

Discovery (DISC5) Awards

Informational Webinar
December 1, 2025



Quick Announcements

- This webinar pertains to the DISC5 Awards due **January 30, 2026 at 2PM PST**
- Webinar recording and FAQ document will be posted in ~2 weeks
- Q&A will focus on general questions. If you have questions related to your specific project, please submit them or request a consultation at discovery@circm.ca.gov

Consultation Requests



Review DISC5 program announcement and application materials; compile scientific/programmatic questions



Email discovery@cirm.ca.gov to request a consultation form



Submit consultation request form
(10-20 mins)



Wait for CIRM to provide a (1) written response or (2) a link to schedule time with Science Officers

CIRM's Discovery & Education Team



Kelly Shepard
Director



Chan Lek Tan
Sr. Science Officer



Uta Grieshammer
CIRM Fellow



Janie Byrum
Sr. Science Officer
R&D Data Infrastructure



Daisy Xin
Science Officer



Catherine Schweppe
Science Officer



Ruby Karimjee
Project Manager

Webinar Panelists



Kelly Shepard
Director,
Discovery & Education



Catherine Schweppe
Science Officer,
Discovery & Education



Uta Grieshammer
CIRM Fellow,
Discovery & Education



Linda Nevin
Sr. Science Officer,
Portfolio Development & Review



Mira Sarwal
Grants Management Officer,
Grants Management



Ruby Karimjee
Project Manager
Discovery & Education

Agenda

1 Part 1: Presentation

1:30 - 2:15pm

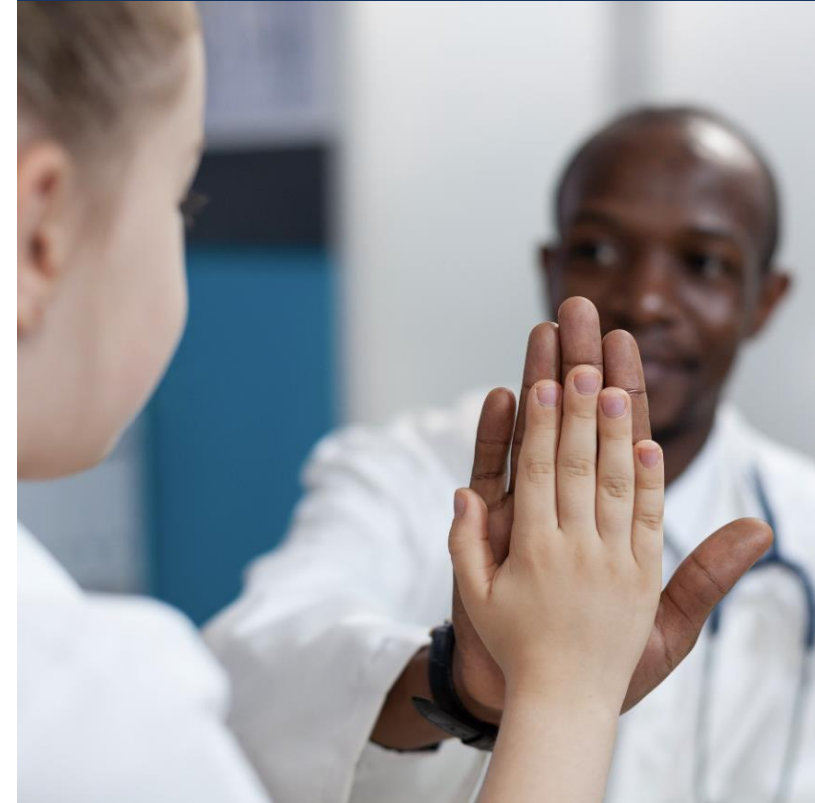
- Program Overview and Updates
- Review Process and Criteria
- Application Components and Considerations
- Information and Resources

2 Part 2: Question & Answer

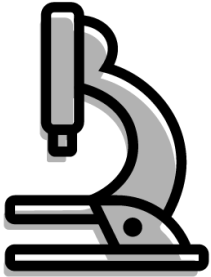
2:15 - 2:30pm

Our Mission

Accelerating world class science to deliver transformative regenerative medicine treatments in an equitable manner to a diverse California and world



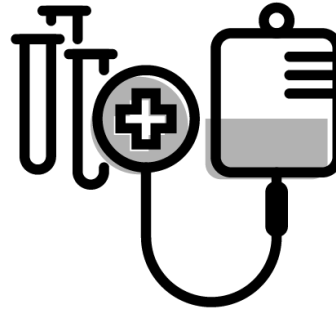
CIRM's Funding Opportunities



Discovery

DISC4

DISC5



Preclinical Development

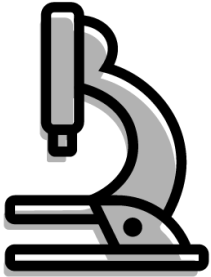
PDEV



Clinical Development

CLIN2

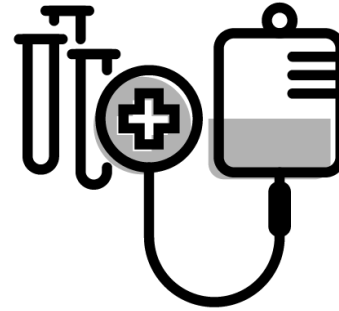
CIRM's Funding Opportunities



Discovery

DISC4

DISC5



Preclinical Development

PDEV



Clinical Development

CLIN2

DISC5 Program Overview

Award Structure

	DISC5
Applicant	California non-profit or for-profit research institutions <i>Institutions may submit multiple applications per cycle</i>
Core Team	2 California-based investigators* (1 PI + 1 Co-I)
Max Budget	\$2.5M (Total Cost, inclusive of overhead)
Max Duration	3 years

* Must be employed by California Organization at the time of application and throughout the project duration

Team Eligibility

	Eligibility Requirements
Applicant Org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> California non-profit or for-profit research institutions
Core Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Core team members must be employed by a California organization at the time of application and throughout the project duration 1 Principal Investigator (min 5% effort) 1 Co-Investigator (min 5% effort) PI and Co-I may not be members of the same lab at the time of application and throughout project duration
Broader Team (including Key Personnel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 1 Data Project Manager

DISC5 Scope and Expected Outcomes

Foundational research led by **pairs of interdisciplinary investigators** to address **fundamental knowledge gaps** or **bottlenecks** in stem cell biology and/or regenerative medicine

Projects should aim to achieve one or more of the following outcomes by the end of the award duration:

- Advance fundamental understanding of human stem and progenitor cells as they pertain to human health and disease
- Advance the use of stem cells to interrogate disease mechanisms to uncover biological insights that could enable therapeutic target and/or biomarker discovery
- Gain mechanistic insights to address key scientific or technical bottlenecks in stem cell, gene therapy, and/or other regenerative medicine approaches
- Advance applicability of stem cells, gene therapies, and/or other regenerative medicine approaches to all affected populations

Project Eligibility

To be eligible, all proposals must:

1. Address a key knowledge gap or research bottleneck in stem cell biology and/or regenerative medicine
2. Aim to meet one or more of the DISC5 expected outcomes
3. Include studies that employ human stem cells and/or genetic research as part of the central approach or hypothesis
4. Provide strong justification for any proposed use of non-human models

What research activities will DISC5 funds support?

- ✓ Any research activity contributing to achievement of the expected outcomes and aligns with eligibility requirements

Illustrative list only; Not exhaustive

- Study or use of stem cells and derivatives
- Genetic research/Genomics
- Reverse translation studies
- Bioengineering/Biomaterials
- Computational biology/Bioinformatics
- Study of primary human tissues
- Tool/tech development
- Target and biomarker discovery

- ✓ Required: Activities associated with managing, preserving, and sharing data and knowledge from the study

What non-research activities will DISC5 funds support?

- ✓ Partnering activities with patient-centered organizations or other project-relevant community groups
- ✓ Activities to support outreach or communication of research plans or outcomes with the wider public
- ✓ Travel and accommodation expenditures associated with attendance of CIRM-organized meetings and conferences
- ✓ Engagement activities with trainees supported through CIRM's EDUC or INFR programs

Out of Scope Activities (**DISC5 will NOT fund**)

- X** Therapeutic or other commercial development activities including lead optimization, manufacturing, pre-clinical toxicology, and pharmacology studies and other activities targeted by CIRM's PDEV and CLIN programs
- X** Costs of activities performed by a separate out-of-state organization that retains intellectual property or independent publication rights in any intellectual property (e.g., invention, technology, data) arising out of the CIRM-funded project
- X** Costs incurred before the date of ICOC approval
- X** Activities already budgeted or paid for under a prior, existing or pending CIRM award, or which are already supported by another funder

CIRM's Discovery Programs

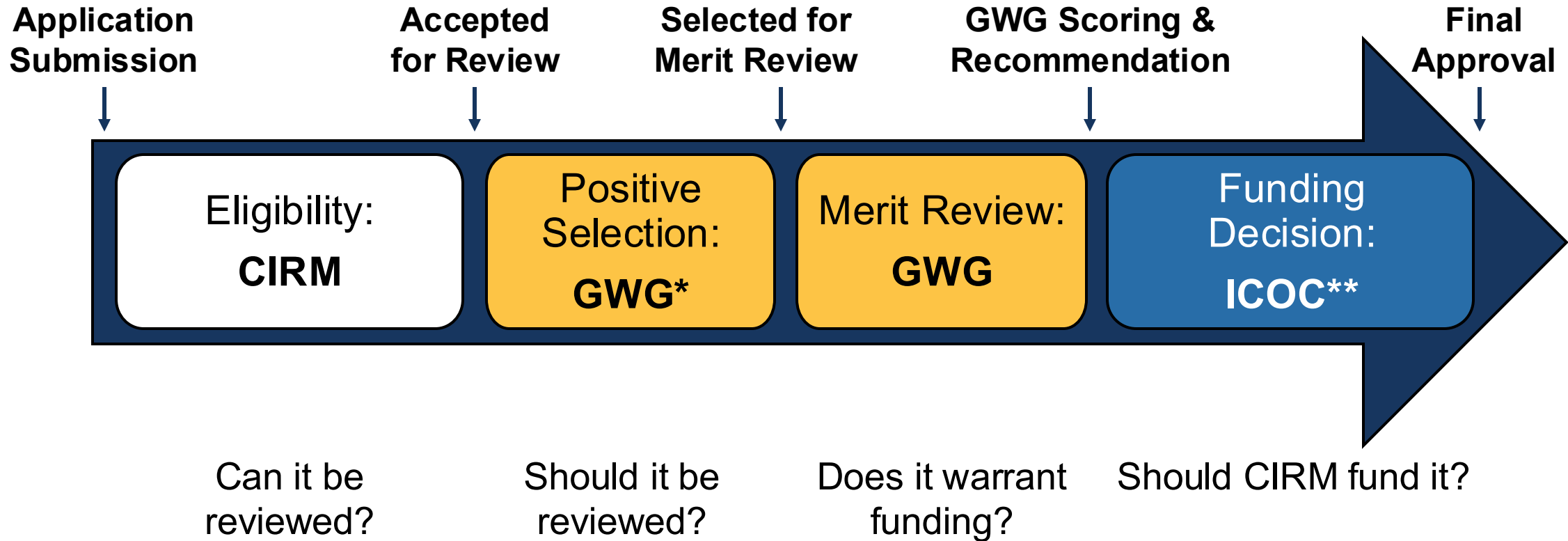
	DISC4	DISC5
Summary	Multidisciplinary collaborations	Exploratory projects
Scope/Goals	Disease biology insights to facilitate novel target/biomarker identification	Basic stem cell biology Innovations in stem-cell based technologies Bottlenecks in regenerative medicine
Preference Topics	Cycle-Specific (Neurological diseases – 2025)	No disease area or organ system preferences
Applicant team	5 or more CA investigators Multi-institutional	2 CA investigators
Budget	\$13-14M	\$2.5M
Duration	4 years	3 years
Pre-submission (LOI)	Required	Not required
Submission Dates *	Annually, June (Pre-submission)	Annually, January

Common Eligibility Issues for DISC Awards

- Focus on animal biology rather than human; missing human cell validation studies
- Are not framed around filling a knowledge gap or overcoming a research bottleneck, even if proposing allowable activities
- Would be more appropriate for CIRM Preclinical or Clinical programs
- Do not use the required template(s) for application document uploads

Review Process and Criteria

Application Review Process



Positive Selection

Review Process for High Volume Programs

- **Stage 1: “Positive Selection”** - GWG members conduct a pre-review of all applications to identify a subset that they believe are most impactful and responsive to the program
- **Stage 2 : Applications selected** move to Stage 2, Merit Review
- **Unselected Applications:** do not advance to Stage 2 nor receive critiques

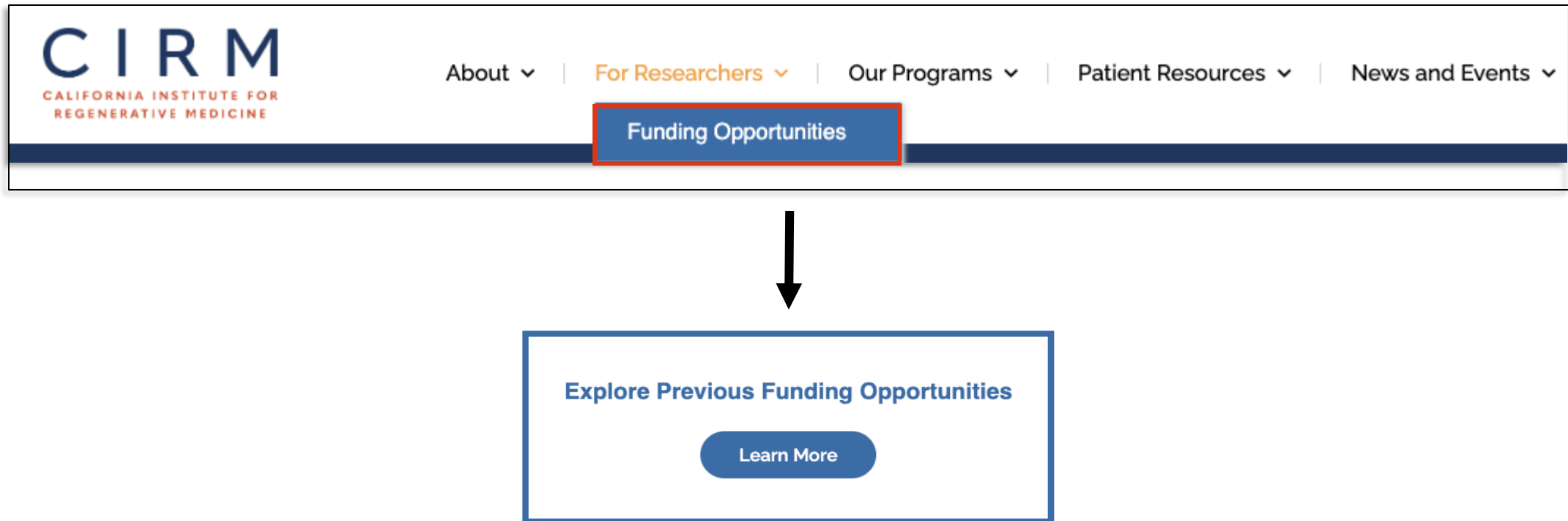
Merit Review | Scientific Review Criteria

Projects will be evaluated by:

1. Significance and potential for impact
2. Innovation relative to the current state of research
3. Scientific rationale in the proposal
4. Project plan and design
5. Extent to which the project considers the potential impact of successful outcomes across affected populations

Previous DISC Review Summaries

Navigate to ["Previous Funding Opportunities"](#) to learn more about how previous DISC awards have been evaluated



Application Components & Considerations

Application | Getting Started

Log-in at <http://grants.cirm.ca.gov/>
Select “Start a DISC5 Grant Application”

Other Things You Could Do

- Browse current [Open Programs](#) to start a new application
- Review [Your Applications](#) to see all previously submitted, expired, abandoned, and withdrawn applications

Open Programs

RFAs and Programs Open For Applications	Actions
CLIN 2 CIRM Clinical Trial Stage Projects: CLIN2 Grant Application	Start a CLIN2 Grant Application
DISC 5 Funding Opportunity for Discovery Stage Research: DISC5 Grant Application	Start a DISC5 Grant Application

*The PI/PD of all applications/pre-applications/LOIs created here will be the person whose name is listed at the top of this page.
You cannot use these links to create applications for any other PI/PD.*

Application | Components

ONLINE SECTION

- Eligibility
- Personnel
- Project, including **Positive Selection Preview Page**
- Funding
- Certifications

UPLOADS SECTION (Attachments)

Required– must use templates provided

- Proposal
- Timeline
- Biographical Sketches for Key Personnel
- PI and Co-I Other Support
- Solvency Worksheet & Documentation (*for-profit applicants only*)
- IP, Licenses, MTA (if applicable)

Optional

- Letters of Support
- Quotes

Required sections will change from “Incomplete” to “Complete”

Instructions	
Print View	
Eligibility	
Eligibility	Incomplete
Personnel	
PI and AOO	Incomplete
Key Personnel	Incomp (1)
Partners	0 Entries
Project	
Title & Duration	Incomplete
Public Information	Incomplete
Positive Selection Preview	Incomplete
Review Exclusions	Empty
Key Words	Incomplete
Funding	
Consultants, Subcontracts and Service Contracts	Empty
CIRM Funds Calculator	Incomplete
Budget Justification	Incomplete
Certifications	
Institutional Approvals and Oversight	Incomplete
Uploads	
Document Uploads	Incomplete

Application | Positive Selection

Positive Selection Preview provides the **primary description** of the application available to reviewers in the **first phase** of the review process

Applicants are encouraged to devote significant attention to the completion of this page

Positive Selection Preview

When the number of applications received in a cycle significantly exceeds the number that can be reviewed by the GWG panel, the GWG members conduct the review in two stages. This section will serve as the primary basis for the first stage of review, in which GWG members will select a subset of applications to advance to the second and final stage of review.

Note: The GWG will read this section as a whole, rather than as isolated answers to individual questions. You are encouraged to build upon ideas across responses and avoid unnecessary repetition.

1. Project Summary

1a. Objective: What is the critical knowledge gap, bottleneck, or outcome addressed by the proposed research?

0/1000

Instructions	
Print View	
Eligibility	
Eligibility	Incomplete
Personnel	
PI and AOO	Incomplete
Key Personnel	Incomp (1)
Partners	0 Entries
Project	
Title & Duration	Incomplete
Public Information	Incomplete
Positive Selection Preview	Incomplete
Review Exclusions	Empty
Key Words	Incomplete
Funding	
Consultants, Subcontracts and Service Contracts	Empty
CIRM Funds Calculator	Incomplete
Budget Justification	Incomplete
Certifications	
Institutional Approvals and Oversight	Incomplete
Uploads	
Document Uploads	Incomplete

Application | Proposal Template



- **Use** the **current required Word Template**
- **Adhere** to prescribed page limits
- **Maintain formatting** (preset fonts, margins)
- **Follow instructions** for each section
- **Convert to PDF** when finished to upload
- **Do not alter** margins, font size, etc.
- **Do not exceed** page limits
- **Do not** leave sections **incomplete**
- **Do not** use a **“DIY”** template

Application | Budget

- Direct and Indirect Project Costs entered by year in Funds Calculator
- Consultant, subcontract, and service contract costs entered in designated module automatically calculate into the CIRM Funds Calculator.
 - **subcontractor spreadsheet is provided in the subcontracting module as a supportive budgeting tool. Not a required upload.*
- All costs/year must be described in Budget Justification module.

Total CIRM Funded Direct Project Costs	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Personnel	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	0
Supplies	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	0
Equipment	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	0
Travel	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	0
Data Sharing and Management	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	0
Other	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	0
Subcontracts (<u>sum</u> of the <u>full subcontract amounts</u> entered in the 'Consultants/Subcontracts/ServiceContracts' table)				
Total CIRM Funded Direct Project Costs	0	0	0	0

Instructions	
Print View	
Eligibility	
Eligibility	Incomplete
Personnel	
PI and AOO	Incomplete
Key Personnel	Incomp (1)
Partners	0 Entries
Project	
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Consultants, Subcontracts and Service Contracts	Empty
CIRM Funds Calculator	Incomplete
Budget Justification	Incomplete
Certifications	
Institutional Approvals and Oversight	Incomplete
Uploads	
Document Uploads	Incomplete

Application | Budget Justification

- Mandatory requirement, must include a complete rationale
- If the proposed budget is equal to or exceeds \$900,000 in a single budget year, additional justification will be required
- DSMP budget just. Considerations (now integrated within one justification text section – no upload required)
- Cannot exceed 20,000 characters
- PI / Co-I considerations

Budget Justification

Key Personnel Section

(from DISC5 Grant Application)

Name	Role on Project	Role Description
Hayley Cohen Test	PI	<empty>
Name Co-I	Co-Investigator	Example
Name DPM	Data Project Manager	Example
Name KP	Key Person	Example

Consultants, Subcontracts and Service Contracts Section

(from DISC5 Grant Application)

Entity Name	Contract Name	Contract Type	Role Description
Sub #1 Name	Sub #1	Subcontract	Example
Sub #2 Name	Sub #2	Subcontract	Example

Total Direct Costs Budget Justification

Provide a narrative justification that describes the basis for **all Total Direct Project Costs**, in the proposed budget. For each budget year, provide a breakdown by cost category (Personnel, Supplies, Travel, Equipment, Data Sharing, Consultants/Subcontracts/Service Contracts, Other).

[Instructions](#)[Print View](#)

Eligibility

[Eligibility](#) Incomplete

Personnel

[PI and AOO](#) Incomplete[Key Personnel](#) Incomp (1)[Partners](#) 0 Entries

Project

[Title & Duration](#) Incomplete[Public Information](#) Incomplete[Positive Selection Preview](#) Incomplete[Review Exclusions](#) Empty[Key Words](#) Incomplete

Funding

[Consultants, Subcontracts and Service Contracts](#) Empty[CIRM Funds Calculator](#) Incomplete[Budget Justification](#) Incomplete

Certifications

[Institutional Approvals and Oversight](#) Incomplete

Uploads

[Document Uploads](#) Incomplete

For-Profit Applicants | Solvency Documents

SECTION 1: CASHFLOW

• Enter historic cash outflows and inflows. If your company is less than 6 months old, provide the full available history.
• Enter positive numbers only (even for outflows).
*Third party costs may include all non-clinical, clinical and manufacturing expenses.

Historical Cashflow			
Prior 180 days cash outflow		Prior 180 days cash inflow	
Payroll and benefits		Proceeds from financings	
Third party costs*		Proceeds from ATM	
Capital expenditures		Proceeds from lines of credit	
		Proceeds from collaborations / out licensing activity	
Rent / lease costs		Proceeds from grants	
Other overhead costs		Other	
Other			
Total	\$	Total	\$

Balance 180 days ago

Historic Net Cash Flow

Balance on Date of Submission

• Enter cash outflows and inflows for the next 180 days.
*Third party costs may include all non-clinical, clinical and manufacturing expenses.

Forward-Looking Cashflow			
Next 180 days cash outflow		Next 180 days cash inflow	
Payroll and benefits		Proceeds from financings	
Third party costs*		Proceeds from ATM	
Capital expenditures		Proceeds from lines of credit	
		Proceeds from collaborations / out licensing activity	
Rent / lease costs		Proceeds from grants	
Other overhead costs		Other	
Other			
Total	\$	Total	\$

Forward Looking Net Cash Flow

Balance After 180 Days

Solvency Supporting Documentation

As instructed in the Solvency worksheet, append all required supporting documentation after this page. Delete the sample entries and page numbers and complete the Table of Contents to help CIRM staff navigate your documentation.

Bank Statement Instructions: If required to provide bank statements, the statements must show account owner, starting balance and ending balance. Account numbers and individual transactions may be redacted. Statement cover pages and/or online account snapshots are acceptable. Publicly traded companies may provide SEC filings to verify cash-on-hand if those filings cover the relevant time periods.

Table of Contents

Document Description	Starting Page Number
[Company Name] Bank Statement 1 Dated 08/31/2023	2
[Company Name] Bank Statement 2 Dated 08/31/2023	3
[Investor Name] Term Sheet	5
[Agency name] Notice of Award 6/15/23	6

You must use **provided templates** found in “Uploads” section

Application | Uploads

NAME

STATUS

TEMPLATES

UPLOADED FILES

UPLOAD BUTTON

Document Name	Status	Template	Uploaded Files	Acceptable File Types	Upload
<div>* <div>Proposal</div> <div>Please refer to the template for instructions.</div> </div>	Incomplete	MSWord	none	pdf	Choose File
<div>* <div>Biographical Sketches for Key Personnel</div> <div>Please refer to the template for instructions. No more than 2 pages per person.</div> </div>	Incomplete	MSWord	none	pdf	Choose File
<div>* <div>Project Aims and Timeline</div> <div>Please refer to the template for instructions.</div> </div>	Incomplete	MSExcel	none	xls, xlsx	Choose File
<div>* <div>PI and Co-Investigator Other Support</div> <div>Please refer to the template for instructions.</div> </div>	Incomplete	MSWord	none	pdf	Choose File
<div> <div>Letters of Support</div> <div> <div>If Applicable</div> <div>In a single PDF, provide any signed letters documenting the following:</div> <div> <div>1. Institutional support</div> <div>2. Collaborations</div> </div> </div> </div>	Complete	none	none	pdf	Choose File
<div> <div>Quotes and Other Budget Data</div> <div> <div>If Applicable</div> <div>In a single PDF, provide any signed letters documenting copies of important contract work proposed in the budget. This information will be used in the evaluation of the budget.</div> </div> </div>	Complete	none	none	pdf	Choose File
<div> <div>IP, Licenses and Material Transfer Agreements</div> <div> <div>If Applicable</div> <div>Please provide a description of any relevant intellectual property or licensing/material transfer agreements.</div> </div> </div>	Complete	none	none	pdf	Choose File

Instructions	
Print View	
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Eligibility	Incomplete
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Co-funders	Empty
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*REQUIRED

Information & Resources for Applicants

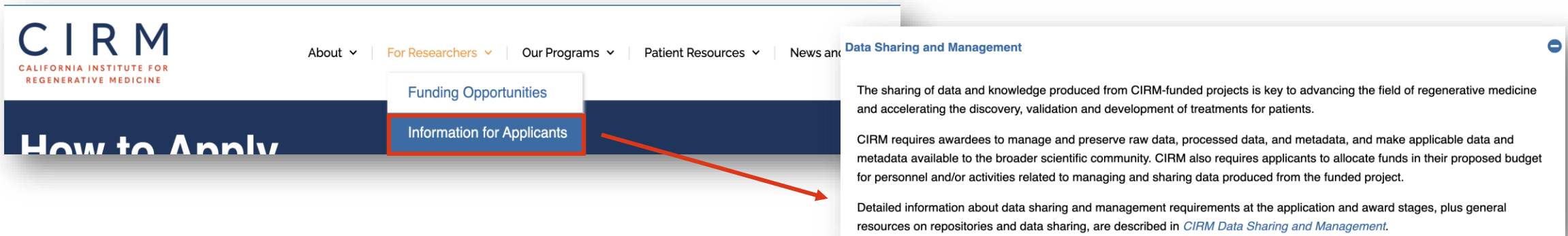
CIRM Data Sharing Requirement

Application

- Provide Data Sharing Overview

Award

- Develop a Data Sharing and Management Plan (DSMP)
 - Metadata Catalog
 - Data Use Limitations (DUL) Institutional Certification
- Deposit data in data repositories by end of award



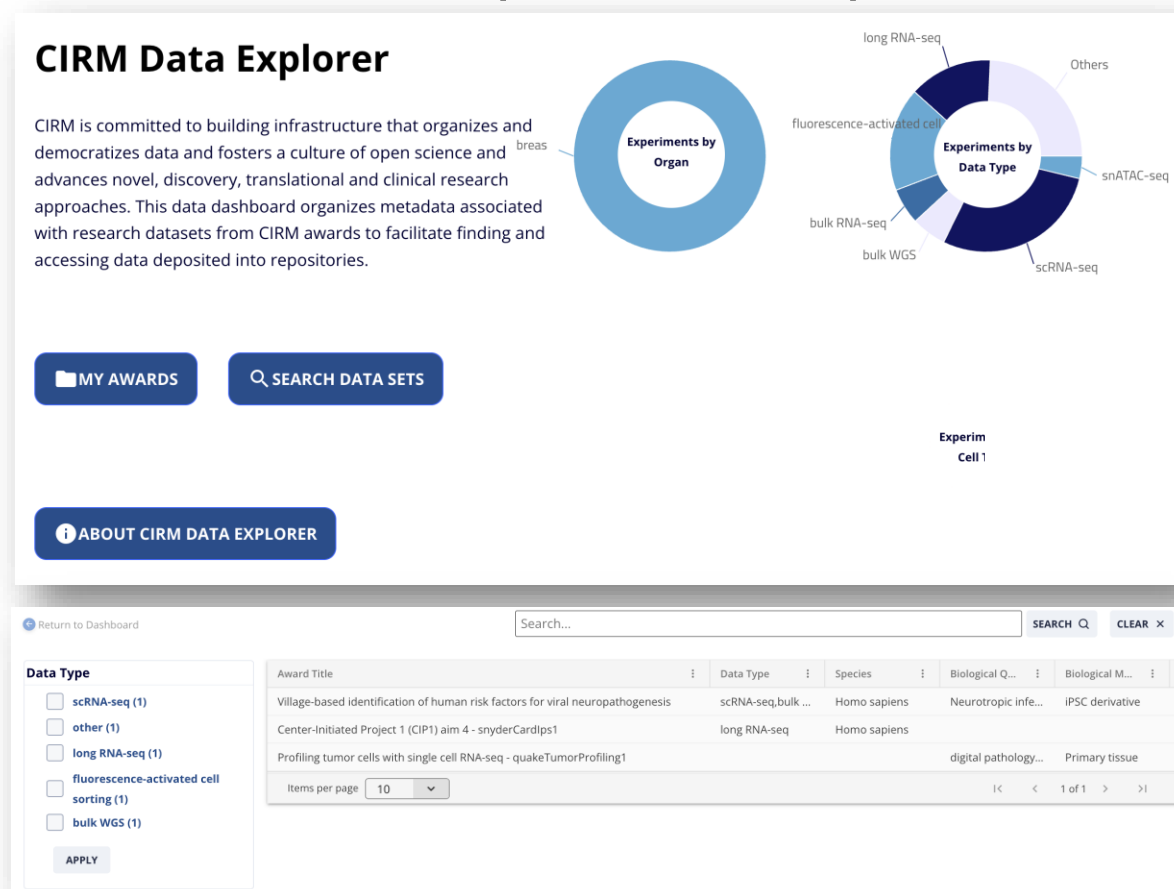
CIRM Data Explorer

Purpose: Promote the findability of CIRM-funded datasets by providing a searchable dashboard of experiments that have been deposited in repositories

Includes datasets from:

- DISC awards
- CIRM Genomics Initiative
- Legacy data (172 curated datasets, ~670 partially curated datasets)

Datahub.cirm.ca.gov



Shared Resources Labs for Stem Cell-Based Modeling

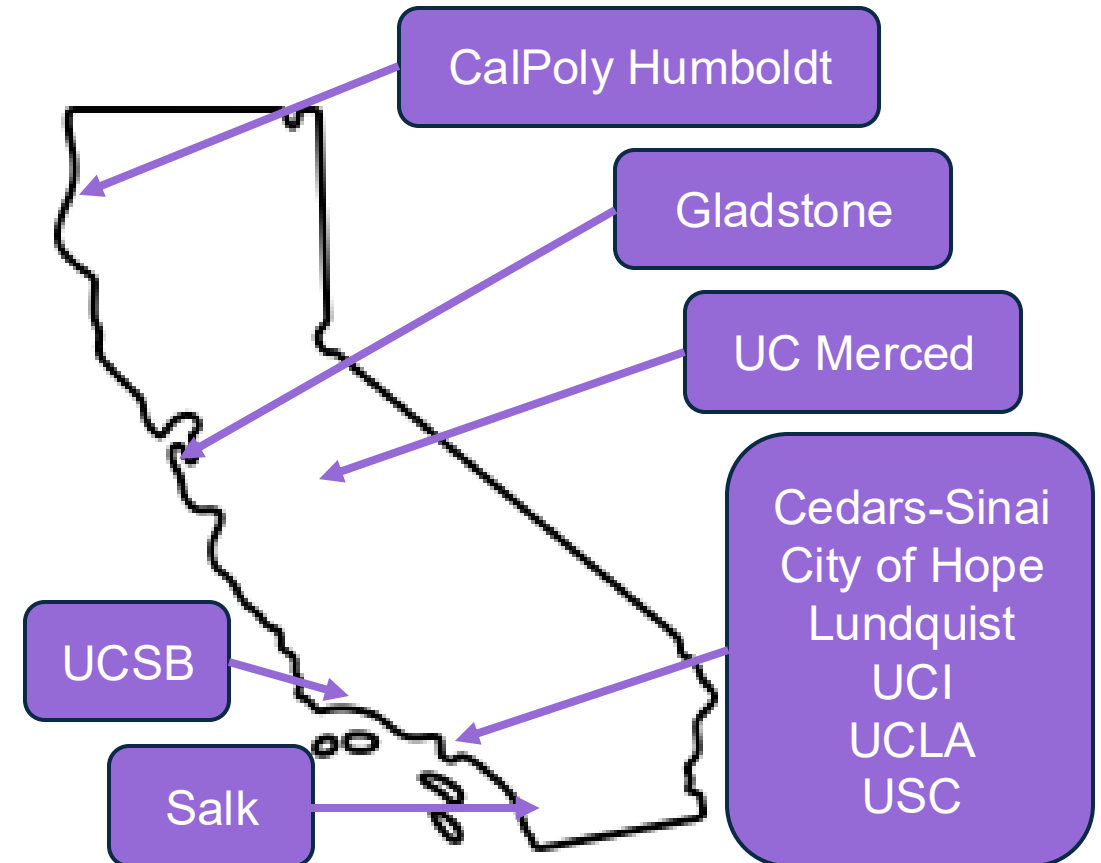
CIRM-funded infrastructure program to support California researchers and educators by:

- Providing access to core facility, specialized services, and equipment
- Sharing models/expertise and resources for research **broadly across CA**
- Training researchers
- Providing educational resources / activities (including formal techniques courses)

General information: <https://www.cirm.ca.gov/shared-labs/>

Browse offerings: <https://cirmhub.cirm.ca.gov/page/public-resources>

Contact: ugrieshammer@cirm.ca.gov



Shared Resources Labs

Stem Cell-Based Modeling Expertise & Technologies

SRL	Organs / Tissues Modeled (2D, organoids)	Technologies / Services (Also available: omics, CRISPR, imaging, flow cytometry)
Cedars-Sinai	brain, heart, bone, blood, gut, lung, liver	automation, metabolism, organ-on-chip
COH	brain, heart, breast	single cell proteomics , electrophysiology, bioprinting , hypoxic incubators
Gladstone	brain, heart, immune	automated cell culture and imaging, LNP delivery , HTP drug screening
Humboldt	brain	
Lundquist	brain, heart, blood, lung, bone, cartilage, intestine, pancreas	metabolism
Salk	brain (aging)	metabolism, direct reprogramming
UCI		imaging mass cytometry , 3D bioprinting
UCLA	brain, skeletal muscle	automated cell culture and imaging, small molecule screening
UCM	vascular	small animal models for stem cell-based model characterization, microfluidic microvascular networks
UCSB	brain, retina, embryo (neuro dev)	HTP drug screening , HTP lenti generation , HTP ELISAs
USC	brain, kidney, intestine, cartilage	electrophysiology

Contacts and Deadlines

Applications due by January 30, 2026, 2pm PST

Programmatic Questions
discovery@cirm.ca.gov

Review Questions
review@cirm.ca.gov

Budget and Grants Admin Questions
grantsmanagement@cirm.ca.gov



Discovery

www.cirm.ca.gov/DISC5

**Please reference documents
on our website for guidance**

Question & Answer

Common Questions

Can I schedule a consultation for my application?

Yes! Please email discovery@cirm.ca.gov to request a Consultation Request Form. Note that each project team is only allowed one consultation per application cycle.

Can investigators be from the same institution?

Yes. Please remember that applicant teams must include one Principal Investigator (PI) and one Co-Investigator (Co-I) that are not currently members of the same laboratory.

Can investigators be included in more than one DISC5 application?

An investigator cannot be listed as a Principal Investigator on more than one application. An investigator may be included in the core team (PI/Co-I) of up to two applications.

Can non-CA investigators be included in DISC5 applications?

Non-CA-based investigators are not eligible to serve as PI or Co-I on DISC5 awards.

DISC5 applicants are allowed to budget grant funds to support a non-CA-based collaborator through a grant subcontract, provided the out-of-state organization does not retain the intellectual property or independent publication rights of any intellectual property arising out of the CIRM-funded project.