EDUC3: Summer Program to Accelerate Regenerative Medicine Knowledge (SPARK)

Guide for Program Directors

Resources
[The RFA "Funding Opportunities for Summer Program to Accelerate Regenerative Medicine Knowledge (SPARK)](#)
[Information on CIRM internships](#)
[CIRM Grants Administration Policy for Discovery, Translation, and Education Projects](#)

Award Administration
Funding
Each SPARK award has a project period of 5 years and supports summer internships for high school students to provide training and mentorship in stem cell, gene therapy, and related research. Programs must follow these limitations on each budget category:

Stipends
The award provides a stipend of up to $4,500 per trainee for a full-time research internship up to 8 weeks in duration.

Travel Funds
Travel funds of up to $750/trainee/summer are provided to cover attendance at 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. Travel funds may not be expended to cover the costs of travel between the trainee's place of residence and the training institution or to the training institution for the purpose of recruitment.

Program Administration
The award provides up to $4,000 per year per trainee in program administration funds. Program administration funds may be used for administrative support salaries; planning and implementing activities focused on patient engagement, community outreach, course operations and delivery, seminars, or other activities that enhance the educational value of the program; and supplies budget for the host lab, if appropriate. Program administration funds may be used to develop a general education course or workshop on Diversity in Science.

Overhead

For non-profit organizations, CIRM will fund up to 10% Indirect Costs on eligible expenses (excludes tuition and fees). CIRM will not fund Facilities Costs. See CIRM Grants Administration Policy (link on page 1) for definitions of allowable costs.

Program Director

The Program Director must be an employee with relevant experience at the applicant institution or be accountable for the conduct of the proposed project to the applicant organization through a formal contract.

Internship Slots

SPARK Trainees should be supported for the duration specified in the grant. Any change to an individual trainee's appointment duration that differs from that specified in the grant, such as leave of absence, requires Prior Approval and should be adequately justified. Appointing a new trainee sponsor or mentor not in CIRM's Mentor database requires notification to CIRM's Program Officer through the trainee's appointment form. Any mentor changes shall be reported in the annual Progress Report. Adding a new host institution, however, requires a Prior Approval Request.

Carryforward

Awardees will be responsible for tracking all program funding and will report on expenditures and obligations annually.

- CIRM allows carry-forward of any *obligated* trainee funds from one grant year to the next. Obligated trainee funds are the remaining portion of trainee funds associated with trainees whose current year appointments will overlap with the next budget year (not typical for a SPARK summer program).
- CIRM will allow carry-forward of unobligated program administration funds and the associated indirect costs from one grant year to the next, in order to allow use of those funds in a way that best serves the trainees.

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*.

No-Cost Extensions

- No-cost extensions (NCEs) are only permitted under exceptional circumstances where an extension would facilitate the completion of a trainee's normal internship term;
- NCEs require specific Prior Approval by CIRM.

Rebudgeting

Rebudgeting of funds during the budget year is allowed with CIRM's automatic approval, except for rebudgeting trainee-related funds into program administration or indirect costs.

Rebudgeting cannot be used to exceed the per-trainee budget category maximums or stipend caps. For more information, please see page 43-44 of the [CIRM Grants Administration Policy for Discovery, Translation, and Education Projects](#) and [Modification of certain Prior Approval Requests & Trainee Appointments memo (April 2022)](#).

Research Internships and Host Laboratories

Internship Projects must comprise hands-on, regenerative medicine-related research involving stem cells, gene therapy and/or other critical research relevant to understanding or treating a human condition or disease.

Research Internships must take place at host laboratories at the awardee's institution that are non-profit research universities or institutes, **or** at a partnering institution with a stem cell, gene therapy or regenerative medicine focus (Host Site). Before adding new internship Host Sites or laboratories to a program, the Program Director must verify that the research, mentorship and financial resources are adequate to support intern for the duration of their training. Prior Approval from CIRM is required to add a new Host Sites that is external to the grantee institution (partnering institutions).

Reporting Requirements

Grantees are required to submit Annual Progress Reports and Financial Reports. Progress Reports will be due on the anniversary of each budget period and include sections on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as well as alumni tracking. Financial Reports will be due 60 days after each budget period.

SPARK Programs are required to submit Intern Appointment Forms describing the planned laboratory placement, mentor, and research activities/project for each trainee prior to start of the internship. Appointment forms should be submitted to CIRM within 30 days of the trainee's start date. CIRM will only disburse trainee internship funds upon receipt? of an Intern Appointment Form for an eligible trainee. Completion forms are also required and due within 60 days of the end of each appointment period which will describe progress made during the internship period. CIRM will withhold subsequent payments until Appointment and Completion forms are received.

All reporting is submitted via CIRM's online Grants Management System (GMS). To access the reporting requirements, the PD or their delegate first logs into GMS at https://grants.cirm.,ca.gov. In the "Action Items Needing Your Attention" section (found on both the home screen and the "Your Awards" screen), current or overdue reporting requirements are shown. The requirement can be accessed with the "edit" action to the right of the report listing.

To view more information about the award, including upcoming reporting requirements, Trainee Appointment forms, a link to the executed Notice of Award and contact information

for the CIRM Science Officer and Grants Manager, use the "Your Awards" link near the top of the webpage and scroll down to the current award.

Submission of the Annual Progress Reports and Prior Approval Requests requires a secondary submission by the Authorized Organizational Official (AOO) assigned to the award. An email is automatically generated to the AOO after submission by the PD. Financial reports are submitted solely by the Financial Authorized Organizational Official (FAOO) assigned to the award. More information on the AOO and FAOO roles can be found at https://www.cirm.ca.gov/researchers/managing-your-grant#Guides. Appointment forms are completed solely by the PD. Once a full cohort is appointed, the submitted appointment forms are locked. Please contact CIRM if any corrections or additions need to be made.

Assurances

CIRM will require self-certification that, where relevant, applicable protocol approvals for use of human pluripotent stem cells, human subjects, and/or vertebrate animals (SCRO, IRB, IACUC) were in place in host laboratories at the time of internship. Self-certification is provided when reporting on individual trainee progress for their Research Internships.

Other Reports

Grantees are also required to report to CIRM publications, inventions, patent applications, licensing and invention utilization activities that result from CIRM-funded Activities. Specific reporting requirements may be found in regulations adopted by the ICOC governing intellectual property.

Prior Approval Requests

The following post-award changes require the Awardee to submit a Prior Approval Request to CIRM for review and approval before any changes or actions are taken by the Awardee:

- Changes to training period (duration), mentor, or host site for an individual trainee (special circumstances differing from grant description, or mid-internship changes to mentor or Host Site)
- Project Period Extensions
- Change in Program Director
- Award Relinquishment
- Adding a new Host Site (a new Partnering Institution) where internships will take place
- Carry-forward of unobligated trainee funds from one Budget Period to the next for the purpose of increasing the number of approved trainee positions/slots
- Creation of additional trainee positions/slots through rebudgeting or carry-forward
- Major change to program scope (e.g., converting in person to online class)
- Rebudgeting from training-related categories to program administration
- Appointing a trainee to a laboratory mentor that already hosts two or more CIRM trainees from other EDUC programs (Bridges, SPARK, Research Training) - see Policy for Intern Mentorship below.

Policy for Intern Mentorship in the SPARK Program

SPARK trainees engaged in laboratory-based research internship must be supervised by a qualified and suitable laboratory mentor, which may include doctoral or faculty level scientists, experienced senior graduate students, or other qualified lab personnel with appropriate expertise. Any prospective laboratory mentor that is not the Principal Investigator (PI) of the host laboratory must have the support and permission of the PI or equivalent faculty level scientist who is accountable for the conduct of the research and operations of the laboratory or facility where the trainee research is performed, to serve in this role. It is the responsibility of the Program Director to ensure that all laboratory mentors for SPARK trainees are appropriately vetted and have secured any necessary permissions.

To ensure appropriate supervision and commitment to each trainee, a given internship mentor may not be appointed to supervise more than two concurrent trainees from any CIRM training program at any one time without Prior Approval from CIRM, unless the period of overlap is less than 6 months. Prior to making a trainee appointment, Program Directors should consider the availability of the mentor to supervise a new trainee, including any possible overlaps with existing trainees that might result in exceeding this mentorship limit. The goal is to have greater engagement by mentors with each intern and encourage a broader participation of mentors in the SPARK program.