

RFA # 1009240111
NYS Grants Gateway # DOH01-INSTTR-2013

**Empire State Institutional Training Programs in Stem Cell Research for
Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellows**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AND MODIFICATIONS

Received June 13, 2014 through June 30, 2014
Including an applicant telephone conference
Held on June 23, 2014

MODIFICATIONS TO RFA

There are no modifications to the RFA.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Will these contracts be renewable after five years? Will continuance of funding be possible?

At this time, there is no plan to offer continuation funding for these awards.

2. Are the institutions that received awards under the first round of institutional training programs unable to apply, or can the institution submit an application under a different PI?

Institutions that received funds under the previous RFA (FAU#0906290930) may not apply.

3. Can applications be submitted through digital upload?

Not at this time. Applications must be submitted through the mail or via courier to the corresponding address selection found in Section IV.E. (How to Complete and File an Application) of the RFA. All applications must be received by 8/21/14 at 4:00 PM.

4. How do we determine whether our application should be a submitted as a resubmission?

Application Completion Instructions (RFA page 38) defines a Resubmission as an application that includes "proposed research that was reviewed by NYSTEM during a previous cycle, but was not funded and is being resubmitted for new consideration." The choice of whether to denote an application as a Resubmission is up to the applicant. If it is a resubmission, complete Forms 1 and 9 as directed in the instructions (RFA pages 38 and 47). Note that reviewers will be provided with the critique from the previous cycle for Resubmission applications.

5. If the contract start date is pushed forward, will the end date shift correspondingly?

Yes, the contract term is scheduled to be up to five years. Note that only the Department of Health can revise the proposed start and end dates of the contract. A late contract execution date does not necessarily, and is unlikely to, mean a change in contract term.

6. Can an institution request a later contract start date?

No. However, if the plan is to start all or a portion of the work later than July 1 (i.e., trainees starting at the beginning of the fall academic semester), then describe this in the workplan and budget accordingly for a nine month trainee support in the first year. Also see Q&As below related to budget and workplan preparations.

7. Can institutions recruit trainees to start before the contract is executed?

If a contract is not executed as of the start date, expenditures may still be made by the institution. However, those expenditures will be incurred "at risk" of not being reimbursed if the contract is not executed. Eligible expenditures incurred after the contract start date are reimbursable once the contract is executed. NOTE: expenses incurred prior to the contract start date are not reimbursable.

8. Do applicants and sub-applicants have to complete and submit the forms found in Attachment 5?

For this RFA, the stated goal for participation of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises is 0%, as is the goal for participation by Women-Owned Business Enterprises. Thus, completion and submission of these forms are optional. RFA Section IV.I. (Page 8) states: "This RFA does not establish minimum goals for participation of minority or women-owned business. Therefore, completion of the MWBE Utilization Plan is optional (Attachment 5). If an applicant chooses to submit an MWBE Utilization Plan, DOH will review it."

9. Must a proposal be for only predoctoral trainees or only postdoctoral trainees?

No. RFA Section III.A. states "Each application will establish a number of training slots for predoctoral and/or postdoctoral trainees in stem cell-related research at eligible institutions in New York State." Therefore, an application can include both, but each type and number of training slots must be designated in the application and cannot later be changed.

10. Our institution would like to create a program with more than the eight training slots allowed by the award maximum. May we supplement the award to create a larger program?

11. Yes. RFA Section III.A. states "The program may be structured so that the number of training slots is different in each year of the expected contract term, provided that stated expense maximums are not exceeded (see page 45 for details). Each training slot will be designated as a full time 12-month commitment at 100% professional effort, though it is expected that trainees may rotate off the program to accept individual fellowships and other opportunities and be replaced by other trainees." Institutional support for the training program may be used to supplement trainee costs, consistent with institutional policies, or to provide funding for additional slots for a larger program. In no case shall funds from this award be used to support a portion of a training slot or its associated costs (see Application Completion Instructions, page 44). Must mentors have current funding through NYSTEM?

No, they may have current funding for stem cell research from any source. Section III.B. of the RFA states “A sufficient number of mentors should be available to support the number and level of trainees accepted to the program. The research experience of the mentors should align with the overall goals and allow for sustainability of the training program. Mentors should be carefully selected and matched to trainees. **Selected mentors should be conducting sufficiently supported stem cell research activities to properly engage and train participating fellows and to provide a rich research environment for the fellowship program participants throughout the term of the contract.**” (emphasis added) While it is acceptable to include individual mentors on multiple training program applications, care should be taken to demonstrate that sufficient research support is available to the mentor who may then be asked to accept trainees from multiple awards.”

12. Must mentors be established investigators, or may they be early career investigators?

Applicants should propose a well-balanced program that will demonstrate strength in mentorship. Section III.B. of the RFA states “A sufficient number of mentors should be available to support the number **and level** of trainees accepted to the program. **The research experience of the mentors should align with the overall goals and allow for sustainability of the training program. Mentors should be carefully selected and matched to trainees.** (emphasis added) Selected mentors should be conducting sufficiently supported stem cell research activities to properly engage and train participating fellows and to provide a rich research environment for the fellowship program participants throughout the term of the contract. While it is acceptable to include individual mentors on multiple training program applications, care should be taken to demonstrate that sufficient research support is available to the mentor who may then be asked to accept trainees from multiple awards.”

13. Must mentors have current research funding?

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14. Are mentors required to commit effort solely to the training program or could the effort be subsumed within effort already committed under an existing research grant?

The intent of an institutional training program is to ensure that specific training opportunities are provided to trainees. Therefore, a designated percentage of effort is required by the mentors and is expected to be reported as part of the percent professional effort, etc. although additional funding is not provided by the award to the mentors.

15. Do we include mentors on Form 2?

Yes, and on Form 8 and Form 6 (in the appendix).

16. Is preference given to proposals that target under-represented minority trainees?

No preference is given. However, the evaluation criteria (Section V.D.) include this question: "Is a recruitment plan proposed with strategies to attract high-quality trainees, including those from under-represented populations in science?"

17. In subsequent years, may new mentors be added to this training program?

Yes, after notifying NYSTEM of the intent to do so.

18. Must Form 1-S be submitted if it is not used?

No. Form 1-S may be omitted if there are no sub-applicants. See Application Completion Instructions starting on page 38 of the RFA.

19. Is it required to have a Co-Program Director?

No, but if a Co-PD is proposed, he/she will be evaluated on the same criteria as the Program Director (see Section V.D.).

20. Although effort by the PD is not required, is there a certain amount that is expected or recommended?

No. Each program design will have its own unique characteristics for which support may be required. In the RFA section Allowable Expenses, under Personal Services (Application Completion Instructions, page 43), it is stated: "The percentage of effort for personnel other than the trainees is not prescribed; it should be dependent upon the nature of the role of each individual at various time points during the project." Further, in the Review Criteria (pg. 12) a criterion is: "Does the PD plan to commit sufficient professional effort to the program to ensure its success?"

21. If the Program Director is committing professional effort but is not requesting salary support, do we list them on the budget form?

Yes.

22. Is salary support available for Program Directors? For Mentors?

Salary support is available for Program Directors and other program administration staff but is not available for mentors. Such support is drawn from the Training Related Expenses category.

23. What level of research detail should be included in the Workplan Form 10 table proposing a training program for predoctoral trainees?

Details of research to be conducted by predoctoral or postdoctoral fellows are not required in this table but descriptions of mentors' research projects may be summarized in the narrative

and tabular data sections. The Workplan table should outline the over-arching goals of the training program (see RFA page 47-50 for detailed instructions).

24. Regarding Form 8, do we report training grants only, or more?

In the first section, include all pending and active research support received through grants and contracts. In the second section, list all pending and active training support, including institutional support for training available to the participants of this application. NOTE: NYSTEM includes training awards in percent effort calculations.

25. Will unspent funds be allowed to be carried forward to the next budget year?

No. RFA page 44 states that ‘unused funds cannot later be used to support additional training slots or portions thereof.’

26. Will Budget Modifications and No Cost Extensions be allowed?

No. RFA page 44 states “**Note: Requests for budget modifications** (to move funds between Personal Service and Non-Personal Service budget categories) **and no cost extensions** (to extend the termination date of the contract) **will not be considered** for these contracts. Further, unused funds cannot later be used to support additional training slots or portions thereof. Thus, it is of critical importance that the application budget is prepared accurately and the scope of work can clearly be accomplished within the stated contract term.”

27. If we add a trainee two months into Year 5, will they lose out on 2 months of stipend at the end of the contract, or can they continue to get the full year?

No trainee can be supported beyond the contract end date regardless of when the training period begins.

28. On the Budget Form, how do we record the items in the table on page 45 (Maximum Annual Budget per Trainee Slot)?

Place stipends under Personal Services. Training Related Expenses, Tuition and Fees, and Facilities and Administration costs should be placed in the “Other” category of the Non Personal Services section of the budget form.

29. If the category for Tuition and Fees in our proposal is less than \$16,000/year, can we budget the excess in another category?

No. RFA page 45 states “Funds may not be re-budgeted within the categories listed in the table above.”

30. In the table on page 45, regarding the \$52,000 stipend for postdoctoral trainees, do we have to pay that amount?

The amount shown is the maximum NYSTEM will support. Throughout the contract term, institutions must pay stipends to both predoctoral and postdoctoral fellows that meet current published NIH minimums or stipends consistent with institutional policy, whichever is greater. Any difference between what is budgeted and what the institution pays must come from other

funds. NOTE: Institutional contribution to stipends may not be tied to any effort requirement. Trainees must devote 100% of their professional effort to this training program.

31. We have an existing seminar series suitable for these trainees. May we use a portion of the Training Related Expenses to expand this series?

Yes. These funds can be used to expand or lengthen an existing seminar series or training program symposium. They may not be used as a substitute or to supplant funds. See Application Completion Instructions, RFA page 44).

32. May we include other tabular data that we believe may be helpful to reviewers (i.e., Overall grad school statistics, resources available for trainees, etc)?

Yes. Tabular data supporting the Workplan text (in addition to that requested on Form 10) is permissible and does not count against the page limit for the Workplan (see <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/index.htm#data> for suggested formats under “Data Tables” and “Individual Blank Data Tables”).

33. Which NIH Training Tables should be included in the application?

Form 10 allows the applicant to add other tables that assist in demonstrating to the peer reviewers the robustness of the applicant’s past training efforts. No tables other than those included as Application Forms are required. The RFA provides a link to the NIH tables in the event that these formats are helpful in supporting the merit of the application’s content. There is no need to repeat data required on Application Form 8 through use of the NIH tables. Note that neither the required Workplan Form 10 nor any additional tables will count against the page limit for the narrative section of this form.

34. The Department of Health website posting of forms references Forms 6-10 and Tables 5, 6 and 14. What are Tables 5, 6 and 14?

This notation was in error. The website posting has been corrected and now reads “Forms 6-10.” The forms posted did not require modification and have not changed.