THE SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL RESEARCH FUNDING (GRANTS REVIEW) WORKING GROUP OF THE CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE FOR REGENERATIVE MEDICINE

Agenda Item 6:
Consideration of the interim criteria for review of research grant applications.

According to Proposition 71, the Grants Review Working Group (GRWG) is required to recommend criteria for the evaluation of research grant applications to the Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee (ICOC). We request that the GRWG recommend interim criteria at this time so that the criteria can be stated in Requests For Applications (RFAs) that are now in preparation. Over the course of time, CIRM will issue a number of different kinds of RFAs, both with respect to topic and with respect to grant mechanism (i.e. seed grants; single investigator, RO1-style grants; multi-investigator, program project-style grants, etc). The criteria that we seek should be general enough to provide an overall framework within which most or all of the grant types can be accommodated, with the understanding that the individual criteria may be weighted differently depending on the purpose and goals of each RFA.

As stated in agenda item 4, the review process by the GRWG will take place in two stages. In the first stage, as mandated by Proposition 71, the fifteen scientific members of the Working Group will evaluate the scientific merit of each proposal. In the second stage of the process, the Working Group will choose the applications to recommend to the ICOC for approval to fund by CIRM.

To provide a starting point for discussion, CIRM staff has drafted criteria for you to consider in your deliberations. For the scientific evaluation, we suggest that the following be considered:

- *Impact and Significance.* Does the research address an important problem? Will the proposed research significantly move the field forward, either scientifically or medically? Will it move us closer to therapy? Will it change our thinking or experimental or medical practice?

- *Quality of the Research Plan.* Is the research carefully planned to give a meaningful result? Are the possible difficulties acknowledged, with alternative plans should the proposed strategy fail? What is the timetable for achieving such significant results ?

- *Innovation.* Is the approach original? Does it bring novel ideas, technologies or strategies to bear on an important problem? Does it break new ground?

- *Feasibility.* Can the aims of the research be reasonably achieved? Does the investigator have access to appropriate technology to perform the research?

- *Investigators.* Do the investigators have the training and experience to carry out the proposed project?

- *Eligibility for Federal funding.* Is the research ineligible or unlikely to receive Federal funding? If not, is the research sufficiently compelling in that it presents "a vital research opportunity" that will materially aid the objectives of CIRM?

In deciding which grants to recommend for funding, we suggest that the following are among the criteria that might be considered in reviewing the entire portfolio of grants that will be recommended for funding:

- *Appropriate balance between innovation and feasibility?*

- *Appropriate balance between fundamental research, therapy development and clinical work? The balance that is appropriate may vary according to the specific requirements or goals of the RFA, and according to the progress of stem cell research over time.*

- *Where relevant, is there an appropriate range of diseases addressed?*

- *Other considerations from the perspective of patient advocates?*