

# VBRN Exploratory Award

**Purpose:** To establish feasibility of a research project and obtain preliminary data.

**Project Duration:** One year

**Eligibility:** Faculty members who are full-time tenure track at Castleton University, Middlebury College, Northern Vermont University, Norwich University, or Saint Michael's College.

Research must be in human health and behavior (broadly defined). Clinical trials are allowed. To determine whether the proposed study is a clinical trial, use the [NIH decision tool](#).

**Funding Level and Allowable Expenses:** Direct costs up to \$10,000 per year may be requested. Permitted expenses include PI salary for summer and/or academic year, technicians, supplies, small equipment, undergraduate wages, participant costs and conference travel. Use of the funds must be outlined and justified as part of the application.

**Review of Applications:** The review of Exploratory Award applications begins with the assignment of the application to two outside reviewers. The reviewers are given the Request For Applications (RFA) and are asked to score the application based on the NIH review criteria used for the [R15 AREA](#) grant, which includes Significance, Investigator, Innovation, Approach and Environment. The NIH utilizes a 9-point rating scale (1 = exceptional; 9 = poor) for all applications; the same scale is used for criterion scores and for the overall impact score.

## Exploratory Award Key Dates

### Grant Writing Workshop Attendance DATE: November 6, 2021

In order to be eligible for 2022-2023 Exploratory Award funding, faculty must attend the online VBRN Grant Writing Workshop.

### Letter of Intent DUE: December 1, 2021

Applicants must submit a Letter of Intent to VBRN with a working title and key words. VBRN will distribute the template to those who attended the Grant Writing Workshop.

### Application Due Date DUE: February 1, 2022

Exploratory Award applications are submitted online via the VBRN application site, which will be accessible beginning in early December 2021. Funding decisions are made and communicated to applicants by the end of March. Note that formatting must adhere to NIH standards as outlined on their [website](#).

For the following application components, use the hyperlinked documents as provided. Please submit all documents in the PDF format, except for the Budget and Budget Justification, which should be submitted as Word documents.

All applicants must contact a federal Program Officer at an NIH Center or Institute to verify that the proposed research is fundable by the NIH. If this is a renewal application, the applicant's current science mentor must review the proposal before submission.

Application components include:

- [Face Page](#) (submit as PDF)
  - Must be signed by BPI Coordinator and institutional grants officials (boxes 12 and 13)
  - List direct costs only (boxes 7a and 8a)
  - List total costs (including Facilities and Administrative costs, boxes 7b and 8b)
  - Include eRA Commons User Name (box 3h)
  - Include NIH Center or Institute for the Research and the Name of a Program Officer
- [Project Summary and Relevance](#) (submit as PDF)
  - eRA Commons ID required for all senior/key personnel
- [Budget](#) (submit as Word document)  
(Not to exceed one page)
  - List direct costs only
  - Fill in the total amount for Facilities and Administrative costs
  - Must be reviewed by the BPI Coordinator
- [Budget Justification](#) (submit as Word document)  
(Not to exceed three pages)
  - Must be reviewed by the BPI Coordinator

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## Exploratory Award Key Dates

- [Research Plan](#) (submit as PDF)  
(Not to exceed four pages, or six pages if applying for a renewal)
  - Specific Aims (not to exceed one page)
  - Progress Report (not to exceed two pages; only for renewal applications)
  - Research Strategy (not to exceed three pages)
    - Must address Significance, Innovation and Approach criteria
  - Literature Cited (as many pages as needed)
- [Research Resources and Environment](#) (submit as PDF)
- [Biosketch](#) (submit as PDF)
  - Submit for all senior/key personnel and other significant contributors
  - Not to exceed five pages per person
- For human subjects research, IRB approval\*
  - PHS Human Subjects and Clinical Trials Information Form
  - Institutional IRB approval letter (with specified dates for which the research is approved)
  - The approved IRB research protocol
  - Current Human Subjects education certification for all key personnel
- For clinical trial studies, IRB approval\*
  - PHS Human Subjects and Clinical Trials Information Form
    - Include the ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier (NCT number, section 1.5)
  - Institutional IRB approval letter (with specified dates for which the research is approved)
  - The approved IRB research protocol
  - Current Human Subjects education certification for all key personnel
  - Current Good Clinical Practice certification for all key personnel
- For vertebrate animals research, IACUC approval\*
  - Institutional IACUC approval letter (with specified dates for which the research is approved)
  - The approved IACUC research protocol
  - [Vertebrate Animals Section](#)
- Supporting documents (as applicable; e.g. Letters of Support, Equipment Quotes, etc.)

\*IRB and IACUC approvals must be submitted with the application by the due date. **A proposal will not be reviewed with a pending status.**

### Funding Period: June 1, 2022–May 31, 2023

Funding of awards is contingent upon NIH approval. Award funds must be spent in the award period; carryover of funds is not allowed.

### Exploratory Award Conditions

Completion of the following:

- Individual Development Plan (IDP) due September 1, 2022.
- Two telephone discussions of the IDP with the VBRN Director, the PDE Core Director, and the BPI Coordinator.
- Annual VBRN survey and periodic VBRN longitudinal surveys.
- Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR).
- Submit a draft manuscript (minimally Methods and Results sections) with revisions recommended by your science mentor based on VBRN-funded research by June 1, 2023.

Attendance at the following:

- Annual VBRN Faculty Retreat in Summer 2022 and 2023.
- VBRN Professional Development Seminar in Winter 2023.
- Annual VBRN Career Day for students in April 2023.

Any work resulting from this Award must acknowledge VBRN as a source of funding, details of which can be found on the VBRN website and in the faculty handbook. All publications from VBRN-funded research are required to meet the NIH public access policy. Details on this requirement can be found in the VBRN faculty handbook.