



China Medical Board

2026 CMB Seed Grants for Bilateral Learning Program

Call for Applications

Invitation for Applications

The China Medical Board (CMB) invites early and mid-career researchers and health professionals from academic institutions in China and the United States (U.S.) to collaborate and apply together for the 2026 CMB Seed Grants for Bilateral Learning Program. Evolving from CMB's flagship 15-year Open Competition (OC) Grants Program, this initiative focuses on fostering bilateral academic exchange, mutual learning, and long-term collaborative research between early and mid-career scholars from China and the U.S., with the 2026 focus on cardiovascular diseases (CVD), hypertension and stroke.

Background

Launched in 2011, the CMB OC Grants Program was designed to support the career development of early and mid-career health professionals in China through theme-based research funding. Through a rigorous, merit-based peer review process that identified scholars with strong potential for independent, research-intensive careers, the program awarded more than 210 grants totaling over US\$17 million across clinical medicine, public health, health policy, and other related fields over 15 annual cycles, playing a pivotal role in nurturing young academic talent in China's health sector.

In 2025, CMB launched an expanded program to promote collaboration between US and Chinese investigators. The application framework was designed to support two Principal Investigators (PIs), one from China and one from the U.S., who are part of either an on-going or newly formed collaboration. Approved projects received a total grant of US\$100,000, allocated equally between the two PIs. The inaugural grants were very well received with positive feedback from the academic community and from early and mid-career medical and health scholars in both countries, underscoring the value of collaboration in advancing bilateral health exchange and peer learning.

Against this backdrop, and in line with CMB's ongoing commitment to fostering academic exchange and collaboration between health professionals from China and the U.S. amid the evolving global health landscape, CMB has established the annual program as the CMB Seed Grants for Bilateral Learning Program (BLP). The new title more fully reflects the initiative's core purpose: to support bidirectional learning, reciprocal knowledge sharing, and sustainable collaborative partnerships between the next generation of medical and health leaders in China

and the U.S., while co-developing innovative, practice-oriented solutions to shared health challenges faced by both nations.

2026 CMB Seed Grants for Bilateral Learning Program

In 2026, CMB will provide up to US\$1 million in total funding to support approximately 10 projects. Each approved project will receive a total grant of US\$100,000, split equally between the Chinese and U.S. PIs, with a maximum project implementation period of 3 years.

The 2026 program prioritizes research projects focused on cardiovascular diseases (CVD), hypertension and stroke. CVD, including stroke, remains the leading cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide. Hypertension is the most significant modifiable risk factor for both coronary heart disease and stroke. Given that stroke accounts for a substantial proportion of CVD-related deaths and disability in both China and the U.S., this year's program identifies stroke as a core outcome of interest.

Globally, CVD causes more than 18.6 million deaths each year, with China and the United States together accounting for nearly one-third of this burden. As the single largest modifiable risk factor for CVD and the primary contributor to stroke risk, hypertension contributes to more than half of all CVD-related deaths worldwide.

In the U.S., nearly half of all adults live with hypertension, yet only one in four patients achieves adequate blood pressure control. Cardiovascular disease remains the number one killer in the U.S., with stroke being the fifth leading cause of death. While age-adjusted death rates plummeted by as much as 70% since the 1970s due to new medicines and public health campaigns, the tide has turned in recent years. Increasing rates of obesity and diabetes continue to drive cardiovascular morbidity upward. Hypertension remains a critical risk factor, with projections indicating that by 2050, over 180 million U.S. adults will be affected, and related healthcare costs will triple. If current trends persist, cardiovascular disease will continue to account for hundreds of thousands of American deaths each year.

In China, 330 million people are affected by CVD, including 245 million with hypertension, and CVD accounts for two out of every five deaths nationwide, with stroke bearing a particularly high burden in the Chinese population. Notably, there has been a marked shift in the incidence of acute cardiovascular events such as sudden cardiac death and myocardial infarction toward younger populations, a trend evident in both China and the U.S., which further underscores the urgency and importance of bilateral collaborative research and the development of targeted prevention and control strategies between the two nations.

China and the U.S. face shared critical challenges in this field, including population aging, a rising prevalence of modifiable risk factors, persistent gaps in primary care prevention and management, health inequities in underserved populations, and the slow translation of evidence-based interventions into real-world clinical and community practice. Managing hypertension is not only about controlling blood pressure numbers but also about preventing its end-organ damage, which includes both cardiac events (heart failure, myocardial

infarction) and cerebrovascular events (stroke). Researchers from China and the U.S. hold complementary strengths in clinical research, implementation science, health system innovation, and digital health applications for CVD and hypertension management. Bilateral collaboration between early and mid-career scholars enables the co-creation of targeted solutions to these shared China-U.S. challenges, builds sustainable academic partnerships and fosters bidirectional learning to advance the field, with such solutions also able to provide valuable references for other countries.

For the 2026 program, CMB will consider projects focused on cardiovascular diseases and stroke, with priority given to those that address hypertension as a key risk factor. Stroke and myocardial infarction share common underlying mechanisms including atherosclerosis, thromboembolism, inflammation, and endothelial dysfunction—all exacerbated by hypertension. Proposals should ideally reflect an integrated approach to cardiovascular and cerebrovascular health.

This Call for Applications aims to advance efforts to improve cardiovascular and cerebrovascular health, and strengthen hypertension prevention and control in China and the U.S. CMB seeks to support early and mid-career health professionals from the two countries to collaboratively develop practice-oriented research projects with strong real-world application, while laying the foundation for long-term academic partnerships and bilateral peer learning. CMB welcomes a wide range of project proposals, including clinical and translational research, implementation science research, health service and health system strengthening initiatives, and multidisciplinary collaborative projects. Multidisciplinary collaboration is strongly encouraged, particularly between neurology, cardiology, nursing, public health, and health policy disciplines, as it integrates diverse professional perspectives to address the complexity of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular challenges and enhances the comprehensiveness and practicality of research outcomes. This grant mechanism does NOT support fundamental basic science research, prospective cohort studies, or drug clinical trials. All proposed projects must explicitly target and address a specific shared challenge faced by both China and the U.S. in the field of CVD, hypertension, and stroke; the research findings, intervention strategies, and potential fundings should be applicable to both countries.

The feasibility of proposed projects will be thoroughly evaluated, considering factors including scope and duration of the project, team capabilities, data security and privacy compliance, and alignment with the strategic priorities of the health systems in both China and the U.S. PIs must identify potential risks and challenges to project implementation and outline clear mitigation strategies. For pilot studies, PIs must demonstrate concrete plans for sustaining project outcomes and scaling successful interventions in real-world settings in both China and the U.S., including plans for long-term bilateral collaboration beyond the grant period.

Areas for potential projects include but are not limited to

- Innovative, scalable screening and primary prevention models for hypertension and cardiovascular and cerebrovascular risk factors in community and primary care settings, to

reduce premature CVD and stroke mortality and major adverse cardiac events.

- Practice-oriented clinical research on enhanced diagnosis, treatment, and care management strategies for CVD and post-stroke sequelae, to improve care quality, patient safety, and patient-reported outcomes.
- Research on integrated care models that address social determinants of health, mental health comorbidities, and multidisciplinary care for patients with chronic CVD, post-stroke disability, and hypertension, to reduce health disparities and improve long-term well-being in both nations.
- Implementation and evaluation of digital health tools to improve medication adherence, healthy behavior promotion, and self-management among patients with hypertension and those at risk for stroke.
- Low-cost, scalable intervention models for hypertension and cardiovascular and cerebrovascular management in underserved and resource-limited settings, adaptable to the primary care contexts of China and the U.S.
- Integrated care models for geriatric patients with CVD, stroke, multimorbidity, and frailty, to optimize cardiovascular and neurological outcomes in aging populations.
- Cross-national comparative research on CVD, hypertension, stroke prevention and control policies, health system models, and implementation strategies to generate evidence for bilateral learning and policy improvement.

Eligibility to Apply

The 2026 CMB Seed Grants for Bilateral Learning Program targets early and mid-career researchers and health professionals from universities (including affiliated hospitals) and research institutions in China and the U.S. Eligibility criteria are structured as follows, with core team requirements, universal standards, and country-specific provisions clearly defined:

- **Core team composition**

Applications must be submitted by a collaborative team led by one PI from China and one PI from the U.S.; no additional co-PIs are permitted. Each PI may only participate in one application for the 2026 program.

- **Universal eligibility standards for both PIs**

- PIs must have received their terminal degree (PhD, ScD, DrPH, or MD) between January 1, 2016, and December 31, 2025, or have completed postdoctoral training or MD residency within the same 10-year period.
- Current postdoctoral fellows or MD residents are NOT eligible to apply.
- PIs must hold a full-time appointment at their respective institutions.

- **Country-specific institutional and citizenship requirements**

Chinese PI must hold Chinese citizenship and be affiliated with a CMB collaborating institution in China (a full list is available in the Addendum). U.S. PI must hold U.S. citizenship and be a full-time employee at a leading U.S. academic or medical institution (CMB does not maintain a list of eligible U.S. institutions; the top 30 U.S. universities in medicine, public health, or nursing may serve as a reference).

- **Ineligibility for prior grantees**

Researchers who have received CMB OC grants as PIs in 2024 and 2025 are not eligible to apply as PIs for the 2026 program. There are no restrictions on the total number of submissions from each eligible institution.

Application Process

All application materials must be compiled into a single PDF document and submitted by the CMB liaison officer of the Chinese PI's institution to cmbbeijing@cmbfound.org by July 1, 2026. The online registration form must also be completed jointly by both PIs via the designated link by the same deadline.

- **Mandatory submission requirements**

- The online registration step is a prerequisite for application eligibility; only one joint registration form per project is required. (<https://www.wjx.top/vm/wt0e0OP.aspx#>)
- Both PIs must comply with their respective institutions' internal approval processes for joint grant applications prior to submission.

- **Required application materials**

All materials must be prepared in accordance with CMB specifications, with a clear delineation of the Chinese and U.S. teams' respective roles, responsibilities, and work contributions in the proposal:

- **Joint Full Project Proposal:** Developed in line with the *CMB BLP Proposal Guidelines*, including separate detailed budgets for the Chinese and U.S. teams aligned with their work plans.
- **CVs:** Each PI's CV (maximum 3 pages) must be in English, including educational background, professional appointments, grants and awards, key publications, and prior participation in CMB activities; the Chinese PI must additionally provide a Chinese version of their CV.
- **Letters of Departmental Approval:** One official letter from each PI's host institution (in English), signed or stamped by the department head (or equivalent), confirming the PI's full-time appointment, institutional support for the project, and compliance with internal grant management regulations.
- **Letter of Institutional Support (U.S. only):** One official letter of institutional support from the institution of the U.S. PI. The letter should be from and signed by the official at the U.S. PI's institution who is authorized to represent the institution in the acceptance of sponsored support to the institution. The letter should indicate that the grant proposal and supporting materials have been reviewed by the official and that the institution understands that the project will involve collaboration between a U.S. based PI and a Chinese based PI who will conduct the project in collaboration with each other. The letter should further state that the institution approves the project.
- **Citizenship Self-Declaration:** A signed document from each PI confirming their

citizenship status, to be combined with all other application materials.

- **Funding disbursement and project management rules**

- Funding allocation: For approved projects, CMB Beijing will disburse US\$50,000 in equivalent CNY to the Chinese PI's institution; CMB headquarters will disburse US\$50,000 to the U.S. PI's institution. Funds cannot be transferred between Chinese and U.S. institutions across national borders, and each team will manage and utilize funds in accordance with their approved budget and institutional financial regulations.
- Overhead cost limits: The administrative/overhead charge for the Chinese institution cannot exceed 5% of its US\$50,000 budget, while that for the U.S. institution cannot exceed 10% of its US\$50,000 budget.
- Ethical review: The proposed project must comply with the ethical review regulations of both PIs' host institutions. CMB does not require completed ethical review approval at the time of application, but approval must be obtained prior to project implementation for all funded projects.
- Project start date: All funded projects will officially commence on January 1, 2027.

Review Criteria

The application review process is highly competitive and strictly merit-based. A committee of international experts will conduct a full peer review of all eligible applications and select outstanding projects for funding. CMB will announce the final funding decisions by November 1, 2026.

Applications will be evaluated based on the following core criteria, with a focus on bilateral collaboration and real-world application in China and the U.S.:

- Practical significance and bilateral value: Alignment with the 2026 CVD/hypertension/stroke theme, and a clear ability to target and address a specific shared challenge faced by both China and the U.S. in this field; the proposed project's findings, interventions and outputs must demonstrate explicit and practical applicability.
- Research design quality: Soundness of the research design, appropriateness of the methods employed, and clarity of the implementation plan tailored to the health system contexts of both countries.
- Project feasibility: The team's technical and operational capacity to complete the proposed work, availability of necessary resources, and clear risk mitigation strategies for cross-national project implementation.
- Bilateral collaboration quality: Substantial and equal contribution from both PIs, with clear evidence of bidirectional learning and potential for long-term sustainable academic partnerships between China and the U.S.
- Innovation and application value: Novelty of the research approach, strong real-world applicability in both countries, and concrete, actionable plans for sustaining project outcomes and scaling successful interventions in real-world settings.
- Multidisciplinary collaboration: Effective integration of different disciplines (where applicable) to address the shared China-U.S. CVD/hypertension/stroke challenge.
- Cost-effectiveness: Reasonableness of the proposed budget for both teams, and the ability to deliver the intended bilateral outputs and outcomes with the requested funding.

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

Point of Contact

The CMB liaison officers will serve as the point of contact between the institution and CMB regarding all grant application and management issues. The CMB liaison officers should send all application materials and inquiries to cmbbeijing@cmbfound.org.

Addendum 1: CMB Collaborating Institutions in China and Liaison Information

Institution	Abbreviation	Liaison Officer	Email
Center for Health Statistics & Information, NHC	CHSI	Zhang Yaoguang	zhangyg@nhc.gov.cn
Central South University	CSU	Xie Yun	agnesxieyun@qq.com
China Medical University	CMU	Bai Xueying	xybai@cmu.edu.cn
China National Health Development Research Center	CNHDRC	Zhang Zhisheng	zhangzs@nhei.cn
Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences & Peking Union Medical College	PUMC	Liu Jiuchang	liujccams@163.com
CUHK-Shenzhen, School of MEDICINE	CUHK-SZ	Alice Siu	alicesiu@cuhk.edu.cn
Duke Kunshan University	DKU	Wang Bingyi	bingyi.wang@dukekunshan.edu.cn
Fudan University	Fudan	Wang Xi	wangxi@fudan.edu.cn
Guangxi Medical University	Guangxi	Xie Li	iec-gmu@163.com
Guangzhou Medical University	Guangzhou	Ma Xiaojie	horse3838@163.com
Hainan Medical University	Hainan	Qiu Lei	qiulei@hainmc.edu.cn
Harbin Medical University	Harbin	Yang Libin	yanglib@126.com
Huazhong University of Science and Technology	HUST	Luo Xin	luoxin2049@hust.edu.cn
Inner Mongolia Medical University	InnerMongolia	Zhang Nan	skyzn@126.com
Jiujiang University Medical Center	Jiujiang	Niu Li	bull1271@126.com
Kunming Medical University	Kunming	Guo Haiyun	seaokmu@163.com
Lanzhou University	Lanzhou	Zhang Hairong	chevidence@lzu.edu.cn
Nanjing Medical University	Nanjing	Xu Yang	xuyang@njmu.edu.cn
New York University Shanghai	NYUShanghai	Guan Chenghe	cg157@nyu.edu
Ningxia Medical University	Ningxia	Zhu Meilin	fa@nxmu.edu.cn
Peking University Health Science Center	PKUHSC	Zhou Xiaoshu	rjennyz_813@163.com
Shandong University	Shandong	Li Huijing	lihuijing@sdu.edu.cn
Shanghai Health Development Research Center	SHDRC	Yuan Fei	yuanfei@shdrc.org
Shanghai Jiao Tong University	SJTU	Luo Lan	luolan@shsmu.edu.cn
Shanghai Tech University	ShanghaiTech	Zhu Chouwen	zhuchw@shanghaitech.edu.cn
Sichuan University	Sichuan	Yin Junbo	stephen68@126.com
Tongji University	Tongji	Shen Huixia	shhx@tongji.edu.cn
Tsinghua University	Tsinghua	Tang Kun	tangk@mail.tsinghua.edu.cn
Wuhan University	Wuhan	Shi Xinyu	global@whu.edu.cn
Xi'an Jiaotong University	Xi'an	Li Xiaomei	roselee@xjtu.edu.cn
Zhejiang University	Zhejiang	Chen Jing	chenjing2006@zju.edu.cn
Sun Yat-sen University	SYSU	Yang Ya	yangy256@mail.sysu.edu.cn

Addendum 2: Guidance for U.S. Applicants – Preparing for a CMB Foundation Grant

If you are a U.S. applicant considering applying for a grant from the China Medical Board (CMB) Foundation, it is helpful to understand the post-award process in advance. This guide provides a brief overview of the standard grant notification process and the materials your institution may need to prepare in advance. Understanding these steps early can help ensure a smooth acceptance and setup process if your application is successful.

1. Program Overview

This grant supports a U.S.-China collaborative project under the CMB Seed Grants for Bilateral Learning Program. The program funds paired principal investigators (PIs)—one from China and one from the U.S.—to conduct joint research on shared health challenges. Each selected project will receive a total of US\$100,000, with US\$50,000 awarded to each PI. The maximum project period is three years. The 2026 program prioritizes research on cardiovascular diseases, hypertension and stroke. Funds must be used strictly for the purposes outlined in the approved proposal and budget.

2. Information to Be Submitted with the Proposal

To facilitate a smooth grant acceptance process, the following information must be submitted together with the proposal. Please provide the contact details of the individual at your institution who is authorized to countersign grant agreements and commit the institution to the stated terms and conditions.

Authorized Institutional Signatory

Contact Name	
Title	
Institution	
Address	
City, State, ZIP	
Email	
Phone (optional)	

Please note also, that a letter of support from the authorized institutional authority is required to be submitted with the application. See the Proposal Guidelines, Section X for this requirement.

3. Required Materials for Acceptance (U.S. Institutions)

When a program proposal is chosen for a grant award, your institution will receive a grant notification letter signed by the President of CMB. Your institution must then submit the following materials by the specified deadline to secure the grant funds:

- **Countersigned Grant Notification Letter:** The official grant notification letter must be signed by an authorized institutional representative.
- **Payment Instructions:** Bank account information for receiving the wire transfer.

- **IRS Tax-Exempt Status Confirmation:** A copy of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Certificate Letter confirming the exempt status of your institution under Internal Revenue Code 501(a), as an organization described in Section 501(c)(3).

4. **Signing Authority**

The letter of institutional support submitted with the application, and the grant notification letter if an award is made, must be countersigned by an individual who has the institutional authority to accept funding and commit the institution to the stated terms and conditions. This signatory is typically not the principal investigator. In most cases, the appropriate signer is a senior institutional official with the authority to act on behalf of the institution.