



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, Governing Board, CIRM

FROM: Rahul G. Thakar, CIRM Senior Science Officer for Portfolio Development and Review

DATE: Monday, October 12, 2015

SUBJECT: Modification of Concept Plan for Conference Grant Awards (Mechanism 2) to permit use of funds for food

On May 21, 2015, the Board approved a concept plan for an updated Conference Grant Program. Briefly, the Conference Grant Program is designed to create a highly competitive opportunity for CIRM to support valuable mission-specific scientific conferences. A scientific conference in this context is defined as an organized event where persons physically assemble to exchange scientific information and explore a defined scientific subject relevant to CIRM's mission.

The updated Conference Grant Program maintains two categories of funding. The first category, or Mechanism 1, is an applicant-initiated mechanism whereby an applicant proposes to hold a conference regarding a particular scientific concept. Mechanism 1 conferences have a maximum funding level that is the lesser of \$50,000 or 50% of the total budget. The second category, or Mechanism 2, is a CIRM-initiated opportunity whereby CIRM determines the need for a conference and designs an RFA to create a competitive application process to determine the conference organizer/coordinating entity. CIRM maintains an oversight role in Mechanism 2 awards to ensure that its mission-centric goals are met.

The concept plan approved by the Board eliminated the co-funding requirement for Mechanism 2 awards, while maintaining the co-funding requirement for Mechanism 1. Also, the concept plan prohibited the use of CIRM funds for food, consistent with CIRM's current Grants Administration Policy (GAP). Finally, Mechanism



2 Conference Grant awardees may not charge a registration fee to conference participants.

Under the existing concept plan, CIRM funds cannot be used to purchase food for CIRM-funded conferences, and because Mechanism 2 does not require matching funds or authorize registration fees, there will frequently be no source of funding to provide food and non-alcoholic beverages to conference attendees. Because these meetings may span an entire day or more, the ability to provide food and non-alcoholic beverages to attendees is critical to the success of the conference. In light of the importance of providing food and non-alcoholic beverages to attendees at CIRM-funded conferences, the CIRM team requests the Board consider modifying the Conference Grant concept plan for Mechanism Two-initiated Conference Grants to permit non-alcoholic beverages and meals/food and to make conforming changes to CIRM's GAP. CIRM will maintain the prohibition against the use of award funds to purchase food and beverages for all other research awards, including Mechanism One-initiated conference grants.

RECOMMENDATION: *Approve modification of concept plan for Conference Grant Program to allow Mechanism 2 Awardees to provide non-alcoholic beverages and meals/food to attendees and make conforming change to GAP.*