

## **RFA Concept Proposal: CIRM New Faculty Awards II**

The use of stem cells in regenerative medicine is a new area of research that requires a cadre of well-trained scientists and clinicians to develop treatments and cures. Current levels of federal funding pose difficulties especially for investigators in the early stages of their careers. New investigators find that undertaking innovative projects is challenging because of tremendous pressures to obtain results, publish scientific papers, and acquire grants quickly. This is particularly true for embryonic stem cell research where restrictions and uncertainty in federal funding discourage scientists from starting new projects in this exciting but risky field. Physician-scientists, who are critical to the development of translational projects, face these challenges as well as significant constraints on their time available for research due to demands of clinical service.

CIRM's New Faculty Awards initiative (RFA 07-02) identified and funded 22 outstanding young scientists and physician-scientists, yet the number of successful applicants was below the projected optimal level for a robust program aimed at the recruitment of new faculty into the stem cell field. In addition, the number of physician-scientists approved for funding was significantly below the targeted level.

To further strengthen the ranks of the new generation of stem cell scientists and rapidly achieve a critical mass of new faculty focused on stem cell research, CIRM proposes the "New Faculty Awards II", in accordance with the Scientific Personnel Development Initiatives of the Scientific Strategic Plan. These awards will fund promising scientists and physician-scientists in the critical early years of their careers as independent investigators. CIRM intends to provide salary and research support for up to five years to help create a stable environment for building innovative and robust stem cell programs. Because effective stem cell-derived therapies may arise from unexpected sources, the New Faculty Awards will support a broad range of research using the full spectrum of stem cell types and experimental approaches. Particular consideration will be given to research applications that cannot be funded by current federal mechanisms.

CIRM New Faculty Awards II will be offered to investigators who are within seven years of beginning their first independent position at the time of application. Successful applicants must hold full-time, faculty-level positions and be employed by an academic or not-for-profit research institution in California at the time of approval for funding by the ICOC. Each eligible institution with an accredited medical school may submit up to five applications less the number of applications approved for the institution by the ICOC in RFA 07-02. A maximum of two applications (approved in RFA 07-02 plus submitted in this RFA) may be from non-physician scientists with the remainder from physician-scientists. Each eligible applicant institution without a medical school may submit up to two applications less the number of applications approved for the institution by the ICOC in RFA 07-02. These applicants may be either new scientist or new physician-scientist faculty.

We propose to fund a total of 14 awards to scientist and physician-scientist faculty at a total cost of up to \$41 million for this round of the program. The combined funding for New Faculty Awards I and II will total \$95 million, approximately \$10 million over the amount originally approved for the New Faculty initiative.

**Provisional Timetable**

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| RFA Release            | February 2008 |
| Review of Applications | June 2008     |
| ICOC Approval          | August 2008   |