Request for Proposals

AST Research Network / Ajmera Transplant Centre: Research in Ex Vivo Organ Perfusion

If you have any questions, please email research@myAST.org.

The application deadline is 11:59 pm Pacific Standard Time on February 25, 2022.

A. Overview
The American Society of Transplantation (AST) and Ajmera Transplant Centre are collaborating to provide one one-year, $50,000 individual research grant to support transplantation and immunology research that focuses on ex-vivo organ perfusion.

About Ajmera Transplant Centre
The Ajmera Transplant Centre is a large multi-organ transplant program located in Toronto, Canada, performing approximately 700 organ transplants per year. The program strongly supports innovation in transplantation, and in particular has a long history of research and clinical translation related to ex-vivo organ perfusion technologies and organ repair strategies. The Ajmera Transplant Centre received the inaugural innovation award from the AST for its program on ex-vivo organ perfusion. In order to enhance ex-vivo related research internationally, the Ajmera Transplant Centre is pleased to partner with AST to provide support for this grant opportunity.

B. General Information:
One grant will be awarded. The grant is for one year at $50,000. Please submit your proposal planning on one year of funding. Research must commence on July 1, 2022 and end on June 30, 2023. The research start date cannot be deferred for any reason.

The recipient will sign a letter of agreement with the AST Research Network. Payments will be issued to the recipient’s institution by the AST Research Network in annual installments. The recipient will report to the AST Research Network.

C. Research Focus
The problem with insufficient numbers of organs available for transplant and the number of deaths by individuals on transplant waiting lists is exacerbated by the fact that many procured organs are deemed unsuitable for transplant and are discarded. This issue has provoked the needed development of strategies to provide more organs for transplant. One strategy that has shown great promise is to subject procured marginal organs to a period of ex vivo perfusion for a number of hours prior to transplant in order to assess and eventually repair and improve organs. In lung and liver transplant, for example, this has resulted in improved overall outcomes and increased organ utilization. The use of ex vivo perfusion approaches to revitalize marginal organs for transplant is increasing. Exciting next steps related to ex-vivo organ perfusion include the ability to develop and perform advanced organ repair and modification strategies on an ex-vivo platform.

This funding mechanism seeks to support applications investigating any area of research related to ex vivo organ perfusion in solid organ transplant. Studies may range from animal ex-vivo models to human organs and ex-vivo perfusion. Examples of potential studies include but are not limited to proof-of-
concept ex-vivo repair strategies and organ modification ex-vivo, investigation of the use of different perfusion modalities and technologies, clinical outcomes related to ex-vivo, the use of ex-vivo diagnostics, and mechanisms underlying the decreases in delayed graft function and graft inflammation and improved graft function of ex-vivo perfused organs.

Applicants should consider the following when preparing their proposal:
1. How will the proposed research contribute to and advance the field of ex-vivo organ perfusion?
2. How will knowledge gained be shared with other centers performing research in ex-vivo perfusion?
3. How is the proposed research novel and unique?

D. Eligibility Criteria
1. Academic Appointment and Institutional Resources:
   a. Investigators with an academic appointment are invited to submit proposals.
2. AST Membership
   a. The applicant must be an active member of the AST or have submitted a completed membership application by February 25, 2022.
3. Previous AST Funding/Funding from Other Sources
   a. The applicant may currently hold other independent research awards.
   b. Faculty may only hold one new AST grant per year: as a PI of a concurrent AST directed grant, as a PI of a Faculty Development Research Grant, or as mentor/sponsor of a Fellowship Research Grant. If more than one grant from a given faculty member (as PI or mentor) is submitted and deemed competitive for funding, the AST will determine which grant to fund.
   c. If the applicant is currently receiving funding for a project similar to the topics described in this RFA, the applicant should explain how the funds of this grant would not overlap with the funds of the other research support.
4. Miscellaneous
   a. The proposed work is to be performed in a North American laboratory.
   b. Education: The applicant must have completed post-graduate training at the time of application.
   c. Applicants who have a substantial relationship with Ajmera Transplant Centre that would present a real or perceived conflict of interest if awarded this grant must first contact the AST Research Network to declare the conflict before submitting an application.
   d. Citizenship: The applicant must be either a) a U.S., Canadian, or Mexican citizen; b) a lawfully admitted permanent resident foreign national of the U.S., Canada, or Mexico with a valid visa during the awarded period; or c) a foreign national admitted lawfully for residence in the U.S., Canada, or Mexico during the awarded period. J1 and H1B visa holders are eligible to apply.

E. Application Process and Requirements:
Applications must be completed in full by February 25, 2022 in order to be reviewed. Applications that do not conform to these guidelines will be denied without review.
1. Name, title, and institution of principal investigator, co-investigator, and/or key co-collaborator(s).
2. Abstract of the proposed research plan: This document should concisely summarize the project in 400 words or less. The abstract should introduce the project and note its relevance to ex vivo organ perfusion. It should describe the long-term objectives and specific aims, research design, and methods for achieving these goals.
3. Applicant’s NIH biosketch (5-page format) to include all usual and pertinent information, particularly describing other past and current research funding and prior published work.
4. The biosketch of additional personnel to be named on the grant (i.e. whoever would ultimately be listed at publication).

5. Complete proposed research plan: The research plan should be a maximum of five pages, not including references. The following sections must be included:
   a. Aims: Include the key questions posed or hypotheses to be tested
   b. Introduction: Provide the rationale for the research
   c. Preliminary Results (if any): Show preliminary results supporting the research plan
   d. Research Plan: Explain how the questions or hypothesis will be studied, with emphasis on experimental design over the details of the specific methods to be used. Anticipated results and potential pitfalls and alternative approaches should be briefly discussed. Specific research (and, if applicable, training) goals to be reached at the end of the grant should also be provided.
      i. Research plan should include a description of relevant facilities/capabilities
   e. Outline of specific milestones / deliverables expected for the first year of the project.

6. Budget
   a. The grant is intended to provide support for supplies, materials, research reagents, and support for trainees and lab/research personnel directly involved in the project. The grant is not meant to provide salary support for the Principal Investigator. No other costs are permitted, including institutional overhead.

F. Review Process
Funding decisions will be made by an expert review committee that will include members of AST. Grants will be scored and awarded on the basis of novelty, research approach, feasibility of obtaining relevant data, and prior work, as well as other factors.

G. Submission, Notification, and Recognition Timeline
Proposals are due by February 25, 2022, and applicants will be notified regarding the status of their application by April 2022. Grant awards will be officially announced during the 2022 American Transplant Congress (ATC), June 4-8, 2022 in Boston, MA. For the individual selected, the term of the grant will begin July 1, 2022.

H. Funding Guidelines & Terms of Agreement
Please review these guidelines and terms prior to completing your application. If you are awarded a grant, you and your institution’s grants office will sign a formal letter of agreement (LOA) stating that you agree to these funding guidelines and terms.
   1. Research must begin on July 1, 2022 and end by June 30, 2023; the research start date and end date cannot be deferred.
   2. Funding in the amount of $50,000 USD will be provided for one year of research.
   3. Funding will not be released until visa status is confirmed (if applicable).
   4. The recipient must maintain AST membership throughout the term of the grant.
   5. The grant is intended to provide support for supplies, materials, research reagents, and support for trainees and lab/research personnel directly involved in the project. The grant is not meant to provide salary support for the Principal Investigator. No other costs are permitted, including institutional overhead.
   6. The grant is paid in annual installments to the recipient’s institution.
   7. Grant funding is not transferable from one recipient to another. If the grantee relocates, the AST will determine if the grant can be transferred to the recipient’s new location, or if the grant must be surrendered and any remaining funds returned (if the grant is surrendered, a final report will still be required).
   8. The applicant must acknowledge the grant as a funding source in all manuscripts and presentations derived from the funded research using the following statement: “This work was
supported by a grant from the American Society of Transplantation Research Network and Ajmera Transplant Centre.” Copies of such publications must be submitted to the AST National Office.

9. Pursuant to regulations of the federal Physician Payment Sunshine Act (included in the Affordable Care Act), NPI numbers will be collected from grant recipients (if applicable) and tax ID numbers collected from the recipients’ institutions (if applicable). All payments will be reported to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Open Payments system, as payments from AST represent indirect transfers of value from the funding pharmaceutical company.

10. Reports are required at the following intervals, and continuation of funding is contingent upon completion of these reports:
   a. Six-month progress report due [6-MO DUE DATE].
   b. Final report within 30 days of the conclusion of the grant term.
      i. A final report is required even if the grant is surrendered for any reason prior to the conclusion of the grant term.

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*Offering and administering a research grant with this partner does not represent an AST endorsement of the use of the partner's products.*