To: ALL UPR CAMPUSES

Call for proposals COBRE PR-CMS Pilot Projects Program P20GM156713-01

Important Dates

Application deadline: April 15, 2026
Decision: June 15, 2026
Anticipated start date: August 1, 2026.

COBRE Puerto Rico Microbiome Sciences Center (MSC) Pilot Project Program

The new COBRE Puerto Rico Center for Microbiome Sciences aims to strengthens microbiome research capacity in Puerto Rico by accelerating and expanding scientific discovery. The program advances cutting-edge microbiome science by supporting state-of-the-art research in data generation, sequencing, and advanced analytical approaches, including the establishment of the first microbiome research core facility of its kind in the Caribbean. In parallel, PR-CMS is committed to developing the next generation of scientists by fostering early-career investigators into competitive, independent researchers through sustained mentorship, access to shared resources, and comprehensive professional development support. Check more details at https://cobremicrobiomepr.com

Program Overview

- The PR-CMS Pilot Project Program is a competitive funding opportunity designed to support (2) emerging microbiome investigators across the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) system. Each pilot project will be funded for up to two years at $50,000 per year, with support for the second-year contingent upon demonstrated scientific progress and the availability of federal funds.
- This inaugural call aims to enable investigators to generate preliminary data, test innovative hypotheses, and develop competitive proposals for external funding. PR-CMS supports projects spanning environmental, clinical, and translational microbiome research, with a strong emphasis on data generation, bioinformatics, and collaborative approaches.

I. Eligibility

The COBRE PR-CMS leadership team, together with an expert external reviewer panel, will select investigators with innovative ideas in biomedical research with a clear focus on microbiome science. Proposals will be evaluated based upon relevance to microbiome-related research, significance, innovation, feasibility of the scope of work proposed, and potential for subsequent extramural funding.

Eligible applicants include investigator teams from:

- All eleven (11) UPR campuses
- Applicants must meet NIH eligibility criteria for one of the following:
    - Early-Stage Investigators (ESIs)
    - New Investigators (NIs)
    - Mid-career investigators (considered if proposal is competitive and T&E of up to 25% can be certified)
- Holding roles as a co-investigator, collaborator, or consultant on research grants with multiple PDs/PIs does not disqualify an applicant from junior investigator status. Likewise, receipt of Academic Research Enhancement Awards (AREA), exploratory or pilot grants (e.g., NIH R03 or R21), mentored career development awards (e.g., NIH K01 or K08), or other federal or non-federal awards not classified as independent research grants does not affect eligibility.
- However, junior investigators who hold NIH K awards may serve as COBRE-PR-CMS Pilot Project Principal Investigators only during the final year of their K award, when effort commitments are reduced to six person-months. Researchers with current IDeA funding (INBRE, other COBRE, ALLIANCE) are not eligible to receive simultaneous research funding from COBRE PR-CMS, as concurrent research project support is not allowed.

Additional Requirements

- PI Must hold a faculty appointment at a UPR campus – collaborations with UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center and other research institutions across Puerto Rico are encouraged.
- May not receive concurrent research support from any another IDeA award

II. Areas of Interest

This funding opportunity is open to all areas of biomedical research consistent with the mission of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS). NIGMS-funded scientists investigate how living systems function across multiple levels of biological organization—from molecules and cells to tissues, organs, organisms, humans, and populations. The Institute's research mission emphasizes understanding the principles, mechanisms, and processes that underlie living systems, often using experimental and computational research models. NIGMS also supports the development of fundamental methods and innovative technologies to advance this mission.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to review:

- The NIH Unified Strategic Plan
- NIH research priorities, including:
  - Use of artificial intelligence and computational models
  - Translational studies leveraging clinical biorepositories
  - Development and application of novel model organisms
- All proposed projects must clearly describe how microbiome research is meaningfully integrated into the study design, objectives, and methodologies. Microbiome data generation and analyses must use COBRE core lab facilities.

III. Application components

- Cover Letter indicating research career stage, position and affiliation, current funding and plans for external funding related to the proposed pilot project. The letter should clearly describe the project team and key collaborators, demonstrate the feasibility of integrating microbiome approaches into the proposed research, and provide a strong scientific rationale for the relevance and added value of incorporating microbiome analyses into the overall project.
- Confirmation of NIH and institutional eligibility by the school's Dean and a commitment by the Department Chair of up to 10% T&E protected to this pilot project.
- CV including list of publications and grants from the past 3 years
- Suggestion of three potential external reviewers with no conflicts of interest with the project (name and affiliation, research emphasis and email addresses).
- Evidence of assurances (IACUC/ IRB) and certificates (Biosafety, Responsible Conduct in Research, Financial Conflict of Interest). Submission of proposals to IACUC, IRB, or others are accepted but final approvals are needed before the project initiates.

Proposal parts:

- Using the NIH 398-forms (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html)

please include:

- Face page
- Abstract (30 lines)
- Project narrative (three sentences)
- Specific aims page (1 page)
- Research strategy (6 pages including 1 page for a career development plan (CDP) section that illustrates the pathway and timeline towards submission and obtaining an R01 grant). References at the end (beyond the 6 Page limit).
- Detailed Budget for Initial Budget Period Form & Budget for Entire Proposed Project Period. Include narrative for budget justification. Allowable direct costs for pilot projects are limited to expenses necessary to support preliminary or exploratory research activities. These include laboratory supplies, animal costs, facility user fees, sequencing, and travel directly related to the pilot project. Partial support for graduate or undergraduate students, consultant fees (e.g., mentor, collaborators), can also be included up to a maximum of 15% of the total approved budget. Salary support cannot be requested from the grant, however a commitment of 10% in-kind must be committed and approved by the Department Chair. Microbiome data generation and analyses should include COBRE lab core facility fees. Applicants must include a preliminary budget justification itemized by cost category and per year. Subawards to other institutions and indirect costs are not allowed.
- Biosketch of the PI and mentors/collaborators. Use Common Forms for Biographical Sketch and Current and Pending (Other) Support: https://grants.nih.gov/policy-and-compliance/implementation-of-new-initiatives-and-policies/common-forms-for-biosketch
- Support letter from Mentor, and any collaboration letters that support and/or are involved your project.
- Appropriately document assurance (IRB,IACUC, IBC as applicable)

*Incomplete proposals will not be considered. Submit electronically the completed application, as 1 combined PDF by the deadline to: **cobremicrobiomeproposals@gmail.com** Subject must indicate *"COBRE MICROBIOME PILOT 2026 – PI NAME"*

IV. Award Information

- **Application deadline:** April 15, 2026
- **Decision**: June 15, 2026
- **Anticipated start date**: August 1, 2026.

V. Requirements

- Funded investigators will be required to present at the retreat and annual microbiome symposia each year, and also participate in periodic meetings with the Center´s Leadership.
- The investigator must provide a written commitment to submit semiannual (6-month) and annual (12-month) progress reports in accordance with COBRE RPPR guidelines.
- Citing the COBRE- PR CMS award in future publications generated as a result of the project. ***"The research/publication/press release was supported by Award Number P20 GM156713 from the National Institutes of General Medical Sciences. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health".***
- Development of other scientific products will be monitored, such as publications, oral and poster presentations, and patents.
- Investigator commits 10% Effort certified by the Dept. Chair.

VI. Review Process

- Proposals will be evaluated by external reviewers using standard NIH review criteria: Importance of the Research (Significance & Innovation), Rigor and Feasibility (Approach), and Expertise and Resources (Investigators & Environment)
- Check this link for further information on review criteria: https://www.niaid.nih.gov/research/review-criteria

Apply Now!!

Contact:
Kreshlya De La Paz, MS, MPH
Program Coordinator
COBRE PR-CMS
Phone: 787-758-2525/ x.7027
Email: kreshlya.delapaz@upr.edu

Approved by: Filipa Godoy-Vitorino, Ph.D.