

BRCCH Fast-Track Call (FTC) for Acute Global Health Challenges

Emergency Response to COVID-19

1. Call Overview

The mandate of the BRCCH is to drive the development of innovative and step-changing health solutions for those who are most in need. With the support of Fondation Botnar, **the BRCCH is launching a Fast-Track Call to address several critical areas related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.** The Call's objective is to both enable research that will help mitigate medical and public health challenges in the short-term, and to also contribute solutions that will lead to better preparedness and reduced global disease burden in the long-term.

The BRCCH invites researchers from its four partner institutions (University of Basel (UniBas), ETH Zurich (ETHZ), University Children's Hospital of Basel (UKBB) and Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH)) to submit step-changing projects that can deliver immediate impact in the COVID-19 pandemic.

The research areas to be considered are:

1. Diagnostics for COVID-19

This area encompasses innovative diagnostic approaches that overcome the limitations of current standard assays to provide more rapid, robust and accurate detection of COVID-19 infections. Novel approaches that will enable early detection of outbreaks, social distancing and quarantine measures are sought. Technologies that aim to improve medical interventions for COVID-19, not only those that increase the understanding of viral evolution, are of strong interest. Diagnostics that can be implemented at larger, population-scale and used for surveillance will also be considered. Technologies that are cost-effective, robust in variable conditions, and scalable are of interest (links to E- and M-Health platforms are desirable).

2. Human Immune Response to COVID-19

This area addresses translational studies that aim to investigate the role of the human immune system in the pathogenesis of COVID-19. Proposals of high interest include novel approaches to studying the immune response in COVID-19-infected patients and/or those receiving experimental treatments (e.g. vaccines). These could include efforts such as: (i) informing therapeutic and immunisation strategies; (ii) identifying novel markers and therapeutic targets and (iii) providing novel insights into disease progression and outcomes.

3. Medical Interventions & Disease Management for COVID-19

This area seeks innovative technology- and molecular-based approaches to improve medical treatment and disease management for COVID-19 patients. Novel therapeutic and preventative approaches to combatting infection and to improving health outcomes are of particular interest, including small molecule therapeutics, biologics, vaccines and immune-enhancing technologies. In addition, this area welcomes innovative digital technologies and medical devices that will improve patient medical care and monitoring, and/or increase the scale of healthcare delivery to reduce disease burden and mortality rates.

2. Project Details

- Project duration: 30 months.
- Project costs: Budget requests may range from 0.5 to 2.5 million CHF.
- Authorised project costs: PI salaries (if non-tenured and/or salary is not yet ensured for entire project period), staff salaries, consumables, fee-for-service infrastructure use, essential equipment for executing project activities, travel and further operational costs.
- Costs not covered: Overheads (i.e. indirect costs), major equipment and/or infrastructure charges.
- Project start: May 2020.

3. Requirements

- Research consortia must be led by at least one Principal Investigator from one of the BRCCH partner institutions: UniBas, ETHZ, UKBB and Swiss TPH. Multidisciplinary and multi-institutional consortia are encouraged.
- Consortia are expected to have one Investigator that is designated as the project lead (e.g. for reporting requirements). Further Co-Investigators from the four BRCCH partner institutions are welcome.
- All applications are required to align scientifically with at least one of the research areas outlined above.
- Applicants must provide a clear path to translation that outlines the project's potential for direct impact and immediate uptake into practice during the project's lifetime. Attention will be paid to the ability of the consortium to start research activities immediately (i.e. May 2020) in the event of a positive evaluation outcome.
- An applicant may be listed on more than one FTC application as an Investigator/Co-Investigator. In this case, the applicant must clearly define his/her unique scientific contributions to each application and to explain how each of the individual contributions differs between the separate applications.
- Collaborators from the BRCCH partner institutions, as well as, national and international researchers are welcome. Collaborators are expected to provide defined scientific contributions and to enable the consortium to deliver immediate impact. Researchers may be listed as a Collaborator on one or more FTC applications.

4. Eligibility

- Investigators and Co-Investigators must be affiliated with either the UniBas (including UKBB and Swiss TPH) or ETHZ.
- Investigators and Co-Investigators must provide a letter from their respective host institution that guarantees access to the home institution's infrastructure and services as needed to conduct the approved research. The template for confirmation letter can be found in the FTC Application Form and on our website: <http://www.brc.ch/ftc>.

5. Timeline

- Application deadline: Wednesday April 8th 2020 @ 11:00 CET
- Application decision: Late April 2020
- Projects start: As early as May 1st 2020

6. Application Instructions

Application deadline: Wednesday April 8th @ 11:00 CET

Please note, due to the short evaluation timeframe, applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Please use our templates (can be found at <https://brc.ch/ftc/>) and submit a single PDF document to contact@brc.ch. A full FTC application should contain the following sections:

1. Cover letter and table of contents.
2. Application including research proposal and budget.
3. CVs of Investigator(s) and, if applicable, of Collaborators.
4. Letter(s) of confirmation, if applicable. Letters can be submitted after the application deadline (by April 30th at the very latest) but will be essential for project approval.

7. Application Clinic

We are pleased to answer your questions via email or on Tuesday 31st of March and Friday 3rd of April during the Application Clinic via Zoom (It is not necessary to install Zoom on your computer). Please fill out our [Google Form](#) to reserve a 30 minutes time-slot. Please request only one slot. You will then receive a confirmation email with a designated time-slot and a unique web-link to the Zoom meeting.

8. Contact

Please address your enquiries to contact@brc.ch