Melanoma Research Foundation Breakthrough Consortium (MRFBC)
Request for Proposals (RFP)
Young Investigator Research Team Award to Advance the Field of Translational Immuno-Oncology
2017
Generously funded by a grant by Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS)

GRANT OVERVIEW:
With the decrease in funding from the NIH, as well as their recent analysis that 42 is the average age of a scientist receiving their first independent NIH research award (NEJM 2017;376:111-113), junior faculty face significant challenges in launching studies and conducting research, especially collaborative research across institutions.

At the fall 2016 semiannual meeting of the MRFBC, a collaborative network of 20 melanoma centers of excellence, we asked the researchers to assess gaps in existing funding opportunities. The consensus recommendation was to create a new category to support a multi-institutional young investigators’ award. While funding agencies may have young investigator or team awards, the opportunity for young investigators to conduct impactful, team research across centers was lacking. Therefore, in response to this concern, and the need to support a critical mass of innovative young researchers entering the field of melanoma, the MRFBC—with generous support by BMS—is offering an award specifically for junior faculty aimed at advancing translational immuno-oncology research in melanoma. Immunotherapy was first shown to be capable of providing durable complete responses in melanoma. Subsequently, single and combination immunotherapies have demonstrated clinical benefit in patients with melanoma resulting in FDA approvals. Yet questions remain that are critical to improving care and extending cures, including identification of predictive biomarkers for response and toxicity, sequencing of immunotherapy with other therapies, adjuvant therapy, the role of neoadjuvant therapies and the impact in subpopulations such as ocular, mucosal, pediatric and those with brain metastases.

The goals of the MRFBC-BMS Young Investigator Translational Immuno-Oncology Team Science Award, in the amount of $125,000 per year for two years, are to 1) help identify and support the next generation of translational investigators, 2) focus on improving clinical outcomes for patients with melanoma being treated with immuno-oncology agents, and 3) advance the scientific understanding of immuno-oncology and the role of the immune system in melanoma. Additional details, including eligibility information, the review process, award administration, application materials, and deadlines are provided below.

Please visit www.melanoma.org for additional information on the MRF/ MRFBC and to learn more about our research grant program. All questions or concerns regarding this RFP as well as the rest of the MRF’s Research Grant Program can be directed to the Program Director at research@melanoma.org or by calling 800-673-1290.

ELIGIBILITY & REQUIREMENTS:
- Applicants must hold a PhD or MD degree or equivalent.
- In addition to the Principal Investigator (PI), at least one co-Principal Investigator (co-PI) must be identified. If the grant is focused on a rare, niche population, involvement of additional co-PIs and/or institutions are recommended and encouraged.
- Grant submissions must involve collaborations from at least two different institutions. The PI must be from a MRFBC institution. Additional institutions may include non-MRFBC sites, although involvement of additional MRFBC sites would only serve to strengthen a grant application. A list of the MRFBC institutions can be found on the MRF website at https://www.melanoma.org/research-center/research-initiatives/mrfbc/participating-sites.
- The proposed PI and co-PI(s) MUST be either postdoctoral fellows with less than five years of postdoctoral experience at the time the grant will be awarded or have titles equivalent to a research
associate/ scientist, instructor, or assistant professor at the time of the grant submission. Please note: although PIs and co-PIs must be junior faculty, additional members of the research team may be senior faculty members.

- PIs, as well as co-PIs, are each required to have at least one mentor; the mentors’ biosketches must be included in the application.

- Applications must be focused on either improving clinical outcomes for melanoma patients being treated with immuno-oncology agents or advancing the scientific understanding of immuno-oncology and the role of the immune system in melanoma. With respect to types of melanoma, grants could focus on cutaneous or rare subtypes such as ocular, mucosal, and/or pediatric melanoma.

- Proposed research cannot be identical to a currently awarded MRF grant.

- Proposed research must comply with all applicable National Institutes of Health (NIH) animal and human welfare guidelines.

- Applicants are encouraged to discuss any eligibility questions with the MRFBC prior to submitting an application.

**REVIEW PROCESS, AWARD ADMINISTRATION, & REPORTING:**

The application submission deadline is **September 15th, 2017**. Each application will be reviewed by a minimum of two non-conflicted scientists. Reviewers will focus on six key areas: scientific significance, the investigative team, innovation, approach, environment, and integration among team members. Reviewers will use the NIH scoring system which ranges from 1 (Excellent) to 9 (Poor). Reviewers will be sought from the national pool of reviewers used for grant review by the MRFBC, MRF Scientific Advisory Committee and Community United for Research & Education of Ocular Melanoma (CURE OM) enriched by experts in subtype of melanoma if relevant. Reviewers will be polled regarding potential conflicts of interest prior to selection. The highest scoring applications will be discussed on a final review conference call and subjected to a vote by Committee. Award decisions will be made on or around **November 15th, 2017**. Upon acceptance of the award, the PI and the Institution will be required to sign an award letter accepting all of the MRFBC’s terms and conditions. Only the institution of the primary investigator will be required to sign the award letter, as the MRFBC contract will be with the lead site only. The lead site will be responsible for dispersing any funds to the participating team sites.

Awards will cover research conducted over a two-year period. Funds will be disbursed two times each year for a total of four payments over two years. A no-cost extension of one year may be permitted with sufficient justification from the PI and approval from the Program Director. Requests for a no-cost extension must be made within 30 days of the award period expiration.

Awardees will be expected to provide status updates at the biannual MRFBC meetings typically held in conjunction with SMR and ASCO accompanied by 6 month progress updates. In addition, interim financial and scientific progress reports are to be submitted to the MRFBC no later than 30 days prior to the end of the grant’s first year. Final financial and scientific reports, detailing all activities during the award period, are to be submitted to the MRF within 60 days of the end of the award period (even if a no-cost extension is requested). The report form requests summaries and outcomes on the research, presentations, publications, patents, clinical trials, new collaborations, and/or new research funding pursuant to the proposed research. Acknowledgment of support from the MRFBC & BMS must accompany any published report using data or findings from research conducted under this award. Any intellectual property identified pursuant to this work remains solely within the institution.

**APPLICATION MATERIALS:**

- Completion of application cover page (Included)
- Research project proposal (6 page maximum), to include:
  - Title
  - Scientific Abstract (3,000 characters max including spaces)
  - Lay Abstract (3,000 characters max including spaces)
  - Specific Aims
Background, rationale, and significance.

Preliminary data

Experimental design and procedures

References (references are not counted in the 6 page limit)

- Budget ($125,000 per year for two years). Please note:
  - Budget information must be provided for both years of the award.
  - Only direct costs are allowed.
  - Cost of living adjustments for personnel or non-personnel costs are not allowed.
  - When calculating salaries, use actual costs - not the salary allowed by the NIH salary cap.
  - Requests for major equipment will be closely scrutinized and should be carefully justified, and should not exceed 15% of the total (two year) budget.
  - Allowable travel expenses for meetings and research purposes – including to international meetings - are capped at $2,000 per project year.
  - Brief justifications must be provided for each budget item.

- PI, Co-PI(s), and Mentor Biosketches using the NIH Biosketch Form (Rev 11/16) which MUST include information about confirmed, relevant funding sources (Section D of the biosketch).

- Letters of Support - a letter of support from your institution is required; a letter from each mentor would be sufficient. Additional letters of support are allowed.

APPLICATION DEADLINE:
Applications will be accepted beginning July 1st, 2017 and ending on September 15th at 5:00 PM ET. Decisions will be made and sent out via email on or before November 15th, 2017. Funds will be disbursed once all required paperwork is submitted to the MRFBC.
MRFBC-BMS
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Application Check List

✔ Please use this list as a guide to be sure you have submitted all necessary documents.

☐ Complete the application cover page with signed certified applicant statement (included).

☐ Complete the Research Project Proposal:

Typed text should be in Times New Roman 11pt font size and is not to exceed the 6 page maximum. The 6 page max does not include references. The research proposal should include the following: Title, Scientific Abstract, Lay Abstract, Specific Aims, Background/ Rationale/ Significance, Preliminary Data, Experimental Design and Procedures, and References.

☐ Budget ($125,000 per year for two years)

☐ PI and Co-PI(s) Biosketches

☐ Biosketches of each Mentor

☐ Institutional Letter(s) of Support (a letter of support from each mentor would be sufficient)

☐ All components of the application (cover page, proposal, budget, biosketch, and letter(s) of support) should be scanned and emailed as one PDF document to the Program Director at research@melanoma.org. An application consisting of multiple attachments will not be accepted.
MRFBC-BMS
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Application Cover Page

Project Title: ______________________________________________________________

Principal Investigator (PI) Name: ____________________________________________

PI Position Title: ________________________  PI Institution: ______________________

PI Address: __________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

PI Phone Number: ____________________  PI Email Address: ________________________

PI Mentor: ____________________________

Co-PI #1*: Name: ____________________ Institution: ____________  Mentor: ____________

Co-PI #2*: Name: ____________________ Institution: ____________  Mentor: ____________

*Add additional lines as needed

Additional Key Personnel* (Add additional lines as needed):

Name: ____________________________  Name: ____________________________

Role: ____________________________  Role: ____________________________

Institution: ________________________  Institution: ________________________

Participating MRFBC Institution(s):

Human Subjects: ___ Yes ___ No; If Yes, Human Subjects Assurance #: __________

IRB Status: _________  IRB Date: _________

Vertebrate Animals: ___ Yes ___ No; If Yes, Animal Welfare Assurance #: __________

IACUC Status: _________  IACUC Date: _________

Recombinant DNA: ___ Yes ___ No; If Yes, Status: _________  Date: _________

CERTIFIED APPLICANT STATEMENT:
I certify that the statements herein are true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. I agree to accept responsibility for the scientific conduct of the project and to provide the required progress reports if a grant is awarded as a result of this application. A typed name will serve as the applicant signature.

Applicant Signature: ____________________________  Date: ________________________