

The Fisher Center Discovery Award (FCDA) - Frequently Asked Questions 2027

Program Goals

- **Can the FCDA project be a collaborative effort with colleagues at another JHU school, university or another facility?**

Yes. One goal of the Fisher Center Discovery Program (FCDP) is to promote novel, cross-disciplinary collaborative clinical research within the Hopkins community and with our non-Hopkins counterparts.

Eligibility

- **My JHU faculty appointment is pending. May I apply as a Principal Investigator (PI) for an FCDA?**
No. Your appointment must be in place at the time of application. A current faculty member will be required to serve as PI. You may serve as the applicant. The PI may include a note concerning the applicant's impending faculty appointment within the application package. Once the applicant's faculty appointment has been fully executed, the proposal can be modified to designate them as the new PI.
- **I am a part-time JHU faculty member. May I apply as a PI for an FCDA?**
Typically, only full-time JHU faculty may serve as the PI. Exceptions may be approved on an individual basis. Please contact the Fisher Center about your request at fishercenter@jhmi.edu.
- **I have a faculty appointment in one school at Johns Hopkins (e.g., School of Medicine); however, I am a student at another school at Johns Hopkins (ex., PhD candidate in Bloomberg School of Public Health). May I serve as a PI through the school where I am a student?**
No. You must be a faculty member of the school where you wish to conduct the study.
- **My primary faculty appointment is at another university. May I submit an FCDA application as a PI?**
No. Only Johns Hopkins University full-time faculty members may apply as PIs; however, another university's faculty may be a co-investigator or consultant on the research team.
- **Can a JHU medical school student included on the FCDA research team also receive funds from the JHU School of Medicine?**
The JHU SOM matriculated candidate for the M.D. degree may independently apply to the JHU SOM for supplemental funding through JHU SOM programs. JHU SOM research programs are separate from the FCDA. As such, it will be the student's responsibility to comply with all JHU SOM requirements regarding the application, completion and administration of JHU SOM programs.
- **Can a JHU medical school student who is included on the FCDA research team receive academic credit from the JHU School of Medicine?**
Work accomplished on behalf of the FCDA may not be credited toward achieving an academic degree without the written permission of the JHU SOM.
- **I am submitting an FCIA proposal; however, I also want to submit a pared-down FCDA proposal to increase my chances of winning an award. Is this allowable?**

An applicant may submit proposals to the FCIA and FDCA; however, the grant applications should be substantially different regarding their aims. If the two proposals are similar, the Fisher Center will ask the applicant to withdraw one of the submissions.

A faculty member may not serve as PI on more than one application. A faculty member may only serve as PI on one submitted FCDA application or on one submitted FCIA application.

Project Topics

- **What does the phrase “Environmental Infectious Diseases” mean?**
 - Environmental ID includes human disease-causing pathogens arising mainly in environments, which differ from diseases transmitted primarily from human to human. Examples include pathogens that typically reside in the air, soil, and water, as well as vector-borne or zoonotic diseases. Human pathogens associated with built environments (e.g., homes, hospitals, and communities; for example, MDR Gram-negative pathogens in hospital rooms) also qualify.
- **What clinical research topics are exciting to the Fisher Center Discovery Program?**

Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the section *Project Topics* (pages 4-5 of the [FCDA Application Guidelines 2027](#)). The FCDP funds understudied or underfunded environmental infectious diseases and topics related to antimicrobial research and post-infectious disease conditions. Projects should be related to aspects affecting human health in North America. Other favorable components may include the potential for a broad impact and the applicant being an early career investigator.

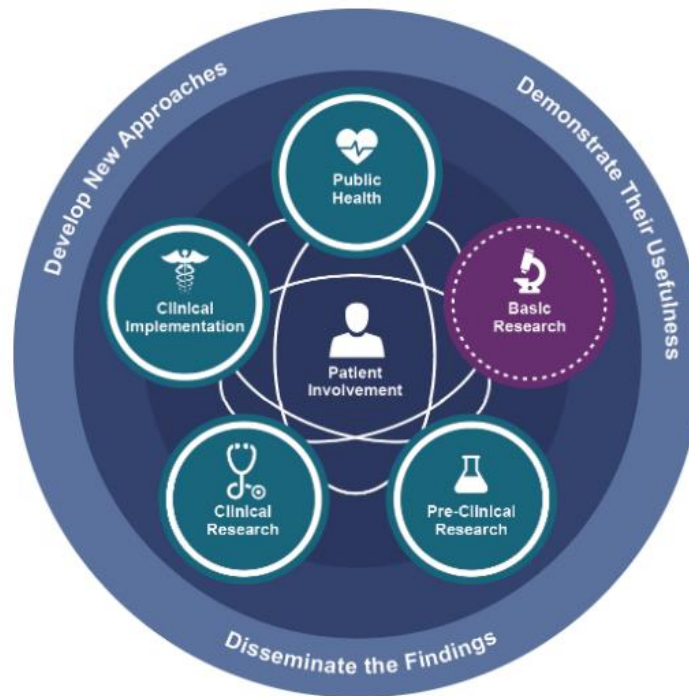
Other than environmental infectious diseases, two different topics that will be supported include a) antimicrobial resistance [with work based in North America unless a cogent rationale is given why an international project would serve domestic US healthcare interests] and b) post-infectious syndromes [e.g., post-treatment Lyme disease syndrome, long COVID, etc.].
- **What clinical research topics are generally *not* funded by the Fisher Center Discovery Program?**

Because FCDP's mission is to provide funding for understudied or underfunded environmental infectious diseases and topics related to antimicrobial research and post-infectious disease conditions, conditions well-funded by other mechanisms and entities typically do not qualify for FCDP funding. Some examples of these conditions and diseases are HIV, tuberculosis, viral hepatitis, influenza and measles, among others.

Similarly, because FCDP projects should be related to conditions affecting human health in North America, conditions that primarily affect other parts of the world do not typically qualify for FCDP funding. Some examples of these conditions and diseases are malaria, yellow fever, dengue, Ebola, etc., unless substantial arguments are made that the study can benefit public health or patient outcomes in the US.
- **I am primarily a bench researcher. Am I eligible for FCDA funding?**

The Fisher Center is dedicated to the clinical and translational research of environmental pathogens that aim to improve the prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of infections causing human disease. Support for laboratory research will be considered if it is part of a translational or clinical research project.
- **What is translational research?**

Translational research may be defined as research that facilitates the rapid and efficient translation of basic science findings to clinical applications that enhance human health. To facilitate “bench to bedside” research, the NCRR of NIH launched the Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) Consortium in 2006, of which the Johns Hopkins ICTR unit is a member. From the [National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences](#) website comes a diagram that succinctly explains the concept of translational research.



Using an integrated approach, CTSA-funded institutions aim to accelerate scientific discovery along the biomedical research continuum, from basic science to patient studies to clinical practice. Information sharing at each stage of the process ensures that researchers are meeting community health needs and that progress in the clinic, in turn, informs the work in the laboratory.

Monetary Support and the Budget

- **Is FCDA salary support limited to Johns Hopkins University employees?**
No. However, the budget must conform to the requirements as outlined in the section *Monetary Support* (page 6) of the [FCDA Application Guidelines 2027](#), as well as the requirements listed on the [FCDA Budget Template 2027](#)
- **Does the NIH salary cap apply to faculty members on the study team?**
No. The FCDA does not impose a salary cap. In preparation of the study budget, the actual salaries of the study team members should be used.
- **If a co-investigator is a full Professor, may they receive FCDA salary support?**
No. No research team member (PI, co-investigator, consultant, etc.) may receive salary support if they are beyond the level of Associate Professor.

- **Can a JHU undergraduate or graduate student who is included on the FCDA research team receive funding for tuition from the FCDA?**

No. Students may receive a stipend for their work on the research study, but FCDA funds cannot be used to reimburse tuition costs.

- **Can a JHU undergraduate or graduate student who is included on the research team receive funding for student health insurance from the FCDA?**

No. Students may receive a stipend for their work on the research study, but FCDA funds cannot be used to reimburse student health insurance costs. For salaried Johns Hopkins faculty, fellows, and staff, FCDA only covers health insurance costs as part of their employees' "fringe benefits."

- **How does the new unionization of graduate students (effective July 2024) affect FCDA funding? What student expenses are covered by FCDA funds, and what are not?**

The unionization of PhD students has no impact on the allowable expenses detailed in the FCDA Application Guidelines, either past or current. FCDA funds will still allow student salary, stipend expenses, and fringe benefits. Tuition and travel for conferences are not permitted to be funded by FCDA. Visa fees are reimbursed centrally through a JH Provost's office fund, not FCDA, and union dues are to be paid by the PhD student (not the University, nor FCDA). Any specific questions about whether an expense is allowed under FCDA Guidelines may be directed to the Fisher Center Discovery Program Research Manager, Diane Lanham, dlanham1@jhmi.edu

- **How does a potential unionization of research staff (currently being organized) affect FCDA funding? What research staff expenses are covered by FCDA funds, and what are not?**

Similar to the policy regarding unionization of PhD students, we do not expect that any potential unionization of research staff will affect the previous or current allowable expenses detailed in the FCDA Application Guidelines. If a research staff union is formed and approved during the course of an active FCDP project, any specific questions about whether an expense is allowed under FCDA Guidelines may be directed to the Fisher Center Discovery Program Research Manager, Diane Lanham at dlanham1@jhmi.edu

- **Pending FCDA funding, I plan to hire a new study team member. Is it okay to request FCDA personnel funds now and submit an addendum with that person's full name and credentials if awarded?**

Yes. On the budget template, under the name, write TBN (to be named). List the role accordingly. Example: Research Coordinator, TBN. If funded, awardees will be required to submit a revised budget with the new hire name and role and percentage effort, as well as a CV/Biosketch/Resume for all new study team members not included on the FCDA Application Form.

- **Can I pay for expenses related to conference trips from FCDA funds?**

No. FCDA funds do not cover any expenses related to conference trips for the PI or anyone on the study team.

- **Do I need to report changes in the FCDA study team to the Fisher Center Research Manager?**

Yes. If personnel are to be added to or removed from the initially approved FCDA study team and FCDA-funded personnel, the PI or applicant must inform the Fisher Center Research Program Manager (Diane Lanham: dlanham1@jhmi.edu). The PI/Applicant will be required to explain why a change in the study team was needed, submit a revised budget, and submit a biosketch/CV/resume for any new study team members.

- **Can international studies receive FCDA support?**

International projects that are unable or not easily performed domestically and have implications for healthcare in North America may be submitted and considered by the FCDP Advisory Board. Applicants with questions about international proposals must submit a letter of intent (LOI) before writing their grant proposal.

- **Do I have to account for indirect costs in the FCDA budget?**

No. Johns Hopkins entities have already accounted for indirect costs, as the research is derived from a philanthropic donation to the School of Medicine. FCDA funds do not cover indirect costs to entities outside of Johns Hopkins (ex., Kennedy Krieger Institute, F.M. Kirby Center). If using an outside entity, applicants/awardees must either request a waiver of indirect costs from that entity, or include the indirect costs as a separate line item in the budget submitted as part of their FCDA application.

- **Does the FCDA research go through the Office of Research Administration (ORA)?**

The FCDP is privately funded and, therefore, is not administered by the ORA. However, some subcontracts, such as those for laboratory testing, may require ORA administration of the contracts. If so, it is the PI's responsibility to interact with the ORA of their JHU-affiliated school.

- **If awarded, does the FCDP manage my funds?**

No. Awarded funds are released to the PI as an internal order (IO) or cost center (CC) number, per the financial practices of the JHU-affiliated school. Periodic *SAP Non-sponsored YTD Transactional Detail Reports* will be required to be generated by the awardee's departmental budget analyst and sent to the Fisher Center Research Manager for review and record keeping. Please review the section *Post Award Requirements* (pages 12-14 of the [FCDA Application Guidelines 2027](#)). The PI is responsible for providing the Fisher Center Research Manager with the contact information for the study budget analyst. The PI/Applicant must also inform the Fisher Center Research Manager of any changes in the budget analyst during the award period. **The PI is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the conduct of the study adheres to all terms specified in the *FCDA Written Agreement* and the *2027 FCDA Application Guidelines*. Failure to comply with the terms of the *FCDA Written Agreement* and/or the *2027 FCDA Application Guidelines* may result in the termination of the award and return of funds, in part or in whole.**

- **Do I need to submit an FCDA budget justification?**

Not necessarily. The budget justification is typically not requested. However, if the total salary support or total laboratory supplies, equipment, and service support exceeds the 50% cap of the total requested award, then a written justification is required. For details, please review the section *Monetary Support* (page 6 of the [FCDA Application Guidelines 2027](#)) as well as the [FCDA Budget Template 2027](#)

- **If my budget changes throughout my project, should I submit a revised budget to the FCDP Manager?**

The FCDP understands that unexpected situations and expenses may arise during the study. Submitting an interim 6-month financial report will help determine whether the study is on track to meet the expected expenses outlined in the approved application budget. If revisions to the budget result in a $\geq 10\%$ change to any budget category (e.g., personnel, equipment and supplies, other expenses), then a revised budget and a *Request for Reallocation of Funds* must be submitted to the FCDP Research Manager (Diane Lanham: dlanham1@jhmi.edu) before the change in the budget. Additionally, if revisions to the budget result in more than 50% of the total budget allocation being allocated to either personnel costs or equipment and supplies, a revised budget and a *Request for Reallocation of Funds* form must be submitted to the FCDP Research Manager (Diane Lanham: dlanham1@jhmi.edu) before implementing the changes.

- **What is the difference between an applicant and the PI on the FCDA Application Form?**

The applicant may be a post-doctoral fellow, trainee or student who wishes to gain research experience by preparing the FCDA application package and managing the research proposal. The applicant does not have to be a JH Faculty member but may be mentored by one or more JH Faculty members. A junior faculty member may serve as both applicant and PI on an FCDA application:

- The applicant is the individual submitting the proposal and managing the project as a whole.
- The applicant may present the project for the FCDA required oral presentations
- The applicant may prepare the FCDA required written reports

The PI must be a full-time JH Faculty member. The PI assumes ultimate responsibility for all aspects of the awarded study. The PI may also serve as the applicant, especially if the PI is a junior investigator:

- The PI accepts responsibility for the terms of the FCDA on the FCDA Written Award Agreement
- The PI may serve as mentor to the applicant
- The PI oversees the research and day-to-day project leadership
- The PI is the key individual designated by the applicant to direct the project
- The PI must be knowledgeable in all technical aspects of the proposed work and capable of leading the research effort
- The PI is responsible for the project's design, execution, oversight, and compliance with all grant requirements
- The PI is responsible for study expenditures and compliance with FCDA funding and budget requirements

- **Who is required to be included on the study team?**

Study team members listed on your application form must include:

- The PI (listed at the top of the form)
- All co-investigators (regardless of whether they are receiving salary support)
- All other individuals who will be receiving salary support from the award (including students who will receive a stipend from the award)
- All individuals making a significant contribution to the study's work should be included as study team members regardless of whether they are receiving salary support from the award.

- **Are collaborators required to be included on the study team?**

If you have a collaborator who will be a co-investigator on your study team but is not receiving salary support, please list them as co-investigators on the application form. However, do not include them in the budget, and please provide their biosketch.

- **Are students required to be included on the study team?**

Students who will receive a stipend for participating in your proposal must be listed on the application form. Students receiving stipends must be listed on the study budget, and a biosketch, CV or resume is required. Students working on the study for class credit should also be listed on the study team, but not on the budget. Students volunteering their time to gain work or educational experience should be listed on the study team if they make significant contributions to the study.

- **Are float staff required to be included on the study team?**

Generally, float staff and temporary staff (ex., float nurses and hematologists) are not required to be included on the study team unless the study requires study-specific training, or the individual is making a significant contribution to the study, and/or if they will be receiving salary support from the award. They may be included

on the study team if the applicant/PI desires; however, they should not be included in the budget if they will not receive support from the award.

- **Are service center staff required to be included on the study team?**

Suppose the study proposal is a human subjects' study and is using a service center (ex., FM Kirby Center for Imaging, ICTR CRU, etc.) or a pool of personnel (ex., JH radiologists, JHOC phlebotomists, JH Path lab techs, etc) and does not have a dedicated individual assigned to the study. In that case, these individuals are typically not included as study team members on the application form. If a dedicated individual performs study procedures and/or the proposal requires study-specific training (e.g., an MRI technician performing a study-specific fMRI task), then that individual should be included on the study team.

- **Are lab staff required to be included on the study team?**

If the study proposal is a lab study and/or uses a dedicated research lab, the lab director is typically listed as a Co-Investigator on the study team, and lab staff are not included as study team members. If a dedicated individual performs study procedures and/or the proposal requires study-specific training, then that individual should be included on the study team.

- **I plan to hire a study team member, but I have not identified them yet. How do I list them on the study team?**

If you will be hiring a study team member (ex., a grad student) for your proposal, and they will receive salary support or a stipend, but the individual has not yet been identified, please list them as TBN on both the application form and the budget. Once the individual has been identified, please email their biosketch, CV or resume to the Fisher Center Research Manager (Diane Lanham: dlanham1@jhmi.edu). A revised budget may also be required that includes the new hire's name, role on the study, percentage effort and any applicable changes to the personnel budget.

- **I have a Co-PI. How do I list them on the study team?**

The term "Co-Principal Investigator" (Co-PI) is not recognized by the JHM IRB, the FDA or industry sponsors; therefore, for consistency, Co-PIs are not recognized by the FCDP. One individual must take responsibility for the study, regardless of whether the effort is equally shared. **Please select one person as the PI** and list the intended Co-PI as a Co-Investigator (Co-I). You may explain in your research protocol (or in your budget justification, should you submit one) that study responsibilities and effort will be shared equally between the PI and the Co-I.

Application Documents

- **Do the FCDA protocol citations need to be in a specific format?**

No. Please use the citation format most commonly used in your JHU-affiliated school.

- **Are biosketches required with my FCDA application?**

While an NIH-style biosketch is preferred, a CV or résumé may be substituted when a biosketch is unavailable. A biosketch, CV, or résumé is required for any individual receiving salary support from the award. A biosketch, CV, or résumé is also necessary for any individual listed as a study team member on your FCDA Application Form.

- **Some of my FCDA research team members do not have a biosketch, curriculum vitae, or résumé. Are these documents essential?**

Yes. The PI and coinvestigators' biosketches, CVs, or résumés must be sent with the application. In addition, these documents are required for any personnel funded by the grant, such as research nurses, study coordinators, lab personnel, technicians, etc. The biosketch, CV, or résumé provides the reviewers with background information on the research team, including education, experience, and research interests. Since a biosketch, CV, or résumé is an essential component of an academic career, it is good practice for all members of a research team, regardless of faculty status, to maintain a current biosketch, CV, or résumé.

- **Do I need to submit a biosketch and a CV with my FCDA application?**

No, please submit one or the other. Do not submit both a biosketch and a CV. Due to its typically shorter length, an NIH-style biosketch is preferred.

- **Is there a specific format or template for the FCDA biosketch, CV, or résumé?**

The biosketch, CV, or résumé may be submitted using the current template specific to the team member's JHU-affiliated school or current institution. **Please number the document pages and submit each biosketch, CV or résumé as a separate document with your FCDA application.**

- **Is a letter of support required if the FCDA co-investigators are JHU faculty members?**

There are two types of letters of support:

- a) If the applicant does not have JHU faculty status, then a full-time JHU faculty member must serve as PI and provide a letter of support.
- b) The reviewers prefer letters of support from co-investigators on the research team, especially those not JHU-affiliated.

Letters of support inform the reviewers that the co-investigators are indeed committed to the research project and will provide support. This second type of letter of support is not a requirement, but may be helpful to the reviewers and is thus strongly encouraged.

Submission of the Application Package

- **Where do I find the FCDA application?**

The [application and supporting documents](https://hopkinsinfectiousdiseases.jhmi.edu/research/research-areas/environmental-id/fisher-center-discovery-program-grants/) are available on the Infectious Diseases website, Fisher Center pages: <https://hopkinsinfectiousdiseases.jhmi.edu/research/research-areas/environmental-id/fisher-center-discovery-program-grants/>

Applicants may also contact the Fisher Center Research Manager (Diane Lanham: dlanham1@jhmi.edu) to request any necessary documents.

- **What completed documents should be included in the final FCDA application package?**

- *FCDA Application 2027* (PDF fillable form)
- Research Protocol
- *FCDA Budget Template 2027* (must use the provided template)
- Budget justification (only required if salaries exceed 50% of the monetary request)
- Budget justification (only if laboratory supplies, equipment, and services exceed 50% of the monetary request)
- Letters of support (PI mentor and/or collaborators) – must be sent as separate documents
- Biosketch, curriculum vitae (CV), or résumé of the PI and all coinvestigators, as well as for all research team members who are to receive salary support from the FCDA – must be sent as separate documents

- **How do I apply for FCDA and send supporting documents?**

Send the completed FCDA application package in a single email to: fishercenter@jhmi.edu

- **I cannot submit all components of the FCDA application package in one email. What should I do?**

If the documents exceed the email file size, please send the remaining documents in a second email and indicate in the first email that they will be sent separately.

APPLICATION DOCUMENTS RECEIVED AFTER NOVEMBER 20, 2026, at 11:59 PM WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Contact Us

Our staff is here to help you. Please feel free to contact us.

The Sherrilyn and Ken Fisher Center for Environmental Infectious Diseases

Phone 443-287-4800 (ask for Diane Lanham, Research Manager)
Fax 410-502-7029
Email fishercenter@jhmi.edu or dlanham1@jhmi.edu (preferred contact method)
Website [Fisher Center Discovery Program](https://hopkinsinfectiousdiseases.jhmi.edu/research/research-areas/environmental-id/fisher-center-discovery-program-grants/)

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