

2022 Veteran Marijuana Research (VMR) Grant Program

Briefing and Award Recommendations

July 12, 2022

Introduction

On April 1, 2022, the Cannabis Regulatory Agency (CRA) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Veteran Marijuana Research (VMR) grants. The Michigan Regulation and Taxation of Marihuana Act was passed by the voters of the state of Michigan in November 2018 and, among other things, creates the Marihuana Regulation Fund in the state treasury and requires the Cannabis Regulatory Agency to expend money in the fund until 2022 or for at least two years, to provide \$20 million annually to one or more clinical trials that are approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration and sponsored by a non-profit organization or researcher within an academic institution researching the efficacy of marijuana in treating the medical conditions of United States armed services veterans and preventing veteran suicide.

The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to obtain proposals from non-profit organizations or academic institutions that will outline plans to coordinate and manage research into the efficacy of marijuana in treating the medical conditions of United States armed services veterans and preventing veteran suicide. The grant period is expected to begin July 30, 2022 and end when the clinical trials are complete. The amount available for this Veteran Marijuana Research Grant is \$20,000,000, consisting entirely of funds from the Marihuana Regulation Fund.

The CRA received five responsive proposals in response to the RFP totaling \$37,678,432. One proposal was received after the deadline and was not considered. One proposal was received timely but deemed not responsive as it was not certified/signed, was determined to not meet the mandatory minimum requirements, and was not considered.

The Joint Evaluation Committee recommended that three of the five considered applicants receive grant awards. When determining the amount to be awarded to each organization, the Joint Evaluation Committee took into consideration several factors, including: 1) experience and financial stability of the organization; 2) the applicant's work plan; 3) applicant's management summary, and 4) applicant's budget and budget narrative. The table below provides the JEC's grant award recommendations.

Organization	Amount Requested	Recommended Award Amount
University of Michigan	\$11,987,667	\$7,434,935
Wayne State University (Lundahl, Rabinak)	\$9,028,541	\$9,028,541
Wayne State University (Marusak, Woodcock)	\$3,536,524	\$3,536,524
MI Soo Labs II	Not Considered	-
Field to Healed	\$10,839,999.50	-
Omni Medical Services	\$2,285,700	-
Agricultural Genomics Foundation	Not Considered	-
Total	\$37,678,432	\$20,000,000

Evaluation Method

Responses to this solicitation were reviewed by the Joint Evaluation Committee, which consisted of the following individuals:

Voting	Advisory
Andrew Brisbo, Executive Director Cannabis Regulatory Agency (LARA)	David Harns, Public Relations Manager Cannabis Regulatory Agency (LARA)
Robert Near, Deputy Director Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency	
Catherine Reid, M.D. Medical Adviser, State Hospital Administration Michigan Dept of Health and Human Services	

Evaluation Results

Bidder #1

University of Michigan

Requested Amount: \$11,987,667

JEC Recommended Award: \$7,434,935

After evaluating their responses to the evaluation criteria, the evaluation team determined that the University of Michigan received a fundable score for their RFP response.

1. Experience and Financial Stability of the Organization

The evaluation team determined that the bidder demonstrated the University of Michigan to be a prominent research institute with extensive relevant experience.

2. Work Plan

The evaluation team determined that the bidder presented a detailed work plan with solid control measures, but the study designs were not as sound as they should be.

3. Management Summary

The evaluation team determined that overall, the responses were satisfactory.

4. Budget and Budget Narrative

The evaluation team determined that the proposed budget had clarity and overall, the responses were satisfactory, but the following deficiency was noted: administrative costs were maximized and not itemized.

Total Score: 94/100

Bidder #2

Wayne State University (Lundahl, Rabinak)

Requested Amount: \$9,028,541

JEC Recommended Award: \$9,028,541

After evaluating their responses to the evaluation criteria, the evaluation team determined that Wayne State University (Lundahl, Rabinak) received a fundable score for their RFP response.

1. Experience and Financial Stability of the Organization

The evaluation team determined that the bidder demonstrated Wayne State University to be a prominent research institute, with strong existing connections, experience with veteran networks, and a previous VMR grant relationship.

2. Work Plan

The evaluation team determined that the bidder presented solid control measures and that the management is composed of a solid team which can implement and oversee the trial.

3. Management Summary

The evaluation team determined that, overall, the responses were satisfactory and detailed.

4. Budget and Budget Narrative

The evaluation team noted that the proposed budget was built upon an already-approved 2021 study and is therefore dependent on the parent grant being executed timely and successfully. Overall, the responses were satisfactory, but the following deficiency was noted: administrative costs were maximized and not itemized.

Total Score: 97/100

Bidder #3

Wayne State University (Marusak, Woodcock)

Requested Amount: \$3,536,524

JEC Recommended Award: \$3,536,524

After evaluating their responses to the evaluation criteria, the evaluation team determined that Wayne State University (Marusak, Woodcock) received a fundable score for their RFP response.

1. Experience and Financial Stability of the Organization

The evaluation team determined that the bidder demonstrated Wayne State University to be a prominent research institute with strong existing connections, experience with veteran networks, and a previous VMR grant relationship.

2. Work Plan

The evaluation team determined that the bidder presented a very detailed plan and has existing relationships with Ann Arbor and Detroit veteran groups. The bidder is working with veterans that do not have previous cannabis experience in order to gain unbiased feedback.

3. Management Summary

The evaluation team determined that overall, the responses showed good management and control measures.

4. Budget and Budget Narrative

The evaluation team determined that the proposed five-year budget was easy to follow, but the following deficiency was noted: administrative costs were maximized and not itemized.

Total Score: 98/100

Bidder #4

MI Soo Labs II

Bidder has not met the requirements of being responsive due to submission of their proposal after the deadline.

Bidder #5

Field to Healed

Requested Amount: \$10,839,999.50

JEC Recommended Award: \$0

After evaluating their responses to the evaluation criteria, the evaluation team determined that Field to Healed received a non-fundable score for their RFP response.

1. Experience and Financial Stability of the Organization

The evaluation team determined that while the bidder is experienced in smaller research trials, they did not include much detail regarding organizational financial stability and do not appear to have the necessary financial experience required for this large of a project.

2. Work Plan

The evaluation team determined that the bidder has doctors with experience with FDA approval but places too much emphasis on the placebo effect on their outcomes. The bidder contracts out a large portion of the work without sharing complete plans on what it will look like. Independent Institutional Review Boards at the sites is not the typical manner of coordination.

3. Management Summary

The evaluation team determined that the while the idea of the study is interesting, there

is no evidence that they will be able to carry this out. There is a significant lack of detail with too many gaps in the process and no solid rubric in place.

4. Budget and Budget Narrative

The evaluation team determined that there is not enough oversight in place. In addition, the administrative costs are capped out.

Total Score: 55/100

Bidder #6

Omni Medical Services, Inc.

Requested Amount: \$2,285,700

JEC Recommended Award: \$0

After evaluating their responses to the evaluation criteria, the evaluation team determined that Omni Medical Services, Inc. received a non-fundable score for their RFP response.

1. Experience and Financial Stability of the Organization

The evaluation team determined that the bidder shared very limited information and experience with trials and did not include documentation of research funding and how it is managed. The evaluation team was unable to verify the financials and status of the organization due to the lack of detail provided regarding past experiences.

2. Work Plan

The evaluation team determined that the bidder has only one primary researcher noted, and the proposal does not seem to support a strong group of researchers with experience.

3. Management Summary

The evaluation team determined that the entire proposal only includes one researcher and the grant coordinator (who is also the owner of the entity) involved in the study. The bidder mentions other personnel but doesn't mention the roles they will play in the research; the proposal is severely lacking detail and oversight.

4. Budget and Budget Narrative

The evaluation team determined that the budget and budget narrative were severely lacking in detail; there were a lot of unidentified administrative costs that seemed too extensive to not itemize.

Total Score: 60/100

Bidder #7

Agricultural Genomics Foundation

Bidder has not met the requirements of being responsive due to submission of an unsigned and uncertified proposal as well as due to not meeting the mandatory minimum requirement of demonstrating a history of garnering FDA approval for clinical trials and administering grant funding to researchers for clinical trials.

JEC Scoring Summary

Evaluation Criteria	Points Available	University of Michigan	Wayne State University (Lundahl, Rabinak)	Wayne State University (Marusak, Woodcock)	Field to Healed	Omni Medical Services
Experience and Financial Stability of the Organization	40	40	40	40	25	25
Work Plan	20	15	20	20	10	15
Management Summary	20	20	19	20	10	10
Budget and Budget Narrative	20	19	18	19	10	10
Total	100	94	97	98	55	60