VBRN Exploratory CURE/Experiential Learning Award (2027-2028)

Purpose: The goal of this Award is to develop and/or implement research-related curricula or experiential education activities, including but not limited to Course-based Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs). The experience is intended to stimulate interest in research, enhance retention in STEM fields, and build student skills required for entry into the biomedical workforce.

Please follow procedures from your Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. To determine if the proposed classroom-based research is subject to formal review by your IRB, consult with the IRB chair. If formal IRB review is not required, provide the IRB chair's determination letter with your application.

Project Duration: One year

Eligibility: Faculty members who are full-time tenure track or equivalent as well as full-time or part-time non-tenure track at Vermont State University, Landmark College, Middlebury College, Norwich University, Saint Michael's College, and the Community College of Vermont.

NIH Mission: NIH is the steward of medical and behavioral research for the Nation. Its mission is to seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability.

Funding Level and Allowable Expenses: Direct costs up to $15,000 per year may be requested. Permitted expenses include PI salary for a maximum of one month during the summer, technicians, supplies, small equipment, and conference travel. Use of the funds must be outlined and justified as part of the application.

Review of Applications: VBRN CURE/Experiential Learning Award applications receive their initial review from external experts in experiential science education. These experts deliver reviews organized around the NIH review criteria that make up NIH's Simplified Framework for Peer Review using the NIH 9-point rating scale for individual criteria and overall merit.

When the external reviews are returned to VBRN, they are reviewed by the VBRN Director, Associate Director, Program Coordinator, and PUI Research Coordinator to determine their suitability for funding, based on available resources, program strategic imperatives*, and PUI impact. The applications along with external reviews and Director recommendations are forwarded to our External Advisory Committee, who make their funding recommendations. VBRN must take steps to ensure all funded research complies with government executive orders and NIH policies. VBRN's goal is to fund as many Awards as possible, but fund only meritorious applications responsive to the NIH mission.

**VBRN will assess applications with respect to alignment with VBRN strategic objectives and mission. We are particularly interested in applications that foster inter-institutional collaborations and include a data science component.*

Exploratory CURE/Experiential Learning Award Key Dates
Grant Writing Workshop Attendance **DATE: September 25, 2026**
To be eligible for 2027-2028 Exploratory Award funding, faculty must attend the VBRN Grant Writing Workshop. This event will be in person
Application Due Date: **DUE: October 23, 2026**

Exploratory CURE/Experiential Learning Award applications are submitted online via the VBRN application site, which will be accessible October 15, 2026. Note, 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.

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
- Budget (submit one document for each year of the award, and both as Word documents) (Not to exceed one page)
  - List direct costs only

- Fill in the total amount for Facilities and Administrative costs
- Foreign components are not allowed without prior approval by NIH
- 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

- Research Plan (submit the following as three separate PDFs in the linked form)

  (Not to exceed 3 pages)
  - Specific Aims (not to exceed one page)
  - Research Strategy (not to exceed 2 pages)
    - Research Strategy literature cited must be submitted on this form (G.220 - R&R Other Project Information Form).
    - Frame the Research Strategy around designing experiments that can be performed by students during the specified time, e.g., class lab period. Ensure that you describe the experimental system and problem to which the experiential activity will be applied. Document the feasibility of breaking that question into readily designable modules that are amenable to exploration within the boundaries of student technical expertise, time, and available resources.
    - Include plans for evaluation and dissemination.
    - Include a letter of support from an academic Department Chair or Dean indicating that the home institution will sustain the experiential activity, if found to be effective, to the same degree as other courses.

- Research Resources and Environment (submit as PDF)
- Biosketch (submit as PDF)
  - Submit for all senior/key personnel and other significant contributors
  - Not to exceed 5 pages per person
  - If the application features multiple PIs, include a Biosketch for each PI. Your Research Strategy should include a section with the heading “Multiple PI Management Plan” that describes the roles, responsibilities, and procedures for resolving disputes/differences for the members of the team.

Funding Period: **July 1, 2027-June 30, 2028**
Funding of awards is contingent upon NIH approval if the proposal involves human subjects. Award funds must be spent in the award period; carryover of funds is not allowed.
Exploratory/CURE Award Conditions

Completion of the following:

- Individual Development Plan (IDP) due September 1, 2027. Incorporate feedback from your science mentor and BPI Coordinator before submitting your IDP to VBRN.
- Two telephone discussions of the IDP with the VBRN Director, the VBRN Program Coordinator, and the BPI Coordinator. These conversations are planned for Fall 2027 and Spring 2028.
- Annual VBRN survey and periodic VBRN longitudinal surveys.
- Report to VBRN citations and/or persistent identifiers for all products resulting from VBRN funding at least in part, including publications, presentations, and grant proposals. Compliance with NIH’s open access policy and data management and sharing policy is required.

Attendance at the following:

- Annual VBRN Faculty Retreat in Summer 2027 and 2028.
- VBRN Professional Development Seminar in Winter 2028.
- Annual VBRN Career Day for students in April 2028.

Acknowledgement of VBRN:

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

which includes deposit of peer-reviewed, accepted manuscripts into PMC on date of acceptance for publication. A foreign coauthor constitutes a foreign component as defined by NIH and is not allowed without prior approval by NIH.