

## **SPECIAL REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

### **JDRF REQUESTS LETTERS OF INTENT FOR: PATHWAYS AND TARGETS FOR PROMOTING PHYSIOLOGIC BETA CELL REGENERATION**

#### **PURPOSE**

The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) invites applications from single investigators or teams of investigators to develop and conduct studies towards the goal of discovering novel targets and pathways for regenerating beta cells in type 1 diabetes.

#### **BACKGROUND**

There is mounting evidence that functional pancreatic beta cell mass increases in response to changes in metabolic demand such as in pregnancy and early childhood growth as well as pathophysiological changes such as obesity/insulin resistance, hyperglycemia and inflammation. While insights into the mechanisms and pathways mediating these physiologic responses are emerging, gaps remain in understanding the cellular and molecular processes underlying beta cell regeneration. Type 1 diabetes (T1D) is an autoimmune disease characterized by the declining function and loss of the insulin-producing beta cells of the islet resulting in a need for life-long insulin replacement therapy. Pharmacologic agents that expand functional beta cell mass by safely promoting regeneration or expansion of endogenous beta cells may have clinical utility for the treatment of type 1 diabetes in early stages of the disease and potentially in established disease. Even partial restoration of endogenous beta cell function may have benefit by reducing insulin requirements, improving glucose control, and reducing the risk of complications.

To date, the majority of the molecular insights into expansion of beta cell mass come from studies in animal models, and relevance to human beta cell expansion has not been widely tested. Validation of the relevance of these findings to human beta cell regeneration is a critical gap. Furthermore, the identification of “druggable” targets to safely increase functional beta cell mass also represents a critical gap.

The purpose of this RFA is to invite outstanding proposals to identify and characterize novel drug targets or biochemical intervention points that will promote regeneration or expansion of beta cell mass in a highly selective, safe, and specific manner. Mechanistic studies may be proposed if they are specific to the beta cell and aimed at providing insight into druggable targets that may provide a basis for translation to a drug discovery platform. Validation of the relevance to human beta cell regeneration is a priority.

#### **OBJECTIVES/SCOPE**

This RFA will support milestone-driven research programs aimed at identifying and validating novel pathways and potential drug targets for the activation of human beta cell regeneration. It is expected that RFA-sponsored studies may ultimately have implications for treatment of type 1 diabetes and that the data generated may be used to support longer-term drug discovery efforts. Inclusion of studies with human islets/beta cells is strongly encouraged. Resources for obtaining human islets are described below.

Examples of pertinent topics include (not intended to be exclusive or all-encompassing):

- Discovery of pathways and targets regulating expansion of functional beta cell mass under conditions of increased metabolic demand in relevant physiologic animal models
- Testing of the importance of factors, targets, and pathways identified in animal model systems for human beta cell proliferation and function
- Testing of the importance of candidate genes and proteins obtained from gene expression, proteomic, or miRNA expression data sets in beta cell expansion and regeneration
- Systematic evaluation of molecular features of human beta-cell biology (cell cycle repressors, epigenetic modifications, etc) that limit regeneration relative to rodent systems

- Systematic evaluation of molecular features that limit replication/regeneration in islets from aged rodents, which may relate to limiting features in human islets
- Elucidation of transcriptional networks implicated in beta cell regeneration and identification of potential druggable targets in the network
- Development of novel assays to enable high throughput screening of small molecules and biologic factors promoting beta cell regeneration
- Development and application of novel siRNA-based assays to screen for regulators of beta cell regeneration
- Evaluation of biologic factors for potential use as therapeutics to promote beta cell regeneration and/or for target identification
- Studies aimed at establishing the utility of model systems for pre-clinical testing of chemical and biologic libraries
- Investigation of known drugs or pharmacologic agents for effects on beta cell regeneration taking both efficacy and safety into consideration
- Discovery of serum biomarkers to detect changes in functional beta cell mass in response to physiologic conditions or pharmacologic agents

This RFA is **not** intended to support:

Studies of embryonic development of beta cells; efforts to expand or differentiate beta cells *in vitro*; efforts aimed at expansion of abnormal, non-functional or oncogenic beta cells or differentiation of stem-cell derived pancreatic progenitors; *ex vivo* studies based solely on rodent beta cell lines/islets.

### MECHANISM

Up to a maximum of \$500,000 USD total may be requested, including 10% indirect costs. The level of funding will vary depending on the scope and overall objectives of the proposal. Under the terms of the grant award, written quarterly reports (~2-3 pages) will be required from the funded investigator as a basis for continued support.

Applicants must adhere to the following guidelines:

- The budget may not exceed \$250,000 USD total per year, including 10% indirect costs.
- The total project period may not exceed two years.
- Projected timelines on a quarterly basis for specific aims must be provided in the application.
- Projected major milestones and deliverables for year 1 and year 2 must be provided in the application; these will be reviewed and may be modified as work progresses during the course of the research program in discussion with the JDRF Program Director.
- The research plan may not exceed a total of 12 pages, including figures, tables, legends, milestones and deliverables

Applications that are not funded in this competition may be resubmitted to other JDRF grant mechanisms according to the deadlines and guidelines described on the JDRF Web site: <http://www.jdrf.org/>

### ELIGIBILITY

Applications may be submitted by non-profit organizations, public and private, such as universities, colleges, hospitals, laboratories, units of state and local governments. Applicants must hold an M.D., D.M.D., D.V.M., Ph.D., or equivalent and have a faculty position or equivalent at a college, university, medical school, or other research facility. Please note that applications from for-profit entities or collaborations with academia may be submitted to this initiative; additional information will be requested from for-profit entities if a full application is invited.

### LOI

**An approved letter of intent is required for submission of a full proposal.**

Prospective applicants should submit a letter of intent on-line via the proposalCENTRAL Web site (<https://proposalcentral.altum.com>). The LOI template provided on the proposalCENTRAL Web site must be used to complete the application. Applicants will be notified approximately eight weeks after the LOI deadline date if they have been approved to submit a full application.

### DEADLINES

- **RFA Release Date:** .....Friday, April 8, 2011
- **Letter of Intent Deadline:**.....Thursday, June 30, 2011
- **Application Deadline:** .....Tuesday, October 11, 2011
- **Response to Applicants:**.....December 2011

- **Earliest Anticipated Start Date:** .....January 2012

## PROPOSAL

All applications must be completed using the templates provided on the proposalCENTRAL Web site (<https://proposalcentral.altum.com/>). Proposal templates in MS Word should be typewritten, single-spaced and in typeface no smaller than **10-point font** and have no more than **six vertical lines per vertical inch**. Margins, in all directions, must be at least ½ inch. Complete information should be included to permit review of each application without reference to previous applications.

The research plan may not exceed 12 pages, including figures, tables, projected milestones and deliverables, but excluding references. **Applications with research plans exceeding the page limit will not be reviewed.** The Research Plan must be organized as follows: 1) Background and Significance of this work to the goals of the RFA; 2) Proposed Research; 3) Rationale for proposed research; 4) Research Design and Methods; 5) Advantages over alternative approaches that would address the same goal; 6) Future plans if research is successful; 7) Quarterly milestones, projected annual outcomes, and deliverables; 8) Intellectual Property or commercial efforts associated with the current application; 9) References (no page limit); 10) Principle Investigator Assurance. All information in items 1-7 must be incorporated in the 12-page limit without exception.

## APPLICATION COMPONENTS

- Applicant and Institutional Demographics (including Financial and Administrative Officer)
- Key Personnel
- Lay and Technical Abstracts
- Budget
- Budget Justification
- Subcontract Budget (if applicable)
- Subcontract Budget Justification (if applicable)
- Other Support (for the PI only)
- Organization Assurances (IRB and/or IACUC)
- Biosketches (for all Key Personnel)
- Research Plan
- Human Subject Research plan (if applicable)
- Resources
- Supporting Documents (i.e. Letter(s) of Collaboration, etc.)

## INSTRUCTIONS

Applicants must register as an applicant and submit their letter of intent and application in response to this RFA using JDRF's on-line application system proposalCENTRAL (<https://proposalcentral.altum.com/>). The letter of intent and application must be completed using the templates provided on the proposalCENTRAL Web site.

## REVIEW CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated based on the overall fit with the RFA objectives, potential that the proposed research will have a substantial impact on the mission of JDRF, and according to the following criteria:

- Significance
- Relevance
- Approach
- Innovation
- Investigator Experience
- Environment

*Significance:* Does this study address an important problem? What will be the expected effect of these studies on the concepts or methods that drive the beta cell biology and T1D fields?

*Relevance:* Is the proposed research relevant to the objectives of this RFA? What will be the expected impact of these studies on JDRF's mission to find new disease-modifying agents to treat T1D?

*Approach:* Are the conceptual framework, design, methods and analyses adequately developed, well integrated and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics? Is the proposed research feasible within the term of the award?

*Innovation:* Does the project employ novel concepts, approaches or methods? Are the aims original and innovative? Does the project challenge existing paradigms or develop new methodologies or technologies?

*Investigator Experience:* Is the investigator appropriately trained and well suited to carry out the planned studies? Is the work proposed appropriate to the experience level of the principal investigator? If the investigator does not have T1D experience, are there appropriate collaborative arrangements with experts in T1D?

*Environment:* Does the scientific environment in which the work will be performed contribute to the probability of success? Do the experiments proposed take advantage of unique features of the scientific environment or employ useful collaborative arrangements? Is there evidence of institutional support?

### **Applying for Human Pancreatic Islets for Basic Science Studies:**

Investigators at institutions in the United States may apply for human islets through the Integrated Islet Distribution Program or through the JDRF Program for Islets for Basic Research. Investigators in Europe may apply for islets through the JDRF-funded European Consortium for Islet Transplantation (ECIT). Please note: The ability of ECIT members to distribute human islets is subject to national and European Union regulations. Detailed information on applying for human pancreatic islets through these programs is available on the JDRF web site ([http://www.jdrf.org/index.cfm?page\\_id=104491](http://www.jdrf.org/index.cfm?page_id=104491)).

### **JDRF STAFF CONTACTS**

#### **PROGRAMMATIC**

##### **Patricia Kilian, Ph.D.**

Scientific Program Director, Regeneration Program

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation

26 Broadway, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor

New York, NY 10004

☎ 212-479-7563

✉ [pkilian@jdrf.org](mailto:pkilian@jdrf.org)

##### **Andrew Rakeman, Ph.D.**

Senior Scientific Program Manager, Beta Cell Therapies

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation

26 Broadway, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor

New York, NY 10004

☎ 212-479-7664

✉ [arakeman@jdrf.org](mailto:arakeman@jdrf.org)

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE**

##### **Bridget Donnelly**

Grant Coordinator

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation

26 Broadway, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor

New York, NY 10004

☎ 212-479-7614

✉ [bdonnelly@jdrf.org](mailto:bdonnelly@jdrf.org)

#### **PROPOSALCENTRAL**

✉ [pcsupport@altum.com](mailto:pcsupport@altum.com)

☎ 800 875 2562 (Toll-free U.S. and Canada) or +1 703 964 5840 (Direct Dial International)

Normal Business Hours: M-F, 8:30am - 5:00pm Eastern Time