

Proposal for ICOC Concept Approval

CIRM Research Leadership Awards

The purpose of this program is two fold:

- 1) To attract some of the world's leading high productivity mid-career stem cell scientists to California.
- 2) To provide investigators the freedom to pursue creative stem cell research.

This initiative is designed to attract the best and brightest to California and is modeled after a new program developed by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute for Early Career Scientists. It is targeted at the very best stem cell scientists who are early in their careers (<10 years past their postdoctoral positions) but have already established themselves as outstanding independent investigators. Newly independent scientists (<3 years past postdoc) are not eligible.

Each candidate must be nominated by the California university, research institution or medical center that is recruiting him/her. However, at the time of application each candidate must hold a fulltime position at an institution outside the state. Researchers at California institutions cannot be nominated (i.e. a CA-institution could not use this award to recruit a faculty member from another CA-institution). Up to 4 awards could be made per year for two years. No more than 1 nomination will be allowed per institution each year and no institution could receive more than 1 award. Awards would not be "portable" if a recipient researcher moved to a different institution (within or outside California) during the award period.

Award components:

- Length of the award – 6 years, not renewable
- Salary support – up to \$186,000 per year plus fringe benefits – *up to 90% commitment based on CIRM's current cap of \$207,000.*
- Laboratory operations - \$300,000 per year (direct costs)
- Laboratory relocation costs (for moving equipment) – up to \$25,000
- Laboratory Renovations and Equipment – One-time award of up to \$1,000,000 (CIRM's contribution) – must be matched 1:1
- Indirect costs – according to CIRM policies

Applicant eligibility and application process:

- CIRM Research Leadership Awards will only be offered to those candidates judged to be highly likely to become world leaders in their fields. At the time of nomination candidates are expected to have:
 - A high-profile international reputation in the stem cell field as a basic, translational and/or clinical researcher;
 - Evidence of seminal contributions to the field;
 - Multiple publications as senior author in high impact journals;

- Significant independent, extramural research funding for stem cell research (basic, preclinical or clinical) – at least 1 RO1 or equivalent;
- Frequent invitations to scientific meetings and symposia;
- Demonstrated evidence of leadership in the field;
- Professional awards.
- Each candidate must be nominated by a university, research institution or medical center within California. A candidate may be nominated by only one institution and, at the time of nomination, he/she must hold a fulltime position at a university or research institution outside the State.
- Candidates must lead independent research programs and be 3-10 years beyond their postdoctoral training at the time of nomination.
- Since successful recruitment may depend on the outcome of the application for a CIRM Research Leadership Award, the review process will be streamlined as much as possible within CIRM and Prop. 71 regulations (see below). The goal will be to provide a decision within 3 months of receipt of the application.
- There will be 3 application deadlines per year but the number of awards will be limited to a maximum of 4 per year for 2 years.
- The application will be relatively short and will be designed to provide information about the candidate's training, success as an independent investigator, "vision" and goals for the next 6 years. A detailed research proposal will not be required.
- Evaluation of the application will focus on the record of the candidate as an independent investigator (45%); the potential impact of his/her vision and goals and the degree to which they align with CIRM's mission (25%); letters of reference (10%).
- CIRM Research Leadership Awards should supplement, not replace, normal start-up packages. Therefore part of the evaluation (20%) will be based on the financial and programmatic commitments to the candidate by his/her nominating institution.
- No award will be activated until the candidate has been appointed to a fulltime position and taken residence at his/her nominating institution in California.
- A candidate who holds a similar career development award from another source would not be eligible for nomination unless he/she is in the terminal year of that award. A CIRM Research Leadership Award could not be activated until that other award ended.

Review Process:

- Nominations will be received 3 times per year according to published deadlines.
- Following conflict of interest clearance, applications will be sent to all members of a special grants working group panel made up of 15 distinguished, senior researchers and patient advocates.
- Each GWG researcher will be required to write a brief evaluation of each application, based on the eligibility and evaluation criteria outlined above, in advance of a telephonic review meeting, during which the GWG Chair will lead the discussion.
- Following discussion each GWG member will submit his/her score electronically.

- The scores will be tabulated immediately and the applications will then undergo programmatic review.
- A summary of the review will be prepared and forwarded to the ICOC at its next meeting for a final funding decision.

Cost estimate per award (assuming the maximum amount in each of the first 4 categories and an estimated mean for facilities/indirect costs):

- Salary and Fringe benefits - \$235K/yr X 6 yrs = \$1410K
- Lab operations - \$300K/yr X 6 yrs = \$1800K
- Lab relocation costs (maximum) \$25K
- Renovations/Equipment \$1000K
- Indirect costs (est. mean) \$1320K
- TOTAL COST \$5555K

Total costs:

Based on the example above the total cost of the program, if 8 CIRM Research Leadership Awards are made, would be \$44.44M (8 awards X \$5555K per award = \$44.44M). However, the cost is likely to be considerably lower for many awards, especially for candidates whose labs are located in CIRM facilities where laboratory renovation costs should be minimal, equipment needs may less and indirect cost totals would be reduced. In those cases, individual awards could total less than \$4.5M.

Multiplier affect:

Investing in the recruitment of high-profile biomedical researchers will leverage considerable new money to CIRM's mission and California's economy because these individuals will:

1. Bring additional grant funds with them;
2. Attract other researchers to California who will bring their own funds;
3. Create teams that will find new funds;
4. Spin off research findings to the private sector.

One study in Australia designed to evaluate this multiplier affect for a program similar to the CIRM Research Leadership Awards found that the initial investment was increased 7X in 3 years.

Timeline:

Release of RFA – December 2009
First nomination deadline – February 2010.