

Short Term Faculty Training Opportunities
RFA
FAU # 0906291100

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 CD or DVD; failure to complete the forms as directed; failure to provide a detailed timeline; 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.

Eligibility

2. Our institution has not applied to NYSTEM for funding previously. Are we eligible to apply?
 - A. No. The applicant must be a New York State not-for-profit or governmental organization **that has previously applied for funding through NYSTEM**. The New York State Department of Health's Wadsworth Center is **not** eligible to apply.
3. Is there an expectation that the PI should be a dean or some high-level administrator?
 - A. There is no specific expectation of the qualification for the PI other than the requirements stated in Section II of the RFA.
4. Can we set up a program that allows postdocs and research associates to receive specialized stem cell training? What about PhD level researchers who aren't heads of their own laboratories but who can apply for R01 grants from the NIH but aren't tenure-track and aren't on their way to running their own labs?
 - A. The participants must be faculty members/investigators. This can include those who are not on a tenure-track but who are permitted to

apply for a research grant. Postdocs are specifically excluded (see Section III.A.2. of the RFA).

Submitting the Application

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

Subcontractors in the Application

7. We're having trouble envisioning the need for subcontractors for this award. Would it make sense for collaborating medical schools within New York State to submit a joint application?
 - A. Such an application would be eligible. However, each institution is eligible to submit a separate application.

Scope and Content

8. Does the application need to define which faculty will go to which labs to learn specific skills?
 - A. No. The application should describe how the program will be run (i.e., advertising, review and approval of requests from faculty, etc.).
9. Does the RFA limit us to only two faculty, each for up to three months of skill/collaboration development?
 - A. No. Many faculty could receive benefit from this RFA for shorter periods of time. The maximum amount any one individual can receive however, is three months, and up to \$5,000 per month.
10. Regarding institutional commitment, would separate letters of institutional support be allowed or must statements of commitment be included in the workplan?
 - A. Both could be appropriate. For example, the workplan might describe policies for relieving the faculty of teaching load for the short term training period and the appendices might include a letter from the Dean to reinforce that commitment.

11. Do we need to include a timeline to project when faculty will start to take advantage of this opportunity, when progress reports will be submitted, etc.?

A. No. A timeline is not required for this application since the dates for each opportunity 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

12. Can I use the same forms for this application that I used the last time I applied to NYSTEM? And what's the difference between the forms included with the RFA in the .pdf file versus those attached underneath it on the website?

A. No, the forms for each RFA are different. The forms underneath the RFA on the website are fillable and should be used rather than the forms included as part of the RFA .pdf file.

13. 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.

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

A. A biographical sketch (Form 8) must be provided for all key personnel listed on Form 7.

15. Is the administrative assistant, who is clearly important to the implementation of the project, considered Key Personnel?

A. No. Include such persons as support personnel on Form 7.

16. Would the members of the review/advisory committee be considered Key Personnel?

A. They could be, yes.

17. Can we insert an NIH biosketch form instead of using Form 8?

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

Budgeting

18. Our investigators are paid on a twelve-month salary. Can we offer their full salary in addition to the \$5,000 stipend?

A. No, salary may be paid from the \$5,000 stipend only if there is no other salary support for the time period of the training experience.

19. Is it allowable to use funds to pay for meeting or conference registration for an investigator?

A. Only if the conference or meeting is an integral part of the larger sabbatical experience. Funds cannot be used to support general attendance at meetings or conferences. Additionally, funds may be budgeted to attend an ESSCB-sponsored meeting (see Section III.C. Reporting Obligations).

20. 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 utilize funding as needed throughout the contract term rather than pre-defining exact needs 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.

21. Am I correct that that the 5% for administration of the program over the contract term is equal to \$1,500?

A. Yes.

22. 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.

23. The evaluation criteria does include whether the PI will commit sufficient professional effort. Is there a minimum percentage of effort required for the PI?

- A. There is no minimum percentage of effort required. The time committed should be reasonable compared to the responsibilities of the PI based on the proposed program.

Peer Reviewers

24. 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

25. 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.

26. Section VI. suggests that if we don't get a score of 2.5 or better, we have no chance of funding. Is that correct?

- A. Yes. The Funding Committee has decided that it will not consider applications that score in the range of 2.6 to 5.0.

27. 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.

28. 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 and elect to receive Event Announcements. The meeting agendas are posted on the website at <http://stemcell.ny.gov/events.html>.

29. Please explain the Funding Committee vote and notification process. Do they have full latitude or does everything that scores 2.5 or better get funded as long as there is funding available?
- A. Following the application review and scoring process, the resulting critiques, recommendations, comments and scores are distributed to the members of the Funding Committee for consideration at an upcoming meeting. During that meeting, as described in Section VI.C. of the RFA, the members will discuss the applications and make recommendations for funding to the Commissioner of Health based on “responsiveness to the mission of the ESSCB, responsiveness to the RFA, programmatic balance, availability of funds and compliance with Public Health Law Article 2, Title 5-A, Section 265.” The primary factor for consideration is the peer review score. There may be many reasons for deciding not to recommend an application for funding, including but not limited to, geographic diversity of the applicants and diversity of the subject matter covered by the applicants. If the Committee does not fund an application in order to fund another with a lower score, or stops before the designated funding runs out, it must explain the rationale to the Office of the State Comptroller. The Funding Committee recommendations are voted on during the public portion of the meeting, which can be viewed by webcast live and for approximately 30 days thereafter.
30. How long will it take to get feedback from peer 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.
31. What happens when the Funding Committee determines an application to be “approved but not funded?”
- A. The Funding Committee has attributed an approximate amount of funding to the RFA. When that funding level has been reached, they may decide to “award but not fund” a small number of applications in the event that one or more of the awards is not accepted or cannot be

finalized. In such an instance, the designation of “approved but not funded” authorizes program staff to fund the next best scoring application without further action by the Committee. Applicants to whom this applies are notified of this status as part of the award/ regrets notification process and are given an estimated date by which a “funded” determination might be made.

32. Can a PI submit essentially the same application to NYSTEM that it has submitted to the NIH and then decide later which one to accept?

A. Yes. If the NYSTEM award is declined, this would allow staff to fund an “approved not funded” application.

33. If our application is not funded, can we resubmit it?

A. The Funding Committee has not made a determination about whether to re-issue the RFA. If it does, the RFA will indicate whether resubmissions will be accepted.

34. What is a Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire?

A. This is a tool used by the Department and the Office of the State Comptroller to assess the risk of entering into contract with an organization. It can be completed and updated on-line (updates are required every six months). See Section IV.I. for details.

35. Does the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire have to be completed for each application or is it completed once for each institution?

A. The Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire must be complete for each institution. This could be done on-line but Attachment 3 to the RFA should be completed and included in each application.

36. What can we do to facilitate contract execution?

A. Upon receipt of the letter of award, Grants Offices should complete/update the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire (see Section IV.I.) 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.

37. 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.

38. Can we count on receipt of the funds in this fiscal/economic environment? Under what circumstances might we not receive them?

- A. Funding is always dependent upon budget process. We expect appropriations to be sufficient but if that is not the case, the Department will notify the contractor to renegotiate the contract.

39. 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

40. If a contract is awarded but during the year, the PI leaves the institution, can an alternative PI from that institution take over the award?

- A. Most often, yes, with prior approval from NYSTEM. NOTE: this is a much longer and more cumbersome process if the PI transfers to a new institution before the contract is executed.

41. What kind of reporting is required?

- A. Written progress reports are required. Progress report forms and instructions will be available on the website.