

## Preterm Birth Initiative

*To increase understanding of the basic biological mechanisms underlying parturition and spontaneous preterm birth using multidisciplinary approaches*

### Deadlines:

Planning Grant/Letter of Intent: **June 1, 2009**

Full Research Grant (by invitation only): **December 1, 2010**

## Program Background

Despite medical and technological advances, the rate of preterm births in the United States is on the rise. More than 12 percent of births in the U.S. are considered preterm, which is defined by a recent Institute of Medicine publication as birth occurring prior to 37 weeks of gestation. Many health and social problems can be attributed to preterm delivery including cerebral palsy, respiratory distress syndrome, chronic lung disease, seizures, learning difficulty, hearing loss, behavioral problems, and others. Preterm birth is currently the leading cause of neonatal morbidity and mortality in children without congenital anomalies. However, for a medical problem that has such grave health and social consequences little is known about its causes.

The Burroughs Wellcome Fund Preterm Birth Initiative was created to increase the understanding of the biological mechanisms underlying parturition and spontaneous preterm birth.

This initiative is designed to bring together a diverse interdisciplinary group with expertise in genetics/genomics, immunology, microbiology, and proteomics along with the more traditional areas of parturition research such as maternal fetal medicine, obstetrics, and pediatrics to address the scientific issues related to preterm birth. The formation of new connections between reproductive scientists and investigators who are involved in other areas will give preterm birth research a fresh and unique look.

## Program

BWF has committed \$3.5 million for grants for the Preterm Birth Initiative. Awards will be made in a two-step process. Applicants for a planning grant must first submit a Letter of Intent by June 1, 2009. Only approved LOIs will be invited to apply to the full research grant. BWF anticipates making an initial 10 planning grants of which five full research grants will

be awarded. Full research grants will provide up to \$600,000 over a four year period (\$150,000 per year) and are expected to begin in 2011.

Up to five full research grants will be awarded. BWF does not allow institutional overhead to be charged to its awards.

## Guidelines

- Proposals must be submitted from degree granting institutions in the United States or Canada. The principal investigator must have a faculty appointment at a degree-granting institution in the U.S. or Canada.
- Researchers working at research institutes, national laboratories, within the federal government, or outside of North America may be partners but all funding must be channeled through a U.S. or Canadian degree granting institution.
- Proposals should address the biomedical causes and mechanisms underlying (preterm) parturition including but not limited to peri-implantational events, placentation, fetal determinants, fetal-maternal immune responses, biological basis for racial-ethnic disparities, mechanisms relating preterm birth to other adverse pregnancy outcomes, biology of normal labor, etc. Proposals seeking to identify biomarkers predicting preterm birth are welcome.
- Proposals must have an interdisciplinary approach.
- One member of the team must have training and expertise outside the traditional areas of reproductive science.
- Proposals that cross institutional boundaries (partnerships between multiple universities or collaborations within larger universities) are encouraged.

## Selection

An interdisciplinary advisory committee will issue invitations and select awardees. Selection will be based on the creativity,

novelty, and innovation of the proposal as well as the likelihood of a significant impact in the area of parturition and the prevention of spontaneous prematurity.

## Application Process

Applicants must apply through proposalCENTRAL, a web-based grant application system, using links provided on BWF's website: [www.bwffund.org](http://www.bwffund.org). Applications not submitted electronically will not be reviewed. All required documents must be submitted and uploaded to proposalCENTRAL as Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files. **All applicants must first apply for a Planning Grant/LOI.**

The Planning Grant may be used for, but not limited to: travel for meetings between members of research groups, sample acquisition for later proposed studies, collection of pilot data, resources to support protocol generation, etc. Also, personnel costs, analysis costs, consumable supplies, animal studies, or human subject recruitment can be supported by the planning grant. BWF does not support indirect costs.

### Planning Grant / Letter of Intent

**Deadline: June 1, 2009**

The Principal Investigator Should:

- Complete the Grant Application/Signature Page form on proposalCentral with appropriate signatures and upload this document as a PDF to be part of the proposal.
- Include Scientific Abstract (one-page maximum) .
- Prepare a five-page summary describing the interdisciplinary nature of the proposal, the research plan, and the impact of the work on preterm birth or parturition.
- Complete the budget template on proposal CENTRAL. The amount requested for the planning grant cannot exceed \$50,000.
- Include the bio-sketch of the principal investigator and of at least one scientist who is currently working outside of the area of preterm birth or parturition. The biosketch should include the principal investigator's current funding.
- Attach the biosketch of no more than eight additional partners or collaborators.

The Planning Grant/LOI signature page form and other attachments must be submitted electronically through proposalCENTRAL by 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time, June 1, 2009. The Planning Grant Awards will be announced by November 1, 2009, and the award will begin in April 2011.

### Using proposalCENTRAL

The principal investigator must register on proposalCENTRAL. If a professional profile has already been created, then the applicant must verify the information for accuracy.

Applicants are not required to complete the online application in one sitting. The application may be accessed and changed multiple times as needed prior to the application deadline.

However, once the deadline has passed, the application cannot be changed.

### Assistance with Applications

Applicants are strongly encouraged to first read the descriptive program, general instructions, and application materials which can all be found on the Burroughs Wellcome Fund website, [www.bwffund.org](http://www.bwffund.org). If there are remaining questions, the Burroughs Wellcome Fund staff is available to assist you. For questions regarding eligibility, policies, and terms and conditions, contact:

**Rolly Simpson, Program Officer**

**Email: [rsimpson@bwffund.org](mailto:rsimpson@bwffund.org)**

**Phone: 919-991-5110**

or

**Debra Holmes, Program Associate**

**Email: [dholmes@bwffund.org](mailto:dholmes@bwffund.org)**

**Phone: 919-991-5134**

For help with the electronic application process, contact:

**proposalCENTRAL Help Desk**

**Email: [pcsupport@altum.com](mailto:pcsupport@altum.com)**

**Phone: 800-875-2562 x227**

**301-916-4557 x227**

## Completing the Application for the Planning Grant / LOI

Planning grant applications must be completed electronically via proposalCENTRAL and include the sections below.

### Sections Requiring Data Entry

- Title Page
- Principal Investigator Applicant Information
- Primary Institution and Partners/Collaborators

### Sections Requiring Upload of Attachments

- Biosketches (four page limit; template provided) of the principal investigator, at least one scientist working outside the area of preterm birth or parturition, and collaborators/partners (10 maximum)
- Scientific Abstract (one page limit; template provided)
- Research Summary (five page limit)
- Budget (template provided)

### Section Requiring Printing and Uploading

- Signature Page form

For in-depth application instructions visit

[www.bwffund.org](http://www.bwffund.org).

## Terms

Awards are made to U.S. or Canadian degree granting institutions on behalf of the awardees. The institutions are responsible for disbursing the funds and for maintaining adequate supporting records and receipts of expenditures. Indirect costs may not be charged against the awards.

Awardees must provide BWF with an annual progress report detailing scientific progress. Continued funding will depend on both the timely submission of these reports and their favorable review by BWF and its program advisory committee. Institutions must provide an annual financial report. Both reports must be submitted on forms that are on the BWF website ([www.bwfund.org](http://www.bwfund.org)). Continued funding will depend on the favorable review of these reports by BWF and the program's scientific advisory committee.

During the award period, unused research funds may be carried over to the succeeding year. Any unused funds (greater than \$500) held by institutions when the award expires or terminated must be returned to BWF, unless BWF has granted prior permission to retain funds. Institutions may receive a no-cost extension of up to 12 months; requests explaining why an extension is needed must be submitted in writing at least one or two months prior to the end of the award period.

Scientific publications or presentations that result from these awards must acknowledge the awardee's receipt of a Burroughs Wellcome Fund Preterm Birth Initiative award. Copies of journal articles and other publications should be sent to BWF along with the annual progress report.

Awardees should follow their institutions' patent, copyright, and intellectual property policies regarding discoveries that result from research conducted under these awards. Awardees must adhere to all federal, state, and local regulations regarding the participation of human subjects, and the use of animals, radioactive or hazardous materials, and recombinant DNA in their research projects. BWF expects the appropriate federal, state, and local guidelines with regard to scientific misconduct are in place and enforced at all institutions with which BWF awardees are affiliated.

Awardees should share scientific findings in a timely manner via the standard means of scientific communication, including publications and/or presentations in scientific forums. BWF will not retain any rights to published results or patents that result from the research.

## Program Advisory Committee

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## Burroughs Wellcome Fund

The Burroughs Wellcome Fund is an independent private foundation dedicated to advancing the medical sciences by supporting research and other scientific and educational activities. Within this broad mission, BWF seeks to accomplish two primary goals—to help scientists early in their careers develop as independent investigators, and to advance fields in the basic medical sciences that are undervalued or in need of particular encouragement.

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