

**Stem Cell Research Experience for Pre-College Teachers
RFA # 0912220314**

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AND MODIFICATIONS
Received February 28, 2014 through March 28, 2014
Including an applicant telephone conference
Held on March 26, 2014**

MODIFICATIONS TO RFA

1. Section I.C. Available Funds (RFA page 1) has changed and now reads as follows (for change, see highlighted text):

All awards will be financed by the Empire State Stem Cell Trust Fund. The number of awards and total funds awarded per application will be contingent on the quality and content of applications received as well as the scale and scope of the proposed programs. Approximately \$2.7 million is available to support approximately four awards from this RFA. This funding is for a period up to four years. No award may exceed \$175,000 in annual direct costs. Additionally, funds will be available to support Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs of up to eight percent (8%) of the modified total direct costs.

2. The Application Checklist (page 17 of the RFA) has changed and the REVISED APPLICATION CHECKLIST is attached here (for changes, see highlighted text).
3. The Budget and Justification - Form 5 – Expenditure Based Budget Template (beginning on RFA page 23) have been revised and re-posted to the website.
4. RFA Page 36 (a portion of completion instructions) has been revised and attached here (for changes, see highlighted text).
5. The instructions for completing the Budget Forms (beginning on RFA page 40) have changed and are attached here (for changes, see highlighted text).

REVISED APPLICATION CHECKLIST (RFA page 17)

Stem Cell Research Experience for Pre-College Teachers

The following items are **mandatory (Pass/Fail)**. Applications that do not include mandatory items will not be reviewed.

- The applicant organization is a New York State not-for-profit or public post-secondary academic institution (see Section II, pg. 1)
- Only one application was received from this organization (see Section II, pg. 2)
- Only one application was received from this Program Director (PD) (see Section II, pg. 2)

The following items are **not mandatory**. When appropriate, appendices should include items such as:

- Vendor Responsibility Attestation (Attachment 2)
- Biographical Sketches of Mentors
- Facilities and Administrative rate agreements
- Letters of collaboration or support; commitment(s) to provide research resources; letter(s) from consultant(s)
- Memoranda of Understanding, Subcontracts or Contractual Agreements
- Up to two highly relevant publications or manuscripts (published or in press) may be included if essential to document the investigator's capability to undertake the work proposed

APPLICATION PENALTIES:

A total penalty of 0.1 point will be assessed to an application if:

- Submission is password protected.
- Forms provided with this RFA are not used
- Submission does not include:
 - Signed and dated Forms 1, all Forms 1S (where applicable), in a *single* Portable Document Format (PDF) file
 - NOTE:** Form 1-S may be omitted if there are no sub-applicants. No other forms may be omitted from the application.
 - Forms 2-4 in a *single* PDF file and a single Microsoft Word Document (DOC) file
 - Form 5s as separate Microsoft Excel (XLS or XLSX) files – one workbook file for the applicant organization and one workbook file for each sub-applicant organization
 - All Form 5s combined in a *single* PDF file – include all applicant and sub-applicant XLS or XLSX files
 - Forms 6-9 and all appendix material in a *single* PDF file, containing at least the following:
 - Biosketch – Form 6 – one for the PD and each Co-PD
 - Facilities and Resources – Form 7 – one for the applicant organization and one for each sub-applicant organization
 - Other Support – Form 8 – for the PD and each Co-PD
 - Workplan Form 9
 - Workplan Narrative – Form 9 – limited to 10 pages.

REVISED Application Completion Instructions (RFA page 36)

Each content section described below should be provided in the application.

ALL APPLICATIONS SHOULD USE THE FORMS (see Attachment 1 – Forms 1-9 and Form 1-S) AND FORMATS PRESCRIBED IN THIS ATTACHMENT 1. APPLICATIONS THAT DEVIATE FROM SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THESE INSTRUCTIONS OR THOSE FOUND ON THE FORMS WILL BE ASSESSED A PENALTY AS SPECIFIED IN Attachment 1, Checklist (above – Page 16).

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all materials to be included in the application have been properly prepared and submitted. **File sizes cannot exceed 10MB each.** Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek appropriate technical support in the creation of digital files and to review the digital files prior to submission. Some materials may require scanning and insertion into the file. Discretion should be exercised in the resolution of figures and scanned materials. Excess resolution will increase the size of the file without any appreciable increase in viewing quality. Tips for managing graphics and file sizes are available at http://stemcell.ny.gov/research_support.html. Applicants should also be aware that while color figures may be included, applications may be printed in black and white. Applicants may wish to annotate the figure legend directing the reader to the digital file if color is an important aspect of the figure.

Forms are pre-set with acceptable fonts and margins. Applications should be single-spaced and typed using the font previously set within each form. Smaller font sizes are acceptable for use in tables and figure legends. Each page of each file should be numbered consecutively. Figures and illustrations referenced in the Workplan are included in the page limits. Appendices may not be used to circumvent page limitations.

Applications must be submitted in digital format on a single CD or DVD. An exact paper copy should also be submitted; it will be used only if the CD or DVD is damaged. If a digital copy of the application is not submitted on CD or DVD, the application will fail administrative review and will not be sent to peer review. Also, if the digital copy is damaged and a paper copy has not been submitted, the application will fail administrative review and will not be sent to peer review.

The CD or DVD should be clearly labeled with the applicant's name. It should contain the following items:

- Signed and dated Forms 1, all Forms 1S (where applicable), in a *single* Portable Document Format (PDF) file
 - NOTE:** Form 1-S may be omitted if there are no sub-applicants. No other forms may be omitted from the application.
- Forms 2-4 in a *single* PDF file and a single Microsoft Word Document (DOC) file
- Form 5s as separate Microsoft Excel (XLS or XLSX) files – one workbook file for the applicant organization and one workbook file for each sub-applicant organization
- All Form 5s combined in a *single* PDF file – include all applicant and sub-applicant XLS or XLSX files
- Forms 6-9 and all appendix material in a *single* PDF file, containing at least the following:
 - Biosketch – Form 6 – one for the PD and each Co-PD
 - Facilities and Resources – Form 7 – one for the applicant organization and one for each sub-applicant organization
 - Other Support – Form 8 – for the PD and each Co-PD
 - Workplan – Form 9
 - Workplan Narrative – Form 9 – limited to 10 pages.

Budget and Justification – Form 5 (RFA page 40)

Form 5 is fillable as a Microsoft Excel workbook. Workbooks are formatted with the proper formulas and will print all 20 pages of budget forms (four years) from one sheet. Pages 2-5 of each budget year must be completed for total amounts to auto-populate on Page 1. (It is not necessary to complete the columns for 'Match Funds' or 'Other Funds').

Complete a Form 5 workbook for the applicant. In addition, complete a separate Form 5 workbook for each sub-applicant (e.g., an application with two sub-applicants will submit a total of three Form 5s). The applicant budget should be submitted as one Excel file and must be named with the application number and institution name. Sub applicant budgets should each be submitted as one Excel file and named with the application number and the sub-applicant institution name (Ex. "N14T-999 Harvard budget", "N14T-999 sub-Boston College budget"). All budget forms should also be submitted as a single PDF file.

Request funds appropriate for cost-effective performance of the proposed project. Budgets must be developed and managed in accordance with appropriate accounting standards for the organization including, but not limited to, applicable Circulars from the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) (see NYS Master Grant Contract, Appendix A-1). Record the amount requested for each category, subtotal and total for each year or portion thereof.

Care should be taken to record the true budgetary needs of the application. Proposed budgets are expected to incorporate cost of living increases and other reasonably-anticipated adjustments that may be necessary throughout the contract term. **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. 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.

No funds shall be directly or indirectly utilized for research involving human reproductive cloning. Patient care and equipment are not allowable expenses. Funds awarded by this program may not be used to supplant or duplicate other existing support for the same work (also see NYS Master Grant Contract, Standard Terms and Conditions, Paragraph III.C., Claims for Reimbursement regarding duplicate reimbursement and replacement funds). Ineligible budget items will be removed from the budget prior to contracting; the budget amount requested will be reduced to reflect the removal of the ineligible items.

Allowable Expenses of the Applicant and Sub-applicants (also see table of Maximum Allowances below)

1. Personal Services

Salaries and stipends are to be paid according to established institutional policies and proportional to the percent of expended professional effort. Fringe benefits may be requested in accordance with institutional guidelines for each position, provided such benefits are applied consistently by the applicant institution as a direct cost to all sponsors. Maximum salary is limited to \$199,700 in each budget year and is not adjustable as the federal salary cap changes. Salary support may be requested for the mentor(s)** and listed on the Budget and Justification – Form 5 template under Personal Services. The percentage of effort for personnel other than the teacher trainees is not prescribed; it should be dependent upon the nature of the role of each individual at various time points during the project.

The teachers will conduct stem cell-related research at the applicant institution or sub-applicant organization. A full time (100 percent professional effort) commitment to the training experience is required of the teachers, equivalent to one FTE for the duration of the training experience.

Provide the information requested for all staff positions assigned to the project, regardless of whether financial support is requested. Insert additional lines as necessary.

Stipends paid from this award will be paid at \$1,000 per week per teacher. If the institutional stipend exceeds this amount, the contractor will be required to pay the difference from other eligible sources of funds.

2. Non-Personal Services

Eligible non-personal service expenditures are limited to administration of the training program and to teacher training-related expenses.

For each teacher trained each summer, expenses may not exceed the following:

MAXIMUM ALLOWANCES PER TEACHER PER SUMMER			
	8 Week Program	7 Week Program	6 Week Program
Weekly Stipend of \$1,000	\$8,000	\$7,000	\$6,000
Reasonable Living/Housing-Related Expenses	\$1,500	\$1,312	\$1,125
Classroom Enrichment Materials (purchase and development)	\$1,000	\$ 875	\$ 750
Professional Development and Related Travel	\$1,000	\$875	\$1,875
Host Laboratory Supplies/Other Expenses*	\$2,500	\$2,188	\$750
Subtotal Training Costs	\$14,000	\$12,250	\$10,500
Program Administration (including PS and OTPS not included in the lines above)**	\$3,500	\$3,062	\$2,625
Subtotal	\$15,400	\$13,475	\$11,550
F&A	\$1,400	\$1,225	\$1,050
Total	\$18,900	\$16,537	\$14,175

*Host Laboratory Supplies/Other Expenses

- Lab Supplies to support teacher projects
- Travel (excluding local commuting expenses) to meetings and teachers' conferences to present their research experience and lesson plan/activity/module
- Teacher Consultation throughout the following academic year(s) with mentor, postdoctoral students and graduate students
- Other Expenses:
 - ✓ Core Facility Usage Fees (including NYSTEM-funded shared facilities)
 - ✓ Communication Costs
 - ✓ Animals and their Care
 - ✓ Human Subjects

- ✓ Training Course Registration
- ✓ Publication Costs
- ✓ Miscellaneous

****Program Administration**

- Salary Support for Program Director(s) and Mentors as well as their Laboratory staff providing support for the teachers' experience
- Salary Support for administrative staff supporting the program
- Other Expenses not delineated above

3. Proposed Subcontracts (Sub-applicants)

Allowable expenses for sub-applicants will be consistent with those established herein for the applicant. Sub-applicant amounts will be carried forward from sub-applicant budget forms to Contractual Services of the applicant budget, Form 5. Such amount will include sub-applicant F&A costs. Note that any expenses budgeted for the sub-applicant will reduce the allowable expenses for the applicant organization.

4. Facilities and Administrative Costs

F&A support is limited to a maximum of eight percent of modified total direct costs. Modified total direct costs consist of all salaries and wages, fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel and subgrants and subcontracts up to the first \$25,000 of each subgrant or subcontract (regardless of the period covered by the subgrant or subcontract). Equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care and tuition remission, rental costs, scholarships and fellowships, as well as the portion of each subgrant and subcontract in excess of \$25,000 shall be excluded from modified total direct costs.

If an award is made, F&A costs will be re-calculated from recommended and approved budget amounts. F&A costs will be calculated as the lower of the RFA-specified percentage of modified total direct costs or the amount recovered using the institution's current DHHS F&A rate. A copy of the DHHS F&A rate agreement should be included in the application appendix. In the absence of a DHHS agreement, an equivalently documented rate for the institution may be used. Sub-applicant F&A costs are likewise limited, and included in the primary applicant's direct costs.

Complete the Summary Page using **only** the column labeled Grant Funds and the column labeled Total. Complete each column of the Personal Services Detail page. Add rows as necessary for Salary and Fringe. Complete all other sections as appropriate.

Justification

On the last page of Form 5, provide sufficient detail to demonstrate that specific uses and amounts of funding have been carefully considered, are reasonable and are consistent with the approaches described in the Workplan. Justify funding for each budget line for the applicant and each sub-applicant. Budget lines that are not well-justified may be decreased or disallowed during the peer review and award process.

Starting with personnel, **fully justify** amounts requested in each budget category and budget line. Regardless of whether financial support is requested, describe and substantiate the roles and essential contributions to the project of the PI and other staff involved in the project. In addition,

provide a **detailed** justification for each 'Non Personal Service' (e.g., travel, supplies and other expenses).

Note that expenses specific to each teacher's experience (corresponding to the "Subtotal Training Costs" line in the table above) are limited as described in the RFA and are to be verifiable upon audit but do not need to be itemized here.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

General

1. How will we know if there are changes to the RFA, forms or instructions before the deadline?
 - A. As originally noted in the RFA, on or about April 3, 2014, a Questions, Answers and Modifications document will be posted to the DOH website. After that date, applicants should check back regularly to be sure that there are not addenda.
2. What is the Grants Gateway?
 - A. The New York State Grants Gateway is a new statewide portal that is the next step for organizations interested in doing business with New York State. **This spring, State agency funding opportunities will begin to be posted on the Gateway for online application.** To prepare for this exciting transition, it is essential that all potential bidders register with the Gateway and create an account that will provide full access to the system. Additional information regarding the NYS Grants Gateway is available at: <http://grantsreform.ny.gov/>.

Purpose of the Funds and Project Narratives/Workplan Outcomes

3. Does the program need to be exclusively a summer program?
 - A. Yes. The program must be 6, 7 or 8 consecutive weeks during the summer. Relationships established between mentors and teachers are expected to extend beyond the summer.
4. What is expected regarding the amount of time teachers will spend conducting research versus attending seminars, etc.?
 - A. The RFA does not stipulate those requirements. Instead, it requests that the applicant describe and justify a proposed program structure that will ensure the participating teachers have developed a lesson plan, hands-on activity or learning module to implement with their students in the classroom.
5. Do the teachers need to commit to the entire length of the program and be there full time (e.g., 30 hour week)?
 - A. Yes. Please refer to the RFA, page 2, Section III. Project Narratives/Workplan Outcomes, paragraph 2. The expectation is that teachers will participate full-time in an intensive six-to-eight consecutive week session. For the purpose of this RFA, "full time" is defined as between 30-40 hours per week.
6. The RFA references recruitment of diverse populations. Is the expectation that we will recruit our teachers with an eye toward diversity or is the intent that we recruit teachers who work with diverse student populations?
 - A. The RFA (page 3) encourages applications that describe plans to recruit teachers from diverse populations and those who teach in schools that have disadvantaged students.

7. Since we won't have recruited teachers in advance of the application deadline, how do we demonstrate diversity?
 - A. Describe your plan to approach districts and teachers and outline how that plan will encourage participation of diverse populations and how disadvantaged students would benefit. Describe your own benchmarks for diversity by describing where and how you'll recruit and how teachers who apply to the program will be screened.
8. The expectation is that the teachers will take what they learned back to their classrooms and include the lesson plan, hands-on activity, learning module that they develop in the course of the school year, so how do we account for educational mandates and curriculum requirements of the districts?
 - A. Address issues such as education mandates, curriculum requirements and district limitations in your application in terms of your recruitment plan and program design.
9. Do we have to describe how we will recruit mentors?
 - A. There are some parameters for the mentors described on page 3 of the RFA. In consideration of those, your application should make it clear that you have ample mentors to mount the program you describe. Additionally, you will need to describe how you will match/assign mentors to the teachers.
10. How many mentors and teachers can we have?
 - A. Section III of the RFA requires that there be 5 to 10 teachers and that no mentor is assigned more than 2 teachers. Each mentor must be engaged in peer-reviewed stem cell research.
11. Should we get letters of commitment from districts and letters of interest from teachers and mentors?
 - A. Yes, often those types of letters strengthen an application.

Budgeting

11. Page 40 of the RFA says there will be no consideration of budget modifications for this contract. Is that correct?
 - A. There will be no consideration of budget modifications between Personal Services and Non-Personal Services during the contract. Modifications within a category will be considered. No cost extensions (request to extend the termination date of the contract) will not be considered. Also see **Modifications** section of this Q&A, above.
12. Will carry forward of unspent funds from one year to the next be allowed?
 - A. They may be proposed as noted in Attachment 4, Sample NYS Master Grant Contract, Attachment A-1, Part B – Program Specific Clauses, G. Other, No. 3, but they should be minimal and may not be approved.

13. What expenditures are not permitted?

- A. Refer to Budget and Justification – Form 5 (RFA page 40) **modification** above, paragraph 5 of these Q&A's for expenditures that would not be permitted.

14. Can expenditure be made to buy research supplies for the teachers?

- A. Yes. See the “Maximum Allowances Per Teacher Per Summer” table and Budget and Justification – Form 5 (as **modified** above). Such expenditures would fall under “Host Laboratory Supplies/Other Expenses.” Remember that the teacher isn't being paid to conduct stem cell science, but is being paid to learn how to teach stem cell science in their classroom.

15. Where in the budget do we recoup expenses related to the administration of this program (e.g., the payment of time for PIs and postdocs who are mentoring the teachers)?

- A. See the “Maximum Allowances Per Teacher Per Summer” table (as **modified** above). Such expenditures would fall under “Program Administration.”

Application Forms

16. What are the allowable application font sizes and margins?

- A. The application forms are pre-set for fonts and margins. You must use the application forms provided as Attachment 1 of the RFA.

17. Are there page limits or limits to the number of objectives and tasks that can be included in the Workplan tabular form?

- A. No. You may add as many objectives and tasks as necessary to represent the narrative workplan in tabular format.

18. Does the 10 page limit for the narrative portion of the workplan include literature citations?

- A. The application instructions do not include a section for literature citations, so any citations would need to be included in the 10 pages.

Workplan and Budget Application Forms

19. How many budget forms will I have to submit?

- A. See **Modifications**, above.

20. We will not have any subcontracts. In that case, can we have more than one Program Director and more than one Co-Director, and if so, how do we list them on Form 1?

- A. The number is not restricted. However, when completing Form 1, only the Program Director and one of the Co-Directors can be listed.

21. On the first page of the Workplan form there is a box where the instructions say to copy and paste our Lay Abstract. Are we limited to the size of that box?

A. No. The text box will expand, and if it continues onto additional pages, that is fine.

22. On the Workplan, Form 13, Detail Tables, can we add rows for additional objectives (aims) and tasks (sub-aims)? Can we delete extra rows?

A. Yes, you can add or delete rows to that table as necessary. Refer to similar Q&A #17 above.

Peer Reviewers and Oversight Panel Member Selection

23. Will the peer review panel members be stem cell scientists or educators?

A. The peer reviewers will be selected based on the content of the applications received. These might include stem cell researchers, educators, individuals who have developed and managed these types of programs in the past, and others.

24. What is the schedule for peer review and award notifications?

A. A date for peer review has not yet been established. The plan is to complete that process in time for the Funding Committee to make its award recommendations at a meeting in October/November 2014. Award notifications will be sent at some point after that meeting and after all approvals are in place. Such notification will also initiate the contract execution process such that contracts should be executed by September 1, 2015. Remember that contractors will not have teachers on site until Summer of 2016.