

**Empire State Medical, Dental and Veterinary Student  
Stem Cell Research Training Program  
FAU # 0906291030**

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS  
9/28/11 – 12/5/11  
Including an applicant conference on 11/29/11**

General

1. Based on your experience, what have been the major mistakes made by applicants?
  - A. Common mistakes have included: submission of a blank or unreadable CD or DVD; failure to complete the forms as directed; failure to provide a detailed timeline and collaboration/coordination strategy; failure to appropriately justify the budget; and failure to check the final Questions, Answers and Modifications to the RFA that are posted to the Department website.
2. Is the intention of this RFA to benefit the field overall or to benefit New York State in some specific way?
  - A. The ESSCB Strategic Plan specifically recognizes the need to provide training opportunities and ensure a robust, interactive stem cell research community in New York State.

Eligibility

3. Are MD/PhD students eligible to apply?
  - A. No. The RFA is not intended for individual applicants, but rather for institutional applicants. So a medical school could apply for funding. Then, if awarded a contract, the school would do their own candidate screening for eligibility. However, students enrolled in a joint PhD/MD program would not be able to be considered for candidacy (see Section III.A. of the RFA). Also see questions and answers in the section below labeled "Scope and Content of the Proposed Training Program."
4. Are osteopathic institutions eligible to apply for funding through this RFA?
  - A. Yes.

5. If a single institution has medical, dental and/or veterinary doctoral programs, can each apply separately?
  - A. Yes.
6. Does the student have to have completed a full two years of education before being eligible to apply for the program?
  - A. Yes. See Section III.A. for some details.

#### Submitting the Application

7. What is the application due date and time?
  - A. The application must be received by 6pm on January 9, 2012.
8. What is to be submitted by the application deadline?
  - A. Refer to RFA Section V. Instructions for Completing the Application as well as Attachment 2 to be sure the submission is complete.

#### Scope and Content of the Proposed Training Program

9. May we place trainees/students with mentors who are part of our own institution?
  - A. Yes. However, this is not required. See Section III.A.3. of the RFA.
10. Should we provide the kinds of tables the NIH would require of an institutional training grant application (e.g., track records of mentors and trainees, etc.)?
  - A. No. The expectation is that we'll receive up to 6 pages of narrative to describe the program (Form 10) and supporting information requested on the other forms.
11. Are students who have a degree (MD, DVM, DDS) and are enrolled in a second program eligible to participate (i.e., can a veterinary student who is an MD receive funding from this program)?
  - A. Yes.
12. Is PhD coursework allowed to be pursued as part of the training experience, and if so, is tuition payment for that coursework an allowable expense?

- A. Yes, as long as the student is not also enrolled in the PhD program.
13. Section III.A.3. requires host mentors to have research funding of at least \$200,000 annually. Does that figure include both direct and indirect costs? Does that amount of funding have to be specifically for stem cell related research?
- A. Yes. Yes.
14. Should we include a list of potential host mentors/institutions in the application and should we include letters of support from them?
- A. Such a list is not required.
15. Can we set up the program so that if a trainee terminates before their 9 – 12 month traineeship is complete, they can be replaced for the duration of the training period?
- A. No. Each trainee is expected to complete a full training period. If a trainee leaves the program early, the remaining funds are likely to remain unspent.
16. Do we need to include a timeline to project when trainees will start, when progress reports will be submitted, etc.?
- A. No. A timeline is not required for this application since the dates of appointment for trainees may vary. However, the application should clearly indicate program implementation schedules (i.e., when you anticipate that program policies will be firmly established and recruiting will begin).

#### Application Contents and Forms

17. For Form 2, should we list potential mentors associated with this project?
- A. Form 2 should list individuals associated with setting up and running the program. If your program will include mentors who work for the applicant institution, then those mentors could be listed. If the program permits trainees to go to other institutions for training, those mentors wouldn't necessarily be identified until the trainee is selected.
18. How much minutia should we get into for the Acronyms list (Form 3)?
- A. The main audiences for this list include the peer reviewers assigned to the panel for their expertise in areas similar to the content of the application and critique editors who may not have expertise in that

specific area but are also scientists. Whether included on Form 3 or not, it is recommended that all acronyms and abbreviations are spelled out when first used in the text of the application, immediately followed by the acronym or abbreviation in parentheses.

19. Must we submit a biosketch for everyone we list on Form 2?

A. No. A biographical sketch (Form 8) must be provided for all key personnel listed on Form 6.

20. Can we insert an NIH or similar table for Other Support instead of using Form 9?

A. To do so would cause a penalty of 0.1 point (see Attachment 2).

21. Do we need to provide proof of the mentor's vertebrate animal or other protocol approvals as part of the application?

A. No. However, necessary protocol approvals must be in place before the trainee begins related work and be verifiable upon request.

22. If we have application forms, screening tools and other evaluation tools already established, can we include those in an appendix?

A. Yes. Be sure to explain the process within the workplan (Form 10) page limits and refer to the appendix material as examples from another successful program.

### Budgeting

23. Why do the instructions require the full contract budget to be placed in Year One?

A. Placement of the full budget in the first year of the contract provides flexibility for the contractor to select appropriate students throughout the contract term rather than pre-defining the number trained in each year. Carry-forward of unspent funds into subsequent budget years is anticipated and will be processed following receipt of the final voucher for each budget year of the contract. **Note:** Requests for budget modifications (to move funds between budget lines) and no cost extensions (to extend the termination date of the contract) will not be considered for these contracts.

24. Can we budget for travel to meetings?

A. Yes. In fact, contractors are required to travel to and participate in annual and other ESSCB-sponsored meeting during the contract period (see Section III.C., Reporting Obligations). Such meetings will be held in New York State.

25. If the NIH stipend exceeds \$24,996, will the contract amount be increased?

A. No, the contractor will be required to provide the difference using its other available funds.

26. Are we able to extend a training period beyond the end of the contract term?

A. No. The full 9 month or 12 month training period will need to be completed by the end of the contract term. Requests for no cost extensions (to extend the termination date of the contract) are not permitted under this RFA.

27. Can we commit the trainees entire salary/stipend in full from the date their training starts as long as the start date is before the end of the contract term?

A. No. This is a cost-reimbursement contract. Contractors cannot voucher for salary/stipends that have not yet been paid to the trainees.

28. If we don't use the full amounts as they are listed in each budget line before the contract end date, do we lose it?

A. Yes. Requests to move funds between budget lines (budget modifications) and to extend the termination date of the contract (no cost extensions) will not be considered.

### Peer Reviewers

29. How will the peer reviewers be selected?

A. Reviewers will be selected from among Wadsworth Center staff. Reviewers are screened for conflict of interest with applicant participants (see Section VI.B. of the RFA and Application Form 2).

## Awards and Contracting Process

30. Section VI. references a set of Pass/Fail requirements and refers to Attachment 2. How is this done?
- A. After applications are received, they are inspected for the mandatory elements listed on Attachment 2. If any one or more of those criteria are not met, the application will not pass the preliminary review and will not be forwarded for peer review. The applicant will be notified of this determination.
31. How is the budget scored?
- A. The reviewers are required to score each criterion listed in Section VI.D. The budget counts for 20% of the total score.
32. When should we expect the Funding Committee to vote on the awards?
- A. This will depend on the number of applications and the length of time it takes to complete peer review but is expected in Fall 2012. Meeting notices are sent to those who sign up for e-Alerts at [http://stemcell.ny.gov/sign\\_up\\_ealerts.php](http://stemcell.ny.gov/sign_up_ealerts.php) and elect to receive Event Announcements. The meeting agendas are posted on the website at <http://stemcell.ny.gov/events.html>.
33. How long will it take to get feedback from the reviewers? When will an official notice of award be sent?
- A. After the Funding Committee meeting recommendations are made, several administrative approvals to enter into a contract are needed before formal communications can be sent from the Extramural Grants Administration office. These approvals generally take six to eight weeks. Upon approval, letters of award or regret will be sent to the Principal Investigator and the Grants Official from the applicant institution. With that correspondence, the PI will also receive a copy of the reviewer critiques, scores, summary statement and review panel roster. The letter of award is not a guarantee of funding; a contract must first be executed before funding is provided.
34. What can we do to facilitate timely contract execution?
- A. Upon receipt of the letter of award, Grants Offices should complete/update the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire (see Section IV.I.) and Charities Registration, and get the Workers' Compensation and Disability Insurance forms (see Section IV.K. of the RFA) ready for submission/return with the signed contract. Then, when the contract is

sent to the institution for signature, it can expeditiously return all necessary documents to the Department of Health with the signed contract.

35. When will we actually receive the funds?

- A. Funds under the contract are reimbursed in accordance with the payment and reporting schedule (See RFA Attachment 5, Appendix C to the contract for a sample). The contract must be executed (signed by all required parties and returned to the applicant institution) in order for allowable expenditures to be reimbursed. Contract execution generally takes six months from the date of the notice of award. The contract start date will be noted on the letter of award; it is expected to be January 1, 2013. Eligible expenses incurred prior to contract execution are made at the applicant's risk. If the contract is not executed, no funds will be reimbursed.

36. Are "no cost extensions," "carry-forwards" and budget modifications allowed, and are they treated in the same way as the NIH?

- A. Only "carry-forwards" are allowable under the contract. Budget modifications (moving funds between lines of the budget) are not allowed. Carry forward requests are treated very differently from an NIH grant. Each must be formally requested and none are guaranteed. A formal contract amendment process, which is both lengthy and time-consuming, is generally necessary.

#### Post-Award

37. What kind of reporting is required?

- A. Written progress reports are required (see Section III.C. and Appendix C of the Sample Grant Contract found in Attachment 5 to the RFA). Progress report forms and instructions will be made available on the website.