

**Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Venture Discovery Fund (VDF)  
REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS 2016-2017**

The Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences (DPBS) announces the availability of three pilot grants in amounts up to \$50,000 for projects to be completed over two years. These grants are intended to accelerate the development and translation of novel approaches to the treatment of patients with psychiatric and behavioral health conditions in accordance with the summary on the last page of this Request for Applications (RFA). The Venture Discovery Fund (VDF), which is made possible by private philanthropy, will achieve its goals by supporting pilot projects emphasizing collaboration with other departments and fields at Johns Hopkins more broadly, or with the NIA and NIDA intramural programs on the Bayview campus. For 2016-17 **the target field is cancer/oncology**. The research may involve any type of translational research, from wet-lab to clinical.

**ELIGIBILITY:** These awards target faculty in the DPBS working in collaboration with investigators in the cancer field at Johns Hopkins or in the Johns Hopkins Bayview-based intramural programs of NIDA or NIA. The DPBS Principal Investigator must enlist a collaborating cancer investigator in a meaningful way. Establishing new and innovative collaborations with investigators not currently involved in this area of research is encouraged. Applicants need not be currently working in cancer research. Those not currently working in cancer research who wish to develop collaborations for such work are encouraged to apply. Full-time faculty members in the DPBS at all ranks are eligible to apply. The VDF will give priority to applications with a translational focus and potential for future funding from NIH, foundations, or pharmaceutical companies.

**APPLICATION PROCESS:** Provide a one-page cover letter, to include project timeframes, as well as the following sections in one PDF file (e.g., Jones\_VDF2016.pdf):

1. Specific aims, background, preliminary data (if appropriate), proposed research, future plans (3 pages)
2. Details of the cross-departmental collaboration and its future potential (1 page)
3. NIH Biosketches for key personnel
4. NIH overall budget and justification
  - a. No F&A will be provided
  - b. Salary for faculty and staff in any JH Department may be included, consistent with the aims of the project
  - c. Equipment and supply costs up to \$5,000 are allowed
  - d. The justification should clarify if there are other, specific sources of funding that will be utilized to complement and ensure the successful completion of the project

**REVIEW PROCESS:** Applications will be reviewed by a special committee appointed by the DPBS Director. They will be judged based on scientific merit and innovation, as well as likelihood of establishing long-range collaboration and obtaining outside funding.

**EXPECTATIONS:** Each Awardee is expected to provide the DPBS with a three-page final report on the project, no later than three months after the end of funding. S/he is expected to present the results of his/her project as a public scientific presentation within six months of the end of funding (e.g., the Psychiatry Research Conference). The collaborating investigator will be expected to participate in this presentation.

**TIMELINES:** Submissions due no later than **October 31, 2016** with funding starting January 1, 2017  
Email applications to: [kostas@jhmi.edu](mailto:kostas@jhmi.edu) with subject line: **Psychiatry Venture Discovery Application**.

**Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences (DPBS)**  
**VENTURE DISCOVERY FUND (VDF)**

**OBJECTIVE:** To accelerate the development and translation of novel approaches to the treatment of patients with psychiatric and behavioral health conditions through pilot projects emphasizing collaboration with other fields in the School of Medicine or Johns Hopkins University more broadly.

**BACKGROUND:** Compared to other areas of medicine, the development of novel, effective therapies for psychiatric and behavioral health conditions has been lagging. Many reasons account for this, including constrained thinking about the role for psychiatric and psychological conditions in contributing to medical outcomes, difficulty in directly assessing the living brain, limited collaboration with related fields, and a dearth of startup funding. Critical to the success of this endeavor will be the establishment of new pathways and approaches to classifying psychiatric conditions. Another key component is improved phenotyping in nuanced ways, with the addition of genetic, brain imaging, blood, or CSF biomarkers.

Future success in treatment development depends in part on the ability to identify and "work" new ideas with collaborators outside psychiatry in the basic sciences, translational laboratories, imaging, and/or related clinical fields. In recent years it has become increasingly difficult to fund early scientific discovery, especially of promising leads that may end up in dead ends but could instead lead to ground-breaking advances. This is because the major funders of scientific treatment discovery research—NIH, pharmaceutical companies, and foundations—are increasingly more interested in funding what seem to be "sure things," rather than supporting early venture-type discovery efforts.

**PLAN:** DPBS has set up a philanthropically supported Venture Discovery Fund to support pilot projects. These projects will involve collaborations with fields outside of psychiatry and the behavioral sciences to explore, test, or develop approaches so as to bring them to a point where they are eligible for funding by sources such as NIH, foundations, or pharmaceutical companies. The effort is modeled after many successful pilot project funding efforts and similar philanthropic ventures. It is hoped that the DPBS will issue an annual request for applications (RFA) to support collaborative work between DPBS faculty and scientists in other departments. Each RFA will focus on a particular field related to psychiatry where there is great potential to grow new or strengthen existing collaborative research.

The fund will support projects with the following characteristics: involve collaborators from psychiatry and the specified outside field; have a clear translational focus; and show strong potential for later funding from outside agencies, such as NIH.

In 2016-17 oncology/cancer will be the field of collaboration for these projects because untapped opportunities exist related to the effects of cancer or its treatment on the brain—often referred to as "chemo brain"—as well as to the treatment and impact of psychiatric conditions on the course of cancer and survivor outcomes. Further, the DPBS's interest in health behaviors plays a major role in cancer prevention through promoting healthy lifestyles (for example: smoking cessation).