CIRM
CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE FOR REGENERATIVE MEDICINE

EDUC8 Funding Opportunity
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR APPLICANTS

- **The application form is available in the CIRM Grants Management Portal**
- **EDUC8 Cycle 1 - Program Announcement**
- **Grants Administration Policy for Discovery, Translation, and Education Projects**
- **Guide for AOOs**
- **EDUC8 Video Guide can be found on our website**
- **CIRM's Information for Applicants page**

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PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

1) Do the Program Director and Co-Director need to have a PhD or MD?

It is not necessary to hold a PhD or MD to serve as a Program Director (PD) or Co-Director. However, the credentials and experience are important for ensuring an EDUC8 program can deliver on its goals, and thus previous experience in managing training programs and/or serving in a similar capacity will be important to demonstrate in the application.

2) Do the Program Director, Co-Director, Mentorship Facilitator, and/or Outreach Coordinator need to be faculty members?

Not necessarily. The Program Director and Co-Director must be either an employee of the applicant organization or someone who is authorized by applicant institution to assume this role through a formal contract. Similarly, the program allows for individuals who are outside of the applicant organization to serve in the Mentorship Facilitator and Outreach Coordinator roles, provided these individuals possess the necessary qualifications and commit an appropriate effort to serve the program.

3) Can a Program Director or Co-Director have an additional role as the Mentorship Facilitator or Outreach Coordinator?

Yes, if it is feasible within your program.

Only one individual can be designated as the Program Director, and a different individual as Co-Director. However, it is possible for one or more individuals to combine their efforts to fulfill required roles of mentorship facilitation, outreach coordination, and Program Director/Co-Director. Please note that reviewers may consider the feasibility of distributing these roles across multiple individuals when evaluating the application.

4) Who can serve as mentors in my EDUC8 program, and what are their responsibilities?

For the purposes of the EDUC8 program, the term "mentor" is applied generally to individuals who will work directly with trainees, individually or in groups, to guide their personal and professional development. However, the terms "internship mentor" or "research advisor" are applied specifically to the subset of mentors who will supervise trainees during their hands-on research or practical internship.

A mentor can be any individual with appropriate qualifications to support trainees throughout their training by providing support, advice, and guidance. CIRM encourages programs to identify individuals from outside their academic institutions. For example, employees of biotechnology companies, entrepreneurs, teachers, community organizers, etc. can serve as mentors and provide perspectives that are not present within the institutional staff, with awareness of diverse career paths that build off a foundation of knowledge and skills related to regenerative medicine related science.

Research advisors/Internship mentors should be PIs or equivalent supervisors. For COMPASS trainees, research advisors/internship mentors can include senior laboratory personnel such as postdoctoral fellows, clinical fellows, senior graduate students, etc. Mentors who are not PIs or equivalent supervisors of a laboratory should have the appropriate level of scientific expertise and experience to supervise a trainee and help them develop and conduct an individual project. The Program Director or if applicable, Co-Director, should ensure that these mentors for COMPASS trainees are appropriately vetted and have secured any necessary permissions, where necessary.

Note: to ensure appropriate supervision and commitment to each trainee, a research/internship mentor may not be appointed to supervise more than two concurrent trainees from any CIRM training program at any one time unless the period of overlap is less than 6 months. To appoint more than this, justification should be provided to CIRM for review.

5) Are we allowed to appoint trainees in year 5?
This will depend on your program. EDUC8 programs are supported with 5-year awards that have defined start and end dates. Trainees appointed part way through may have internships or activities that extend into the subsequent award year. Those appointed in year 5 may need a no-cost extension (NCE). As CIRM will only consider a 12-month (NCEs), programs should avoid appointing new trainees in Year 5 unless they can complete their program within 12 months of the award end date. This may be feasible Bridges-type and 2-year COMPASS-type trainees if a NCE prior approval request (PAR) is approved, but not for 3-year COMPASS-type trainees.
Have additional questions about appointment timing? Contact education@cirm.ca.gov for a consultation.

INSTITUTIONAL ELIGIBILITY

Program scope and project eligibility are described in the 'Scope", Structure' and 'Eligibility' sections of the EDUC8 PA for each chosen training path. Eligibility is determined at CIRM staff's sole discretion.

For questions of scope/eligibility related to your specific project, please reach out to education@cirm.ca.gov to request a consultation. Note that a consulttatino does not guarantee your submitted application will meet eligibility requirements.

6) My institution is not eligible for an EDUC8 program, but we think we can train the future workforce. How can we be involved with CIRM trainees?

There are several different ways your institution may be able to partner with an EDUC8 program, depending on the assets and value that can be provided. A few examples include:

- A research institute or biotechnology company with appropriate laboratory personnel and facilities could host CIRM trainees for research internships
- Curricula or other resources could be shared and included in a trainee's coursework or mentored activities
- Partnering with an EDUC program for trainee recruitment activities
- Providing specialized training courses or other activities on site for trainees (i.e. a course on GMP, patient engagement activities, community outreach activities)
- Providing personnel who can serve as mentors for students, or advisors for the Program Leadership
- Mentoring trainees, offering lab tours, shadowing, etc.

INTERNSHIPS

7) Does a COMPASS trainee have to participate in an internship every year or summer of their appointment?

This depends on program design. All COMPASS trainees are required to participate in at least one internship equivalent to two to three months full-time work, regardless of whether their overall time in the COMPASS program is for a two-year or three-year term. These internships 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. If desired, the program budget can allow for COMPASS trainees to take internships for more than one summer term or in more than one host lab.

8) My institution does not offer PhDs in regenerative medicine disciplines. Are we allowed to host laboratory internships internally or must we find a partner?

This depends on your institution's faculty and facilities. To host internships on site, an institution should have least some research faculty with federally- or CIRM-supported research programs in regenerative medicine-related disciplines. Institutions with limited capacity in this respect, if not partnering with external laboratory hosts, should only propose an EDUC8 program and budget that supports the number of students that can be feasibly trained with the available resources. To support a larger number of trainees or expand offerings, such institutions may consider partnering with external organizations (such as appropriate biotechnology companies, PhD-granting research institutions, etc.) to host interns for their research training. Such partnerships should be secured through letters of support prior to application submission.

9) Can trainees do internships outside of California?

No. Internship sites must be in California.

10) Are trainee's internships projects limited to those using human stem cells? Are projects using model systems or nonhuman stem cells allowed?

Laboratory internships are not strictly required to employ human stem cells/systems, though any proposed internship project must meet the definition from the Program Announcement of "internships in stem cell biology, gene therapy, or related regenerative medicine fields" and its broad relevance and applicability to human disease.

To elaborate, 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.

11) Besides academic laboratories, where can internships take place?

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. Sites could include, but are 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, and CDMOs. Importantly, internship host sites must have appropriate supervision, mentorship and facilities for EDUC8 trainees, as determined by the Director/Co-Director of the EDUC8 program with whom they will collaborate.

BUDGET

12) How many trainees can I propose to support?

This depends on the capacity of your program and the path you choose. The total award amount for a COMPASS or Bridges Path award supports up to 10 trainees per year, while a Dual Path award supports up to 20 trainees per year (based on 10 COMPASS and 10 Bridges). This translates to 50 (single path) or 100 (dual path) "trainee-year slots". In the case of a Bridges program, this could mean 10 different trainees supported per each budget year. For COMPASS programs that have multi-year appointments, total number of trainees supported may be fewer, as these 50 slots could accommodate 25 trainees for 2 years each. Note that the above are examples, and the actual number of trainees that can be supported and over what time frame will be part of the EDUC8 program design.

Importantly, institutions should propose a program that is appropriate for their capabilities, taking into consideration any partnerships and cost-sharing within their institutions. The Grants Working Group will be asked to review the feasibility of each program for meeting not only their internal targets of recruitment, but whether doing so meets the EDUC8 program objectives of identifying and supporting untapped talent and producing well-trained, adaptable, and committed professionals for the regenerative medicine workforce.

Some institutions may have access to external or matching funds that can be used to expand the number of supported trainees or extend their appointments beyond what EDUC8 funds

provide. This may be considered if it is feasible for the EDUC8 leadership team to take on additional capacity.

13) Can an EDUC8 trainee hold another type of training appointment concurrently (e.g., federal grant, CIRM Bridges program)?

A trainee may not be concurrently supported with another fellowship or similar award that provides a stipend or otherwise duplicates provisions of the EDUC8 award; however, CIRM trainees may accept supplemental funding from other (non-CIRM) sources to increase funds available to the individual trainee.

14) If our grant is funded, do we need to appoint trainees right away or is there time allowed to build up the program?

Although the EDUC8 Program Announcement mandates that all awards must begin within 180 days of board approval, it is expected that some programs will need a transition or build up period before any trainees can be appointed. When you submit your EDUC8 application, you will be asked to provide a timeline of activities to reflect these details. Funding from the administrative budget will begin upon grant initiation, whereas trainee-associated funds will be only awarded upon trainee appointment.

For existing programs that receive renewal, one option is to end your current program early to start the next. Any unobligated funds from that first award would come back to CIRM and cannot be transferred to the new award.

Another option would be to initiate the new program while the previous one sunsets, as long as there is no budgetary overlap between the two awards while they are both active.

15) Do all trainees have to be appointed at the same time? What happens if I appoint a cohort of trainees in Year 4?

A program can be easier to manage when all trainees are appointed as a cohort on the same schedule, once per year. However, depending on how an EDUC8 program is designed, trainees may be appointed at different times throughout the year or on a staggered schedule across cohorts. Since the EDUC8 award offers 5-year funding term, an award may need to request a one year no-cost-extension to accommodate any students who are newly appointed in Year 4 or Year 5.

16) What is the Trainee Administrative Support Fund (TASF) and how does it work?

The TASF is a per trainee budget which includes support for training related expenses and certain institutional allowances. In addition to offering stipend support to participating trainees, the TASF may be used by the training program to defray expenses for an individual trainee, such as tuition, course fees, research related funds, assistance funds, trainee travel costs, and more to offset, insofar as possible per the program announcement, appropriate administrative costs of training (See Program Announcement for more information). The TASF is intended to cover costs which directly support the trainee's research experience and should not be proposed to support costs incurred by the institution to manage the training program, such as personnel costs. TASF funds are distinct from stipend payments and are institutionally managed; they are awarded to the institution and must be administered by them in support of a Trainee while participating in the CIRM funded training program. Cost category limits for TASF funds described in the Program Announcement must be observed unless prior approval from CIRM is received. All Assistance Funds requests require prior approval from CIRM.

Unused TASF funds must be refunded to CIRM upon Award close out. TASF expenditures must, as with all CIRM grant expenditures, adhere to CIRM's allowable costs policy, as stated in the Grants Administration Policy for Discovery, Translation, and Education Projects (linked at top of FAQ). Awarded applicants should expect to report on TASF expenditures on an annual basis in both annual progress and financial reporting requirements.

17) What does the 50% cap on Program Administration funds being used on salary include?

The 50% cap applies to salary costs only and does not include benefits. Additionally, hiring lecturers to teach courses is considered a programmatic or course-related expense, not an administrative salary cost, so those expenditures do not count toward the 50% limit.

18) Can the full Indirect cost budget be requested if the max amount of trainees are proposed to be supported throughout the duration of the Program, but the full direct cost budget is not requested?

Applicant institutions are limited to a maximum of 10 percent of allowable direct 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. The Indirect cost budget stated in the Program Announcement is a maximum cost which can be requested only if associated direct costs are also requested at the maximum amounts, per budget category.

APPLICATION

19) What information do I need to provide for host sites/partner institutions?

At the application stage, you must provide the name of any host institutions with whom you have arranged a partnership to host prospective interns. The application forms will collect the name of each host organization and a contact email. Letters of support should be included in the application from these collaborating institutions.

20) What uploads will I be required to provide? What is optional?

The bulk of your application will be on a Proposal MS Word document, which will be uploaded as a PDF attachment when you submit your EDUC8 application online. Other required documents to be included in your application submission are the Trainee Costs excel Workbook, Other Support document for the Director/Co-Director, biosketches for key personnel, a project timeline, and a letter of institutional support. Optional uploads include an alumni outcomes table and letters of collaboration from prospective mentors and host sites.

21) Can I invite my Co-Director and/or administrative assistant into the application portal to help complete the online section? Or can only the PD enter information into the portal?

Yes. The PD (or any user) can delegate their authority in the Grants Management System (including edit, complete and submit privileges) to another user who has an account setup in GMS. Once the new user's account is setup, the PI can delegate by selecting "Edit Profile" in the User Profile Menu on the top right side. At the very bottom, click on the "Specify a new delegate" link, enter and find the delegate's email address you want to provide privileges to and finish the delegating process.

22) How can we get in touch with the Shared Resource Labs?

To find information about CIRM Shared Resources Labs for Stem Cell-based Modeling, go to the CIRM website, and navigate –> For Researchers -> Shared Resources Laboratories. There, you will find links to SRL websites (which include contact information) and a link to SRL catalogs (SRL Research Offerings, CIRM-Supported Courses) with relevant links to SRL websites.

You can also contact ugrieshammer@cirm.ca.gov if you have questions.

23) What do new applicants need to know about the CIRM application process?

As a first-time applicant, you should look through the resources at the top of this FAQ.

Applicants should review PD/Co-D and institutional eligibility requirements and allowable cost principles. Budget development should follow CIRM regulations and may require coordination with institutional grants offices.

You should also be familiarized with Authorized Institutional Officials (AOOs), the individual with the signature authority for an institution that is submitting a full application The AOO must be "cleared" by our Grants Management Team before the final application is considered submitted, which can take up to a week. The submission process takes place in 2 steps: the PD will submit their application first, which is then routed to the AOO. The approved AOO must log in and co-submit through their own interface. For more information, please see "Guide for AOOs" linked at the top of this FAQ.

First time applicants are advised to familiarize themselves with CIRM application portal and upload templates and other material well ahead of the deadline.

24) What do new applicants need to know about the CIRM review process?

CIRM's review process involves an eligibility assessment by CIRM staff, expert review by CIRM's Grants Working Group (GWG), and funding approvals by CIRM's board. These phases are described here: Our Review Process.

25) Will CIRM consider my institution's performance on prior awards during the review?

Yes, 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.

26) What are the review criteria that will be used to evaluate my EDUC8 application?

Applications will be scored based on five review criteria:

1. Value Proposition - The program's value and potential for impact
2. Outreach and Assessment - The strategy for identifying talent and measuring success
3. Trainee Experience - The quality of the educational and support framework to ensure successful trainee outcomes

4. Program Team and Resources - The expertise and resources that will be deployed to achieve the training program objectives
5. Population Impact - The extent to which the program considers the potential impact of the proposed training across broad segments of California

For detailed sub-criteria under each category, please refer to the EDUC8 Program Announcement.

27) What score does my application need to receive to be recommended for funding?
Applications are scored on a scale of 1-100.
- Median score 85 and above: The application has exceptional merit and warrants funding, if funds are available.
- Median score below 85: The application is not recommended for funding. The Application Review Subcommittee of the ICOC makes final funding decisions.

For questions related to the review process, contact review@cirm.ca.gov