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Melbourne Neuroscience Institute Interdisciplinary Seed Funding Scheme Guidelines for Funding in 2017

Closing Date: Friday 12 August 2016

1. INTRODUCTION

The Melbourne Neuroscience Institute (MNI) is offering a competitive Interdisciplinary Seed Funding Scheme for grants of up to \$40,000 to support interdisciplinary research projects in the field of neuroscience and related disciplines. **This funding round, submissions that cover one or more of the following focus areas shall be reviewed favourably: ageing, technology development, and/or neural computational modelling.**

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the MNI Interdisciplinary Seed Funding Scheme are:

- To fund highly innovative small-to medium-scale interdisciplinary research projects that show significant potential for future funding by granting bodies; and
- To catalyse the drawing together of academic staff from across disciplines to work on interdisciplinary problems consistent with the broad research objectives of the Melbourne Neuroscience Institute.

3. FUNDING

- 3.1 Grants shall be awarded with a maximum value of \$40,000.
- 3.2 Grants below \$10,000 will not be awarded
- 3.3 Grants will be awarded for one year: 1 January 2017 - 31 December 2017.
- 3.4 Expenditure on equipment or conference travel should only be proposed in exceptional circumstances and a compelling justification will be required.
- 3.5 Funds will be available in 2 tranches: 50% available January 2017 and the balance provided following acceptance of an interim project report in June 2017.
- 3.6 A final report is due on completion of the seed-funded project.

4. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

- 4.1 Applications will be prepared by a Research Team, and each application must nominate a "Coordinating Investigator." The project must be led by a Coordinating Investigator **who holds a salaried academic appointment at the University of Melbourne of at least 0.5 EFT and their appointment should run until at least December 2018.** There is no exception to this rule. Staff

holding honorary positions only with the University of Melbourne are ineligible to apply as the coordinating investigator.

- 4.3 There are no restrictions on other members of the proposed project team, including those external to the University of Melbourne and international team members collaborating on the project.
- 4.3 A simple sign-off process will be used. Applications must be signed by the coordinating investigator and the **Head of Department of the University of Melbourne** to which the coordinating investigator belongs. It will be assumed that in submitting an application, **all project team members have consulted appropriately with their University of Melbourne Heads and Deans** and have the time and basic infrastructure resources to pursue the project concerned, within the context of existing research, teaching and higher degree supervision responsibilities.

5. NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Applicants may be involved in only one application as Coordinating Investigator, but may be participating Team Members on other applications.

6. RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROPOSAL TO OTHER PROJECTS

- 6.1 Because this scheme is intended to fund ground-breaking initiatives, applications which request funds to supplement other current internal University grants, external grants or research contracts will be excluded from consideration. However, proposals that are clearly an innovative and interdisciplinary niche within a larger program and that would be facilitated by an IDSF grant may be eligible.

7. EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

7.1 Evaluation

- 7.1.1 In 2017, submissions which cover one or more of the focus areas - ageing, technology development, and/or neural computational modelling shall be viewed favourably. That is, if the eligibility and assessment criteria are met and an application is ranked very highly, then ideally, MNI shall award at least one seed funding grant in each of the three key focus areas.
- 7.1.2 Applications with a disability theme are also encouraged.

7.2 Assessment Process

- 7.2.1 Applications will be assessed on a competitive basis by a Grants Review Committee.
- 7.2.2 The Committee reserves the right to discuss applications with Deans, Associate Deans (Research), Heads of Department/School of the University of Melbourne, or other senior colleagues, and reserves the right to seek further information from applicants before making a final decision.

7.2 Assessment Criteria

- Demonstrably innovative interdisciplinary research that would be facilitated and accelerated by this grant;



- Consistent with the broad research objectives of the Melbourne Neuroscience Institute;
- Involves a team of academic staff from relevant disciplines with appropriate and complementary expertise for the proposed research. Teams involving early career researchers will be viewed favourably;
- Shows significant potential for future funding by granting bodies; and
- Budget is aligned with proposed outcomes.

7.3 Assessment Metrics

Potential of the investigators and the proposed project to advance the research team's chance of future competitive grant success	20%
Interdisciplinarity of proposed project	20%
Track record of the research team, given opportunity	20%
Scientific quality of the proposed project	30%
Feasibility of the project – within the 12 month period	10%

8. APPLICATION PROCESS

8.1 An application will consist of three elements:

1. Administrative details – 1 page
2. Project Proposal – 2 pages
3. CVs – for each team member: A statement of no more than 1 page for each team member, that includes:
 - (i) Current position,
 - (ii) Expertise relevant to the proposed role in the current proposal, including track record of prior collaboration, and
 - (iii) Representative list of grants and/or publications in areas relevant to the proposal.

8.2 If there are several team members, please use the CV of the coordinating investigator, you may add the CV's of the other team members as one-page attachments at the end of the application (noting the final submission must be in the form a single pdf file – see Section 8.5).

8.4 Applicants are expected to discuss their proposal with their Department Head or Nominee and with the MNI Director or Deputy Director, should you have concerns about the suitability of your project for the MNI interdisciplinary funding scheme.

8.5 All application must be submitted **as a single pdf file** which must include the elements listed in section 8.1; Administrative details, Project proposal and CV of each team member. **The file name should be “MNI-ID Seed Funding 2017 Application – [CI_Surname]”**. Applications which do not adhere to this convention may be excluded from consideration.

8.6 You are advised to use Calibri font size 10 or higher.

8.7 Applications including all the above documents are to be submitted to Vikki Marshall, Melbourne Neuroscience Institute Operations Manager, by the closing date.

Please submit your application by email to: research-mni@unimelb.edu.au



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Enquiries:

Professor Trevor Kilpatrick
Director, Melbourne Neuroscience Institute
Tel +61 3 834 41804

Vikki Marshall
Operations Manager, Melbourne Neuroscience Institute
vikki.marshall@unimelb.edu.au
Tel +61 3 834 48692

9. KEY DATES

Applications Open:	Monday 27 June, 2016
Information Session:	Monday 11 July, 2016
Applications due:	Friday 12 August, 2016
Advice of outcome:	September 2016
First tranche of funds available:	January 2017
Second tranche of funds available:	June 2017 (pending receipt by MNI of interim report)

10. CONDITIONS OF GRANT

- 10.1 Grant Offers must be accepted in writing by the Coordinating Investigator and their Head of Department/School.
- 10.2 The Coordinating Investigator will be the contact person for all administrative matters to do with the project and is responsible for internal reporting requirements.
- 10.3 The Coordinating Investigator must ensure that the research is conducted in accord with University policy, including compliance with the Code of Conduct for Research and policies on human research ethics, animal experimentation ethics, requirements of the Office of Gene Technology Regulator, health and safety and intellectual property. No project may proceed unless the appropriate ethical or other required clearances have been obtained.
- 10.4 Funding is for one year only, commencing January 2017. Projects must be completed and funds expended by 31 December 2017. Extensions to this completion date will be considered only in exceptional circumstances, with a maximum extension date of 30 June 2018. Where exceptional circumstances exist, a written request must be approved by the Coordinating Investigator's Head of Department, and submitted to the Director of the Melbourne Neuroscience Institute no later than 1 November 2017.
- 10.5 The Coordinating Investigator must comply with any instructions or conditions in the Offer of Grant relating to approved items of expenditure.
- 10.6 Unless special conditions are set down by the Committee, the grant should be regarded as a 'one-line budget.' The Coordinating Investigator is responsible for ensuring that the expenditure of the grant is broadly in accord with the budget presented in the application and is consistent at all times with the nature and aims of the specific project approved and the objectives of the Scheme.



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- 10.7 The Coordinating Investigator will be required to provide written reports and presentations on the progress and outcomes of the project as requested by the MNI Director from time to time, ***with a formal final report required on the outcomes of the project within 3 months of the project's completion.*** Summaries of projects funded and project final reports may be published. In addition, it is anticipated that at least one Showcase Event will occur during 2017 at which all funded projects will be required to report on progress.
- 10.8 Successful applicants are expected to provide appropriate acknowledgement of University support when communicating research outcomes.



About the Melbourne Neuroscience Institute

The Melbourne Neuroscience Institute (MNI) is one of five University-level interdisciplinary research institutes at The University of Melbourne. Its Director is Professor Trevor Kilpatrick. The core MNI team is located in the Melbourne Brain Centre (Parkville). The MNI is charged with focussing the University's cross-disciplinary neuroscience research activities to optimise productivity and impact, increase funding for research in this area and to enable more efficient use of existing facilities and infrastructure. The Institute is responsible for enhancing interdisciplinary in neuroscience through stewardship of cross-faculty activities which involve collaboration with researchers from areas such as Medicine, Mental Health, Engineering, Optometry and Vision Sciences, Ophthalmology, Law, Economics, and Social Sciences. It aims to provide an international neuroscience research-based focus that attracts and retains talented researchers from around the world in addition to the best postdoctoral researchers and research higher degree students. The MNI is also charged with developing new research ventures to address significant gaps in the University's knowledge base in the neurosciences. The Institute aims to enhance the University's connectivity with the community, and with key stakeholders, in order to optimise research outcomes and knowledge transfer, as well as maximising the translation of neuroscience research to clinical outcomes. The Melbourne Neuroscience Institute supports endeavours undertaken by researchers within its four major themes, which include the Centre for Neural Engineering (CfNE), the Music, Mind and Wellbeing initiative, Stem Cells Australia (SCA) and the Melbourne Brain Centre Imaging Unit (MBCIU).

The Institute works through a small core unit that draws together key researchers and administrators whose activities are enhanced to meet a broader objective, namely to promote interdisciplinary research in the Neurosciences across the University of Melbourne. By creating opportunities for links between the University's researchers in areas such as diseases of the brain and mind, social context and health costs, the Institute strengthens University-wide responsiveness to neuroscience-related matters. The Institute is also able to provide a focused opportunity to collaborate with institutional, hospital and commercial partners, in order to maximise research outcomes, facilitate knowledge transfer and strengthen the standing of the University of Melbourne as a leader in research in the Neurosciences nationally and internationally.

Governance of MNI is supported by an Advisory Board. The Advisory Board aims to ensure the MNI is aligned with important trends and provide avenues for interaction with those who might wish to commission or undertake research through collaborative interaction in the Neurosciences and related disciplines of research. The Board provides advice on research directions, business strategies and stakeholder linkages.

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