

Funding Opportunity For Summer Program To Accelerate Regenerative Medicine Knowledge (SPARK)

RFA 15-06



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

09.17.15 (revised)



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Funding Opportunity For Summer Program To Accelerate Regenerative Medicine Knowledge (SPARK)

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Objective

The mission of California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) is to accelerate stem cell therapies to patients with unmet medical needs.

The objective of the Summer Program to Accelerate Regenerative Medicine Knowledge (SPARK) is to enable California academic institutions to provide summer training opportunities in stem cell research to high school students who represent the diversity of California's population, particularly those who might not otherwise have opportunities to take part in summer research internships due to socioeconomic constraints. Through summer lab internships, community outreach and patient engagement, CIRM hopes to inspire, educate and motivate high school students to become involved in CIRM's mission of accelerating stem cell treatments to patients with unmet medical needs.



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Award Information

How is the SPARK training program structured?

Each SPARK program will be led by a qualified Program Director based at the awardee institution who will be responsible for the management and coordination of all activities supported by the program as well as the recruitment of qualified trainees. CIRM SPARK programs must supplement and integrate with existing summer programs sponsored by eligible California universities, colleges or research institutes. Summer research internships, which are a central component of these programs, will take place in internship-host laboratories at the applicant Institution.

Each SPARK summer program will provide all of the following Core Training Activities:

- ✓ **Internship in a research laboratory** – a summer internship of up to 12 weeks that provides hands-on stem cell research experience culminating in a poster presentation at a CIRM-hosted event.
- ✓ **Auxiliary educational activities** – A short course / workshop to prepare the trainees for their research activities prior to their project start date.
- ✓ **Patient engagement activities** – at least a one-day activity that engages trainees with patients and/or could benefit patients.
- ✓ **Community education and social media activities** – Trainees will be required to keep a weekly blog of their internship activities, and submit Instagram pictures of their most inspired “hands-on” research activity.

How much will CIRM provide to cover the cost of required activities?

Each award will support a minimum of five and up to ten trainees per year, and programs will be funded for up to five years. CIRM will provide each program with direct project costs of up to \$72.5K per year plus 10% indirect costs on eligible expenses. CIRM will not fund facilities costs. The maximum total award amount per program over five years is \$399K. CIRM anticipates funding up to ten programs.

1. **Trainee Funds** The award will provide up to the following amounts per trainee:
 - a. Trainee Stipends – \$2,500 for a full time research internship of up to 12 weeks duration.
 - b. Mentor Stipends – \$1,000 for each mentor (e.g. senior graduate student or postdoc) engaged in direct supervision of the trainee during the entire duration of the trainee’s summer internship. An individual may only serve as a mentor for one trainee.
 - c. Research-related funds – up to \$500 for research project costs to the internship host laboratory.
 - d. Travel expenses – up to \$750. These funds must be used to cover travel costs for travel to attend the CIRM sponsored poster day held at the end of each summer. Excess funds may be used to cover other program-related travel for the trainee.



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2. Program Administration Funds

Up to \$2,500 per year per trainee may be requested for administrative support salaries, activities focused on patient engagement, community outreach or other activities that enhance the educational value of the program. Adequate justification for all Program Administration expenses must be provided.

Eligibility

Who can apply?

Applicant institutions must be California public universities or colleges, or private, non-profit academic institutions in California that are accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Applicant institutions must have an existing high school summer internship program. Non-profit organization means either: (1) a governmental entity of the state of California; or (2) a legal entity that is tax exempt under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3) and California Revenue and Taxation Code section 23701d.

Each eligible applicant institution may submit only a single application.

Who can serve as Program Director (PD)?

The PD is the individual(s) who directs the planning and execution of the summer research internship program including primary responsibility for all programmatic and administrative aspects of the program and adherence to budgetary, policy, and reporting requirements. The PD must be an employee with relevant experience at the applicant institution.

What are the required Core Training Activities?

The proposed training program must develop and provide all of the following Core Training Activities for each trainee:

Internship in a research laboratory: All trainees must participate in stem cell related research or therapy development through internships in laboratories at the applicant institution. Internship labs must be engaged in stem/progenitor cell research, translation, or therapy development that relates to human disease and regenerative medicine.

CIRM will fund summer internships for up to 12 weeks. Programs must detail plans to recruit qualified students of diverse cultural and socio-economically challenged backgrounds. All internships within a Program must be of the same duration in each funded year.

Auxiliary educational activities: Programs must provide a short course / workshop to prepare the trainees for their research activities prior to their internship project start date.

Patient engagement activities: Programs must provide at a minimum a one-day activity that engages trainees with patients and/or could benefit patients. Such activities could include a full day volunteer participation in medical settings (e.g. community clinic, emergency room, etc.). Programs **must** include participation in



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blood donation, bone marrow registry or similar awareness campaigns as one component of the patient engagement activities.

Community education and social media activities: All trainees must keep a weekly blog of their internship activities and submit one to three Instagram pictures of their most inspired “hands-on” research activity. All communication via Social media activities will be available to the public and therefore will require the approval of the host laboratory head prior to posting

Schedule And Deadlines

Applications Due	October 1, 2015, 2:00pm Pacific Time
Grants Working Group (GWG) Review	November 2015
ICOC Review and Approval	January 2016
Award Start	May 2016

Application Review Information

What is the process for evaluating an application?

Eligibility Review

CIRM will assess whether the applicant and proposed SPARK program meet eligibility requirements under this RFA. If CIRM determines, in its sole discretion, that an applicant or proposed program does not meet the eligibility requirements, CIRM will notify the applicant of its decision, and the application will not be reviewed.

Scientific Review

The scientific and educational merit of each application will be assessed by the GWG, which is composed of fifteen subject matter experts from outside California, seven patient advocate members of the Independent Citizens Oversight Committee (ICOC), and the Chair of the ICOC. The list of scientific members who may participate in the GWG review can be found at http://www.cirm.ca.gov/WorkingGroup_GrantsReview. The composition of the ICOC can be viewed at <http://www.cirm.ca.gov/GoverningBoard>.

The fifteen participating scientists on the GWG will evaluate the applications and score them according to scientific and technical merit, applying the review criteria described below. The GWG scientific members will score each application and the full GWG will make funding recommendations to the ICOC's Application Review Subcommittee.



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The ICOC's Application Review Subcommittee will make final funding decisions giving consideration to the GWG recommendations and any CIRM team recommendations.

Confidentiality

CIRM's confidentiality and conflict screening rules apply to everyone who will have access to applications or who will attend any review meeting in which confidential information is discussed, including but not limited to CIRM team members, reviewers and members of the ICOC. (Per Gov. Code §6254.5(e) non-public records may be disclosed to government agencies under confidentiality agreements.)

How will the educational and technical merit of an application be evaluated?

Scientific members of the GWG will evaluate and score applications based on the following key criteria:

1. Does the proposed program hold the necessary significance and potential for impact?

Is the proposed training program likely to have a meaningful, positive impact on trainees' awareness of stem cell research? Is the program likely to foster a commitment among trainees to the CIRM Mission of accelerating the delivery of stem cell-based therapies to patients with unmet medical needs? Is the program likely to impact trainees representing diverse cultural and socio-economically challenged backgrounds?

2. Is the training program well planned and designed?

Is the training program appropriately planned and designed to provide all trainees a quality, first-hand experience in stem/progenitor cell laboratory research, translation, or therapy development? Are there robust plans in place to support all required Core Training Activities? Does the program provide a suitable mentorship for all SPARK trainees? Have adequate mechanisms and procedures been established for tracking trainee progress after completing the program?

3. Is the proposed program practical and achievable?

Does the program have access to all the necessary resources, including personnel and key partnerships, to implement and carry out the proposed training program? Is the program director appropriately qualified to manage and lead the training program? Does the institutional commitment and track record support achievement of program objectives? Are appropriate mechanisms established for the recruitment of qualified students with diverse cultural and socio-economically challenged backgrounds?

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Application Components And Submission

How does one apply?

Applications must be completed online using the CIRM Grants Management Portal at <https://grants.cirm.ca.gov>. Any prospective Program Director (PD) must create a login in the system to access application materials and apply. Applications are available in the system only to the PD. A PD may submit only a single application in response to this RFA.

Applications are due by 2:00 PM (Pacific Time) on October 1, 2015.

What is required to prepare a complete application?

The Grants Management Portal provides instructions for completing all the necessary components and submitting a final application. The application is designed to collect information necessary to appropriately evaluate the proposal and for CIRM to rapidly initiate an award if approved for funding. Applicants are required to indicate key personnel involved in the program, describe how the program will address the RFA objectives and provide a detailed plan of proposed activities.

The main body of the proposal contains the following sections:

- 1. Program Summary:** description of the proposed program of training including the numbers of trainees, the nature and scope of courses and ancillary educational activities, and the range of research opportunities available to trainees in the program.
- 2. Trainee Selection and Placement:** description of how trainees (including trainees with diverse cultural and socio-economically challenged backgrounds) will be recruited and selected for the program and how trainees will be placed in internships.
- 3. Auxiliary educational activities:** description of short course / workshop on preparing the trainees for their research activities prior to their project start date as well as how trainee progress and accomplishment will be assessed throughout the summer program.
- 4. Patient Engagement Activities:** description of planned activities, nature of trainee involvement and potential to enhance trainees' understanding of the challenges of being a patient.
- 5. Community Outreach:** description of planned activities focused on sharing their experiences about stem cell biology and regenerative medicine and with patients with a diverse and broader audience via social media.
- 6. Program Leadership and Administration:** description of plans for the educational and administrative leadership and program oversight; description of the qualifications for the Program Director.
- 7. Prior Program Track Record and Outcomes:** description of prior Creativity Awards (if applicable) or other similar program including success in recruiting qualified students of diverse cultural and socio-economically challenged backgrounds and quantitation of program outcomes (success rate of previously enrolled trainees that have gained admission into a college in a science related field).

**Who are Key Personnel?**

In the application, we ask you to identify by name Key Personnel and their specific roles in the program. For SPARK, Key Personnel include the Program Director and any key administrative personnel. Do not include internship-host mentors in this section.

What should one know before preparing the budget?

All budgetary requests must be indicated on the online application form. Limits for each budget category are indicated above (Award Information: How much will CIRM provide to cover the cost of required activities?) and must be observed. Budget justification for "Program Administration Funds" should provide sufficient detail to allow evaluation of the appropriateness of the costs in relation to the activities proposed. Budget justification for "Trainee Funds" is not required; however, the number of trainee positions should be justified in the "Overall Program Design" section of the proposal.

How much can an applicant claim for indirect costs?

Indirect costs will be limited to 10% of the total direct costs (Trainee Funds and Program Administration Funds). For this program, CIRM will not allow the applicant institution to incur additional Indirect Costs on any subcontract costs proposed for the project.

Award Administration

Issuance of Award

Awards will be made in the form of a grant. CIRM will disburse funds pursuant to a Notice of Award.

Reporting

Grantees will be required to provide annual written progress and financial reports to CIRM.

Fund Carry-forward and No-Cost Extensions

Trainee funds cannot be carried forward from one grant year to the next. All unobligated trainee funds at the end of each trainee internship must be returned to CIRM and cannot be used to fund additional internships, additional program administration funding or for any other purpose unless specifically approved in advance by CIRM for exceptional circumstances. CIRM will allow carry-forward of unobligated program administration funds from one grant year to the next in order to allow use of those funds in a way that best serves the trainees.

No-cost extensions (NCEs) are not permitted under this program.



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