

I. OVERVIEW OF THE FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Program Announcement for the Department of Defense

Defense Health Program

Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs

Vision Research Program

Investigator-Initiated Research Award

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: HT942524VRPIIRA

**Assistance Listing Number: 12.420 Military Medical
Research and Development**

SUBMISSION AND REVIEW DATES AND TIMES

- **Pre-Application (Preproposal) Submission Deadline:** 5:00 p.m. Eastern time (ET), July 11, 2024
- **Invitation to Submit an Application:** September 2024
- **Application Submission Deadline:** 11:59 p.m. ET, November 8, 2024
- **End of Application Verification Period:** 5:00 p.m. ET, November 14, 2024
- **Peer Review:** January 2025
- **Programmatic Review:** March 2025

This program announcement must be read in conjunction with the General Application Instructions, version 901. The General Application Instructions document is available for downloading from the Grants.gov funding opportunity announcement by selecting the “Package” tab, clicking “Preview,” and then selecting “Download Instructions.”

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II. DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

II.A. Program Description

The U.S. Army Medical Research Acquisition Activity (USAMRAA) is soliciting applications to the fiscal year 2024 (FY24) Vision Research Program (VRP) using delegated authority provided by United States Code, Title 10, Section 4001 (10 USC 4001). The Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) at the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command (USAMRDC) is the program management agent for this funding opportunity. Congress initiated the VRP in 2009 to provide support for research of high potential impact and exceptional scientific merit. Appropriations for the VRP from FY09 through FY23 totaled \$184.95 million (M). The FY24 appropriation is \$20M.

The goal of the VRP is to transform visual system trauma care for our Armed Forces and the nation. Eye injury accounted for approximately 15% of all injuries from battlefield trauma sustained during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹ An epidemiology study of 652 Soldiers admitted to Walter Reed Army Medical Center from 2001 to 2011 showed that 30% of patients became legally blind in their injured eyes.² There were more than 270,000 ambulatory eye injuries and 5,237 hospitalizations between 2000 and the first quarter of 2017, with 6,087 injuries at high risk of blindness.³ In addition, traumatic brain injury (TBI), which affected more than 485,000 Service Members through the second quarter of 2023,⁴ can have significant impact on vision even when there is no injury to the eye.⁵

The FY24 VRP challenges the scientific community to design innovative research that will significantly advance the understanding, prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, and/or treatment of eye injury or visual dysfunction associated with military exposure. Research outcomes are expected to ultimately improve the care of Service Members and Veterans as well as the American public.

II.A.1. FY24 VRP Focus Areas

To meet the intent of the funding opportunity, applications to the FY24 VRP Investigator-Initiated Research Award (IIRA) must address research in one of more of the following Focus Areas:

¹ Ari AB. 2006. Eye injuries on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan: Public health implications. *Optometry* 77(7):329-339.

² Harvey MM, Justin GA, Brooks DI, et al. 2021. Ocular trauma in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom from 2001 to 2011: A Bayesian network analysis. *Ophthalmic Epidemiology* 28(4):312-321.

³ Frick KD and Singman EL. 2019. Cost of military eye injury and vision impairment related to traumatic brain injury: 2001-2017. *Military Medicine* 184(5-6):e338-e343.

⁴ <https://health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Centers-of-Excellence/Traumatic-Brain-Injury-Center-of-Excellence/DOD-TBI-Worldwide-Numbers>

⁵ Reynolds ME, Barker FM 2nd, Merezhinskaya N, et al. 2019. Incidence and temporal presentation of visual dysfunction following diagnosis of traumatic brain injury, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2006-2017. *Medical Surveillance Monthly Report* 26(9):13-24.

- Understand and treat eye injury or visual dysfunction as related to military exposure
- Diagnose, stabilize, and treat eye injuries in austere environments and prolonged care settings
- Restore visual function after military exposure-related vision loss or severe visual impairment

II.A.2. Award History

The VRP IIRA mechanism was first offered in FY18. Since then, 313 IIRA applications have been received, and 70 have been recommended for funding.

II.B. Award Information

The FY24 VRP IIRA is intended to support studies that will yield highly impactful discoveries or major advancements in the research and/or patient care of eye injury and/or visual dysfunction as related to military exposure.

To support research projects at different stages and the exploration/development of ideas of different maturity levels, two different funding levels are available under this program announcement. ***When submitting the pre-application, it is the responsibility of the applicant organization to select the funding level that is most appropriate for the research proposed. The funding level should be selected based on the stage and maturity level of the research project, rather than the amount of the budget.***

- **Funding Level 1** supports exploratory, innovative, high-risk/high-reward research that is in the earliest stages of idea development. Research must have the potential to yield new avenues of investigation, such as new approaches, new research tools, or new paradigms.
 - Preliminary data are ***not required***. However, ***applicants must provide solid rationale for the research idea, supported by literature***.
 - Investigators without prior experience with the visual system are welcome to submit research ideas to Funding Level 1, provided that the investigating team have sufficient expertise to test the research idea.
- **Funding Level 2** supports the advancement of more mature research toward clinical translation. The research idea or solution should be innovative or novel, or offer significant refinements, improvements, or new applications of existing ideas or solutions, as applicable.
 - Funding Level 2 applications may focus on any phase of research from basic through translational.
 - ***Preliminary data supporting the readiness and feasibility of the proposed research are required.***
 - **Partnering PI Option:** The FY24 VRP IIRA Funding Level 2 includes an **option for two Principal Investigators (PIs)**. One PI will be identified as the **Initiating PI** and

will be responsible for the majority of the administrative tasks associated with application submission. The other PI will be identified as the **Partnering PI**. Both PIs should contribute significantly to the development and execution of the proposed research project. If recommended for funding, each PI will be named on separate awards to the recipient organization(s). Each award will be subject to separate reporting, regulatory, and administrative requirements. For individual submission requirements for the Initiating and Partnering PI, refer to [Section II.D.2, Content and Form of the Application Submission](#).

Research involving human subjects and human anatomical substances is permitted; however, ***the IIRA may not be used to conduct clinical trials.***

A clinical trial is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46.102 (45 CFR 46.102) as a research study in which one or more human subjects are prospectively assigned to one or more interventions (which may include a placebo or another control) to evaluate the effects of the interventions on biomedical or behavioral health-related outcomes.

Studies that ***retrospectively*** analyze data generated from ***previously conducted*** clinical trial(s) are ***not*** considered a clinical trial.

For the purposes of this funding opportunity, research that meets the definition of a clinical trial is distinct from clinical research. ***Clinical research*** encompasses research with human data, human specimens, and/or interaction with human subjects. Clinical research is observational in nature and includes:

- (1) Research conducted with human subjects and/or material of human origin such as data, specimens, and cognitive phenomena for which an investigator (or co-investigator) does not seek to assess the safety, effectiveness, and/or efficacy outcomes of an intervention. Research meeting this definition may include but is not limited to: (a) mechanisms of human disease, (b) diagnostic or detection studies (e.g., biomarker or imaging), (c) health disparity studies, and (d) development of new technologies.
- (2) Epidemiologic and behavioral studies that do not seek to assess the safety, effectiveness, and/or efficacy outcomes of an intervention.
- (3) Outcomes research and health services research that do not fit under the definition of clinical trial.

Excluded from the definition of clinical research are in vitro studies that utilize human data or specimens that cannot be linked to a living individual and meet the requirements for exemption under [§46.104\(d\)\(4\) of the Common Rule](#).

Applicants may consult the following resource documents as applicable:

- [Blast Term Dictionary and Guidance Documents for Blast Injury Research](#)
- [A Primer for Conducting Department of Defense \(DOD\) Funded Human Research with Military Populations](#)

- [A Beginner's Guide to Army Healthcare System](#)

A description of health services across the range of military operations can be found in the [Joint Health Services Joint Publication 4-02](#).

The funding instrument for awards made under the program announcement will be grants (31 USC 6304).

The anticipated direct costs budgeted for the entire period of performance for an FY24 VRP IIRA Funding Level 1 should not exceed **\$260,000**. The anticipated direct costs budgeted for the entire period of performance for an FY24 VRP IIRA Funding Level 2 should not exceed **\$750,000**. Refer to [Section II.D.5, Funding Restrictions](#), for detailed funding information.

Awards supported with FY24 funds will be made no later than September 30, 2025.

The CDMRP expects to allot approximately \$.832M to fund approximately two VRP IIRA Funding Level 1 applications, and \$6M to fund approximately five VRP IIRA Funding Level 2 applications. Funding of applications received is contingent upon the availability of federal funds for this program, the number of applications received, the quality and merit of the applications as evaluated by peer and programmatic review, and the requirements of the government. Funds to be obligated on any award resulting from this funding opportunity will be available for use for a limited time period based on the fiscal year of the funds. It is anticipated that awards made from this FY24 funding opportunity will be funded with FY24 funds, which will expire for use on September 30, 2030.

Following selection of projects for VRP funding, the VRP may share FY24 IIRA applications and reviews with the National Eye Institute (NEI) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for independent funding consideration. Additional or separate application information may be required by the NEI. The number of applications to be considered for funding by the NEI is indeterminate and contingent upon NEI's determination of the quality of applications and funding availability.

II.C. Eligibility Information

II.C.1. Eligible Applicants

II.C.1.a. Organization: Extramural and Intramural organizations are eligible to apply, including foreign or domestic organizations, for-profit and non-profit organizations, and public entities.

Extramural Organization: An eligible non-Department of Defense (DOD) organization. Examples of extramural organizations include academic institutions, biotechnology companies, foundations, federal government organizations other than the DOD (i.e., intragovernmental organizations), and research institutes.

Intramural DOD Organization: Refers specifically to DOD organizations including DOD laboratories, DOD military treatment facilities, and/or DOD activities embedded within a civilian medical center.

Awards are made to eligible *organizations*, not to individuals. Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 1, for additional recipient qualification requirements.

II.C.1.b. Principal Investigator

Independent investigators at all academic levels (or equivalent) may be named by the organization as PIs on the applications.

An eligible PI, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, or citizenship status, must be employed by or affiliated with an eligible organization.

II.C.2. Cost Sharing

Cost sharing/matching is not an eligibility requirement.

II.C.3. Other

Organizations must be able to access **.gov** and **.mil** websites to fulfill the financial and technical deliverable requirements of the award and submit invoices for payment.

Refer to [Section II.H.2, Administrative Actions](#), for a list of administrative actions that may be taken if a pre-application or full application does not meet the administrative, eligibility, or ethical requirements defined in this program announcement.

II.D. Application and Submission Information

Submission of applications that are essentially identical or propose essentially the same research project to different funding opportunities within the same program and fiscal year is prohibited and will result in administrative withdrawal of the duplicative application(s).

Exception: Applicants to the FY24 VRP IIRA Funding Level 2 are permitted to simultaneously submit the same project as part of an application to the FY24 VRP Focused Translational Team Science Award (FTTSA) (Funding Opportunity Number: HT942524VRPFTTSA). The scope and budget of the IIRA Funding Level 2 and the FTTSA applications must be appropriate for the respective award mechanism. Accepting multiple awards to support the same project will not be allowed.

II.D.1. Location of Application Package

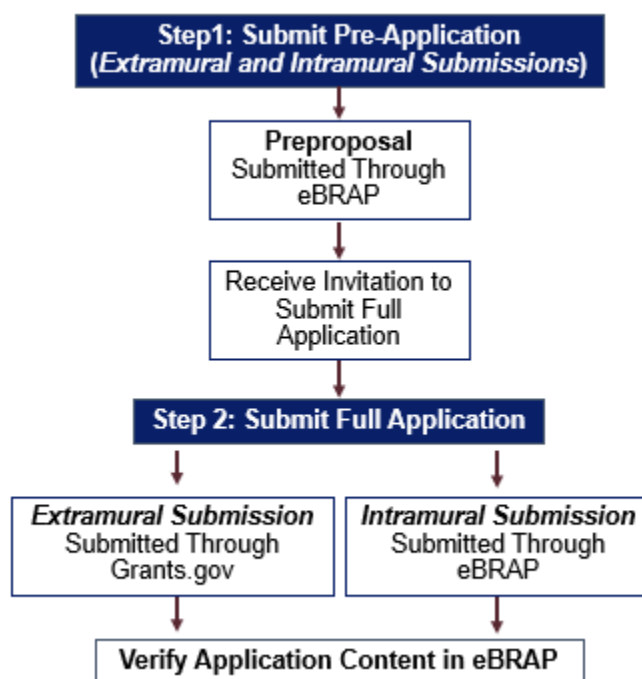
Submission is a two-step process requiring both a *pre-application* submitted via the Electronic Biomedical Research Application Portal (eBRAP.org) and a *full application* (eBRAP.org or Grants.gov). Depending on the type of submission (i.e., extramural vs. intramural), certain aspects of the submission process will differ.

The CDMRP uses two portal systems to accept pre- and full application submissions.

eBRAP (<https://ebrap.org>) is a secure web-based system that allows PIs and/or organizational representatives from both extra- and intramural organizations to receive communications from the CDMRP and submit their pre-applications. Additionally, eBRAP allows extramural applicants to view and verify full applications submitted to Grants.gov and allows intramural DOD applicants to submit and verify full applications following their pre-application submission.

Grants.gov (<https://grants.gov>) is a federal system that must be used by funding agencies to announce extramural grant applications. Full applications for CDMRP funding opportunities can only be submitted to Grants.gov after submission of a pre-application through eBRAP.

Application Submission Workflow



Extramural Submission: An application submitted by an [extramural organization](#) for an extramural or intramural PI working within an extramural or intramural organization. For example, a research foundation submitting an application for a DOD employee working within a DOD organization would be considered an extramural submission and should follow instructions specific to extramural submissions. Download application package components for HT942524VRPIIRA from Grants.gov (<https://grants.gov>). Full applications from extramural organizations *must* be submitted through Grants.gov.

Intramural Submission: An application submitted by an [intramural DOD organization](#) for an investigator employed by that organization. Intramural DOD organizations *may* submit full applications to either eBRAP or Grants.gov. Download application package components for HT942524VRPIIRA from the anticipated submission portal eBRAP (<https://ebrap.org>) or Grants.gov.

The submission process should be started early to avoid missing deadlines. Regardless of submission type or portal used, all pre- and full application components must be submitted by the deadlines stipulated on the first page of this program announcement. There are no grace periods for deadlines; failure to meet submission deadlines will result in application rejection. ***The USAMRAA cannot make allowances/exceptions for submission problems encountered by the applicant organization using system-to-system interfaces with Grants.gov.***

II.D.2. Content and Form of the Application Submission

Submitting applications that propose essentially the same research project to different funding opportunities within the same program and fiscal year is prohibited and will result in administrative withdrawal of the duplicative application(s).

Unnecessary duplication of funding, or accepting funding from more than one source for the same research, is prohibited. See CDMRP's full position on research duplication at <https://cdmrp.health.mil/funding/researchDup>.

Including classified research data within the application and/or proposing research that may produce classified outcomes, or outcomes deemed sensitive to national security concerns, may result in application withdrawal. Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 7, Section B.

FY24 VRP Programmatic Panel members should not be involved in any pre-application or full application. For questions related to panel members and pre-applications or applications, refer to [Section II.H.2.c, Withdrawal](#), or contact the eBRAP Help Desk at help@eBRAP.org or 301-682-5507.

II.D.2.a. Step 1: Pre-Application Submission

All pre-application components must be submitted by the PI, or, if exercising the Partnering PI option, the Initiating PI, through eBRAP (<https://eBRAP.org/>), *including the submission of contact information for the Partnering PI.*

During the pre-application process, eBRAP assigns each submission a unique log number. This unique log number is required during the full application submission process. The eBRAP log number, application title, and all information for each PI, the Business Official(s), performing organization(s), and contracting organization(s) must be consistent throughout the entire pre-application and full application submission process. Inconsistencies may delay application processing and limit or negate the ability to view, modify, and verify the application in eBRAP. If any changes need to be made, the applicant should contact the eBRAP Help Desk at help@eBRAP.org or 301-682-5507 prior to the application submission deadline.

When starting the pre-application, applicants will be asked to select a "Mechanism Option". Please be sure to select the correct option appropriate to your pre-application:

	Single PI Option	Partnering PI Option
Funding Level 1	Select “IIRA – FL1”	Not Available
Funding Level 2	Select “IIRA – FL2”	Select “IIRA - FL2 -PPIO”

If exercising the Partnering PI Option: After the Initiating PI confirms submission of the pre-application, the Partnering PI will be notified of the pre-application submission via an email from eBRAP. *The Partnering PI should not initiate a new pre-application based on the same research project submitted by the Initiating PI. Instead, the Partnering PI must follow the link in the notification email to ASSOCIATE the partnering pre-application with their eBRAP account.* If not previously registered, the Partnering PI must register in eBRAP.

After associating the pre-application with their eBRAP account, the Partnering PI should email the eBRAP Help Desk (help@ebrap.org) to have the desired contact information associated with their pre-application. The email should include the pre-application log number, the name of the Business Official, the name(s) of the Performing/Contracting Organization(s), and the submission-type for the pre-application (extramural or intramural).

The Partnering PI is urged to complete these steps as soon as possible. If they are not completed:

- The Partnering PI will not be able to view and modify their full application during the verification period in eBRAP.
- Any intramural Partnering PI will not be able to submit their full application package components to eBRAP.

II.D.2.a.i. Pre-Application Components

Pre-application submissions must include the following components (refer to the General Application Instructions, Section III.B, for additional information on pre-application submission):

Note: *Upload documents as individual PDF files unless otherwise noted.*

- **Preproposal Narrative (one-page limit) (New page limit in FY24):** The Preproposal Narrative page limit applies to text and non-text elements (e.g., figures, tables, graphs, photographs, diagrams, chemical structures, drawings) used to describe the project. Inclusion of URLs that provide additional information to expand the Preproposal Narrative and could confer an unfair competitive advantage is prohibited and may result in administrative withdrawal of the pre-application.

The Preproposal Narrative should include the following:

- **Objective/Rationale:** Describe the rationale of the proposed research including key preliminary data if applicable. Concisely state the project’s objective(s)/hypothesis(es) and specific aims. Clearly state whether the proposed research targets a specific injury or condition (e.g., retinal detachment, optic nerve injury, etc.). *Do not go into details of experimental design.*

- **Funding Level 1:** Concisely explain how the proposed research may yield new avenues of investigation, such as new approaches, new research tools, or new paradigms.
- **Funding Level 2:** Concisely explain how the proposed research will advance a line of research toward clinical translation.
- **Impact:** Describe the anticipated short- and long-term impact of the proposed research on the field of visual system trauma research and/or care.
- **Pre-Application Supporting Documentation:** The items to be included as supporting documentation for the pre-application *must be uploaded as individual files* and are limited to the following:
 - **References Cited (one-page limit):** List the references cited (including URLs if available) in the Preproposal Narrative using a standard reference format that includes the full citation (i.e., author[s], year published, reference title, and reference source, including volume, chapter, page numbers, and publisher, as appropriate).
 - **List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Symbols:** Provide a list of abbreviations, acronyms, and symbols used in the Preproposal Narrative.
 - **Key Personnel Biographical Sketches (six-page limit per individual):** *All biographical sketches should be uploaded as a single combined file.* Biographical sketches should be used to demonstrate background and expertise through education, positions, publications, and previous work accomplished.

II.D.2.a.ii. Pre-Application Screening Criteria

To determine the technical merits of the pre-application and the relevance to the mission of the Defense Health Program (DHP) and the VRP, pre-applications will be screened based on the following criteria:

- **Objective/Rationale:** How well the proposed research meets the intent of the award mechanism and funding level. To what extent the proposed research is supported by a rationale and, if applicable, by key preliminary data.
- **Impact:** To what extent the short- and long-term outcomes of the proposed research, if successful, will impact the field of visual system trauma research and/or care.

II.D.2.a.iii. Notification of Pre-Application Screening Results

Following the pre-application screening, the PI or (if exercising the Partnering PI option) the Initiating PI will be notified as to whether they are invited to submit full applications. The estimated date when PIs can expect to receive notification of an invitation to submit a full application is indicated in [Section I, Overview of the Funding Opportunity](#). No feedback (e.g., a critique of the pre-application's strengths and weaknesses) is provided at this stage. Because the invitation to submit a full application is based on the contents of the pre-application,

investigators should not change the title or research objectives after the pre-application is submitted.

II.D.2.b. Step 2: Full Application Submission

Applicants must receive an invitation to submit a full application. Uninvited full application submissions will be rejected.

II.D.2.b.i. Full Application Submission Type

Extramural Submissions: Full applications from extramural organizations *must* be submitted through Grants.gov Workspace. Full applications from extramural organizations, including non-DOD federal organizations, received through eBRAP will be withdrawn. Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV, for considerations and detailed instructions regarding extramural full application submission.

Intramural Submissions: Intramural DOD organizations may submit full applications through either eBRAP or Grants.gov. There is no preference from the CDMRP for which submission portal is utilized; submission through one portal or the other does not provide the application any advantage during the review process. Intramural DOD organizations that choose to submit through Grants.gov should follow Extramural Submission instructions. Intramural DOD organizations that are unable to submit through Grants.gov should submit through eBRAP. For the remainder of this program announcement, it will be assumed intramural DOD submissions will proceed through eBRAP. Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section V, for considerations and detailed instructions regarding intramural DOD full application submission.

II.D.2.b.ii. Full Application Submission Components for the PI or (if exercising the Partnering PI option) the Initiating PI

Note: If exercising the **Partnering PI Option**, both the Initiating PI and the Partnering PI must submit *separate full application packages*, even if the PIs are located within the same organization. The Partnering PI should follow instructions in [Section II.D.2.b.iii., Full Application Submission Components for the Partnering PI](#), to assemble the full application package. Each full application package must be submitted using the unique eBRAP log number received by the Initiating and Partnering PIs during pre-application submission.

All associated applications (the Initiating PI's and the Partnering PI's) must be submitted by the full application submission deadline.

Each application submission must include the completed full application package for this program announcement. See [Section II.H.3](#) of this program announcement for a checklist of the required application components.

(a) SF424 Research & Related Application for Federal Assistance Form (*Extramural Submissions Only*): Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B, for detailed information.

(b) Attachments:

Each attachment to the full application components must be uploaded as an individual file in the format specified and in accordance with the formatting guidelines listed in the General Application Instructions, Appendix 2.

- **Attachment 1: Project Narrative (page limit varies by funding level; see below for page limit): Upload as “ProjectNarrative.pdf”.** The page limit of the Project Narrative applies to text and non-text elements (e.g., figures, tables, graphs, photographs, diagrams, chemical structures, drawings) used to describe the project. Inclusion of URLs (uniform resource locators) that provide additional information that expands the Project Narrative and could confer an unfair competitive advantage is prohibited and may result in administrative withdrawal of the application.
 - **Page Limit:** Page limits for the Project Narrative are correlated with the application’s funding level:
 - **Funding Level 1:** 6-page limit
 - **Funding Level 2:** 12-page limit

Describe the proposed project in detail using the outline below.

- **Background/Rationale:** Describe the background and scientific rationale for the proposed research.
 - **Funding Level 1:** Describe the idea that the proposed research will explore and develop, clearly stating the objective(s) to be reached and/or the hypothesis(es) to be tested. Present sufficient literature to support the rationale for testing the idea. Explain how the proposed research has the potential to yield new avenues of investigation, such as new approaches, new research tools, or new paradigms. Preliminary data are allowed but not required.
 - **Funding Level 2:** Describe the proof-of-concept finding(s) that the proposed research aims to move forward to the next phase of development, clearly stating the objective(s) to be reached and/or the hypothesis(es) to be tested. Present sufficient preliminary data and critical analysis of literature to support the readiness of the objective(s), the soundness of the hypothesis(es), and the feasibility of the approach(es). Explain how the proposed research is innovative or novel or offers significant refinements, improvements, or new applications of existing ideas or solutions.
- **Specific Aims:** Concisely explain the project’s specific aims. Explain how the aims address the objective(s) and/or hypothesis(es) of the proposed research.
- **Research Strategy:** Describe the experimental design, methods, and analyses, including appropriate randomization, blinding/masking, and controls. Provide sufficient detail so that the appropriateness and feasibility of the research strategy can

be fully evaluated. Describe the statistical plan as appropriate for the proposed research. Outline whether researchers, subjects, clinicians, data analysts, and/or others will be blinded during the study. Describe any other measures to be taken to reduce bias. Address potential problem areas and present alternative methods and approaches.

- If cell lines or animals are to be used, justify the selection of the proposed cell line(s) or animal model(s). Be specific as to why the cell line or animal model was chosen over other cell lines or models, how it is appropriate for addressing the study aims, and how it is relevant to human visual biology and/or injury. Further details of research involving animals will be required in [Attachment 8: Animal Research Plan](#).
- If human subjects, human anatomical samples or data will be used, include a detailed plan for the recruitment of subjects or the acquisition of samples or data, including evidence that the research team has access to subjects, samples, and/or data. Describe the strategy for the inclusion of women and minorities appropriate to the objectives of the study, including a description of the composition of the proposed study population in terms of sex/gender, racial, and ethnic group, and an accompanying rationale for the selection of subjects. Studies utilizing human biospecimens or datasets that cannot be linked to a specific individual, gender, ethnicity, or race (typically classified as exempt from Institutional Review Board [IRB] review) are exempt from this requirement. Anticipated enrollment table(s) with the proposed enrollment distributed on the basis of sex/gender, race, and ethnicity should be provided as part of the application's Supporting Documentation ([Attachment 2](#)). Describe how data will be reported and how it will be assured that the documentation will support a regulatory filing with the Food and Drug Administration, if applicable. ***This award may not be used to conduct clinical trials.***
- **Attachment 2: Supporting Documentation: Combine and upload as a single file named "Support.pdf".** Start each document on a new page. The Supporting Documentation attachment should not include additional information such as figures, tables, graphs, photographs, diagrams, chemical structures, or drawings. These items should be included in the Project Narrative.

There are no page limits for any of these components unless otherwise noted. Include only those components described below; inclusion of items not requested or viewed as an extension of the Project Narrative will result in the removal of those items or may result in administrative withdrawal of the application.

References Cited: List the references cited (including URLs, if available) in the Project Narrative using a standard reference format.

List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Symbols: Provide a list of abbreviations, acronyms, and symbols.

Facilities, Existing Equipment, and Other Resources: Describe the facilities and equipment available for performance of the proposed project and any additional facilities or equipment proposed for acquisition at no cost to the award. Indicate whether government-furnished facilities or equipment are proposed for use. If so, reference should be made to the original or present government award under which the facilities or equipment items are now accountable. There is no form for this information.

Publications and/or Patents: Include a list of relevant publication URLs and/or patent abstracts. If articles are not publicly available, then copies of up to five published manuscripts may be included in Attachment 2. Extra items will not be reviewed.

Letters of Organizational Support (two-page limit per letter is recommended): Provide a letter (or letters, if applicable) signed by the Department Chair or appropriate organization official, confirming the laboratory space, equipment, and other resources available for the project. Letters of support not requested in the program announcement, such as those from members of Congress, do not impact application review or funding decisions.

Letters of Collaboration (if applicable) (two-page limit per letter is recommended): Provide a signed letter from each collaborating individual and/or organization demonstrating that the PI has the support and resources necessary for the proposed work. If an investigator at an intramural DOD organization is named as a collaborator on a full application submitted through an extramural organization, the application must include a letter from the collaborator's Commander or Commanding Officer at the intramural DOD organization authorizing the collaborator's involvement.

Intellectual Property: Information can be found in the 2 CFR 200.315: "Intangible Property.

- **Intellectual and Material Property Plan (if applicable):** Provide a plan for resolving intellectual and material property issues among participating organizations.

Inclusion Enrollment Plan (if the proposed research involves recruitment of human subjects): Provide an anticipated enrollment table(s) for the inclusion of women and minorities using the Public Health Service (PHS) Inclusion Enrollment Report, a three-page fillable PDF form that can be downloaded from eBRAP at <https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>. The enrollment table(s) should be appropriate to the objectives of the study with the proposed enrollment distributed on the basis of sex/gender, race, and ethnicity. Studies utilizing human biospecimens or datasets that cannot be linked to a specific individual, gender, ethnicity, or race (typically classified as exempt from IRB review) are exempt from this requirement.

DOD Data Management Plan (two-page limit is recommended): Describe the data management plan in accordance with Section 3.c, Enclosure 3, [DoD Instructions 3200.12](#). *Do not duplicate the Data and Research Resources Sharing Plan.* Refer to General Application Instructions, Section IV.B, Attachments Form, Attachment: Supporting Documentation, for detailed information regarding Data Management Plan content.

Data and Research Resources Sharing Plan: Describe the type of data or research resource to be made publicly available as a result of the proposed work. Describe how data and resources generated during the performance of the project will be shared with the research community. Include the name of the repository(ies) where scientific data and resources arising from the project will be archived, if applicable. If a public repository will not be used for data or resource sharing, provide justification. Provide a milestone plan for data/results dissemination including when data and resources will be made available to other users, including dissemination activities with a particular focus on feeding back the data to affected communities and/or research participants. Refer to CDMRP's Policy on Data & Resource Sharing located on the eBRAP "Funding Opportunities & Forms" web page <https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm> for more information about CDMRP's expectations for making data and research resources publicly available.

Quad Chart: Provide a Quad Chart for the proposed project. The format for the quad chart is available on the eBRAP "Funding Opportunities & Forms" web page at <https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>.

Use of DOD Resources (if applicable): Provide a letter of support signed by the lowest-ranking person with approval authority confirming access to active-duty military populations and/or DOD resources or databases.

Use of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Resources (if applicable): Provide a letter of support signed by the VA Facility Director(s) or individual designated by the VA Facility Director(s), such as the Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development (ACOS/R&D) or Clinical Service Chief, confirming access to VA patients, resources, and/or VA research space. If the VA-affiliated non-profit corporation is not identified as the applicant organization for administering the funds, include a letter from the VA ACOS/R&D confirming this arrangement and identifying the institution that will administer the funds associated with the proposed research.

- **Attachment 3: Technical Abstract (one-page limit):** Upload as "TechAbs.pdf". The technical abstract is used by all reviewers. *Abstracts of all funded research projects will be posted publicly.* Use only characters available on a standard QWERTY keyboard. Spell out all Greek letters, other non-English letters, and symbols. Graphics are not allowed.

Programmatic Reviewers rely on the technical abstract for appropriate description of the project's key aspects. Therefore, clarity and completeness within the space limits of the technical abstract are highly important.

Technical abstracts should include the following elements:

- **Research Idea/Rationale:** Present the ideas and scientific rationale behind the proposed research. Clearly indicate whether the proposed research is exploring early ideas that have the potential to yield new avenues of investigation or is advancing more mature research toward clinical translation. Describe how the proposed research aligns with one or more of the [FY24 VRP Focus Areas](#). Clearly state the injury or condition (e.g., retinal detachment, optic nerve injury, etc.) to which the proposed research is applicable.
- **Objective(s) and/or Hypothesis(es):** Clearly state the objective(s) to be reached and/or the hypothesis(es) to be tested.
- **Specific Aims:** State the project's specific aims.
- **Study Design:** Briefly describe the study design, including appropriate controls.
- **Impact:** Briefly describe how the proposed project, if successful, will impact the field of visual system trauma research and/or care.
- **Attachment 4: Lay Abstract (one-page limit): Upload as "LayAbs.pdf".** The lay abstract is used by all reviewers, and addresses issues of particular interest to the affected community. *Abstracts of all funded research projects will be posted publicly.* Use only characters available on a standard QWERTY keyboard. Spell out all Greek letters, other non-English letters, and symbols. Graphics are not allowed. *Do not duplicate the technical abstract.*

The lay abstract is an important component of the application review process because it addresses issues of particular interest to the consumer advocate community. Lay abstracts should be written using the outline below in a manner readily understood by readers without a background in science or medicine. Minimize use of acronyms and abbreviations, where appropriate.

- Clearly describe the rationale, objective, and aims of the application.
- Describe the anticipated short-term and long-term outcomes of the proposed research. Explain how the outcomes will impact the field of visual system trauma research and/or care.
 - If applicable, how will the proposed research open new avenues of investigation? Why is that important?
 - If applicable, how will the proposed research make significant advancements toward clinical translation?

- **Attachment 5: Statement of Work (SOW) (three-page limit): Upload as “SOW.pdf”.** Refer to the eBRAP “Funding Opportunities & Forms” web page (<https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>) for the suggested SOW format and recommended strategies for assembling the SOW.

For the IIRA, refer to either the “Example: Assembling a Generic Statement of Work”, for guidance on preparing the SOW. Use the “Suggested SOW Format” to develop the SOW for the proposed research. Submit as a PDF.

If exercising the **Partnering PI Option**, *each PI* must submit *an identical copy* of a jointly created SOW. *The specific contributions of the Initiating PI and the Partnering PI should be clearly noted for each task.*

- **Attachment 6: Impact Statement (one-page limit): Upload as “Impact.pdf”.** Describe how the short-term and long-term outcome(s) of the proposed research, if successful, will advance the field of visual system trauma research, advance patient care, improve quality of life, contribute to the development or validation of evidence-based policy or guidelines, or otherwise impact the visual health of Service Members, Veterans, and the American public. This should be written with a broad audience in mind, including readers without a background in science or medicine.
- **Attachment 7: Relevance to Military Health Statement (one-page limit): Upload as “Military.pdf”.** Explain how the proposed research is responsive to the health care needs and quality of life of Service Members and Veterans with eye injury and/or visual impairment and/or to their Family Members and caregivers.

As applicable, include the element(s) below:

- Identify any element(s) or special consideration(s) related to the applicability of the ultimate outcome of the research in the military operational environment (e.g., battlefield, Battalion Aid Stations, Forward Support Medical Battalions). Applicants may consult [A Beginner’s Guide to Army Healthcare System](#) and the [Joint Health Services Joint Publication 4-02](#) for descriptions of health services across the range of military operations.
- If active-duty military, Veteran, or military Family member population(s) will be used in the proposed research project, describe the population(s), the appropriateness of the population(s) for the proposed research, and the feasibility of using the population.
- If applicable, provide a description of how the knowledge, information, products, or technologies gained from the research could be implemented in a dual-use capacity to both benefit the civilian population and address a military need.

- **Attachment 8: Animal Research Plan (no page limit): Upload as “AnimalResPlan.pdf”.** (*Attachment 8 is only applicable and required for applications proposing animal studies.*)

Provide a summary describing the animal research that will be conducted. Consult the ARRIVE (Animal Research: Reporting *In Vivo* Experiments) guidelines 2.0 (<https://arriveguidelines.org/arrive-guidelines>) to ensure relevant aspects of rigorous animal research are adequately planned for and, ultimately, reported. The Animal Research Plan may not be an exact replica of the protocol(s) submitted to the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). The Animal Research Plan should address the following points to achieve reproducible and rigorous results for each proposed animal study:

- Briefly describe the research objective(s) of the animal study. Explain how and why the animal species, strain, and model(s) being used can address the scientific objectives and, where appropriate, the study’s relevance to human biology.
- Summarize the procedures to be conducted. Describe how the study will be controlled. Identify the ages, sex, and total number of animals by species to be used.
- Describe the randomization and blinding procedures for the study, and any other measures to be taken to minimize the effects of subjective bias during animal treatment and assessment of results. If randomization and/or blinding will not be utilized, provide justification.
- Provide a sample size estimate for each study arm and the method by which it was derived, including power analysis calculations.
- Describe how data will be handled, including rules for stopping data collection, criteria for inclusion and exclusion of data, how outliers will be defined and handled, statistical methods for data analysis, and identification of the primary endpoint(s).
- Describe how data will be reported and how it will be assured that the documentation will support potential regulatory filing, if applicable.

- **Attachment 9: Partnership Statement (Required only if exercising the Partnering PI Option; one-page limit): Upload as “Partnership.pdf”.** Describe how the partners’ combined experience will better address the research question and explain why the work should be done together rather than through separate efforts.
- **Attachment 10: Representations (*Extramural Submissions Only*): Upload as “RequiredReps.pdf”.** All extramural applicants must complete and submit the Required Representations template available on eBRAP (<https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>). For more information, see the General Application Instructions, Appendix 8, Section B, Representations.

- **Attachment 11: Suggested Intragovernmental/Intramural Budget Form (if applicable):** Upload as “IGBudget.pdf”. If an [intramural DOD organization](https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm) will be a collaborator in performance of the project, complete a separate budget using the “Suggested Intragovernmental/Intramural Budget Form”, available for download on the eBRAP “Funding Opportunities & Forms” web page (<https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>). The budget should cover the entire period of performance for each intramural DOD site and include a budget justification as instructed. The **total** costs per year for each subaward (direct and indirect costs) should be included on the Grants.gov Research & Related Budget Form under subaward costs. Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section V.A.(e), for additional information and considerations.
- (c) **Research & Related Personal Data:** For extramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B.(c), and for intramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section V.A.(c), for detailed instructions.
- (d) **Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded):** For extramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B.(d), and for intramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section V.A.(d), for detailed instructions.
- **PI Biographical Sketch (six-page limit):** Upload as “Biosketch_LastName.pdf”. The suggested biographical sketch format is available on the “Funding Opportunities & Forms” web page (<https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>) in eBRAP. The NIH Biographical Sketch may also be used. All biographical sketches should be submitted in uneditable PDF format.
 - **PI Previous/Current/Pending Support (no page limit):** Upload as “Support_LastName.pdf”.
 - **Key Personnel Biographical Sketches (six-page limit each):** Upload as “Biosketch_LastName.pdf”.
 - **Key Personnel Previous/Current/Pending Support (no page limit):** Upload as “Support_LastName.pdf”.
- (e) **Research & Related Budget:** For extramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B.(e), and for intramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section V.A.(e), for detailed instructions.
- **Budget Justification (no page limit):** For extramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B.(e), Section L, for instructions. For intramural submissions, refer to General Application Instructions, Section V.A.(e), Budget Justification Instructions.
 - If exercising the **Partnering PI Option**, the Initiating and Partnering PIs must **each** submit, as part of their respective Grants.gov or eBRAP application package, a budget and justification ***specific to their distinct portions of the effort***. The Initiating PI should

not include budget information for Partnering PI even if they are located within the same organization. Refer to [Section II.D.5, Funding Restrictions](#), for detailed information.

(f) Project/Performance Site Location(s) Form: For extramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B.(f), and for intramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section V.A.(f), for detailed instructions.

(g) Research & Related Subaward Budget Attachment(s) Form (if applicable, Extramural Submissions Only): Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B.(g), for detailed instructions.

- **Extramural Subaward:** Complete the Research & Related Subaward Budget Form and upload through Grants.gov.
- **Intramural DOD Subaward:** Complete a separate “[Suggested Intragovernmental/Intramural Budget Form](#)” for each intramural DOD subaward and upload as a single document titled **IGBudget.pdf** to Grants.gov as Attachment 11.

II.D.2.b.iii. Full Application Submission Components for the Partnering PI (if exercising the Partnering PI Option)

The application submission process for the *Partnering PI* uses an *abbreviated* full application package. Refer to the equivalent attachment above for details specific to each of the following application components.

(a) SF424 Research & Related Application for Federal Assistance Form (Extramural Submissions Only): Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B.(a), for detailed information.

(b) Attachments:

- **Attachment 5: Statement of Work (three-page limit): Upload as “SOW.pdf”.** The Partnering PI must submit an SOW that is *identical* to that submitted by the Initiating PI. The SOW shall be jointly created by both PIs. *The specific contributions of each PI should be clearly noted for each task.*
- **Attachment 10: Representations (Extramural submissions only): Upload as “RequiredReps.pdf”.**
- **Attachment 11: Suggested Intragovernmental/Intramural Budget Form: Upload as “IGBudget.pdf”.**

(c) Research & Related Personal Data: For extramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B.(c), and for intramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section V.A.(c), for detailed information.

(d) Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded): For extramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B.(d), and for intramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section V.A.(d), for detailed information.

- **PI Biographical Sketch (six-page limit):** Upload as “Biosketch_LastName.pdf”.
- **PI Previous/Current/Pending Support (no page limit):** Upload as “Support_LastName.pdf”.
- **Key Personnel Biographical Sketches (six-page limit each):** Upload as “Biosketch_LastName.pdf”.
- **Key Personnel Previous/Current/Pending Support (no page limit):** Upload as “Support_LastName.pdf”.

(e) Research & Related Budget: For extramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B.(e), and for intramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section V.A.(e), for detailed information.

- **Budget Justification (no page limit):** Upload as “BudgetJustification.pdf”.
- The Initiating and Partnering PIs must *each* submit, as part of their respective Grants.gov or eBRAP application package, a budget and justification *specific to their distinct portions of the effort*. The Research & Related Budget for the Partnering PI should **not** include budget information for the Initiating PI, even if they are located within the same organization. Refer to [Section II.D.5, Funding Restrictions](#), for detailed information.

(f) Project/Performance Site Location(s) Form: For extramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B.(f), and for intramural submissions, refer to General Application Instructions, Section V.A.(f), for detailed information.

(g) Research & Related Subaward Budget Attachment(s) Form (if applicable, Extramural Submissions Only): Refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B.(g), for detailed information.

- **Extramural Subaward:** Complete the Research & Related Subaward Budget Form through Grants.gov.
- **Intramural DOD Subaward:** Complete the “[Suggested Intragovernmental/Intramural Budget Form](#)” for each intramural DOD subaward and upload as a single document titled IGBudget.pdf to Grants.gov as Attachment 11.

II.D.2.c. Applicant Verification of Full Application Submission in eBRAP

Independent of submission type, once the full application is submitted it is transmitted to and processed in eBRAP. At this stage, the PI and organizational representatives will receive an email from eBRAP instructing them to log into eBRAP to review, modify, and verify the full

application submission. Verification is strongly recommended but not required. eBRAP will validate full application files against the specific program announcement requirements, and discrepancies will be noted in the “Full Application Files” tab in eBRAP. However, eBRAP does not confirm the accuracy of file content. It is the applicant’s responsibility to review all application components and ensure proper ordering as specified in the program announcement. ***The Project Narrative and Research & Related Budget Form cannot be changed after the application submission deadline. If either the Project Narrative or the budget fails eBRAP validation or needs to be modified, an updated full application package must be submitted prior to the full application submission deadline.*** Other application components, including subaward budget(s) and subaward budget justification(s), may be changed until the end of the [application verification period](#). The full application cannot be modified once the application verification period ends.

II.D.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)

The applicant organization must be registered as an entity in SAM (<https://www.sam.gov/content/home>) and receive confirmation of an “Active” status before submitting an application through Grants.gov. Organizations must include the UEI generated by SAM in applications to this funding opportunity.

II.D.4. Submission Dates and Times

The pre-application and application submission process should be started early to avoid missing deadlines. There are no grace periods. Failure to meet either of these deadlines will result in submission rejection.

All submission dates and times are indicated in [Section I, Overview of the Funding Opportunity](#).

II.D.5. Funding Restrictions

The maximum period of performance is **2** years for Funding Level 1 and **3** years for Funding Level 2.

The application’s direct costs budgeted for the entire period of performance should not exceed **\$260,000 for Funding Level 1** or **\$750,000 for Funding Level 2**. If indirect cost rates have been negotiated, indirect costs are to be budgeted in accordance with the organization’s negotiated rate. Collaborating organizations should budget associated indirect costs in accordance with each organization’s negotiated rate.

Funding Level 2 with the Partnering PI Option:

- The \$750,000 funding restriction applies to the ***combined*** direct costs for the applications of the Initiating PI and the Partnering PI. Collaborating organizations should budget associated indirect costs in accordance with each organization’s negotiated rate.
 - A separate award will be made to each PI’s organization.

- The PIs are expected to be partners in the research, and direct cost funding should be divided accordingly unless otherwise warranted and clearly justified.

All direct and indirect costs of any subaward or contract must be included in the direct costs of the primary award.

The applicant may request the entire maximum funding amount for a project that may have a period of performance less than the maximum **2** years for **Funding Level 1** or **3** years for **Funding Level 2**.

For this award mechanism, direct costs:

May be requested for:

- Travel in support of multi-institution collaborations.
- Travel for one investigator to travel to one scientific/technical meeting per year to present project information or disseminate project results from the FY24 VRP IIRA.

Must not be requested for:

- Clinical trial costs

For **Funding Level 2**, direct costs must be requested for:

- Travel costs for the PI to present project information or disseminate results at one DOD-sponsored meeting to be specified by the program office during award negotiations (e.g., the Military Health System Research Symposium). For planning purposes, it should be assumed that the meeting will be held in the Central Florida Area. Costs associated with travel to this meeting should be included in year 2 or 3 of the budget. This is in addition to the scientific/technical meeting described above.

II.D.6. Other Submission Requirements

Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 2, for detailed formatting guidelines.

II.E. Application Review Information

II.E.1. Criteria

II.E.1.a. Peer Review

To determine technical merit, all applications will be individually evaluated according to the following **scored criteria**, which are of equal importance:

- **Impact**
 - To what extent the proposed research will advance the field of visual system trauma research, change the standard of care, improve the quality of life, contribute to the development or validation of evidence-based policy or guidelines, or otherwise impact the visual health of Service Members, Veterans, and the American public.
- **Research Idea**
 - **Funding Level 1:**
 - To what extent the idea of the proposed research, including the objective(s) and/or hypothesis(es), is based on sound rationale and critical analysis of literature.
 - To what extent the proposed research has the potential to yield new avenues of investigation.
 - **Funding Level 2:**
 - To what extent the idea of the proposed research, including the objective(s) and/or hypothesis(es), is based on sound rationale and critical analysis of literature and preliminary data.
 - To what extent the proposed research is innovative or novel or offers significant refinements, improvements, or new applications of existent ideas or solutions.
- **Research Strategy**
 - To what extent the specific aims are appropriate to address the objective(s) and/or hypothesis(es) of the proposed research.
 - To what extent the experimental design, methods, and analyses are appropriate and feasible.
 - To what extent the statistical plan is appropriate.
 - How well the proposed research is designed to achieve reproducible and rigorous results, including controls, sample size(s), blinding, randomization, and data handling, and measures to reduce bias.
 - How well the application acknowledges potential problems and addresses alternative approaches.
 - If applicable, how well the animal study is designed to achieve the study objectives, including the appropriateness and relevance of animal model(s), experimental procedures, randomization and blinding procedures, and endpoints/outcome measures.
 - If applicable, how well the human study is designed to achieve the study objectives, including description of and access to the study population(s) or sample(s), plans for

subject recruitment, consent, screening and retention, and plans for addressing ethical and regulatory considerations.

- If applicable, whether the strategy for the inclusion of women and minorities and distribution of proposed enrollment is appropriate for the proposed study.
- If applicable, whether data will be appropriately reported and documented to support a regulatory filing.

- **Personnel**

- To what extent the backgrounds, expertise, and past accomplishments of the PI(s) and key personnel are appropriate to accomplish the proposed research project.
- Whether the levels of effort by the PI(s) and key personnel are appropriate for the successful conduct of the proposed project.
- **For applications exercising the Partnering PI Option:** How the partners' combined expertise will better address the research question.

- **Environment**

- To what extent the scientific environment is appropriate for the proposed research project.
- How well the research requirements are supported by the availability of and access to facilities and resources (including collaborative arrangements).
- To what extent the quality and level of institutional support are appropriate for the proposed research project.

In addition, the following **unscored** criteria will also contribute to the overall evaluation of the application:

- **Budget**

- Whether the **direct** costs exceed the allowable direct costs as published in the program announcement.
- Whether the budget is appropriate for the proposed research.

- **Data and Resources Sharing**

- Whether the plan for sharing data and resources is appropriate and reasonable.

- **Application Presentation**

- To what extent the writing, clarity, and presentation of the application components influence the review.

II.E.1.b. Programmatic Review

To make funding recommendations and select the application(s) that, individually or collectively, will best achieve the program objectives, the following criteria are used by programmatic reviewers:

- Ratings and evaluations of the peer reviewers
- Relevance to the priorities of the DHP and FY24 VRP, as evidenced by the following:
 - Adherence to the intent of the award mechanism, including alignment with at least one of the [FY24 VRP Focus Areas](#)
 - Relative impact
 - Relevance to military health
 - Contribution to program portfolio

II.E.2. Application Review and Selection Process

All applications are evaluated by scientists, clinicians, and consumers in a two-tier review process. The first tier is **peer review**, the evaluation of applications against established criteria to determine technical merit, where each application is assessed for its own merit, independent of other applications. The second tier is **programmatic review**, a comparison-based process in which applications with high scientific and technical merit are further evaluated for programmatic relevance. Final recommendations for funding are made to the Commanding General, USAMRDC. *The highest-scoring applications from the first tier of review are not automatically recommended for funding. Funding recommendations depend on various factors as described in [Section II.E.1.b, Programmatic Review](#).* Additional information about the two-tier process used by the CDMRP can be found at <https://cdmrp.health.mil/about/2tierRevProcess>.

All CDMRP review processes are conducted confidentially to maintain the integrity of the merit-based selection process. Panel members sign a statement declaring that application and evaluation information will not be disclosed outside the review panel. Violations of confidentiality can result in the dissolution of a panel(s) and other corrective actions. In addition, personnel at the applicant or collaborating organizations are prohibited from contacting persons involved in the review and approval process to gain protected evaluation information or to influence the evaluation process. Violations of these prohibitions will result in the administrative withdrawal of the organization's application. Violations by panel members or applicants that compromise the confidentiality of the review and approval process may also result in suspension or debarment from federal awards. Furthermore, the unauthorized disclosure of confidential information of one party to a third party is a crime in accordance with 18 USC 1905.

Following selection of projects for VRP funding, the VRP may share FY24 IIRA applications and reviews with the NEI of the NIH for independent funding consideration. Additional or

separate application information may be required by NEI. The number of applications to be considered for funding by NEI is indeterminate and contingent upon NEI's determination of the quality of applications and funding availability.

II.E.3. Integrity and Performance Information

Prior to making an assistance agreement award where the federal share is expected to exceed the simplified acquisition threshold, as defined in 2 CFR 200.1, over the period of performance, the federal awarding agency is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is available in SAM.

An applicant organization may review SAM and submit comments on any information currently available about the organization that a federal awarding agency previously entered. The federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards when determining a recipient's qualification prior to award, according to the qualification standards of the Department of Defense Grant and Agreement Regulations (DoDGARs), Section 22.415.

II.F. Federal Award Administration Information

II.F.1. Federal Award Notices

Each applicant organization and PI will receive email notification when the funding recommendations are posted to eBRAP. At this time, each PI will receive a peer review summary statement on the strengths and weaknesses of the application and an information paper describing the funding recommendation and review process for the VRP award mechanisms. The information papers and a list of organizations and PIs recommended for funding are also posted on the program's page within the CDMRP website.

If an application is recommended for funding, after the email notification is posted to eBRAP, a government representative will contact the person authorized to negotiate on behalf of the recipient organization.

Only an appointed USAMRAA Grants Officer may obligate the government to the expenditure of funds to an extramural organization. No commitment on the part of the government should be inferred from discussions with any other individual. ***The award document signed by the Grants Officer is the official authorizing document (i.e., assistance agreement).***

Intra-DOD obligations of funding will be made according to the terms of a negotiated Inter-Agency Agreement and managed by a CDMRP Science Officer.

Funding obligated to ***intragovernmental and intramural DOD organizations*** will be sent through the Military Interdepartmental Purchase Request (MIPR), Funding Authorization Document (FAD), or Direct Charge Work Breakdown Structure processes. Transfer of funds is contingent upon appropriate safety and administrative approvals. Intragovernmental and intramural DOD investigators and collaborators must coordinate receipt and commitment of

funds through their respective Resource Manager/Task Area Manager/Comptroller or equivalent Business Official.

An organization may, at its own risk and without the government's prior approval, incur obligations and expenditures to cover costs up to 90 days before the beginning date of the initial budget period of a new award. For extramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section IV.B.(e), Pre-Award Costs section, and for intramural submissions, refer to the General Application Instructions, Section V.A.(e), Pre-Award Costs section, for additional information about pre-award costs.

If there are technical reporting requirement delinquencies for any existing CDMRP awards at the applicant organization, no new awards will be issued to the applicant organization until all delinquent reports have been submitted.

II.F.2. PI Changes and Award Transfers

Unless otherwise restricted, changes in PI or organization will be allowed on a case-by-case basis, provided the intent of the award mechanism is met.

An organizational transfer of an award supporting the Initiating PI or Partnering PI is discouraged and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

An organizational transfer of an award will not be allowed in the last year of the (original) period of performance or any extension thereof.

Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 7, Section F, for general information on organization or PI changes.

II.F.3. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Applicable requirements in the DoDGARs found in 32 CFR, Chapter I, Subchapter C, and 2 CFR, Chapter XI, apply to grants and cooperative agreements resulting from this program announcement.

Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 7, for general information regarding administrative requirements.

Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 8, for general information regarding national policy requirements.

Refer to full text of the latest [DoD R&D Terms and Conditions](#) and the [USAMRAA Research Terms and Conditions: Addendum to the DoD R&D Terms and Conditions](#) for further information.

Applications recommended for funding that involve animals, human data, human specimens, human subjects, or human cadavers must be reviewed for compliance with federal and DOD animal and/or human subjects protection requirements and approved by the USAMRDC Office of Human and Animal Research Oversight, prior to implementation. This administrative review

requirement is in addition to the local IACUC, IRB, or Ethics Committee review. Refer to the General Application Instructions, Appendix 6, for additional information.

The VRP requires that all TBI-related clinical research with at least 50 subjects funded by this program be shared through the jointly supported DOD-National Institutes of Health Federal Interagency TBI Research Information System (FITBIR). Recipients will be required to upload study data annually and in accordance with the FITBIR data submission policies. There is no fee to use FITBIR, and detailed guidance and policies, including a cost estimator tool for budgeting considerations, can be found at <https://fitbir.nih.gov>.

II.F.4. Reporting

Annual technical progress reports and quad charts as well as a final technical progress report and quad chart will be required. Annual and final technical reports must be prepared in accordance with the Research and Performance Progress Report (RPPR).

The Award Terms and Conditions will specify whether additional and/or more frequent reporting is required.

Award Expiration Transition Plan: An Award Expiration Transition Plan must be submitted with the final progress report. Use the one-page template “Award Expiration Transition Plan,” available on the eBRAP “Funding Opportunities & Forms” web page (<https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>) under the “Progress Report Formats” section. The Award Expiration Transition Plan must outline if and how the research supported by this award will progress and must include source(s) of funding, either known or pending.

PHS Inclusion Enrollment Reporting Requirement (*only required for clinical research studies*): Enrollment reporting on the basis of sex/gender, race, and/or ethnicity will be required with each annual and final progress report. The PHS Inclusion Enrollment Report is available on the “Funding Opportunities & Forms” web page (<https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm>) in eBRAP.

Awards resulting from this program announcement may entail additional reporting requirements related to recipient integrity and performance matters. Recipient organizations that have federal contract, grant, and cooperative agreement awards with a cumulative total value greater than \$10M are required to provide information to SAM about certain civil, criminal, and administrative proceedings that reached final disposition within the most recent 5-year period and that were connected with performance of a federal award. These recipients are required to disclose, semiannually, information about criminal, civil, and administrative proceedings as specified in the applicable Representations (see General Application Instructions, Appendix 8, Section B).

II.G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts

II.G.1. eBRAP Help Desk

Questions regarding program announcement content or submission requirements as well as technical assistance related to pre-application or intramural application submission

Phone: 301-682-5507

Email: help@eBRAP.org

II.G.2. Grants.gov Contact Center

Questions regarding Grants.gov registration and Workspace

Phone: 800-518-4726; International 1-606-545-5035

Email: support@grants.gov

II.H. Other Information

II.H.1. Program Announcement and General Application Instructions Versions

Questions related to this program announcement should refer to the program name, the program announcement name, and the program announcement version code 901a. The program announcement numeric version code will match the General Application Instructions version code 901.

II.H.2. Administrative Actions

After receipt of pre-applications or full applications, the following administrative actions may occur.

II.H.2.a. Rejection

The following will result in administrative rejection of the pre-application:

- Preproposal Narrative exceeds page limit.
- Preproposal Narrative is missing.

The following will result in administrative rejection of the full application:

- Submission of an application for which a letter of invitation was not issued.
- Project Narrative exceeds page limit.

- Project Narrative is missing.
- Budget is missing.

II.H.2.b. Modification

- Pages exceeding the specific limits will be removed prior to review for all documents other than the Preproposal Narrative and the Project Narrative.
- Documents not requested will be removed.

II.H.2.c. Withdrawal

The following may result in administrative withdrawal of the pre-application or full application:

- An FY24 VRP Programmatic Panel member is named as being involved in the research proposed or is found to have assisted in the pre-application or application processes including, but not limited to, concept design, application development, budget preparation, and the development of any supporting documentation, including letters of support/recommendation. *A list of the FY24 VRP Programmatic Panel members can be found at <https://cdmrp.health.mil/vrp/panels/panels24>.*
- The application fails to conform to this program announcement description.
- Inclusion of URLs, with the exception of links in References Cited and Publication and/or Patent Abstract sections.
- Applications that include names of personnel from either of the CDMRP peer or programmatic review companies. For FY24, the identities of the peer review contractor and the programmatic review contractor may be found at the CDMRP website (<https://cdmrp.health.mil/about/2tierRevProcess>).
- Personnel from applicant or collaborating organizations are found to have contacted persons involved in the review or approval process to gain protected evaluation information or to influence the evaluation process.
- Applications from extramural organizations, including non-DOD federal agencies, received through eBRAP.
- Applications submitted by a federal government organization (including an intramural DOD organization) may be withdrawn if (a) the organization cannot accept and execute the entirety of the requested budget in current fiscal year (FY24) funds and/or (b) the federal government organization cannot coordinate the use of contractual, assistance, or other appropriate agreements to provide funds to collaborators.
- Application includes research data that are classified and/or proposes research that may produce classified outcomes, or outcomes deemed sensitive to national security concerns.

- The invited application proposes a different research project than that described in the pre-application.
- Submission of the same research project to different funding opportunities within the same program and fiscal year, while recognizing the specific [exception](#) to this withdrawal criteria stated in Section II.D., Application and Submission Information.
- A clinical trial is proposed.
- The PI does not meet the eligibility criteria.
- *(If exercising the Partnering PI Option)* Failure to submit all associated (Initiating PI and Partnering PI) applications by the deadline.

II.H.2.d. Withhold

Applications that appear to involve research misconduct will be administratively withheld from further consideration pending organizational investigation. The organization will be required to provide the findings of the investigation to the USAMRAA Grants Officer for a determination of the final disposition of the application.

II.H.3. Full Application Submission Checklist

Full Application Components	Uploaded	
	PI / Initiating PI for Partnering PI Option	Partnering PI for Partnering PI Option
SF424 Research & Related Application for Federal Assistance (Extramural submissions only)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summary (Tab 1) and Application Contacts (Tab 2) (Intramural submissions only)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attachments		
Project Narrative – Attachment 1, upload as “ProjectNarrative.pdf”	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Supporting Documentation – Attachment 2, upload as “Support.pdf”	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Technical Abstract – Attachment 3, upload as “TechAbs.pdf”	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Lay Abstract – Attachment 4, upload as “LayAbs.pdf”	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Statement of Work – Attachment 5, upload as “SOW.pdf”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Impact Statement – Attachment 6, upload as “Impact.pdf”	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Relevance to Military Health Statement – Attachment 7, upload as “Military.pdf”	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Animal Research Plan – Attachment 8, upload as “AnimalResPlan.pdf”, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Partnership Statement – Attachment 9, Upload as “Partnership.pdf”, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Representations (Extramural submissions only) – Attachment 10, upload as “RequiredReps.pdf”, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Suggested Intragovernmental Budget Form – Attachment 11, upload as “IGBudget.pdf”, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research & Related Personal Data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attach PI Biographical Sketch (Biosketch_LastName.pdf)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attach PI Previous/Current/Pending Support (Support_LastName.pdf)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attach Biographical Sketch (Biosketch_LastName.pdf) for each senior/key person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attach Previous/Current/Pending (Support_LastName.pdf) for each senior/key person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research & Related Budget (Extramural submissions only) Include budget justification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budget (Intramural submissions only) Include budget justification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Project/Performance Site Location(s) Form	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research & Related Subaward Budget Attachment(s) Form (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX 1: ACRONYM LIST

ACOS/R&D	Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development
ARRIVE	Animal Research: Reporting <i>In Vivo</i> Experiments
CDMRP	Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DHP	Defense Health Program
DOD	Department of Defense
DoDGARs	Department of Defense Grant and Agreement Regulations
eBRAP	Electronic Biomedical Research Application Portal
ET	Eastern Time
FAD	Funding Authorization Document
FITBIR	Federal Interagency Traumatic Brain Injury Research
FTTSA	Focused Translational Team Science Award
FY	Fiscal Year
IACUC	Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
IIRA	Investigator-Initiated Research Award
IRB	Institutional Review Board
M	Million
MIPR	Military Interdepartmental Purchase Request
NEI	National Eye Institute
NIH	National Institutes of Health
PDF	Portable Document Format
PHS	Public Health Service
PI	Principal Investigator
RPPR	Research Performance Progress Report
SAM	System for Award Management
SOW	Statement of Work
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
UEI	Unique Entity Identifier
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
USAMRAA	U.S. Army Medical Research Acquisition Activity
USAMRDC	U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command
USC	United States Code
VA	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
VRP	Vision Research Program