



WEBB-WARING BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July of 2008 the Boettcher Foundation (the Foundation) announced the creation of a multi-million dollar grant program aimed at advancing biomedical research in Colorado. The program is the result of an innovative agreement among the Boettcher Foundation, the Webb-Waring Foundation for Biomedical Research and the University of Colorado. This document serves to describe the new program, articulate the major goals of the program and provide guidelines to research institutions and eligible applicants.

The Foundation's Board of Trustees determined that the proceeds of the new Webb-Waring Biomedical Research Program will be directed to support Early-Career Investigators engaged in biomedical sciences in Colorado. Grants from \$200,000 covering up to three years of research activity will be funded with the intent to provide independent research opportunities to promising and talented investigators. Successful projects will lead to independent research, thus making investigators competitive for major awards from federal agencies and private foundations. Early-Career Investigators (ECI's) are faculty members who are four years or less from their first academic appointment at a Colorado research institution. This program is designed to help recruit, retain and advance scientific talent within Colorado and will be implemented in partnership with public and private nonprofit institutions that have significant biomedical research programs. The grants are anticipated to support the work of the "best and brightest" within the cohort of ECI's in Colorado. This work will be significant in scope and impact and the grants will provide support for major efforts in biomedical science. Eligible investigators will apply through competitive processes established within their individual institutions.

The Foundation, its Trustees and institutional partners have deliberated over two years on the best way to acknowledge and celebrate the scientific and public service legacy of the Webb and Waring families. This new program will ensure that these legacies live in the discovery of new knowledge that improves human health and in the advancement of young scientists. The program enhances the mission of the Boettcher Foundation, which was created by a visionary and pioneering family in Colorado to improve the quality of life and opportunities for Coloradans. It is with gratitude to these generous families that the Boettcher Foundation introduces the new Webb-Waring Biomedical Research Program that will support the important work of Boettcher Investigators.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- There are many current funding sources that support all stages of biomedical research, and the needs are greater than the available resources at every stage. However, some funding gaps are more significant than others, and some gaps cannot be addressed effectively with the amount of funds available in the new program.
- Colorado's public and private research institutions are very competitive in garnering biomedical research support (about \$600M/year), and the research quality is outstanding. Leaders from these institutions have been and will continue to be consulted about the new program.
- Biomedical research covers many disciplines and many stages of discovery through to product development. The goal of the new program is to support the creation of new biomedical knowledge and understand the application of that knowledge to address critical human health issues.

DEFINITION OF BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH

There is no single definition of biomedical research that is generally accepted by the entire research community. Therefore, an important component of the work of the Foundation was to provide some precision to the meaning of the terms within the context of the principles and objectives. Therefore, the following definition has been adopted:

The biomedical research supported pursuant to this grant program will be designed to find ways to prevent disease and improve human health through basic and applied biomedical research. The intent of the program is to fund translational research that advances a discovery closer to clinical application. This research will improve the understanding, treatment and prevention of human disease.

At its core, this definition reflects the mission of the original Webb-Waring Institute and adds language to clarify the Foundation's intent to focus on translational biomedical research.

Early-Career Investigators – At the beginning of the biomedical research continuum, these promising researchers have spent their early years working in the laboratories of senior scientists, and they are ready to contribute original work to the biomedical knowledge base. It is difficult to compete for significant independent federal or private grants without the reputation and experience of senior researchers. In fact, recent studies indicate the average age at which a biomedical researcher received his/her first peer-reviewed RO1 grant is 44. This is causing Early-Career Investigators to leave the academic setting out of frustration about the lack of career advancement and to turn to industry for opportunities. Funding for early career research opportunities is scarce. The federal agencies do sponsor some early career grants, but the funding is minimal. Relatively small grants to the most promising early career researchers could catapult a career and open new important areas of inquiry.

For purposes of this program, an eligible ECI is defined as:

An investigator who is within four years of appointment to his/her career-track academic position, and who has not previously received a major independent research award. It is preferable that applicants be either currently or recently involved in a mentored grant program. A signed letter of offer is acceptable documentation for appointment to a career-track academic position.

The intent of the program is to allow the investigator to generate data to be competitive for a major independent research award within three years. The Webb-Waring Biomedical Research Program is designed to move the investigator from a mentored grant program to this competitive position.