

EDUC8: Umbrella for CIRM Bridges and COMPASS Funding Opportunities



Program Announcement
December 19, 2025

EDUC8 Awards: Umbrella for CIRM Bridges and COMPASS Funding Opportunities

Summary

OVERVIEW			
Objective	Prepare undergraduate through master’s level students for career-entry opportunities in regenerative medicine by identifying and supporting untapped talent and producing well-trained, adaptable, and committed professionals for the regenerative medicine workforce.		
Scope	EDUC8 enables training programs that provide relevant coursework, instill key competencies, and support paid, hands-on internships to produce technically skilled individuals who can deliver on CIRM’s mission. An EDUC8 Award may be structured to support a COMPASS Path, a Bridges Path, or both (Dual Path). All paths include patient engagement, community outreach, and strategic mentoring practices for efficient transition of trainees to careers in the life sciences. Innovative recruitment and retention strategies will broaden the participation and perspectives of Californians in the regenerative medicine workforce.		
Recurrence	One funding cycle in 2026; one funding cycle in 2027		
AWARD DETAILS			
Program Path	COMPASS Path	BRIDGES Path	Dual Paths
Max Award Amount	\$3,237,000 total costs	\$4,588,500 total costs	\$6,918,000 total costs
Max Award Duration	5 years		
ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS			
Applicant Organization	All Applicant Organizations		
	Must be a California public university or college, or private, non-profit academic institution that offers regenerative medicine-relevant biology or STEM certificates and/or degrees		
	COMPASS Path Applicants		Bridges and Dual Path Applicants
	Must have an accredited Bachelor’s degree program in above-mentioned disciplines		Must not have CIRM funded Major Facility nor Shared Research Laboratory under Proposition 71
Critical Roles	A Program Director who must commit at least 5% effort. Dual Path Programs must also have a Co-Director who must commit at least 5% effort		
Required Expertise	Mentorship Facilitator and Outreach Coordinator		
SCHEDULE AND DEADLINES			
Application Due Dates	Twice, once in 2026 and once in 2027		
GWG Review	Approximately 60 days after application due date		
Award Approval	Approximately 30 days after GWG Review		
Start Date	Within 180 days of award approval		



CONTACT AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<https://www.cirm.ca.gov/researchers/education-conference-grants-and-research-training-awards/>

For additional information on the program or applications, contact education@cirm.ca.gov. For questions related to the review and approval of applications, contact review@cirm.ca.gov.

Additional requirements and definitions incorporated here by reference may be found in **CIRM Funding Opportunities: Common Requirements and Definitions**.

Background

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.

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 portfolio of Education (EDUC) Awards that provide specialized coursework and laboratory research experiences for trainees of various levels around the state of California. Trainees are additionally instilled with a holistic understanding of patient advocacy and community outreach, tying their research to the therapies that will eventually impact the people of California.

In September of 2024, CIRM's Governing Board, the Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee (ICOC), approved a Strategic Allocation Framework (SAF) to guide and optimize the value of CIRM's current and future investments. A major outcome of this exercise was defining an ambitious goal to bolster CIRM's workforce development programs to address gaps and meet evolving demands in regenerative medicine. Specifically, a recommendation was endorsed to make strategic improvements to the Bridges (EDUC2) and COMPASS (EDUC5) programs by increasing training offerings, diversifying internship opportunities, & increasing integration with CIRM's Research, Development, and Infrastructure programs.

To this end, EDUC8 was developed as an umbrella mechanism to update and improve Bridges and COMPASS, thereby sustaining the value of existing programs while extending their capacity to meet the evolving needs and technical demands of the regenerative medicine field.

Objective

The objective of EDUC8 is to prepare undergraduate through master's level students in California for careers in regenerative medicine by identifying and supporting untapped talent and producing well-trained, adaptable, and committed professionals for the regenerative medicine workforce.

Specifically, EDUC8 will enable the development and implementation of training programs that provide relevant coursework, instill key competencies, and support paid, hands-on internships to produce technically skilled individuals who can deliver on CIRM's mission. EDUC8 programs include patient engagement, community outreach, and strategic mentoring practices to promote efficient transition of trainees to careers in the life sciences. Innovative recruitment and retention strategies will broaden the participation and perspectives of Californians in the regenerative medicine workforce.

Scope

EDUC8 is an umbrella grant mechanism that provides support for new versions of CIRM's Bridges (EDUC2) and COMPASS (EDUC5) programs. EDUC8 programs may be structured as a COMPASS path; a Bridges path; or a Dual Path program, depending on applicant eligibility and resources. Shared and unique elements required for each path are described below and in the subsequent sections.

- **Adaptive Outreach and Recruitment Plan (AORP)**, for identifying and recruiting trainees appropriate for the specific goals of each program, depending on the trainee path supported. The



AORP will be developed and executed by a dedicated Key Personnel and include periodic evaluation and adaptation for iterative improvement. The AORP must include defined goals and expected outcomes of the program, relevant approaches for recruitment and selection, and strategies to address program-specific disparities in comparison to the breadth of California communities.

- **Internships in stem cell biology, gene therapy, or related regenerative medicine fields.** Internship host sites may include organizations or entities that play a role in therapy discovery, development, and patient access, which offer training in skills relevant to the evolving regenerative medicine landscape. To facilitate learning of hybrid skillsets, internships can provide skills or knowledge that complement trainees' primary coursework. Internship durations and requirements depend on trainee path(s) supported, detailed below under EDUC8 Structure: Paths and Special Requirements.
- **Coursework in stem cell/regenerative medicine and additional relevant subjects** that are integrated within a trainee's certificate or degree curriculum. Required coursework depends on the trainee path(s) supported and is detailed below under EDUC8 Structure: Paths and Special Requirements.
- **Patient/Healthcare engagement activities**, which are designed to engage trainees with patients or patient advocates and provide insights into the challenges of developing new regenerative medicine therapies. Such activities could include but are not limited to volunteer participation in medical or patient-facing settings (e.g. CIRM Alpha Clinics, community clinics, emergency room), donation drives (e.g. bone marrow donation, blood donation), educational content with relevant experts (e.g. healthcare, policy, patient-facing experts), structured interactions or colloquia with patients/patient advocates, etc.
- **Community outreach and education opportunities** for trainees to engage with community members and share scientific and medical innovations while gaining insight and awareness of those communities' perspectives and concerns, particularly around healthcare access and representation. Trainees must participate in a workshop or receive formal training in communicating science to lay audiences and members of the public. Possible opportunities might include presenting to local community groups and K-12 classrooms, participation in local science/health fairs or CIRM-supported outreach events, preparation and distribution of educational materials, hosting lab tours, etc.
- **Mentorship and professional development activities** structured through a Mentorship Program, led by a dedicated Key Person who will identify and train a small team of individual(s), which may include external advisors. This team will serve as role models for students and bring perspectives representing the breadth of California communities that may not be present in the resident faculty of the applicant or collaborating institutions. Mentoring programs must include individual development plans for students, formal mentor training for advisors and mentors including implicit bias training, activities for personal and professional growth, soft skills development, and career counseling, where relevant.
- **Alumni tracking and engagement plan** for annual assessment and reporting on post-graduate employment positions taken by program alumni, and for encouraging their continued participation in the Mentorship Program.
- **Resource and knowledge sharing**, including approaches, outcomes and events within and outside of the institution, and specifically with CIRM via platforms such as the CIRM Hub, to facilitate collaboration across all CIRM workforce development programs and to extend benefits to a broader community of educators.

EDUC8 Structure: Paths and Special Requirements

EDUC8 programs can be structured to support three different types of training approaches ("paths") that are tailored to serve two distinct trainee populations. Specific requirements for these paths are elaborated



below, including institutional eligibility. Applicants should structure an EDUC8 program that aligns best with their institution's teaching and research infrastructure, faculty specialization, resource availability, and other assets of value.

Bridges Path

A Bridges path must be integrated into a regenerative medicine-focused biology or STEM degree or certificate program at an eligible institution (**see Eligibility below**), which is typically a certificate or undergraduate/master's degree granting institution that did not receive CIRM Major Facilities or Shared Lab funding under Proposition 71 (e.g. state universities, community colleges). Internships take place at partner or "host" sites, which are organizations that can provide access to advanced research and development infrastructure and expertise in regenerative medicine related disciplines. Bridges internships must be 6 to 12 months in duration and are elaborated further below.

Bridges Course Requirements

Trainees must take the following required courses as well as specialized courses, workshops or other activities that are integrated within a degree or certificate program at their home institution. Content can be offered at the home institution or through an external source or partnering organization.

- An **advanced techniques** course that will provide all trainees with hands-on experience in working with human stem cells and/or other therapeutically relevant human cell types
- A course or workshop where trainees are introduced to **the process for development and regulation of new therapies**, such as GMP manufacturing, Quality, Regulatory Affairs, etc. This could involve a locally offered course, an online course (e.g. a course offered by the Regulatory Affairs Professional Society, RAPS), a series of workshops, or other formal activities required of all trainees
- A **data science and sharing** course, workshop or activity where trainees are introduced to FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) principles of data sharing and data science in the context of regenerative medicine and/or other biomedical disciplines
- A course, workshop, or activities on **public science communication**, where trainees acquire skills for communicating their research to members of the public and lay audiences
- A course, workshop, or activities on **research ethics**, where trainees are introduced to principles guiding responsible research, e.g. ensuring participant welfare, data integrity, and public trust

Bridges Internship Requirements

Trainees will participate in hands-on internships at host laboratories or sites that offer regenerative medicine-relevant opportunities. This can include but is not limited to research or work at biotech/pharma companies, academic labs at institutions with regenerative medicine research and infrastructure, clinical trial sites/centers, clinical operations and coordination, manufacturing centers and GMP facilities, CDMOs, or other organizations or entities that play a role in therapy discovery, development, and patient access.

Internships may focus on research or research and development (R&D)-adjacent skill sets such as project management, clinical trial coordination, process development, etc. Internships that provide multidisciplinary exposure and/or foster the development of hybrid skillsets are encouraged, for example combining molecular biology research with project management opportunities. Additional disciplines of interest include but are not limited to imaging, data science, statistics, regulatory affairs, science communication, policy, or science consulting-related experiences.

CIRM will fund internships for durations of up to one year and not less than 6 months. Bridges paths are permitted to have up to two tracks or types of internship (e.g. undergraduate-level internships and master's level internships), and all internships within a track must be of the same duration in each funded year. Internship research is expected to be a full-time activity for which the trainee is compensated with a stipend and appropriate academic credit (determined by the applicant institution).

Trainees should be enrolled as full-time students during the internship.



Bridges Outreach and Recruitment Requirements (Trainee Selection)

As part of the AORP (described above), program administrators must develop a clear strategy for identifying, recruiting, and selecting appropriate trainees. The plan should include defined goals and expected outcomes, which will be assessed on a regular basis to identify areas for improvement that can be incorporated in subsequent recruitment cycles.

Eligible institutions for Bridges path may request support for **up to 10 trainees per year**. Applicants are encouraged to expand trainee participation and the size of their programs by involving additional trainees supported from other sources, if funding is available.

COMPASS Path

A COMPASS path must be integrated within a Bachelor's degree program at an eligible institution (**see Eligibility below**), which are typically institutions that offer bachelor's degrees in relevant biology disciplines. Trainees should be supported for two or more years while they complete required foundational coursework (described below) and participate in internships, which must be the equivalent of 2-3 months full-time work. Applicants intending to host internships at their home institutions must have participating faculty with federal- or CIRM-supported research projects in regenerative medicine-relevant disciplines. Applicants without such research infrastructure must partner with another organization to provide appropriate internship opportunities.

COMPASS Foundational Course Requirements

Trainees must complete foundational coursework in stem cell/regenerative medicine that is integrated within their degree curriculum. Educational content must include the following courses, workshops, or equivalent activities:

- **Foundational coursework** in stem cell/regenerative medicine, integrated within a bachelor's program
- **Specialized options of value**, e.g. computational biology, bioengineering, data science or analysis, statistics, etc.
- An introduction to **FAIR principles of data sharing** (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable)
- **Good research habits** (planning, documentation, time management)
- **Principles of translational research**, e.g. an introduction to the therapeutic development process
- A course, workshop, or activities on **public science communication**, where trainees acquire skills for communicating their research to members of the public and lay audiences
- A course, workshop, or activities on **research ethics**, where trainees are introduced to principles guiding responsible research, e.g. ensuring participant welfare, data integrity, and public trust

COMPASS Internship Requirements

Trainees will participate in hands-on internships at the applicant institution or at a partnering, host institution or site that offers regenerative medicine-relevant opportunities. This can include but is not limited to research or work at biotech/pharma companies, academic labs at institutions with regenerative medicine research and infrastructure, clinical trial sites/centers, clinical operations and coordination, manufacturing centers and GMP facilities, CDMOs, or other organizations or entities that play a role in therapy discovery, development, and patient access.

Internships may focus on research or research and development (R&D)-adjacent skill sets such as project management, clinical trial coordination, process development, etc. Internships that provide opportunities for exploring different disciplines or regenerative medicine related career paths are encouraged.



Internships must be the equivalent of two to three months full time work and can take place over the summer or can be distributed as part-time effort over an extended or different period as suits program and individual. Each trainee must complete at least one research internship while appointed as a COMPASS trainee. The internship experience should culminate in a poster presentation at a CIRM-hosted event.

COMPASS Capstone Project Requirements

Trainees must develop a Capstone Project under the guidance of mentor(s), highlighting training outcomes including any co-authorship of publications as part of the research team.

COMPASS Outreach and Recruitment Requirements (Trainee Selection)

The AORP (described above) must employ strategies to identify and foster untapped talent within students who may not have prior experience in stem cell biology or life sciences and may otherwise go unrecognized. Each plan must specify innovative approaches to identify and select promising students in lieu of traditional practices that have relied on highest SAT scores, grades, educational pedigree, etc. Program leadership will evaluate activities and outcomes to iteratively improve recruitment, selection, and retention of trainees, in collaboration with insights from personnel directing trainee mentoring and professional development.

Eligible institutions for COMPASS path may request support for **up to 10 trainees per year**. Applicants are encouraged to expand trainee participation and the size of their programs by involving additional trainees supported from other sources, if funding is available.

Award Amount and Duration

Dual Path

Institutions that are eligible for a Bridges path may propose a Dual Path program that can support both Bridges and COMPASS trainees. If feasible, a Dual Path program might include a flexible or accelerated path for trainees to transition from a COMPASS to a Bridges program.

Dual Path proposals must maintain the unique requirements of the individual COMPASS and Bridges paths such as trainee recruitment criteria, required coursework, and mentorship elements. Trainees should be guided through stages of academic and career development specific to their path. Dual Path programs should also be designed to foster areas of collaboration through cross-trainee interactions, shared resources and activities, and other opportunities that enrich the experience of the whole cohort while respecting the unique needs of Bridges and COMPASS trainees.

Dual Path programs must have a Co-Director to ensure that the value of independent program features is retained. The Co-Director will have expertise and responsibility for managing either the COMPASS- or Bridges-specific requirements of the Dual Path Program, complementing those of the Director.

Eligible institutions for the Dual Path may **request support for up to 10 Bridges trainees and up to 10 COMPASS trainees per year**. Applicants are encouraged to expand trainee participation and the size of their programs by involving additional trainees supported from other sources, if funding is available.

Award Amount and Duration

EDUC8 Awards will be made in the form of a grant and will provide up to 5 years of support that includes direct project costs + 10% indirect costs on eligible expenses. The amount requested must be adequately justified and is subject to adjustments prior to the issuance of an award based on assessments by the Grants Working Group (GWG), the CIRM team, or by the Application Review Subcommittee of the ICOC.

Maximum costs per category are as follows:



AWARD COST CATEGORIES				
Program Path		COMPASS	Bridges	Dual Path
Max Award Amount (5 Years)		\$3,237,000	\$4,588,500	\$6,918,000
Direct Project Costs	Total (5 years)*	\$2,995,000	\$4,215,000	\$6,385,000
	Trainee Stipend (internship)	\$3,600/month	\$3,600/month	\$3,600/month
	Trainee Stipend (academic support)	\$1200/month	N/A	\$1200/month COMPASS path
	Trainee Administrative Support Funds (TASF)	\$18,300/year	\$23,100/year	Based on trainee path
	Program Administration	\$200,000/year	\$180,000/year	\$215,000/year
Overhead (10% indirect costs, 5 years)		\$242,000	\$373,500	\$533,000

*Based on 10 trainees per path per year; Dual Path based on 20 trainees (10 COMPASS, 10 Bridges)

Award Budget Structure (Direct Project Costs)

1. Trainee Stipends

- **COMPASS Path:** Up to \$21,600 per year per student comprising:
 - Up to \$10,800 (not to exceed \$3,600/month) for a hands-on research/practical internship. The internship can take place over a summer, an academic quarter, or may be distributed on a part time basis over several months to a year, as is most suitable to the program and/or individual trainee
 - Up to \$10,800 per year per student (not to exceed \$1,200/month) to provide support for participation in mentored activities (i.e. academic support) throughout academic year up to 9 months
- **Bridges Path:** up to \$3,600/month during the full-time research/practical internship period of up to one year
- **Dual Path:** Trainees enrolled in the Dual Path program are eligible for stipend support up to an amount **equivalent to that of either the COMPASS or Bridges path**, based on their assigned training level. The stipend structure must be applied consistently with the selected path and in accordance with programmatic and funding guidelines

2. Trainee Administrative Support Funds (TASF)

To support equitable participation and reduce financial barriers, applicants may request (per budgeted trainee slot) up to \$18,300/year (COMPASS) or \$23,100/year (Bridges) to provide support in key areas essential to trainee success. Dual Path trainees are eligible for TASF support **up to that of either the COMPASS or Bridges Path**, based on their assigned training path(s). The TASF budget structure must be applied consistently with the selected path and in accordance with programmatic and funding guidelines. The TASF is intended for flexible, discretionary use. Specific categories with set limits must be adhered to and are described below. TASF Budgets may include the following allowable costs:

- **Tuition and Fees:** Support for academic enrollment costs associated with EDUC8 requirements and not otherwise covered by institutional or programmatic funding
 - COMPASS: up to a maximum of \$11,500 (to the institution) per year per trainee
 - Bridges: up to \$9,600 (to the institution) per trainee



- **Research-Related Expenses:** Support for the internship host site/lab (per internship period or per year) to offset research and other costs for hosting trainee
- **Advanced Techniques Course Fees (Bridges only):** Fees and expenses (including travel) for a required hands-on training course in advanced cell culture techniques
- **Program Related Trainee Travel:** These funds must be used in part to cover travel costs for trainees to attend an annual CIRM Trainee Meeting. Capped at \$1200 per trainee/year
- **Assistance Funds: A special discretionary fund may be requested to support** specific, documented needs and/or unique hardships that could arise which may impact a trainee's ability to join or remain in the program (e.g., housing insecurity, health insurance, commute or transportation challenges). Assistance Funds are intended to promote accessibility, retention, and success among trainees, particularly those facing financial hardship or structural barriers to participation. Use of Assistance Funds are subject to certain restrictions* and capped as follows:
 - COMPASS Path: Up to \$3,000/year/trainee, capped at \$30,000/year
 - Bridges Path: Up to \$5,000/per trainee, capped at \$50,000/year

* Refer to allowable and unallowable costs within the [CIRM Grants Administration Policy for Discovery, Translation, and Education Projects](#). Additional restrictions will be defined in the Award Terms and Conditions.

3. Program Administration

Up to \$200,000 (COMPASS), \$180,000 (Bridges), or \$215,000 (Dual Path) may be requested to develop and administer the program to support:

- Developing and administering the Adaptive Outreach and Recruitment Plan
- Developing and administering a Mentoring Program and associated activities
- Support for Patient Engagement and Community Outreach activities
- Administrative support salaries and mentorship incentives
- Developing a general education course/workshop on regenerative medicine and how the influence of genetic, environmental and/or other external factors may impact research and therapy development or accessibility for California populations

Generally, not more than 50% of the Program Administration Funds may be requested for salary support of the Program Leadership Team (Program Director, Co-Director, Outreach Coordinator, and Mentorship Facilitator roles) and administrative personnel. Adequate justification for all Program Administration expenses must be provided including percent effort and salaries for key personnel.

Program Activities

CIRM **will fund** the following activities under this opportunity:

REQUIRED ACTIVITIES	
✓	Development and delivery of appropriate, relevant coursework that includes multidisciplinary exposure and training in core competencies, as well as soft skills and public communication
✓	A formal mentorship and professional development program to guide and support EDUC8 trainees; must include formal training of mentors and dissemination of best practices
✓	Hands on, paid trainee internships at appropriate facilities and host sites, including, for example, regenerative medicine laboratories, Alpha Clinics, CDMOs, CMOs, core facilities, biotech/pharma companies, medical institutes, etc.
✓	Patient/Healthcare engagement and community outreach activities
✓	Trainee participation in a CIRM-sponsored conference



✓	Bridges Path: Specialized courses integrated within a certificate, bachelor's, or master's degree program in a regenerative medicine-related science, and the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An advanced stem cell culture techniques course or equivalent • A Data Sharing and Science Course/Workshop • Principles of translational research, drug development and/or regulatory affairs • Communicating Science to the Public (Course, Workshop, or equivalent training) • Research Ethics (Course, Workshop, or equivalent training)
✓	COMPASS Path: Foundational coursework in stem cell/regenerative medicine, integrated within a bachelor's program that includes an introduction to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAIR principles of data sharing (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) • Good research habits (planning, documentation, time management) • Principles of translational research • Specialized options of value, for example computational biology, bioengineering, data science or analysis, statistics, etc. • Communicating Science to the Public (Course, Workshop, or equivalent training) • Research Ethics (Course, Workshop, or equivalent training)
✓	Advising and career/professional development
✓	Adaptive Outreach and Recruitment
✓	Alumni tracking and engagement
✓	Sharing of knowledge and resources generated through Award

ALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES	
✓	Developing/implementing a general education course or workshop about regenerative medicine that includes discussion of how the influence of genetic, environmental and/or other external factors may impact research and therapy development or accessibility for California populations
✓	Assembling advisory panels to provide relevant community perspectives on prospective trainee outreach, recruitment, and appointment
✓	Partnering with CIRM INFR facilities for tours, workshops, courses, certifications, community engagement, etc.
✓	Hosting K-12 students, families, or community members for tours and/or scientific/regenerative medicine themed educational events

CIRM **will not fund** the following activities under this opportunity:

UNALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES	
✗	Costs incurred on or before the date of ICOC approval
✗	Activities already budgeted or paid for under a prior, existing or pending CIRM award, or which are already supported by another funder

Provisional timetable

The EDUC8 funding opportunity will be offered annually for two cycles. The timeline of each funding cycle is as follows:

PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE	
Applications Open	Once in 2026 and once in 2027



Applications Due	Approximately 30 days after applications open
Grants Working Group (GWG) Review	Approximately 60 days after applications due
Application Review Subcommittee (ARS) Award Approval	Approximately 30 days after Grants Working Group Review
Award Start	Within 180 days of award approval

Eligibility

All the following requirements must be fully satisfied for an application to be accepted and considered for funding by CIRM.

(1) Programs must be led by a qualified Program Director (PD) who commits at least 5% effort.

(2) Dual Path programs (which support both Bridges and COMPASS paths simultaneously) must have a Co-Director (Co-D) who commits at least 5% effort.

A Co-Director for Dual Path programs is necessary to support core elements of one of the paths, to ensure that the separate COMPASS and Bridges requisites, practices, and requirements are maintained.

To be eligible, the PD and Co-D must satisfy the following requirements:

- Must be an employee of the applicant organization or be accountable for the conduct of the proposed project to the applicant organization through a formal contract.
- Must commit at least 5% effort to working on the project. Any effort for which salary from CIRM is claimed must be expended in California.
- Must be authorized by the applicant organization to assume the responsibilities of PD or Co-D.
- Must not currently have another application pending review or approval under this funding opportunity.
- Must not currently have another application that is substantially similar or has overlapping activities pending review or approval under any CIRM opportunity.

(3) The applicant team must include personnel dedicated to mentorship and trainee recruitment.

The project team must include personnel with dedicated roles in executing mentoring programs and trainee recruitment/selection (outreach coordination, mentorship facilitation). Personnel serving in these roles should have knowledge, skills and/or experience in working with people from different backgrounds and in outreach for improved access to educational opportunities. The Program Director/Co-Director may assume these roles, if feasible.

(4) An application must include all Required Activities for the path(s) of trainees supported.

(5) Applicant organizations must meet the following requirements based on trainee type:

To support Bridges trainees, applicant institutions must:

- Be a California public university, college, or private, non-profit academic institution accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and which did not receive a CIRM funded Major Facility or Shared Research Laboratory Award under Proposition 71.
- Have either 1) a bachelor's or master's degree program in cell and molecular biology, biotechnology, biomedical sciences or an equivalent discipline, or 2) a certificate or associate degree program in biotechnology or biomedical technology or equivalent

To support COMPASS trainees, applicant institutions must:



- Be a California public university, college, or private, non-profit academic institution
 - Have an accredited bachelor's degree program in biology, bioengineering, biomedical sciences, or other STEM disciplines relevant to regenerative medicine
- (6) Internship host sites must be located in California and may include biotech/pharma companies, R1 institutions with regenerative medicine research and infrastructure, clinical trial sites, manufacturing centers, CDMOs, and other organizations or entities that play a role in therapy discovery, development, and patient access. Host sites must also have suitable mentors to support trainees during the internship.**
- (7) The applicant institution must not have an active or pending EDUC8 Award.**
- (8) An applicant organization may only submit a single EDUC8 application per funding cycle under this opportunity.**
- (9) The application must be complete and accurate.**
All required components of the application must be completed and may not contain false or inaccurate information.
- (10) The applicant must be in good standing.**
Applicants and their affiliates must represent and certify that they are in good standing, as described in [CIRM Funding Opportunities: Common Requirements and Definitions](#).
- (11) The applicant must be ready to initiate work on the funded project within 180 days.**
Given the urgency of CIRM's mission, all approved awardees must initiate work on the funded project within 180 days of award approval and authorization for funding by the Application Review Subcommittee (ARS) of CIRM's governing board, the Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee (ICOC).
- (12) Matching Funds are not required.**
If the program does require funding over and above that which CIRM provides, documentation demonstrating the commitment of funds to cover the proposed additional amount must be provided at the time of application submission (e.g., letters of support demonstrating co-funding commitment showing amount, conditions and source). Pursuant to Proposition 14, CIRM shall prioritize EDUC8 applications that offer matching funds or verified in-kind support.

Application Preparation

Consultations and Webinars

In accordance with CIRM's mission, the Agency is committed to facilitating the development of promising stem cell-based technologies and genetic therapies by supporting the next generation of regenerative medicine scientists. Therefore, prospective applicants have the opportunity to request consultations with CIRM Science Officers to address inquiries regarding eligibility, budgets, and other topics to enhance alignment with program objectives and CIRM requirements. To start a consultation request, please email education@cirm.ca.gov.

In addition, CIRM staff may produce and share an instructional video following the dissemination of this program announcement. Prospective applicants are encouraged to [subscribe to email alerts](#) or visit our website to receive any updates.



How does one submit an application?

Applications must be completed and submitted online using the CIRM Grants Management Portal at <https://grants.cirm.ca.gov>. **A prospective PD must create a login in the system to access and submit application materials.**

Applications are available in the system only to the PD. Organizations that have not previously applied for CIRM funding should create a separate login for the designated AOO and request authorization of that individual prior to submission.

What components does an application include?

CIRM applications are comprised of an online form and document uploads. The application is designed to collect information for CIRM staff to assess eligibility, for Grants Working Group (GWG) reviewers to evaluate the program, and for CIRM to rapidly initiate an award if the program is approved for funding. In the online form, applicants must complete an eligibility form, indicate Key Personnel involved in the program, provide budgetary information, describe how the program will address the EDUC8 objectives, provide a detailed plan of proposed activities, and summarize trainee internship opportunities. Letters confirming support and commitment of the applicant institution and any partnering organizations should be included.

The document uploads section, found in the online application form, provides templates and guidelines for writing the Proposal, Biosketches, Letters of Support, Trainee Worksheet, and other key components of the application. Applicants **must** use the provided templates and adhere to the prescribed page limits and formatting.

What are the contents of the Application Proposal?

The Proposal comprises the bulk of detailed information on the project, organized within the following sections:

- 1. Program Summary:** High level overview of the proposed program of training including the targeted path(s), overall recruitment strategy; the number of trainees to be supported and the duration of their appointment; the scientific and ancillary curricula; mentoring plans and associated activities; and the range and scope of internship opportunities available to trainees in the program.
- 2. Trainee Selection and Recruitment:** Description of the overall goals and expected outcomes of the AORP; strategies for recruiting and selecting prospective trainees for relevant paths, i.e. COMPASS, Bridges, or Dual Path; and a plan for assessment and continuous improvement.
- 3. Trainee Coursework and Educational Enhancements:** Description of educational activities and their integration into the trainee's curriculum and, if applicable, plans to provide a culminating capstone experience. Description of the coursework and content that will be offered (see pages 5-6 for path-specific course requirements).
- 4. Internship and Research Activities:** Description of internship opportunities that will be available to trainees, including their relevance to stem cell/regenerative medicine and the development of any hybrid skillsets, how trainees will be placed in internships, and the number, duration, and timing of internships proposed per trainee (e.g. 1 internship of up to 12 months, 2 summer internships etc.). Description of strategies to recruit and qualify new host sites/internship mentors, if applicable. Laboratories, facilities, and internship mentors that have already committed to hosting trainees should be described separately (items 12-13).
- 5. Patient/Healthcare Engagement Activities:** Description of planned activities, nature of trainee involvement, and their value towards enhancing trainees' understanding of the challenges of being a patient.
- 6. Community Outreach:** Description of planned activities focused on sharing experiences and/or educating California communities about stem cells, gene therapy, and regenerative medicine, and for gaining awareness of socio-economic issues and disparities around access to education and health care. Description of plans to develop a general education course or workshop on regenerative medicine



that includes discussion of how the influence of genetic, environmental and/or other external factors may impact research and therapy development or accessibility for California populations.

7. Mentoring Program: Description of mentoring program including details on mentor recruitment and training, advising, and assessment of mentorship success, as well as mentored trainee activities and access to resources. Description of mentoring program structure including individualized development plans and other cohort-wide activities that support personal and professional growth of trainees.

COMPASS or Dual Path: Description of strategies to help students navigate their program experience while bringing culturally aware knowledge and perspectives representing groups that may not be present in the resident faculty of the applicant institution.

8. Alumni Tracking and Engagement Plan: Description of plans for annual assessment and reporting on post-graduate employment positions taken by program alumni and encouraging their continued participation in the Mentoring Program to inspire and motivate future trainees.

9. Resource and Knowledge Sharing Plan: Description of how approaches, outcomes, resources, and events within and outside of the institution will be shared with other institutions as well as with CIRM.

10. Program Leadership and Administration: Description of plans for the educational and administrative leadership and program oversight; description of the qualifications for the roles of Program Director, Co-Director (if applicable) and other core functions (mentorship facilitation, outreach and recruitment), as well as any other key personnel that are integral to program success.

Dual Path: Description of plans to facilitate and streamline communication between Director and Co-Director to ensure unique features of individual training paths are maintained while leveraging opportunities for shared resources and cross-path collaborative activities.

11. Prior or Similar Training Programs (if applicable): Description of any prior experience with undergraduate- or masters-focused research training, including relative success in recruiting qualified students and progression of trainees to careers or further education in science-related fields.

12. Institutional Resources and Partnering Organizations: Description of the facilities, environments, and institutional partnerships in which arrangements for trainee placement or training have been established.

13. Internship Mentors: List of research advisors/internship mentors available to supervise or host trainees for the research or practical hands-on component of their training.

14. Population Impact: Description of how the team will incorporate perspectives from communities representing the breadth of California and promote awareness of how genetic, environmental, and societal factors can impact scientific outcomes and access of different populations to scientific advances.

What should one know before preparing the budget?

All budgetary requests must be indicated within the online application form. Budget justification for Program Administration Funds and Trainee Administrative Support Funds (TASF) should provide sufficient detail to allow evaluation of the appropriateness of the costs in relation to the activities proposed. Budget justification for Trainee Stipends and Travel Allowance is not required; however, the number of trainee positions should be justified in the "Program Summary" section of the proposal.

Budgets must be justified in detail, including all subcontracts and consulting fees, including, if applicable, any additional costs that would be funded from another source. Refer to [CIRM Funding Opportunities: Common Requirements and Definitions](#) for additional information and definitions to aid in budget preparation.

The total CIRM Award is subject to a cost cap of Allowable Project Costs. Allowable Project Costs are detailed in the [CIRM Grants Administration Policy for Discovery, Translation, and Education Projects](#) and include Indirect costs. CIRM will not fund costs that exceed the specified Award amount. Generally, program



costs for personnel, trainees, supplies, travel, equipment, and subcontracts may be claimed. Limits for specific cost categories must be observed.

CIRM makes no stipulations on how funds are distributed among the Program Director (and Co-Director, if applicable) in the team. However, specific budget allocations for each member of the team (Program Director and Co-Director) must be delineated in the budget worksheet, budget justification, and should reflect relative contributions and project needs. This aspect of the budget will be subject to evaluation by the Grants Working Group.

Trainee Conference Participation

CIRM will periodically fund and advise the organization of EDUC program conferences where trainees are convened. Awardees are required to facilitate their trainees' attendance at such conferences using travel funds from the TASF. Program Directors (and Co-Directors, if applicable) are also expected to participate in such conferences. Dates and CIRM-organized meetings or conferences will be determined by CIRM staff and communicated to PDs in advance of the conference start date.

Indirect Costs

Applicant institutions are limited to a maximum of 10 percent of allowable Direct Research Funding Costs, exclusive of the costs of Equipment, Tuition and Fees, Research Patient Care Costs, and the total cost of each service contract, Subcontract and Consultant agreement in excess of \$50,000.

Change in Status

Applicants are required to notify CIRM of any material change in status while the application is pending review (e.g., a change in PD, the applicant no longer qualifies as an eligible institution, etc.).

Application Review Information

What is the process for evaluating an application?

Eligibility Review

CIRM will assess whether the applicant and proposed program meet eligibility requirements sought under this program announcement. If CIRM determines, in its sole discretion, that an application does not meet the eligibility requirements of the program or that the submitted application is incomplete or contains false or inaccurate information, CIRM will notify the applicant of its decision and, if CIRM deems it appropriate, allow an opportunity to remedy. If CIRM deems it inappropriate, or if the applicant does not remedy the error in a timely manner, CIRM will terminate all further action on the application. CIRM may exercise its authority to make eligibility determinations at any time before an award is executed.

Scientific Review

The scientific and educational merit of each application is assessed by the GWG, which is composed of fifteen subject matter experts from outside California, seven patient advocate or nurse members of the ICOC (called "GWG Board Members"), and the Chair of the ICOC. The list of scientific members who may participate in the GWG review can be found at <https://www.cirm.ca.gov/about-cirm/working-groups/>. The composition of the ICOC can be viewed on the CIRM website at <https://www.cirm.ca.gov/about-cirm/governing-board/>.

The fifteen participating scientists on the GWG evaluate the applications and score them on a scale of 1-100, applying the review criteria described below. The GWG scientific members will score each application and the full GWG will make funding recommendations to the Application Review Subcommittee of the ICOC.

For purposes of making funding recommendations to CIRM's board, each application shall be assigned to one of two categories based on the median score as follows:



Median score 85 and above: The application has exceptional merit and warrants funding, if funds are available; or

Median score below 85: The application is not recommended for funding.

The Application Review Subcommittee of the ICOC makes final funding decisions.

Consideration of Past CIRM Award Information (If Applicable)

The GWG may consider information from a previously funded and related CIRM award as part of its review. CIRM provides the GWG with objective information regarding a related award that CIRM, in its sole discretion, deems relevant, including but not limited to achievement of specific training activities, goals, and outcomes.

A “related CIRM award” includes: (1) an award for which the applicant PD served as the PI/PD, a co-PI, a co-investigator, or otherwise substantially participated in the conduct of the award; or (2) an award that includes overlapping team members.

Confidentiality

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

How will the scientific merit of an application be evaluated?

Applications will be scored based on the following review criteria.

- 1. Value Proposition:** Evaluate the program's value and potential for impact.
 - Assess whether the training program will have a meaningful, positive impact on trainees' professional development and foster a long-term commitment to CIRM's mission
 - Assess whether the program will help broaden the participation and perspectives of Californians in the regenerative medicine workforce
 - Assess the likelihood that the program will support a sustainable pipeline of trainees who possess the professional competencies necessary to contribute to the regenerative medicine and/or related workforce
- 2. Outreach and Assessment:** Evaluate the strategy for identifying talent and measuring success.
 - Assess the robustness of the Adaptive Outreach and Recruitment Plan (AORP) for identifying talent and addressing disparities in representation by identifying path-appropriate tactics for trainee recruitment and selection, and for evaluating a trainee's potential to succeed, e.g. use of holistic approaches and/or non-traditional metrics
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of plans to track long-term trainee outcomes and disseminate best practices that may benefit other training programs
- 3. Trainee Experience:** Evaluate the quality of the educational and support framework to ensure successful trainee outcomes.
 - Evaluate whether the proposed curriculum and activities effectively integrate appropriate coursework with essential skills to support successful transitions to a broad range of career possibilities
 - Assess whether the patient engagement and community outreach activities, both individually and in combination, contribute to a comprehensive and well-rounded training experience
 - Assess the extent to which the hands-on research experience is of sufficient quality to build competency in regenerative medicine, appropriate to the trainee levels (paths) targeted and their potential career paths of interest



- Evaluate the quality of the mentoring program structure, including plans for mentor training, the use of Individualized Development Plans (IDPs), and plans to disseminate best practices that may benefit other training programs
 - Dual Path Programs: Assess the extent to which the program supports Bridges and COMPASS trainees distinctly while fostering meaningful cross-cohort engagement and maximizing shared resources for the benefit of all trainees
- 4. Program Team and Resources:** Evaluate the expertise and resources that will be deployed to achieve the training program objectives.
- Evaluate the qualifications of the program leadership to successfully navigate the recruitment, mentoring, and administrative demands of the proposed program
 - Assess the program's access to all necessary resources, key partnerships, and institutional support to implement the proposed training activities. If the applicant has other existing training programs, consider whether the proposed program addresses a gap or unmet need
 - Evaluate the appropriateness of the budget and program scale to support the proposed number of trainees and associated activities
 - Evaluate the team or institution's track record of success with ongoing or previous training programs, with respect to trainee recruitment, retention and progression to careers or further education (if applicable)
- 5. Population Impact:** Evaluate the extent to which the program considers the potential impact of the proposed training across broad segments of California.
- Assess plans to incorporate perspectives from communities that are systematically underrepresented in STEM or have had limited access to STEM exposure and opportunity, including those that may not be present on the Program Team
 - Evaluate plans to provide trainees with awareness of how genetic, environmental, and societal factors can impact the practice of science and the access of different communities to scientific advances
 - Evaluate plans to provide trainees and other program participants with access to resources that can support their success and sense of identity in the regenerative medicine field

Award Administration

Issuance of Award

CIRM issues awards through a Notice of Award (NOA), which serves as the official contract defining terms, conditions, and funding commitments. Before finalizing the NOA, CIRM reserves the right to modify project activities and budgets. After consulting with program teams, CIRM, where appropriate, may establish success criteria and timelines based on application information. CIRM will also review key agreements critical to program success to ensure compliance with applicable policies and regulations.

How Funds Will be Awarded

Awards will be made in the form of a grant. CIRM will disburse funds pursuant to a Notice of Award. The first payment will be issued upon initiation of an award and continued funding will be contingent upon timely progress. Where progress is not satisfactory, CIRM reserves the right to either redirect resources to maximize the program outcome or, at its sole discretion, to suspend payment and/or terminate the Award. Five percent (5%) of the award budget will be withheld pending completion of all reporting requirements.



Reporting

Awardees will be required to provide periodic reporting to CIRM according to the terms of the Notice of Award. These include periodic progress reports, annual financial reports, trainee appointment and completion forms.

Trainee appointment forms include the planned activities for each trainee and are submitted prior to start of the appointment period. The forms must be updated periodically to include description of internship projects as appropriate. Completion forms are due at the end of the final appointment period that include summaries of the trainees' activities and post-award plans.

Carry Forward and No-Cost Extensions

CIRM allows carry-forward of funds 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 funds remaining at the end of the program must be returned to CIRM.

No-cost extensions (NCEs) are only permitted under exceptional circumstances, up to 12 months, where an extension would facilitate the completion of a trainee's normal internship term; such an extension would require prior authorization from CIRM.

CIRM Regulations and Policies

Grant awards made through this Program Announcement will be subject to all applicable CIRM regulations. These regulations can be found at <https://www.cirm.ca.gov/our-funding/cirm-stem-cell-grant-regulations>.

Resources

For more information about this and CIRM's other EDUC programs, please visit our [Current Funding Opportunities](#) page to access program announcements, webinar materials and FAQs. For programmatic questions that are not addressed in the above resources, send email correspondence to education@cirm.ca.gov.

For questions related to application review, send email correspondence to 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](#).

CIRM Hub

CIRM offers a rich array of resources designed to support and accelerate individual projects. The CIRM Hub is a centralized platform to facilitate collaboration and the sharing of knowledge, resources, and opportunities between CIRM-supported Education and Infrastructure programs. Applicants are encouraged to engage with the Alpha Clinics, Manufacturing Network, Community Care Centers of Excellence, and Shared Resource Labs as course providers and as potential partners for internship opportunities in their EDUC8 applications. Please visit the [CIRM Hub](#) to explore all offerings.