

# 2026 Funding Opportunity for SPARK

## Part 1

### Informational Video Guide

Discovery & Education Team

February 2, 2026



# Panelists



**Kelly Shepard**  
Director,  
Discovery & Education



**Daisy Xin**  
Science Officer  
Discovery & Education



**Mark Ortiz**  
Grants Management Officer,  
Grants Management

# Information for Applicants

- This video guide pertains to the
  - EDUC3 (SPARK) Awards due **May 28, 2026 at 2PM PST**
- If you have questions related to your specific institution, please submit them or request a consultation at [education@circm.ca.gov](mailto:education@circm.ca.gov)

# EDUC3 (SPARK) Agenda

## 1 Introduction to CIRM & Education Programs

### 2 EDUC3 (SPARK)

a Structure

b Eligibility and Budget

c Award Summary

### 3 Contact and Deadlines

## Our Mission

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

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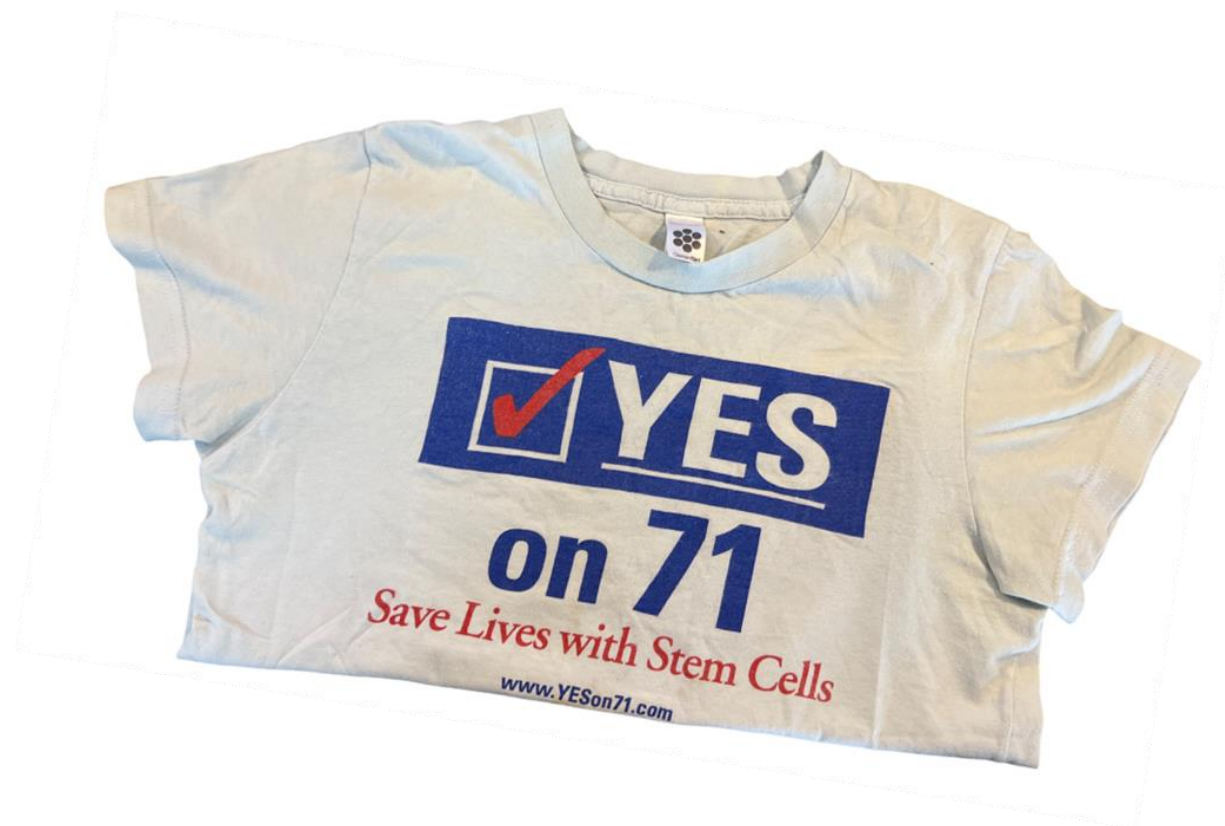


# Created and Funded by the People of California

Proposition 71 in 2004 provided  
**\$3 billion** in funding

Proposition 14 in 2020 provided  
additional **\$5.5 billion** in funding

Proposition 14 dedicates \$1.5B of  
this to R&D for diseases and  
conditions of the brain and CNS



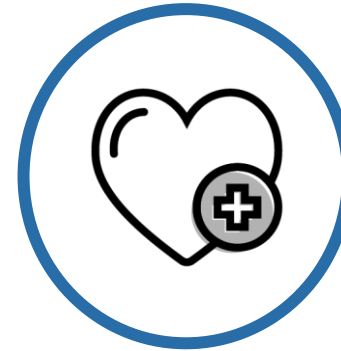
# CIRM Supports Five Pillars



Discovery  
Research



Preclinical  
Development



Clinical  
Development



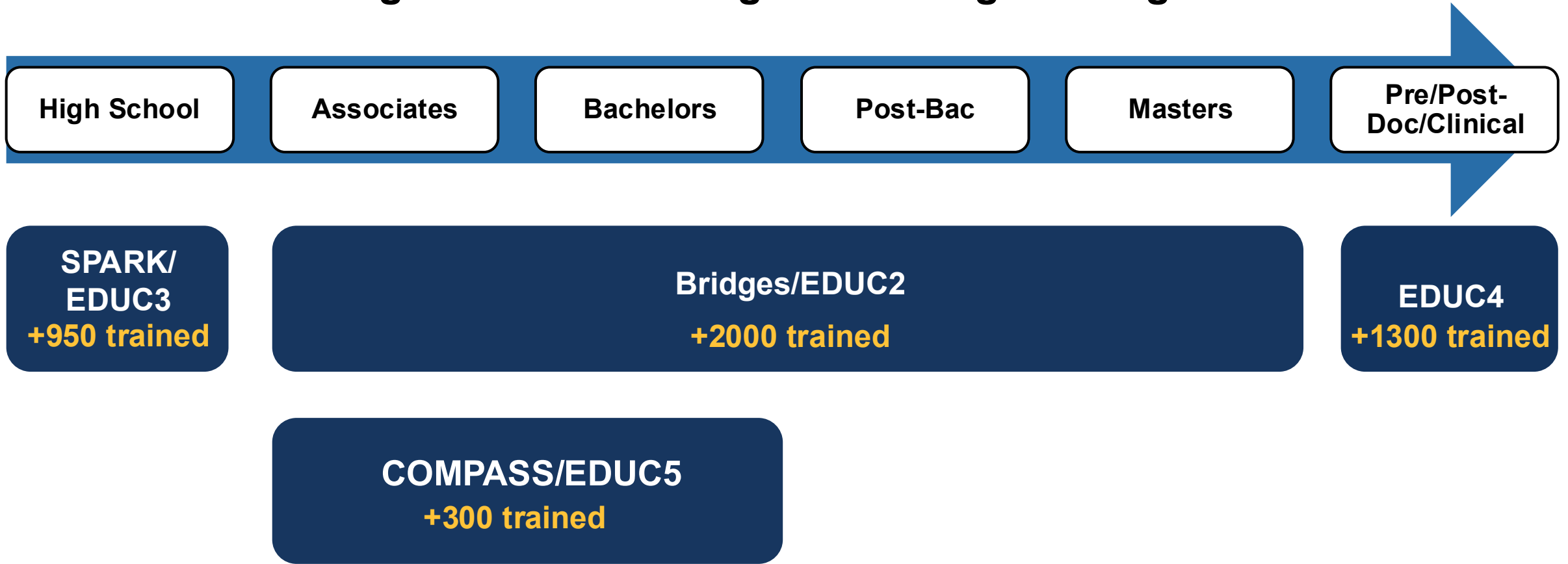
Infrastructure



Education & Workforce  
Development

# Current CIRM EDUC Programs (2007 - Present)

**EDUC Programs cover a range of training and degree levels**





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# EDUC3 (SPARK)

## Objective

To provide summer training opportunities for high school students and broaden participation in stem cell, gene therapy, and related research to deliver CIRM's mission, including those who might have social, geographic, or other constraints

## Structure

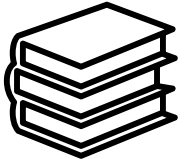
Each program is led by a qualified program director who is responsible for coordinating all activities supported by the program

# What Does a EDUC3 (SPARK) Program Look Like?



## Program Integration and Supplement

SPARK supplements an existing high school summer internship program



## Auxiliary Educational Activities and Mentorship

Preparatory coursework and workshops, structured mentorship and activities



## Hands-on Experience

Paid internships, patient & community engagement, conference attendance



**Provide summer training opportunities and broaden participation in stem cell and gene therapy-related research to high school students**

# EDUC3 (SPARK)

## *Required Trainee Components*

<b>Auxiliary Educational Activities</b>	<b>Patient/Healthcare Engagement</b>	<b>Community Outreach</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short courses or workshops to prepare for internships</li> <li>• Introduction to research ethics</li> </ul>	<p>Activities that provide insights into patient perspectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class or lecture on challenges of therapy development for patients</li> <li>• Hospital tours</li> <li>• Engagement with donor drives (bone marrow, blood)</li> </ul>	<p>Activities to educate communities on issues in regenerative medicine healthcare, and access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media engagement</li> <li>• Volunteering at public health events/fairs</li> <li>• Presentation to local K-12</li> <li>• Training in scientific communication to public audiences</li> </ul>

# EDUC3 (SPARK)

## *Summer Internships*

- Internships take place in host labs/sites at the applicant institution and/or partnering institution(s)\*
  - Must have appropriate mentorship and facilities to accommodate high school trainees
- Hands-on, regenerative medicine-related research activities that are relevant\*\* to understanding or treating human disease
- Up to 12 weeks, typically 6 to 8 weeks



\* Partnering institutions must be located in California.

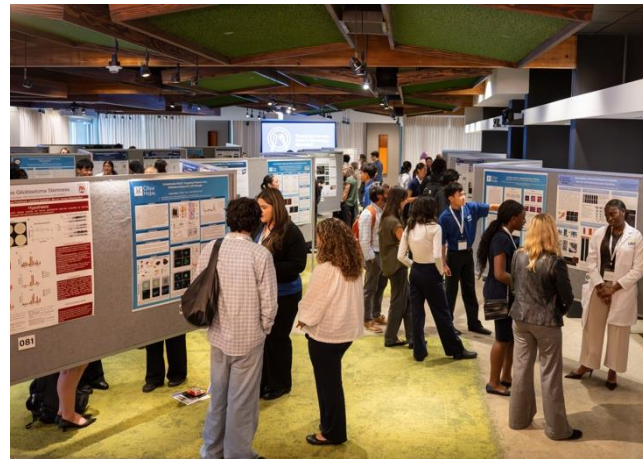
\*\* Internships may comprise relevant technical/practical activities (i.e. project management, manufacturing, clinical research coordination, data science)

# EDUC3 (SPARK)

## *Required Administrative Components*

<b>Trainee Recruitment</b>	<b>Alumni Tracking</b>	<b>Knowledge Sharing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and place qualified students</li> <li>• Those who may not have had opportunities due to social, geographic, or other constraints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanism to track and report alumni outcomes</li> <li>• Include details such as college acceptance and choice of major</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share best practices and other resources, as well as relevant events</li> <li>• Between EDUC programs and with CIRM</li> </ul>

# SPARK Conference



- Annual conference with all SPARK students across CA
- Culminating summer event
- Poster sessions, scientific talks, career panels, and networking

# EDUC3 (SPARK)

## *Other Allowable Activities*

Video Guide: Walkthrough of application, review processes, & CIRM resources  
**See link in description after Feb 10, 2026**

- Collaborating with CIRM INFR sites for tours, workshops, courses, certifications, community engagement, etc.
- Collaborating with other organizations to provide workshops or activities of value that complement the SPARK program
- Counseling SPARK students for next steps such as college applications



Alpha Clinics



Community Care  
Centers of Excellence



Shared Resource Labs



Manufacturing Centers



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# EDUC3 (SPARK)

## *Eligibility*



WASC Accredited academic institutions in California with existing or recent high school internship program



Other CA institutions with regenerative medicine-related research programs or relevant activities for high school students



Qualified Program Director

# EDUC3 (SPARK)

## *Budget*

### Trainee Costs (per trainee, per summer)

- Trainee stipend: **up to \$5,500** for a full-time internship up to 12 weeks in duration
- Travel funds: **up to \$1,000** for attending a CIRM sponsored culminating conference

### Program Administration

- **Up to \$4,167 per trainee** for administrative support salaries
- Activities that enhance education (i.e. patient engagement, community outreach)
- Mentor stipends or supplies budget for the host site, if appropriate
- Applicants may request a budget **for up to 12 trainees/summer**

Maximum Award Budget is **\$704,000**, comprising up to \$640,000 direct project costs and **up to 10% indirect costs** on eligible expenses)

# EDUC3 (SPARK) Award Summary

EDUC3 (SPARK)	
<b>Application Due Date</b>	May 28, 2026
<b>Max Award Duration</b>	5 years
<b>Applicant Eligibility</b>	California based institutions
<b>Leadership and Expertise</b>	Program Director
<b>Max Budget (Total Cost)</b>	\$704,000

# Contacts and Deadlines

**Applications due by May 28, 2026, 2pm PST**

Programmatic Questions  
**education@circm.ca.gov**

Review Questions  
**review@circm.ca.gov**

Budget and Grants Admin Questions  
**grantsmanagement@circm.ca.gov**

Learn about EDUC8 in our next video – **See link in description**

Walkthrough of application, review processes, & CIRM resources  
**See link in description after Feb 10, 2026**



**Education**

**[www.cirm.ca.gov/programs/  
education-and-training/](http://www.cirm.ca.gov/programs/education-and-training/)**

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