



CALIFORNIA'S STEM CELL AGENCY

Funding Opportunity Concept Plan

EDUC3: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY FOR THE SUMMER PROGRAM TO ACCELERATE REGENERATIVE MEDICINE KNOWLEDGE (SPARK)- 2021 Relaunch

BACKGROUND

The mission of CIRM is to accelerate stem cell treatments to patients with unmet medical needs.

Under Proposition 71, CIRM ran a successful SPARK Training Program that has supported summer research internships for 482 high school students across California to date. CIRM intends to renew this program under Proposition 14 with minor enhancements to better serve the diverse communities of our state.

OBJECTIVE

The objectives of the SPARK Training Program are to:

- Inspire, educate and motivate high school students to become involved in CIRM's mission of accelerating stem cell treatments to patients with unmet medical needs

- Provide summer training opportunities and broaden participation in stem cell, gene therapy and related research to high school students who represent the diversity of California's population and who might not otherwise have opportunities to take part in summer research internships due to socioeconomic constraints

Through the SPARK program, CIRM continues to create funding opportunities that would otherwise not be available to support and grow the field of regenerative medicine. Although extramural federal funding opportunities for high school level research training programs are available, they are limited in both scope and focus, primarily driven by the internal priorities and interests of the administering body. Currently, there are no comprehensive, federally funded high school internship programs that target regenerative medicine across multiple research institutions. And while federal supplements can be awarded to individual investigators with research grants to take on a high school interns, those opportunities are individualized and do not reflect a standardized, common training experience that can be delivered to cohorts of students in a timely manner.

AWARD INFORMATION

How is the SPARK Training Program Structured?

Each SPARK training program will be led by a qualified Program Director based at the awardee Institution who will be responsible for the management and coordination of all activities supported by the program as well as the recruitment of diverse and qualified students. Research internships, which are a central component of these programs, will take place at host laboratories at the awardee's institution that are non-profit research universities or institutes, or at a partnering institution with a stem cell, gene therapy or regenerative medicine focus.

What activities will CIRM fund?

CIRM funds will support the following activities under this opportunity:

- Trainee Expenses including:
 - Trainee stipends during summer internship period
 - Travel/accommodation expenses for SPARK Poster Day
- Program Expenses
 - Administrative support salaries

- Support for Patient and Healthcare Engagement activities
- Mentor stipend or supplies budget for the host lab, if appropriate

What is the award amount and duration?

CIRM anticipates the EDUC3 program will recur periodically to enable both the renewal and optimization of successful, existing SPARK Programs, as well as provide an inroad for new SPARK Training Programs to be developed that will broaden the reach and participation of students throughout California. In this first occurrence, CIRM requests \$5.1 million to support up to 10 awards. Each award will provide direct project costs of up to \$463,000 plus 10% indirect costs on eligible expenses, for a total of up to 5 years.

1. Trainee Funds The award will provide up to the following amounts per trainee:

- a. Trainee Stipends – Up to \$4500 for a full time research internship of up to 10 weeks duration
- b. Travel expenses – up to \$750. These funds must be used to cover costs for travel to attend the CIRM sponsored poster day held at the end of each summer.

2. Program Administration Funds

Up to \$4,000 per year per trainee may be requested for administrative support salaries; activities focused on patient engagement, community outreach or other activities that enhance the educational value of the program; and mentor stipend or supplies budget for the host lab, if appropriate. Adequate justification for all Program Administration expenses must be provided.

How will funds be awarded?

Awards will be made in the form of a grant. CIRM will disburse funds pursuant to a Notice of Award. CIRM will only disburse trainee internship funds upon submission of a signed Intern Appointment Form for an eligible trainee.

ELIGIBILITY

What types of projects are eligible for funding?

(1) To be eligible, the proposed program must include the following components:

a. Patient (or Patient Advocate) and Healthcare Engagement Activities designed to engage trainees with patients/patient advocates. As one component of these activities, programs might include participation in blood donation, bone marrow registry or similar awareness campaigns.

b. Internships at host laboratories, in which trainees participate in hands-on, regenerative medicine-related research involving stem cells, gene therapy and/or other critical research relevant to understanding or treating a human condition or disease

c. Auxiliary Educational Activities that prepare students for internship research and augment the internship experience.

d. Community Outreach and Education Activities in which trainees participate in educating diverse California communities about stem cells, gene therapy and regenerative medicine, and gain awareness of socio-economic issues and disparities around health care and access.

e. A Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan that addresses

- How the SPARK Program will promote diversity, equity and inclusion in the development and implementation of the program.
- How the grantee institution will conduct outreach and recruit qualified persons for training who are representative of the diverse California population; and
- What the applicant institution has done previously to support DEI

(2) Must be ready to initiate work on the funded project within 60 days of approval

Given the urgency of CIRM's mission, all approved awardees must initiate work on the funded project within 60 days of approval and authorization for funding by the Application Review Subcommittee of the Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee.

(3) Application must be accurate and complete

All required components of the application must be completed and may not contain false or inaccurate information.

(4) Applicant must be in “good standing”

In order to be eligible to apply for CIRM funding, an applicant must certify that it is in good standing, as follows:

- a. Non-Profit (in existence for less than five years):
 - (i) The applicant’s Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and Program Director must not have been convicted of, or currently under investigation for, crimes involving fraud/misappropriation; and
 - (ii) The applicant must have accounting systems in place that are capable of tracking CIRM funds.

- b. The Program Director or key personnel must not be currently under investigation for research misconduct by the applicant institution or a funding agency, and must not be currently debarred by HHS Office of Research Integrity.

Who can apply?

Applicant institutions must be California public universities or colleges; private, nonprofit academic institutions in California that are accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC); or other California-based organizations with a documented track record of successfully delivering laboratory based research training to high school students. Applicant institutions must have an existing high school summer internship program that the SPARK program would supplement. Non-profit organization means either: (1) a governmental entity of the state of California; or (2) a legal entity that is tax exempt under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3) and California Revenue and Taxation Code section 23701d.

Each eligible applicant institution may submit only a single application

Who can serve as the Program Director (PD)?

To be eligible, the Program Director must be an employee with relevant experience at the applicant institution.

SCHEDULE AND DEADLINES

Applications Due	September 2021
Grants Working Group (GWG) Review	Approximately 60 days post submission
ICOC Review and Approval	Approximately 90 days post submission
Award Start	Must start within 60 days of award approval (i.e., approximately 150 days post submission)