural funding (i.e. NIH R01 funding) to apply. Those who have received other career development awards at the R01 or similar funding level are eligible to apply.
• The recipient is required to contact ASTRO immediately if any problems are encountered that would prevent them from successfully completing the project.
• Recipients must attend at least one ASTRO Annual Meeting and present the findings of this research study at the meeting.

Commitment from the Applicant’s Institution
• The institution must be recognized as providing a rich environment for career development.
• A responsible figure from the institution/department and the mentor must demonstrate, in writing, a detailed mentoring plan that outlines the commitment to the development of the applicant as a productive, independent investigator.
• A responsible figure from the institution/department and the mentor must demonstrate, in writing, intent for a significant percentage of the recipient’s full-time professional effort to be devoted to research.
• The host department will act as the fiscal intermediary. The institution will pay the stipend to the winner and be responsible for satisfying tax withholding, deposit and/or reporting requirements applicable to the payment of the award. The winner will be responsible for individual income taxes.
• ASTRO and BCRF do NOT pay institutional Facility and Administrative costs.
• The institution will be required to provide sufficient additional funds to supplement salaries or supplies as needed for the research.
• Any change in institution, mentor and chair or in the applicant’s position that might affect their ability to successfully complete their training should be communicated as soon as possible to ASTRO so that appropriate action can be taken.
• When a mentor at the grantee institution is to be replaced, the institution must submit a letter from the proposed mentor documenting 1) the need for substitution 2) the new mentor’s qualifications for supervising the program and 3) the level of support for the applicant’s career development.
• Only 1 grant can support the proposed research project. If independent funding is obtained for the same scope of work selected by ASTRO-BCRF for this award the recipient must refuse either this or the competing award/s.
General timeline

September 15, 2019  Release of RFA
February 15, 2020  Applications due at 11:59pm Eastern Standard time (GMT -5).
February – April, 2020  ProposalCENTRAL application site closes
June 30, 2020    Notification of award status
July 1, 2020   Award begins

Application Guidelines

Applications must be submitted online at proposalCENTRAL:
https://proposalcentral.altum.com/GrantOpportunities.asp?GMID=105

Deadline for submission is: 11:59 pm, Eastern Standard Time (GMT -5), Saturday February 15, 2020

Formatting

All materials MUST be prepared in English, single spaced with normal spacing between letters and words, using a font style (size 10-12) such as Arial or Times New Roman. A minimum of one-half inch margins must be used on all page borders.

Each section must be loaded into ProposalCENTRAL. Applicants can stop at any point and save the application to be completed by the deadline.

Submission Content

All applications must contain the following:

1. **Title Page:** Complete the grant application face page including the title, principal investigator name and contact information, human subject status, proposed dates of support, project costs, organization name and type, DUNS number, administrative official and signing official. Sign and date the application face page.

2. **Scientific Abstract:** Brief abstract (<750 words) that concisely describes the background, rationale, specific aims, experimental approach including model system and statistical approach, anticipated outcomes and impact of the project is required.

3. **Public Abstract** (will be posted on the ASTRO and BCRF websites): A brief abstract (<500 words) aimed at a public audience that concisely describes the project and impact on understanding or treating breast cancer is required.

4. **Research Proposal:** Proposal to include a narrative text and any preliminary data to justify a 2-year proposal, **limited to 10 pages maximum**, is required. Proposal should include within the 10 page limit the following sections:
   - Background
   - Preliminary data and figures (if applicable, but not required)
   - Specific aims
   - Experimental design/methods
   - Statistical analysis plan
Anticipated outcomes
Potential pitfalls and alternatives
Significance
Future directions

References must be included but will not count toward the 10-page limit.

5. **Mentoring plan**: A detailed mentoring plan that outlines courses, lectures, meetings, and other ways to support the applicant and help increase likelihood of success should be included. This can be included in the letter of support from the mentor (2-page limit).

6. **Biosketches**: The applicant and lead mentor each must submit a biosketch including a list of relevant publications and currently funded research projects (5-page limit). NIH or DoD formats will be accepted.

7. **Budget pages**: Submit a detailed budget (can be prepared using the NIH budget form like PHS39) with a breakdown of annual estimated costs and budget justification. ASTRO and BCRF will cover only direct costs, no facilities and administrative (F&A) costs will be covered. Funding cannot go towards supporting salaries of mentors or collaborators. Funding for technical support is acceptable.

8. **Letters of support (2)**: Upload 2 letters of support. One must be from your mentor and must outline the mentorship plan.

9. **Institutional letter of support**: Upload a letter of support from the institution or department. If the mentor is the chair of the department, only one letter needs to be submitted.

Applications lacking the required materials or in the incorrect format will be considered ineligible for review.

No additional data or documentation such as accepted manuscripts or awards received will be accepted after the grant deadline.

**Application Review Information**

All grant applications are subject to peer review. Reviewers are members of the ASTRO Research Grants Evaluation Committee, representatives from BCRF, and statisticians. A study section consisting of researchers with expertise in the areas and topics of each grant will review the application for scientific merit and appropriateness for funding. Final decisions will be subject to the approval of the ASTRO and BCRF Boards of Directors.

Each grant will be evaluated based on several individual criteria scores. The final score will consider the overall impact and strength of the application, as well as individual criteria scores.

Individual scoring criteria are as follows:

1. **Impact** - The likelihood of the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved (5%).
2. **Significance** – The significance of the proposed work to the research and/or the practice of radiation oncology and the treatment or prevention of breast cancer. (15%)
3. **Investigator** – The Applicant’s strengths as an independent researcher, taking into account publications, training and experience. (25%)
4. Project Plan – The level of novelty and innovation of the proposed project, its feasibility of being completed within the grant timeline, the proposed statistical analyses, and the overall strength of the proposed plan. (30%)

5. Environment – The level of commitment of resources, detailed mentorship plan, time and resources that the applicant’s home institution can provide. (10%)

6. Mentorship plan – The efforts to be taken to help mentor the applicant and increase their potential success as a researcher. (10%)

7. Statistical plan – The statistical approach to data analysis. (5%)

In addition, the study section will consider the following factors, though they will not factor directly into the score:

1. The commitment of the applicant to a career in academic radiation oncology.
2. The budget of the proposed research plan is feasible to complete the aims outlined and align with the research development of the applicant.

Selected proposals will have strong scientific merit and impact in the understanding or treatment of breast cancer, possess an innovative and transformative approach, and demonstrate potential for progression to the clinic.

Funding decisions will be made through peer and programmatic review.

Questions can be directed to research@astro.org or 1.703.839.7368