CIRM
CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE FOR REGENERATIVE MEDICINE

Communications Strategy in Response to Federal Developments

Overview:

As a new administration has assumed office, there are many questions and uncertainties about what this means for government agencies (like the FDA and NIH), initiatives focused on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, research funding in California, and the field of regenerative medicine.

Recently, the administration implemented a cancellation of scientific meetings which have caused confusion and concern among the scientific community. The administration has also made efforts to ban Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) programs and initiatives in the federal government, and proposed cuts to indirect and overhead costs in grants.

Given the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine's (CIRM) role as a key research funder, its advocacy for scientific innovation, and its commitment to inclusivity in science, the Agency can be a powerful voice in addressing these challenges.

While these updates have caused concern and uncertainty, CIRM has an opportunity to reinforce the importance of funding regenerative medicine research, protect scientific integrity, and continue promoting equitable access to therapies.

By positioning CIRM as a proactive leader in regenerative medicine and highlighting our efforts to fund the most promising research, CIRM can continue to advance its mission of accelerating world-class science to benefit California.

This communications plan outlines a strategic approach to effectively communicate CIRM's efforts and messages to diverse stakeholders, while emphasizing CIRM's leadership in regenerative medicine and California's vital role in advancing innovative research.

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Communications Objectives:

- **Emphasize CIRM's leadership in regenerative medicine** while highlighting California's critical role in advancing scientific research and the field as a whole
- **Reassure stakeholders** that CIRM's strategic impact goals (SAF) and mission remain unchanged amid uncertainty and potential federal policy shifts and regulatory uncertainties
- **Emphasize the value of science** and the importance of continued investment in research
- **Reaffirm CIRM's commitment to inclusivity** emphasizing the importance of diversity and inclusion in driving scientific excellence and equitable access to transformative therapies
- **Highlight the importance** of evidence-based scientific regenerative medicine research
- **Maintain and deepen relationships with key stakeholders**, including researchers, patient advocacy groups, policymakers, and the broader scientific community.
- **Communicate CIRM's ongoing dedication** to working with legislators, government officials, policy partners, and government agencies to advance the field and respond to potentially harmful policies.
- **Maintain and strengthen public trust** in CIRM and regenerative medicine.
- **Provide relevant information** about the risks of taking unproven and bogus stem cell treatments (stem cell tourism)

Key Audiences

A primary audience is the main group the message or content is intended to reach and directly impact, while a secondary audience is a supplementary group that may indirectly benefit from or influence the primary audience.

Primary Audiences:

- CIRM staff and board
- CIRM awardees and applicants
- Regenerative medicine scientific community
    - Researchers/Clinicians
    - Principal Investigators
- CIRM-funded academic and research institutions
- Patients and patient advocacy groups
- Government officials, agencies, legislators, and policymakers
- CIRM education/training program trainees

- General public

Secondary Audiences:

- Industry

Key Messages:

Key messages relating to communications objectives will be carried across communications channels.

Overall	• In light of recent changes at the federal level, CIRM's goal is to remain a proactive, transparent, and effective voice in the regenerative medicine field—guiding research efforts in the face of uncertainty, regulatory changes, and political shifts. • CIRM's mission is steadfast and grounded in scientific integrity, patient access, and inclusivity. We will continue to lead the way in regenerative medicine and remain a reliable partner to our stakeholders, ensuring that our funding drives groundbreaking therapies to reach patients who need them most. • At CIRM, our mission has never been clearer: to accelerate world-class scientific research that improves patient outcomes, supports innovative research across the state, and drives California's leadership in biotech. Through transparent communication, collaboration, and ongoing support, we remain committed to our stakeholders, to the future of regenerative medicine, and to improving the lives of patients.
CIRM and California's role as a leader in regenerative medicine and scientific innovation	• As a state of California agency, CIRM is uniquely positioned to lead the way in advancing regenerative medicine, even in the face of uncertain federal policies. • CIRM is at the forefront of scientific breakthroughs in regenerative medicine, funding innovative therapies that have the potential to transform patient outcomes. To date, CIRM has invested over $3 billion in cutting-edge stem cell research, accelerating clinical trials, and supporting the development of therapies for conditions that affect people in California and worldwide. • CIRM's commitment to funding regenerative medicine research and programs is unwavering, having funded

	more than $3.8 billion across 1400+ grants in basic research, translational research, and clinical trials. • By investing billions in innovative cell and gene therapy research, CIRM has made California a global leader in the development of regenerative medicine therapies that have the potential to change patient outcomes. • CIRM plays a key role in California's regenerative medicine leadership. Our work not only supports scientific innovation but also drives economic growth, creates jobs, and ensures that life-saving therapies reach the patients who need them. • CIRM is making groundbreaking strides in regenerative medicine through innovative funding and research, helping bring life-changing therapies to patients who need them most. • CIRM's funding programs has strengthened California's biotech ecosystem, encompassing laboratories, Alpha Clinics, and manufacturing facilities. CIRM's industry partnerships continue to grow, and our education and training opportunities are preparing tomorrow's scientists to continue important work in regenerative medicine.
Reassure stakeholders that CIRM's Strategic Goals (SAF) and mission remain unchanged amid uncertainty and potential federal policy changes	• CIRM's mission to advance stem cell and gene therapy research remains unchanged. Our work is guided by our SAF priorities, ensuring that we make strategic, data-driven funding decisions that maximize patient impact. We are working hard to implement the updated funding concepts, resume application reviews, and continue to align our resources with the programs and investments necessary to drive meaningful progress. • While federal policies may shift, CIRM's commitment to drive forward life-saving therapies, foster scientific advancement, and invest in regenerative medicine research is unchanged. • CIRM's position as a state agency, supported by California voters, provides a solid foundation for continuing to drive scientific progress independent of federal policy shifts.

	• CIRM has a proven track-record of adapting to the evolving federal landscape and will continue to work with stakeholders and partners to address potentially adverse actions affecting the regenerative medicine field. • Twenty years ago, CIRM was created with the vision to advance transformative stem cell and regenerative medicine research to benefit Californians and beyond. Our commitment to this vision remains solid. • CIRM's commitment to funding groundbreaking stem cell and regenerative medicine research, and ensuring equitable access to life-saving therapies, is grounded in the principles established when the Agency was founded 20 years ago. While the national landscape may change, CIRM's core goal to advance world class science remains constant and unshaken. • CIRM has a long history of adapting to changing political and regulatory environments while remaining dedicated to its mission of scientific innovation. No matter what happens in Washington, CIRM's track record of resilience and flexibility means that we will continue to provide stable support for the regenerative medicine research and patient community. • CIRM operates with scientific integrity at its core, relying on a rigorous, scientific review process to ensure that our funding decisions supports the most promising and ethical research, regardless of political changes.
Demonstrate CIRM's commitment to upholding inclusivity efforts and initiatives	• CIRM is committed to creating an inclusive and equitable research environment in regenerative medicine, supporting research that benefits underrepresented communities, and ensuring diversity in scientific research outcomes. • CIRM champions inclusivity in our programs, including: ○ *In patient outreach and clinical trial recruitment:* We ask applicants to highlight how they will engage and work with underserved populations to include clinical trial participants from these communities.

	○ *In education and workforce development:* CIRM provides valuable educational opportunities in regenerative medicine for students and young professionals from backgrounds that reflect the diverse communities of the state. Hands-on research and structured mentorships, such as the COMPASS program for undergraduates, empower aspiring scientists to pursue rewarding careers in regenerative medicine. ○ *In research designed for a diverse California:* Access to diverse cell lines for research can have far-reaching impacts on equitable health outcomes for Californians. We've created the world's largest single repository of human induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs), containing over 2,600 cell lines from individuals of diverse ancestries. • Throughout its history, CIRM has fostered crucial partnerships while maintaining a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This approach ensures that innovative therapies reach more communities, particularly those historically underserved by the healthcare system. • Even in an uncertain federal landscape, CIRM will continue to champion inclusivity in science, ensuring that patients have equal access to the transformative power of regenerative medicine. • CIRM has kept diversity, equity, and inclusion at the forefront of everything we do, launching new educational programs to train a diverse workforce, and advancing efforts that address access and affordability.
Highlight the importance of evidence-based scientific regenerative medicine research	• CIRM funds the most scientifically sound, peer-reviewed research that adheres to the highest standards of medical ethics and evidence-based science. • All CIRM-funded projects undergo a thorough review process conducted by leading scientists in the field to ensure that the research is based on credible evidence.

	• Evidence-based regenerative medicine research is already changing lives, and CIRM is funding the science that makes these advances possible. • CIRM has funded discovery research and clinical trials that have led to breakthrough treatments for diseases like sickle cell and Parkinson's disease, all based on years of scientific research. • Misinformation can be harmful to patients and their families. That's why it's important to trust credible sources like CIRM when it comes to understanding regenerative medicine and treatments. • CIRM supports clinical trials that are designed to meet or exceed the standards set by regulatory bodies like the FDA. These trials produce results and evidence of a treatment's safety and effectiveness and promote positive patient outcomes. • CIRM collaborates with world-renowned scientists, medical professionals, and experts in regenerative medicine to ensure that the information we share is accurate, up-to-date, and based on scientific evidence.
Maintain and deepen relationships with key stakeholders, including researchers, patient advocacy groups, policymakers, and the broader scientific community	• CIRM remains committed to fostering relationships with federal agencies like the FDA, NIH, and CDC to ensure that regenerative medicine continues to progress. • CIRM works with federal agencies to navigate the regulatory environment and ensure that the latest scientific advances are aligned with federal policy standards, benefiting both patients and researchers. • CIRM is committed to advancing groundbreaking science by supporting researchers who are pushing the boundaries of regenerative medicine. With more than $3 billion invested in research, CIRM continues to fund high-impact projects that drive scientific progress and support the discovery of novel therapies. • CIRM values collaboration with policymakers to continue supporting our mission as a vital force in driving California's economy and regenerative medicine

	progress. CIRM is integral to California's leadership in biotechnology and regenerative medicine, contributing to economic growth, job creation, and scientific innovation. • CIRM is committed to ensuring that the benefits of regenerative medicine reach communities across California, especially those historically underrepresented in scientific research. By supporting CIRM's efforts, policymakers can play a key role in ensuring that equity and accessibility are integral parts of the future of healthcare.
Communicate CIRM's ongoing dedication to improving outcomes for patients	• CIRM believes in working with patient advocacy groups to ensure that research priorities align with the needs of the communities we serve. Through close collaboration with patient advocacy groups, CIRM identifies research that ensures clinical trials are designed with patients' needs at the forefront. • CIRM values transparency and is committed to keeping patients and advocacy groups informed about the latest research developments and clinical trial progress. • CIRM remains committed to putting patients at the forefront and working with patient advocacy groups to ensure that the latest breakthroughs are accessible to those who need them most.
Emphasize the value of science and the importance of continued investment in research	• Regenerative medicine holds vast potential in treating diseases and injuries that were once considered untreatable. CIRM supports cutting-edge research that focuses on stem cells and regenerative medicine therapies to repair, replace, or regenerate damaged tissues and organs, offering hope for conditions like heart disease, diabetes, spinal cord injuries, and neurodegenerative disorders like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. • Some of the world's biggest health challenges—such as chronic diseases and genetic disorders—require scientific solutions. Regenerative medicine has the potential to offer treatments for conditions that have remained untreatable for decades. Investment in science is critical to developing solutions for these unmet needs.

	• At CIRM, we believe scientific progress is a team effort. CIRM promotes collaboration across research institutions, universities, biotech companies, and hospitals. This collaborative approach helps ensure that cell and gene therapies reach patients faster and more efficiently, demonstrating the power of public-private partnerships in accelerating scientific discoveries. • CIRM's research doesn't just impact California, it's setting the stage for advancements in regenerative medicine worldwide. By pushing the boundaries of science, CIRM's work is helping solve some of the most pressing health challenges, from rare diseases to widespread chronic conditions. • Research is a long-term commitment with the potential for great rewards. CIRM's commitment to continued investments in regenerative medicine research ensures that California remains at the forefront of medical and scientific progress.
Provide relevant information about the risks of taking unproven and bogus stem cell treatments (stem cell tourism)	• Not all stem cell treatments offered to patients around the world are done in the setting of rigorous and formal clinical trials and in a structured regulatory framework, and not all geographical regions have regulations for cellular therapies or patient protection. Additionally, it is possible that some practitioners may offer stem cell procedures without following the existing regulations. That's why CIRM remains committed to providing the public with relevant information to make informed decisions about stem cell treatments. • CIRM has worked with organizations like the International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR) and the worlds top experts to issue guidance helping patients and their families assess international clinics advertising stem cell cures. • In 2017 CIRM partnered with California State Senator Ed Hernandez (D-West Covina) to create a new law that attempts to address stem cell tourism. The bill, SB 512, requires medical clinics whose stem cell treatments are not FDA approved, to post notices and provide handouts to patients warning them about the potential risk.

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Communications Strategies & Tactics

By implementing the previous key messages into the following tactics, CIRM can remains a proactive, transparent, and effective voice in the regenerative medicine field while providing timely updates to stakeholders and audiences.

KEY STRATEGY 1:

Public Relations: Develop media statements and op-eds that address key issues, including inclusivity, scientific research funding, and California's leadership in regenerative medicine.

Specific opportunities include:

- **Talking Points and FAQ:** Craft talking points and key messages related to objectives to ensure messaging is aligned. Develop collateral or landing pages as needed to relay these messages to audience.
- **Board Engagement:** Engage with CIRM Board to develop testimonials or statements on CIRM's blog, website, social media, and other channels. Testimonials and statements should align with overall key messages, goals, and objectives.
- **Media Statements:** Publish media statements (written and video formats) with CIRM's Executive Team on CIRM's website, blog, email newsletters, and social media.
- **Earned Media:** Engage with journalists covering scientific research and biotech to encourage accurate coverage of CIRM's role in the field, efforts, and initiatives. Share media statements with journalists and highlight CIRM Executive Team for thought leadership quotes, interviews, and features.

KEY STRATEGY 2:

Social Media & Content: Use social media platforms to share real-time updates, promote accurate scientific information and CIRM-funded research, promote inclusivity efforts and stories, and engage with both the public and the scientific community.

Specific opportunities include:

- **Content:** Publish recurring stories and real-time updates emphasizing objectives (funding, inclusivity, importance of research, CIRM's impact). Align updates to CIRM's Strategic Allocation Framework (SAF) and Executive Team priorities.
- **Engage CIRM Trainees:** Engage with CIRM trainees on social media to craft messages and amplify CIRM's social media updates (e.g., boost content shares, CIRM Hub, Trainee Alumni Group). Utilize email newsletters to engage trainees.
- **General social media engagement:** Identify platforms, online community groups, and forums to share relevant updates and join the conversation on trending topics.
- **Social media graphics:** Produce a series of graphics optimized for social media platforms, showcasing CIRM's efforts and statements in an engaging, shareable format.
- **Influencer Engagement:** Partner with influencers in the scientific space to amplify key messages.

KEY STRATEGY 3:

Development of Digital Tools & Publications: The digital tools and publications will relay CIRM's messages and efforts, promoting reach and engagement across multiple platforms.

Specific opportunities include:

- **Website landing pages**: Create dedicated section(s) and web landing pages on the CIRM website for updates on policy, CIRM's response when relevant, and its ongoing commitment to scientific research.
- **Stem Cellar Blog:** Regularly update CIRM's blog with research success stories and content that helps clarify complex topics and demonstrates CIRM's leadership. Blog updates should align with objectives and key messages.
- **Email newsletters:** Utilize email marketing tools (MailChimp) to share relevant updates, funding opportunities, and stories showcasing CIRM's commitment to continued research funding, driving innovation, and driving growth in regenerative medicine.
- **Annual report:** Utilize CIRM's annual report to highlight CIRM's efforts at the federal level, including updates from leadership and policy partners.
- **Collateral Development:** Create info sheets, white papers, postcards to distribute at meetings and outreach events, including meetings with legislators and government officials.

KEY STRATEGY 4:

Stakeholder and Community Engagement: Maintain and deepen relationships with key stakeholders, including researchers, patient advocacy groups, STEM-focused organizations, scientific community, policymakers, and broader California communities.

Specific opportunities include:

- **Working with Policy Partners:** Collaborate with policy partners in DC and CIRM's leadership (e.g., Board Vice Chair Maria Bonneville) to write and share relevant updates related to federal policy changes.
- **Meetings and Events**: In partnership with Executive Team, host virtual or in-person meetings and webinars to engage directly with stakeholders and audiences, highlighting CIRM's efforts and addressing stakeholder concerns.
- **Stakeholder Feedback:** Use meetings/events and social media to gather feedback, and foster collaboration in response to federal changes. Create talking points or content based on feedback.
- **Partnerships and Alliances:** Collaborate with other scientific organizations, patient advocacy groups, and academic institutions to amplify CIRM's voice and message, ensuring that the regenerative medicine community is unified and prepared to navigate potential federal policy shifts.
- **Collaborations with STEM-focused organizations:** Highlight partnerships with advocacy groups, which promote inclusion in STEM (SACNAS, etc.).

- **Community Outreach:** Collaborate with CIRM's Community Outreach Manager to incorporate approved key messages into outreach efforts and events.

PR and Earned Media Opportunities:

Are there opportunities to pitch the event or stories to media, organizations, or partners?

- Develop a targeted media pitch highlighting CIRM's efforts, including funding initiatives and research outcomes.
- Engage journalists and media outlets specializing in scientific research and regenerative medicine to amplify CIRM's impact stories and efforts.
- Collaborate with advocacy organizations to identify earned media opportunities through their channels.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

The following are potential questions to address in a comprehensive FAQ document for internal or external use.

- Will CIRM continue its Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) programs and initiatives?
- Will CIRM continue to fund research amid uncertainties in federal funding programs?
- Will changes at the federal level impact CIRM's funding and research?
- How will CIRM's funding for regenerative medicine evolve?
- What will be the federal policy on the use of stem cells and gene therapies?

Relevant Links:

- Jan. 28, 2025 - University of California System Press Release on Federal Funding
- University of California System Federal Update Tracker
- Dec. 12, 2024 - CIRM Board meeting discussion on federal changes
- Jan. 22, 2025 - **Stat News:** Trump administration's abrupt cancellation of scientific meetings prompts confusion, concern
- Jan. 23, 2025 - **Stat News:** FDA purges material on clinical trial diversity from its site, showing stakes of Trump DEI ban
- Jan. 24, 2025 - **Stat News:** Trump's restrictions spark chaos across health and science agencies
- Jan. 28, 2025 - **Vox:** Researchers are terrified of Trump's freeze on science. The rest of us should be, too.
- Feb. 5, 2025 - **Gizmodo:** The List of Trump's Forbidden Words That Will Get Your Paper Flagged at NSF
- Feb. 10, 2025 - **LA Times:** California joins legal fight to stop NIH cuts that could be a blow to UC, CSU other universities

- Feb. 10, 2025 - **CBS News:** Judge directs Trump officials to comply with earlier order halting funding freeze
- Feb. 13, 2025 - **BBC News:** RFK Jr. Confirmed to Lead U.S. Health and Human Services
- Feb. 15, 2025 - **American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology—Press Release:** Cuts to science agencies undermine hope for American health and economies
- Feb. 16, 2025 - **AP News:** Trump administration cuts reach FDA employees in food safety, medical devices and tobacco products
- Feb. 16, 2025 - **LA Times:** California officials detail Trump funding freeze 'chaos,' warn another could cripple state
- Feb. 16, 2025 - **House Democrats:** President Trump and Elon Musk Sabotage Research on Cures and Treatments for Diseases Press Release

- Feb. 17, 2025 - **Sierra Sun Times:** California U.S. Senators Sound Alarm Over Trump Administration's Illegal, Indiscriminate Funding Cuts to National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- Feb. 17, 2025 - **Seattle PI:** Cutting funding for science can have consequences for the economy, US technological competitiveness
- Feb. 20, 2025 - **Reuters:** FDA staffers told that 'woman,' 'disabled' among banned words; White House says it's an error
- Feb. 26, 2025 - **NPR:** NIH partially lifts freeze on funding process for medical research
- Feb. 27, 2025 - **Forbes:** Here's Where Trump's Government Layoffs Are—As Firings At FAA Begin
- Mar. 2, 2025 – **PBS:** Dr. Francis Collins retires from NIH, urging support for crucial research and embattled workers
- Mar. 4, 2025 – **Stat News:** NIH terminates ongoing grants for LGBTQ+ research
- Mar. 4, 2025 – **Slate:** Slashing DEI Is Going to Haunt the Future of Medicine
- Mar. 5, 2025 – **Reuters:** Trump's NIH pick Bhattacharya's challenges to include research funding cuts