

Funding Opportunity to Manage the 2026 CIRM Annual Trainee Network Conference

EDUC 1.12



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

10.15.2026

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Objective

The mission of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) is to accelerate world class science to deliver transformative regenerative medicine treatments in an equitable manner to a diverse California and world.

The objective of this request for applications (RFA) is to solicit a highly qualified applicant to help develop and manage an Annual Trainee Network Conference in support of CIRM's Research Training grant (EDUC) Programs, to take place between May and August of 2026 with consultation and final approval of dates from CIRM.

Award Information

What CIRM Education (EDUC) Programs are included in this Trainee Network Conference?

Key to the achievement of CIRM's mission is the creation of a skilled work force that can tackle the scientific challenges of today and deliver the innovative solutions of tomorrow. To this end, CIRM supports a series of Education programs (EDUC Grants) that provide specialized coursework and laboratory research experiences for students and trainees of various levels around the state of California. Each year, several hundred individuals complete their formal training and progress to new opportunities that may include further education or immediate employment in biomedical related fields. The Trainee Network Conference serves as a culminating event to showcase the achievements of these trainees, and to promote their professional development through peer-to-peer networking and other organized activities.

A summary and description of CIRM's EDUC programs included in this Conference are provided below.

Bridges (EDUC2): The Bridges program provides undergraduate and Masters level students from California State Universities and community colleges with specialized coursework followed by 8-12 months long, full-time research internships in regenerative medicine-based host laboratories within research institutions or biotechnology/pharma companies.

COMPASS (EDUC5): The COMPASS program provides sustained academic and mentoring support to early-stage undergraduate students within California colleges and universities, with an

added focus on identifying untapped talent and bringing unique perspectives to the work force. COMPASS students receive foundational coursework and conduct laboratory internships in regenerative medicine related disciplines.

Research Training (EDUC4): The Research Training program, nicknamed “CIRM Scholars”, includes predoctoral graduate students as well as postdoctoral and clinical fellows. All CIRM Scholars receive specialized coursework and complete multi-year fellowships at world class research institutions in California.

What are the goals of the Annual Trainee Network Conference?

The goals of the Annual Trainee Network Conference are to:

- Expand and enhance the CIRM Trainee Network that includes undergraduates, graduates, and post-graduates pursuing different areas of regenerative medicine
- Provide peer-to-peer networking and career-building opportunities for CIRM trainees exploring the next stages of their professional development
- Provide attendees with workshops/sessions of value such as scientific communication, professional development, patient advocacy, community outreach, mentorship, etc.
- Provide attendees an opportunity to share their research accomplishments more broadly

What is the size, timing, and location?

The Annual Trainee Network Conference should take place between May and August of 2026 and accommodate up to 500 attendees including culminating EDUC trainees, select EDUC program personnel, and invited speakers/guests for a 2.5-day event. The conference should be hosted in a metropolitan area of California containing a major airport.

What activities will CIRM support?

This RFA will support the development and conduct of the 2026 Annual Trainee Network Conference through CIRM’s Conference Grant Program. Under this mechanism, the Awardee will retain the primary responsibility for planning, directing, and executing the proposed event; however, the Awardee will work closely with the CIRM team to design and implement an event that is responsive to CIRM needs. The Awardee is expected to engage and collaborate with a steering committee appointed by CIRM to develop a meeting structure, agenda and to identify speakers and panelists.

To allow ample opportunities for trainees to engage and participate in diverse activities of value, CIRM recommends that the 2026 Trainee Network Conference be structured similarly to the 2025 Trainee Network Conference, the agenda of which can be viewed in the Appendix. Feedback via surveys from the 2025 Conference may be shared with the organizing team to better respond to participant feedback.

[More information about CIRM's Education programs can be found on the CIRM website.](#)

CIRM resources will support the following required core activities under this opportunity:

Direct meeting logistics

- Participation in regular conference planning calls with CIRM
- Venue and site selection
- Arranging hotel blocks, including lodging for up to 20 CIRM Team Members
- Food and beverage planning
- Development of meeting agenda
- Floor plan and site map preparation including diagrams for offices, breakout rooms, speaker-ready rooms, poster rooms, food and beverage spaces, networking spaces, and other relevant environments
- Speaker and panelist coordination, including identification of speakers, collecting presentation materials, and confirming talk topics and logistics
- Schedule meetings and develop contracts/service agreements with core planning team, vendors, and service providers
- Coordination with third-party sponsors (if applicable)

Pre-conference logistics

- Website (and conference app, if applicable) management including website/app design, online registration, attendee abstract submission during online registration and, as applicable, CVs/resumes
- Preparation of digital or printed attendee directory/abstract booklet
- Poster session management, including rental of portable poster boards, set-up, and return
- Coordination of food and beverage services and ensuring compliance with the California State reimbursement requirements
- Coordination of travel, parking, and housing as needed for attendees and guests
- Management of all internet access, AV (including livestream), and IT requirements
- Discussion and arrangement for appropriate poster signage and other conference-related events
- Establishment of safety and emergency response plan
- Solicitation and management of additional sponsorship (optional, but encouraged)

Meeting day requirements

- Venue set-up
- Management of onsite conference registration
- Hotel/venue onsite coordination to manage food, beverage, and other event logistics
- Management of all IT and AV requirements as needed during the conference
- Management of all speaker sessions and/or workshops throughout the conference
- Track attendee participation in sessions
- Security management

Post meeting requirements

- Survey and evaluation
- Timely report to CIRM on meeting results or other debrief session
- Provide event photos to CIRM Staff
- Share recorded sessions through the Conference Website or other means
- Report on attendee satisfaction and outcomes
- Budget and Financial Reconciliation

Meeting Information

For purposes of this RFA, CIRM anticipates the Annual Trainee Network Conference will be held at a suitable venue in California for up to 2.5 days between May and August of 2026, with consultation and final approval of dates from CIRM.

The budget for the Annual Trainee Network Conference is up to a maximum of \$426,000 for all eligible costs and may not exceed this amount. Unspent funds for the 2026 Annual Trainee Network Conference must be returned to CIRM.

The meeting will include:

- Up to 500 attendees for full duration, +/- 50 with partial attendance (e.g., posters only, career fair only, etc.)
- Approximately 1000 room nights for participants (up to 100 of which are for speakers, panelists and CIRM staff, which are paid for by this grant)
- Career fair/networking event and special presentations by trainees and leading scientists in the field of regenerative medicine and/or EDUC program alumni
- A subset of conference sessions open or made accessible to the public or invited members of local community.
- 2 Breakfasts, 2 light lunches, 4 refreshment breaks, 1 dinner, and 1 reception/dinner of up to 500 people (all paid by this grant at CIRM allowable rates¹). If the event plan ultimately requires fewer meals, the budget should reflect appropriate reductions.

Solicitation of outside sponsorship is highly encouraged but not required. CIRM will approve any prospective sponsors to ensure that they are appropriate.

¹ The maximum per-person expenditures for meals and light refreshments may not exceed the amounts defined in [CIRM's Business Meeting Expenditure](#) policy, which are currently: Breakfast \$34.00; Lunch \$54.00; Dinner \$94.00; Light refreshments \$22.00. **Please review CIRM's [policy](#) prior to submitting an application for updates**, to ensure that the most current allowances can be considered.

Eligibility

What types of applicants are eligible to apply?

(1) The applicant team and/or applicant organization must satisfy the following requirements:

- Applicant organization has at least five years of experience in planning, implementing and hosting scientific/technical or educational conferences
- Program Director and one additional staff each have at least five years of experience organizing scientific/educational events
- A track record of hosting scientific or education conferences, including events that have required working with individuals and institutions not connected to the applicant organization
- Demonstrated ability to understand and utilize the role of scientific conferences in the professional development of trainees by reinforcing scientific learning, deepening trainees' understanding of the scientific process, and providing an opportunity to practice scientific communication skills

(2) The conference must be held in California by an eligible applicant and have a qualified Program Director (PD)

The conference must be conducted in California. California-based and non- California-based organizations (for-profit and non-profit) may use CIRM funds for eligible conference costs incurred in California. Foreign institutions are not eligible to apply for conference grant support.

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) and California Revenue and Taxation Code section 23701d.

(3) The application must be accurate and complete.

All required components of the application must be completed and may not contain false or inaccurate information.

Schedule, Deadlines, and Budget

Applications Due	2:00 pm (PDT/PST) on December 2 2025
Presidential Review and Approval	Approximately 30 days post submission
Budget	Up to \$426,000 for all eligible allowable costs
Proposed Conference Date Window	May-August 2026
Meeting Length	Up to 2.5 days

Application Review Information

What is the process for evaluating an application?

Pre-submission Consultation

In accordance our mission, CIRM is committed to funding scientific conferences that focus on regenerative medicine research and educational programs to train future scientists. Prospective applicants are encouraged, but not required, to contact CIRM with questions to discuss their proposal, including eligibility, before applying for a conference grant.

Eligibility Review

CIRM will assess whether the application meets the eligibility parameters required under this program. If CIRM determines, in its sole discretion, that an application does not meet the eligibility parameters of the program, CIRM will notify the applicant of its decision and cease all further action on the application.

Application Review

CIRM's governing board, the Independent Citizens Oversight Committee (ICOC), has delegated to the President of CIRM authority to review and make funding decisions for CIRM-initiated conferences.

The following criteria will be considered in the review of applications and funding decisions:

1. Experience and Track Record

Do the applicant organization and Program Director have the appropriate experience to manage and perform the proposed activities? Does the applicant organization have a proven commitment to

educational conferences in science, medicine, biotechnology, and/or science education fields?

2. Resources

Does the applicant organization have the necessary resources to adequately manage the meeting and effectively carry out all the required core activities in a timely fashion? Has the applicant organization appointed an appropriate team that will collaborate effectively with CIRM to understand needs, implement tasks, and manage the process?

3. Overall Value

Does the proposal offer a good value to CIRM by providing quality event management services for a reasonable price that is commensurate with use of California public funds? Are proposed costs appropriately justified?

4. Engagement and Outreach

Has the applicant organization outlined a plan to conduct outreach and engage qualified persons for the conference that will ensure a broad spectrum of perspectives?

Confidentiality

CIRM's confidentiality and conflict screening rules apply to everyone who will have access to applications or who will attend any review conference 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.)

Application Components and Submission

How does one apply?

Applications must be completed and submitted online using the CIRM Grants Management Portal at <https://grants.cirm.ca.gov>. Any prospective 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 a given review cycle and may not submit additional applications during the review period.

Applications are due by 2:00pm (Pacific Time) on Tuesday December 2, 2025.

What components does an application include?

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 project, describe how the proposal addresses the objective of the funding opportunity, provide a detailed plan of proposed activities, and provide a budget for both meetings.

The application for CIRM Conference Grants consists of an Application Information and Proposal Form (Web-based document). Instructions for submitting an application can be found at:

<https://www.cirm.ca.gov/about-cirm/education-conference-grants>.

The application for CIRM Conference Grant includes the following sections:

1. **Key Personnel:** List of main personnel who will contribute to the execution of the project and a description of their role.
2. **Budget:** Summary of costs by category requested from CIRM.

All allowable costs for research and conference grants are detailed in the CIRM [Grants Administration Policy for Discovery, Translation and Education Projects](#).

Allowable Costs for CIRM-Initiated Conference Grants include:

- Conference facility and equipment rental (including easels, poster display boards, tables/chairs, and associated taxes and service fees)
- Transportation, parking, lodging and per diem or subsistence allowances for the organizers and speakers and other costs
- Hotel room charges and fees (overnight accommodations for CIRM staff and conference organizers and speakers)
- AV equipment rental and planning costs (e.g., audio/visual and internet connectivity) (and associated taxes and service fees)
- Meeting planning and management costs that include up to 10% justified salary support for the Program Director for time spent conducting conference-specific activities; reasonable salary support for administrative staff time conducting conference-specific activities; and meeting planner costs
- Production, publicity and supply costs (website development, program printing or electronic media, name tags, etc.) needed for conduct of the conference (only if received for use during the budget period)
- Meals (food and non-alcoholic beverages) served to attendees during the conference
- Awards for students in the form of tangible gifts (no cash-based gifts including gift cards are allowed)
- Honoraria for invited speakers
- Other items as described in the [CIRM Grants Administration Policy](#)

These costs are allowable whether incurred by the applicant or by contracted vendors providing the above services needed to conduct the conference.

Non-allowable Costs for CIRM-Initiated Conference Grants

Non-allowable costs include purchase of equipment; visas; passports; entertainment; alcoholic beverages; personal telephone calls; laundry charges; dues; cash awards; alterations or renovations. The CIRM [Grants Administration Policy](#) also indicates unallowable costs. Indirect Costs are not allowable on this award.

- 3. Conference Coordination and Logistics Plan:** A description of your ability to work with CIRM to coordinate and plan the Annual Trainee Network Conference. Similarly, describe your plans to coordinate and manage external partnerships with third party vendors, advisors, or service providers to execute the meeting logistics, including for example, meeting venues/hotels, AV/IT providers, security services, etc.
- 4. Experience and Track Record:** A description of the experience of the PD and the applicant institution in the organization and conduct of scientific and educational conferences, including the track record of managing similarly sized conferences in science, medicine, biotechnology, and/or science education fields.
- 5. Available Resources:** A description of the resources you have to ensure that the meeting is adequately managed and that all required core activities are carried out in a timely fashion. A description of how an appropriate team will be appointed that can collaborate effectively with CIRM to understand needs, implement tasks, and manage the conference planning and execution process.
- 6. Overall Value:** A summary of how this proposal offers a good value to CIRM by providing quality events management services for a reasonable price that is commensurate with use of California public funds, and by appropriately justifying proposed costs.
- 7. Engagement and Outreach Plan** A description of how your organization will seek to include a broad spectrum of perspectives in the development and implementation of an Annual Trainee Network Conference.

Because CIRM is prohibited from taking race, ethnicity, national origin, and gender into account in making grant decisions, applicants should refrain from describing the race, ethnicity, national origin, or gender of applicant organization personnel. However, applicants may describe other characteristics of diversity such as individuals who: (a) grew up in low-income families or come from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities; (b) are the first in their family to attend college; or (c) have overcome educational, economic, physical (e.g., disability), or other barriers to opportunities.

- 8. Supporting Documentation:** Available quotes from service providers, a sample agenda and any other relevant documentation as a single PDF file with table of contents.

Award Administration

Issuance of Award

A CIRM Conference Award is issued via a Notice of Award, which is the formal contract that defines

the terms and conditions of an award and documents the commitment of funds from CIRM. The Awardee will be subject to CIRM's Grants Administration Policy, including the insurance requirements specified therein.

Pandemic or other contingency: If CIRM determines that any of the parameters outlined in the Notice of Award must be changed to accommodate unexpected circumstances, CIRM will work with grantee to determine what re-budgeting is necessary and allowable to enable the meeting to go forward.

Reporting

Awardees will be required to provide written outcome and financial reports to CIRM upon completion of the conference. Awardees should include the final conference agenda or program. All unobligated funds at the end of each annual budget period must be returned to CIRM.

Resources

For general information about CIRM's EDUC Programs or the Annual Trainee Network Conference:
Email: education@cirm.ca.gov

For questions about application review:
Email: review@cirm.ca.gov.

For questions related to budgets or allowable project costs, please consult the Grants Management FAQ on CIRM's website under "For Researchers > Grants > Managing your Grant." For more information on budgets or allowable costs that are not addressed in the above resources, send email correspondence to grantsmanagement@cirm.ca.gov.

Terms used here are defined in CIRM Funding Opportunities: [Common Requirements and Definitions](#).

Appendix

CIRM Regulations

Grant or Loan awards made through this RFA will be subject to all applicable CIRM regulations. These regulations can be found on CIRM's website at <https://www.cirm.ca.gov/our-funding/cirm-stem-cell-grant-regulations>.

[Example Agenda](#) (2025 Trainee Networking Conference)

[Example Agenda](#) (2024 Trainee Networking Conference)