

**Boston Obesity Nutrition Research Center  
Pilot and Feasibility Program 2009**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

1. Who is eligible to apply for BONRC Pilot and Feasibility (P&F) Program funding?

Any investigator working in an institution in Boston or the New England area who aims to pursue a novel research project related to obesity or nutrition and who meets one of the following criteria:

- (a) is a new scientist (faculty or advanced postdoctoral fellow) without previous or current NIH research grants (R01, R29, or P01) or equivalent support. Previous or current recipients of T32, F32, K08, K23 or R03 funding are eligible by this criterion;
- (b) is an established investigator not currently working in the area of obesity or nutrition and who is now proposing an innovative project in one of these areas; or
- (c) is an established investigator working in obesity or nutrition but who is now proposing an innovative project that is a substantial departure from his/her previous areas of study.

2. What is the significance of the different categories of P&F eligibility?

The purpose of the BONRC Pilot and Feasibility Program is to encourage (1) the development and/or recruitment of new investigators into the areas of obesity and nutrition, and (2) the pursuit of creative new research in obesity and nutrition. To accomplish these goals, the NIH has established three categories of eligibility for Pilot and Feasibility Program applicants (principal investigators), described under Question 1 above.

Investigators in any of the three eligibility categories are encouraged to apply for P&F Program awards, and applications are judged primarily on the basis of their scientific merit and the likelihood that the proposed research will lead to ongoing, funded research projects.

Among competitive applications, highest priority is given to funding new scientists (category 1), second highest priority to established investigators in other fields proposing studies in obesity or nutrition (category 2), and third highest priority to established investigators in obesity or nutrition proposing novel studies that represent a substantial departure from their previous areas of study (category 3). Applicants in category 3 must describe clearly how their proposed studies represent a substantial departure from their previous and current research.

3. Are non-US citizens eligible?

Yes. Applicants who are not U.S. citizens or permanent U.S. residents need to have active visas permitting them to remain in the U.S. to perform the proposed research. Applicants without U.S. citizenship or permanent residency status must describe clearly their career plans, their anticipated duration of residence in the U.S. and the status of any plans or applications for permanent U.S. residency (if applicable).

4. What determines whether I am a new investigator?

Anyone who has never received full research funding (R01, P01 or equivalent) from the NIH or other national granting agencies (e.g., National Science Foundation, American Diabetes Association, Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, American Heart Association, etc.) is considered a new investigator. Investigators with pending NIH R01 or equivalent research funding applications will no

longer be considered new investigators if these research applications are funded by the beginning of the P&F award period.

Note that applicants with previous or current funding through NIH T32, F32, K08, K23, R03 or R21 or equivalent mechanisms are still considered new investigators for the purposes of the BONRC P&F Program.

5. Who is considered an “advanced postdoctoral fellow”?

For the purposes of the BONRC P&F Program, advanced postdoctoral fellows are individuals who have not yet been appointed as faculty members but who have clear plans for faculty appointment before or during the term of the proposed P&F award. Applicants who are advanced postdoctoral fellows must have a faculty sponsor who is an established investigator in obesity or nutrition. Both the Letter of Intent and full P&F application must include a description of career plans (including plans for faculty appointment), as well as letters of support and recommendation from their faculty sponsor and department/division chief. The letter from the department/division chief must describe the plans and timing of the applicant’s anticipated faculty appointment.

6. Do I need to remain in Boston or the New England area as a faculty member to be eligible?

Advanced postdoctoral fellows and faculty who are likely to move away from Boston or the New England area once their P&F project is complete are eligible for funding through this mechanism. Please note that should a P&F investigator relocate during his/her funding period, the funds may not be transferred to an institution outside the New England area or to another investigator.

7. What determines whether the proposed project represents a significant departure from my previous work?

To qualify as a significant departure from previous work, the proposed project must focus on a question or subject in which the applicant has no previous publications or funding. It is essential that applicants in eligibility category 3 describe clearly how the proposed project is a significant departure from their previous and ongoing work, both in the initial Letter of Intent and in the full P&F application. Final determination of eligibility under this category will be made by the P&F Scientific Review Committee.

Note that the criterion that the proposed project is a significant departure from previous work applies only to applicants in eligibility category 3. (The three P&F eligibility categories are described in the response to Question 1 above).

8. What kinds of projects are acceptable?

The P&F Program supports innovative research that addresses any important area within obesity or nutrition. This program is designed to support both pilot studies and feasibility testing of novel, “high-risk, high-payoff” projects. Applications for both clinical and basic studies are encouraged and funded.

See also the response to Question 8 above for the criteria used to evaluate P&F proposals.

9. What are the most important criteria for evaluating P&F grant applications?

The two most important criteria are (1) the scientific merit of the proposed studies and (2) the likelihood that they will lead to an independently supported (e.g., R01-funded) research project. As

part of the evaluation of scientific merit, major consideration is given to (1) the novelty of the proposed project, (2) the likelihood that the project will generate important new information, (3) the record of achievement and promise of the applicant investigator, (4) the adequacy of intellectual and material resources available for the project, and (5) the likelihood that the investigator will be able to complete the project during the award period.

10. What parts of the application are most important?

As with most grant applications reviewed for scientific merit, the research plan is the focus of the application. However, each component of the application is critical to the review committee in assessing the novelty and merit of the proposed project, the qualifications, plans and promise of the applicant, the likelihood that the project will generate important information, and the likelihood that it will lead to an independently funded research project,

11. What parts of the application can I leave out?

None. Detailed instructions for preparing and submitting the initial Letter of Intent and the full P&F application are available on the BONRC website (<http://www.bonrc.org/>). These instructions must be followed carefully and all required component of the application included. Incomplete applications will not be considered for review.

12. I have two projects. Can I submit two P&F applications?

There is no rule against submitting two or more P&F applications in the same funding period, but submission of multiple applications is strongly discouraged. As part of the evaluation process, the review committee will assume that the applicant intends to pursue all proposed research projects (even if not funded through a P&F award) and will consider the applicant's, and project's, likelihood of success in that light. Note that to be eligible, each application must propose a research project that is completely independent of the other applications simultaneously submitted by that investigator.

13. How many P&F grants will be funded?

The total number of P&F grants awarded during any individual cycle is determined by (1) the availability of P&F Program funds and (2) the quality of the applications received. In general, BONRC aims to fund at least five new P&F projects each year.

14. How much money is available for each P&F grant?

P&F awards are for up to \$15,000 per year, renewable once for a total of \$30,000 over two years. These amounts are for direct costs (i.e., funds available to be spent by the principal investigator).

15. Where can I get more information about the BONRC Pilot and Feasibility Program?

Detailed information about the P&F Program, application forms and instructions are available on the BONRC website (<http://www.bonrc.org/>). Please review the information on the website carefully before preparing a P&F application. For additional questions or further guidance about the program or application process, please contact Donna Gibson, BONRC Administrator, at [donna.gibson@bmc.org](mailto:donna.gibson@bmc.org) or Lee M. Kaplan, MD, PhD, BONRC Associate Director for the Pilot and Feasibility Program at [LMKaplan@partners.org](mailto:LMKaplan@partners.org).