China Medical Board
2024 Open Competition Grants Program
Call for Applications

Invitation for Applications

The China Medical Board (CMB) invites early and mid-career researchers and health professionals from collaborating institutions to apply for the CMB Open Competition (CMB-OC) research grants. This is the 14th annual round of the CMB-OC program, with this year's theme focusing on digital health.

Background

The CMB-OC program, started in 2011, was designed to promote the career development of early and mid-career researchers and health professionals in China. The program's rigorous merit-based peer review process seeks to identify researchers with high potential for an independent research-intensive career. CMB-OC awardees receive research funding and join an active CMB research community. The program is highly competitive. Over the course of 13 cycles, CMB has awarded 183 CMB-OC grants totaling nearly 16 million US dollars.

2024 CMB-OC Program

In this 2024 round, CMB commits up to 1 million US dollars to support grants of $50,000 to $100,000 each. A committee of international experts will review full proposals and select outstanding applications for funding. Each successful applicant will receive a grant to conduct their project for no more than three years.

The 2024 CMB-OC program prioritizes projects in digital health. Digital health is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the field of knowledge and practice associated with the development and use of digital technologies to improve health. According to the U.S. National Academy of Medicine, developments such as digitally mediated diagnosis and treatment, cloud computing, machining learning, artificial intelligence, block-chain, tele-health, and consumer-facing mobile health applications have been used in self-management, health care and biomedical sciences. Over the past few decades, these technologies have been driving a revolution in health care. Supported by moderate evidence, digital technologies have vast potential to enhance the delivery of care for individuals across the spectrum of health promotion and disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation. Digital health solutions are also acknowledged for their potential to support public health practices and health system strengthening.

While digital health interventions offer the potential to transform and revolutionize health care, many remained in the pilot stage and failed to demonstrate effectiveness or to be scaled

up in the real-world setting. There have been many digital health studies mainly focusing on the technology features, but lacking adequate understanding of the social and technical aspects when human-centered design principles are implemented.

This Call for Applications is designed to move forward with global understanding and efforts to apply and scale up digital health tools, solutions, and interventions to enhance the quality, safety, efficiency, and equity of care. It is released against the backdrop of the need to enhance the appropriate adoption of digital health tools and solutions, crucial for transforming healthcare services and systems, which aligns with the vision and agenda of the WHO's Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020-2035 and the Healthy China 2030 initiative. CMB hopes to use this open competition program to support young Chinese health professionals in undertaking projects that demonstrate strong potential application, thereby enhancing their academic capabilities and to equip them with the essential skills and mindset for the digital era. The OC grant will not only aim to catalyze the advancement of digital health in China, but also to promote international exchange and collaborations in relevant fields.

In the 2024 OC program, CMB welcomes a wide variety of project proposals, including clinical and translational projects, implementation science, and system strengthening projects, etc. The CMB-OC grant mechanism will not support fundamental basic science research or drug trials. Proposed topics must focus on addressing a specific issue that is of practical significance and value for the current needs of clinical professionals, public health practitioners, patients, and the general public in China.

The feasibility of implementing the proposed project must be thoroughly evaluated, considering factors such as the grant size, project duration, team capabilities, data security and privacy concerns, as well as health system priorities and capabilities. PIs should define the anticipated risks that might cause the proposed innovation to fail and how they plan to rationally de-risk the innovation; also, explicitly define the outcomes they need to achieve to progress. For proposed pilot studies, it is very important for the PIs to demonstrate considerations of the sustainability of the project outcome as well as concrete plans for applying and scaling up the outcome in real-world settings including future partnerships should the pilot prove successful.

Areas for potential projects include but are not limited to:
- Appropriate utilization of digital tools and solutions in disease diagnosis and treatment in clinical settings,
- Development and implementation of digital tools and solutions for consumers and patients in prevention, early screening, and self-management of disease,
- Development of digital health solutions and interventions aimed at improving the equity, efficiency, accessibility, and continuity of care,
- Applications of digital health tools and solutions in pandemic preparedness and responses, especially the early detection of infectious diseases at the community level,
- Digital health solutions and interventions to enhance the effectiveness of health education and health promotion programs.

Eligibility to Apply

The OC grants aim to support early and middle-stage career researchers and health professionals from universities (including affiliated hospitals) and research institutions in China. Researchers and health professionals from CMB's collaborating institutions (listed in the Addendum) who received their terminal degree (PhD, ScD, DrPH or MD) in the last 10 years (2014 and beyond) or completed their postdoc/residency training in the last 10 years are eligible to apply for the 2024 CMB-OC grants. Researchers who have received CMB-OC grants as PIs from 2021 to 2023 or as co-PIs in 2023, are not eligible to be PIs or co-PIs for the 2024 CMB-OC grants. We do not restrict the total number of submissions from each institution.

We strongly encourage multidisciplinary work, emphasizing collaboration between clinical medicine, nursing, and/or public health. In particular, it is essential to harness synergies within an institution, leveraging resources across schools or departments supported by institutional leadership for achieving practical, sustainable, and impactful project outcomes. Applicants are also encouraged, where appropriate, to team up with international experts, although the primary lead researcher must be based in China. Collaboration with health systems including letters of support from operational leaders are also highly encouraged. A project can include up to three Co-PIs.

Application Process

This Call for Applications will be implemented in two stages. Along with CVs, applicants should submit a concept note for peer review first. The PIs of projects considered suitable will be invited to submit full proposals which will go through international peer review for the determination of final selection.

A concept note of no more than 2 pages should include the following:
- **General information**: project title (in English and Chinese); PI's full name, institution, and academic & administrative title; amount of funding required; and duration of the project.
- **Project summary**: use no more than 200 words to summarize the specific issue to be addressed, main objective, basic design, expected outputs and significance of the proposed study.
- **Project description**: statement of the aim and objectives, specific activities that will be undertaken to achieve the objectives, methods to be used, expected outputs and outcomes, project team composition, project timeline, and budget breakdown.

The concept note should be submitted in English and combined with the PI's current CVs in both Chinese and English. The CV in each language version should be no more than 3 pages and include the PI's date of birth, contact information, educational background, professional appointments and experiences, grants and fellowships, awards and honors, publications, and previous participation in CMB activities.

Please combine the concept note and CVs into one Microsoft Word file; do not send them separately. When naming the document, please follow the standard format: "**24OC+InstitutionAbbreviation+PI's name**." Letters of support from institutional leaders are not needed at the concept note submission and review stage.

Applicants should submit their application documents through the respective institution's CMB liaison officer (contact information to be found in the Addendum). Applicants from university affiliated hospitals should also send application documents to the respective university's CMB liaison office.

After submitting application materials to the liaison officer, each applicant must register their basic information online by April 1, 2024: https://www.wjx.top/vm/eBam3mV.aspx# Please note that this step is mandatory for the OC application.

CMB Review Criteria

The process is highly competitive, and merit based. PIs of selected concept notes and proposals may be sent comments to assist them in improving their full proposals. The following aspects will be examined during the concept note and proposal review process:
- Practical significance and value of the project,
- Soundness of the research design and appropriateness of methods used,
- Feasibility of the project,
- Sustainability and strength of partnerships for scaling up the technology if successful,
- Potential of the PI to achieve academic excellence,
- Demonstration of multidisciplinary work,
- Cost-effectiveness in producing key knowledge and educational products given the requested budget.

It is CMB policy that all research and education products, including original datasets generated by its grant support, must be widely shared and accessible to the public.

Timeline

April 1, 2024	Submission of concept note
May 31, 2024	Notification of concept notes selected for full proposal development
July 31, 2024	Submission of full proposal
December 1, 2024	Notification of approved proposals for funding

Point of Contact

The CMB liaison officers will serve as the point(s)-of-contact between the institution and CMB in grant management issues. The CMB liaison officers should send all concept notes, proposals, and inquiries to cmbbeijing@cmbfound.org.