



## 2015-2016 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

### SECOND RELEASE

September 10, 2015

The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) is pleased to announce its second Request for Proposals (RFP) for the 2015-2016 cycle focused on Special Opportunity Awards being made possible with the generous support of donors and partners.

**MRA's First Release RFP** that describes additional awards being offered this cycle was announced on August 18, 2015. For your convenience, this RFP has been appended below. **Interested applicants should refer to this First Release RFP for complete instructions on eligibility, key criteria, and instructions on how to apply for these and other MRA awards this cycle. An investigator may serve as PI on only one proposal submitted to MRA for any of the mechanisms in this cycle, including those announced in this RFP and in the First Release RFP.** The deadlines for these Awards are the same as for other awards offered this cycle. MRA plans to award at least \$10 million for the 2015-2016 cycle.

Email questions about this RFP, eligibility, or other issues about MRA or its awards to Laura Brockway-Lunardi, Ph.D., MRA Scientific Program Director at [lbl@curemelanoma.org](mailto:lbl@curemelanoma.org).

### SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY AWARDS FOR TEAM SCIENCE

**Letters of Intent (LOIs) are due on October 12, 2015**

**Invited full length proposals from meritorious LOIs are due on January 8, 2016**

The following Special Opportunities are for Team Science Awards, which are designed to foster a multidisciplinary collaborative research process and promote transformational research advances with the potential for rapid clinical translation in prevention, early detection, staging and/or treatment of melanoma.

Teams must consist of two or more established PIs and a Young Investigator with complementary expertise. The designated Administrative PI is responsible for administrative leadership. All PIs in the team share authority for scientific leadership. An investigator may serve as a PI, including Administrative PI and all collaborating PIs, on only one LOI. **Each team must include at least one Young Investigator as a co-investigator** (see and comply with all Young Investigator eligibility criteria in the First Release RFP below), whose work must be integral to one or more of the aims of the proposal. An investigator may only be the designated Young Investigator on one proposal in the team science category. A Young Investigator Award applicant may be the designated Young Investigator on one team science application.

Team Science Awards have a collaborative and multidisciplinary emphasis, involving meaningful collaboration between participants. **Applications must include a description of the nature of and rationale for the proposed collaboration, the specific role of all PIs and the Young Investigator, and synergistic opportunities.** Evidence of prior productive collaborations between members of the team is also useful.

### **SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY: SABAN FAMILY FOUNDATION-MRA TEAM SCIENCE AWARDS**

Multidisciplinary teams of two or more PIs led by an **Administrative PI at a research institution in Israel** will receive up to \$1 million USD total over 3 years, to support projects with the potential to lead to transforming advances in prevention, detection, staging diagnosis, or treatment of melanoma. To foster international collaboration, **all teams must include at least one collaborating PI from an institution outside of Israel**. Each team must also include at least one Young Investigator as a co-investigator who is at an institution in Israel. Up to two teams may be funded.

Applicants should submit to the general Team Science Award program and designate their desire to be considered for this award when completing their online application in proposalCENTRAL. To do this, please make the “Israel-led Team” selection in the Title Page step of the on-line application.

The Los Angeles-based Saban Family Foundation has been a significant funder of melanoma research and a valued partner of MRA since 2013, supporting three MRA research teams in total. MRA is pleased to renew its partnership with the Saban Family Foundation to advocate for the improved treatment of metastatic melanoma and to promote strategic research alliances around the globe.

### **SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY: L’ORÉAL PARIS-MRA TEAM SCIENCE AWARD FOR WOMEN IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

MRA and L’Oréal Paris are proud to collaborate to offer a Team Science Award for a woman-led team with the goal of attracting and supporting women who are conducting field-leading melanoma research. Multidisciplinary teams of two or more established PIs and a Young Investigator with complementary expertise will receive up to \$900,000 total over 3 years to support projects with the potential to lead to transformative advances in prevention, detection, diagnosis, staging or treatment of melanoma. **For this Award, the Administrative PI must be a woman**. Teams may consist of investigators from the same institution, inter-institutional, and/or international.

Applicants should submit to the general Team Science Award program and designate their desire to be considered for this award when completing their online application in proposalCENTRAL. To do this, please make the “Woman-led Team” selection in the Title Page step of the on-line application. One award will be selected for this Special Opportunity, but as in the past, MRA will grant additional Team Science Awards regardless of the gender of the applicants.

L’Oréal Paris has been a valued supporter of the L’Oréal Paris–MRA Team Science Award since 2013. The brand has also worked closely with MRA through broad efforts to enhance its impact in the skin cancer research field and promote melanoma and sun safety awareness among millions of women. MRA is delighted to renew its committed partnership with L’Oréal Paris to advocate for women working in the field of melanoma research.

### **SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY: MRA TEAM SCIENCE AWARD IN UVEAL MELANOMA**

Uveal melanoma arises from melanocytes in the uveal tract of the eye. It is the second most common type of melanoma after cutaneous, comprising about 5% of all melanomas. Approximately half of patients will develop metastases 10 to 15 years after diagnosis, and metastatic disease is often fatal, a fact that has not changed despite advances in treating the primary eye tumor. More research is needed urgently to improve patient outcomes. MRA seeks Team Science Award proposals that will advance the biological understanding of and treatment approaches for this subtype of melanoma. A multidisciplinary team of two or more established Principal Investigators and a Young Investigator with complementary expertise will receive up to \$900,000 total over 3 years, to support a project with the potential to lead to

transformative advances in uveal melanoma. Teams may consist of investigators from the same institution, inter-institutional, and/or international.

Applicants should submit to the general Team Science Award program and designate their desire to be considered for this award when completing their online application in proposalCENTRAL. To do this, please make the “Uveal Melanoma” selection in the Title Page step of the on-line application.

## **SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY AWARDS FOR YOUNG INVESTIGATORS**

**Proposals are due on November 16, 2015**

### **SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY: SOCIETY FOR IMMUNOTHERAPY OF CANCER-MRA YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARD**

In collaboration with the Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer (SITC), MRA is pleased to offer a Young Investigator Award to conduct research in the area of immunotherapy. Young Investigator Awards aim to attract early career scientists with novel ideas into the field of melanoma, thereby recruiting and supporting the next generation of melanoma researcher leaders. Up to \$75,000 per year for 3 years will be provided to accomplish innovative, translational research projects in melanoma immunotherapy.

Applicants must be within 4 years of their first independent, full time academic faculty appointment at the time of application at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent position). Fellows or others who are in training are not eligible to apply. Those who are in research support positions are not eligible to apply. However, applications from those who have secured an independent full-time faculty position commencing by July 1, 2016 will be considered; in this case, a letter from an institutional official or department chairperson confirming the planned date of faculty appointment is required at the time of application. **Any applicant not expected to hold an Assistant Professor position (e.g., Instructor or other title) by July 1, 2016 must contact MRA to confirm eligibility prior to submitting a proposal.** To confirm eligibility, interested applicants must send an email, along with their CV, to Laura Brockway-Lunardi, Ph.D., MRA Scientific Program Director, at [lbl@curemelanoma.org](mailto:lbl@curemelanoma.org) by **November 13, 2015**. Investigators who have been awarded a prior MRA Young Investigator Award are not eligible to apply for an additional MRA Young Investigator Award.

Young Investigator applicants must designate one Mentor, who is a senior investigator at the same institution who will ensure that adequate support and guidance are provided for successful completion of the proposed research project. A support letter from the Mentor must be included in the application package and should confirm that the applicant has an independent research program and include a brief statement about the applicant, the Mentor’s role, mentoring plan, the research environment, core facilities, and other sources of institutional support (monetary or in-kind) that the applicant will utilize in conducting the project.

Applicants should submit to the general Young Investigator Award program, and any applicant in this category proposing research focused in the field of immunotherapy will be considered for this Special Opportunity.

SITC is the world’s leading member-driven organization specifically dedicated to professionals working in the field of cancer immunology and immunotherapy. Established in 1984, SITC is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with a growing constituency of over 1,000 academic, government, industry, clinical and basic scientists, and practitioners from around the world. SITC brings together all aspects of the cancer immunology and immunotherapy community. MRA and SITC have established a strong collaboration since 2014 to further research and educate patients and caregivers about immunotherapy.

# Melanoma

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## Research Alliance

### 2015-2016 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

#### FIRST RELEASE

August 18, 2015

The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) is pleased to announce a Request for Proposals (RFP) for high-impact translational research that has the potential to lead to near-term clinical application in melanoma prevention, detection, diagnosis, staging, and treatment. This cycle, proposals will be accepted for Team Science Awards, Young Investigator Awards, Academic-Industry Partnership Awards (for Established Investigators), and Special Opportunity Awards. **MRA plans to release a second RFP by mid-September focused on additional Special Opportunity Awards.**

#### INTRODUCTION

**About Melanoma:** Melanoma is a leading cause of new cancers, and more effective options for patients and those at risk are urgently needed. While research and treatment have advanced significantly in recent years, leading to the availability of immunotherapies and molecularly targeted therapies for patients, there is a significant need to develop new treatment approaches, to optimize the effectiveness of existing and emerging therapies, and to better prevent and diagnose melanoma. From a basic and clinical research perspective, melanoma occupies the crossroads of molecular biology and immunology. Cutaneous melanomas can be queried at the earliest stages of carcinogenesis for molecular events or signatures predicting progression, invasion, and dissemination. As one of the most immunogenic human tumors, melanoma also provides an ideal context for understanding interactions between the human immune system and cancer. Recent therapeutic progress offers unprecedented means to explore melanoma in ways never before possible.

**About the MRA:** MRA is a public charity formed in 2007 under the auspices of the Milken Institute, with the generous founding support of Debra and Leon Black. MRA is poised to build on the current momentum in the field, accelerating the pace of scientific discovery and translation in order to eliminate suffering and death due to melanoma. To date the MRA has awarded almost \$68 million to research projects worldwide. Please visit [www.curemelanoma.org](http://www.curemelanoma.org) for further information on MRA and the research projects funded in prior award cycles.

#### OBJECTIVE: EMPHASIS ON TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE

The MRA is soliciting proposals that address the gap in translational science; i.e., turning scientific discoveries into tools and/or treatments for high risk individuals and melanoma patients. Successful proposals will offer the potential for translational development that could lead to high impact near-term clinical application in melanoma detection, prevention, diagnosis, staging, or treatment.

Proposals for clinical investigations testing well-defined and clearly articulated hypotheses are welcome and should be accompanied by a brief protocol synopsis and timeline with milestones. Local IRB approval is not required at the time of application but is required in order to grant the award.

## **MRA welcomes proposals in the following areas:**

- **Prevention:** Elucidation of environmental, epidemiological, and biological factors in melanoma carcinogenesis.
- **Detection, Diagnosis, and Staging:** Development of targeted screening methods and identification and validation of diagnostic and prognostic biomarkers.
- **Treatment:** Projects emphasizing the translation of scientific findings to new treatments for patients with melanoma. Examples include but are not limited to studies of melanoma immunotherapy, therapeutic applications based on molecular mechanisms involved in melanoma formation and/or progression, combination therapies, and development of novel biomarkers of response to therapy.

**Special Emphasis Areas:** For the 2015-2016 cycle, MRA seeks proposals in the following areas, which are focused on current unmet clinical needs in melanoma. These areas are of particular interest and will receive special consideration. These can include pre-clinical, clinical, and/or correlative scientific studies:

- 1) Undertaking studies that define logical and optimal **combination therapies, therapeutic sequences, or treatment regimens** to improve outcomes and curtail resistance to current and emerging therapies.
- 2) Identifying **biomarkers of risk of recurrence or death in early stage disease** for improved clinical management and to speed the development of adjuvant therapies as well as **markers of response/resistance** to approved and investigational therapies which may include tumor, microenvironment, immunological, imaging or circulating biomarkers.
- 3) Research leading to **improvements in difficult-to-treat disease or treatment failures**, including melanoma subtypes (e.g., acral and uveal melanomas) and metastatic brain disease, by identifying new targets and/or treatment approaches for recalcitrant molecular targets.
- 4) Improving the understanding of the biological basis for melanoma formation, such as risk factors and the interaction of risk and the environment, in order to develop better **prevention and early detection** strategies.

## **KEY REVIEW AND SELECTION CRITERIA**

- **Innovative and transformative research:** Novel approaches with strong scientific rationale and clear capacity to revolutionize prevention, detection, diagnosis, staging, or treatment for patients with melanoma or for individuals at risk are encouraged.
- **Scientific merit:** Outstanding and rigorous proposals as determined by peer review.
- **Potential for rapid progression to clinical testing:** Proposals that articulate a clear path to near-term clinical application will be strongly favored.
- **Additional Key Criterion for Team Science Awards - Collaborative and multidisciplinary emphasis:** Meaningful collaboration between two or more PIs with complementary expertise that offers the possibility for synergistic advances.

## **APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY**

**Principal Investigators (PIs) must hold a full-time faculty appointment at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent) or above at an academic or other non-profit research institution within or outside the United States.** Investigators need not be specifically trained in melanoma research; however, they should be working in an environment capable of conducting high quality, high impact melanoma research. PIs must be able to show clear evidence of an independent research program.

Fellows or those in other training or research support positions are not eligible. Individuals employed by state or federal government agencies may participate in research proposals as non-funded collaborators, but may not apply for direct funding. If there are any questions about eligibility, please contact MRA before submitting an application. Applications from PIs who do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be reviewed.

**An investigator may serve as PI on only one proposal submitted to MRA for any of the mechanisms in this cycle. This includes all PIs on Team Science Awards and any Special Opportunity Awards described in this RFP and in separate announcements released during the 2015-2016 cycle.** Multiple applications will be accepted from a single institution, provided that each application has a different PI and represents a distinct hypothesis.

## TYPES OF AWARDS

### **AWARDS FOR TEAMS**

**Letters of Intent (LOIs) are due on October 12, 2015**

**Invited full length proposals from meritorious LOIs are due on January 8, 2016**

### **MRA TEAM SCIENCE AWARDS**

Awards for team science are designed to foster a collaborative research process and promote transformational melanoma research advances with the potential for rapid clinical translation. Multidisciplinary teams of two or more established Principal Investigators and a Young Investigator with complementary expertise will receive up to \$900,000 total over 3 years, to support projects with the potential to lead to transformative advances in prevention, detection, diagnosis, staging and/or treatment of melanoma.

Teams may consist of investigators from the same institution, different institutions, and may be international. The designated Administrative PI is responsible for administrative leadership. All PIs in the team share authority for scientific leadership. An investigator may serve as a PI, including Administrative PI and all collaborating PIs, on only one LOI. **Each team must include at least one Young Investigator as a co-investigator** (see and comply with all Young Investigator eligibility criteria below), whose work must be integral to one or more of the aims of the proposal. An investigator may only be the designated Young Investigator on one proposal in the team science category. However, a Young Investigator Award applicant may be the designated Young Investigator on one team science application.

Team Science Awards have a collaborative and multidisciplinary emphasis, involving meaningful collaboration between participants. **Applications must include a description of the nature of and rationale for the proposed collaboration, the specific role of all PIs and the Young Investigator, and synergistic opportunities.** Evidence of prior productive collaborations between members of the team is also useful.

## **SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY: MRA TEAM SCIENCE AWARD IN ACRAL MELANOMA**

Acral melanoma, which occurs on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet and under the nails, accounts for a small number of melanoma cases but has a survival rate of 10-20% lower than for cutaneous melanomas overall. Acral melanomas have a distinct genetic profile that may contribute to the difference in survival along with other unique features of this disease. MRA seeks Team Science Award proposals that will advance the biological understanding of and treatment approaches for this subtype of melanoma. A multidisciplinary team of two or more established Principal Investigators and a Young Investigator with complementary expertise will receive up to \$900,000 total over 3 years, to support a project with the potential to lead to transformative advances in acral melanoma. Proposals are encouraged that address the therapeutic potential of targeting altered signaling (e.g. due to genetic changes in NF1, CRKL) and/or explore the importance and druggability of telomere maintenance/chromatin remodeling (e.g. due to genetic changes in TERT, ATRX). There will be one Award made under this mechanism. Applicants must follow instructions for MRA Team Science Awards included in this RFP above and in proposalCENTRAL.

## **AWARDS FOR YOUNG INVESTIGATORS**

**Proposals are due on November 16, 2015**

### **MRA YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARDS**

Young Investigator Awards aim to attract early career scientists with novel ideas into the field of melanoma, thereby recruiting and supporting the next generation of melanoma researcher leaders. Awardees will be provided up to \$75,000 per year for 3 years to accomplish innovative, translational research projects.

Applicants must be within 4 years of their first independent, full time academic faculty appointment at the time of application at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent position). Fellows or others who are in training are not eligible to apply. Those who are in research support positions are not eligible to apply. However, applications from those who have secured an independent full-time faculty position commencing by July 1, 2016 will be considered; in this case, a letter from an institutional official or department chairperson confirming the planned date of faculty appointment is required at the time of application. **Any applicant not expected to hold an Assistant Professor position (e.g., Instructor or other title) by July 1, 2016 must contact MRA to confirm eligibility prior to submitting a proposal.** To confirm eligibility, interested applicants must send an email, along with their CV, to Laura Brockway-Lunardi, Ph.D., MRA Scientific Program Director, at [lbl@curemelanoma.org](mailto:lbl@curemelanoma.org) by **November 13, 2015**. Investigators who have been awarded a prior MRA Young Investigator Award are not eligible to apply for an additional MRA Young Investigator Award.

Young Investigator applicants must designate one Mentor, who is a senior investigator at the same institution who will ensure that adequate support and guidance are provided for successful completion of the proposed research project. A support letter from the Mentor must be included in the application package and should confirm that the applicant has an independent research program and include a brief statement about the applicant, the Mentor's role, mentoring plan, the research environment, core facilities, and other sources of institutional support (monetary or in-kind) that the applicant will utilize in conducting the project.

## **ESTABLISHED INVESTIGATOR ACADEMIC-INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP AWARDS**

### **Proposals are due on November 16, 2015**

These awards are designed to enhance translational research by extending academic capabilities to clinical investigations and to facilitate interactions between the academic and industrial research sectors. These awards will be co-funded by MRA and an industry partner whose involvement is essential to the project.

Investigators with an established record of scientific productivity will receive up to \$100,000 per year for 2 to 3 years from MRA to conduct projects supported by preliminary data. Industry funds and/or in-kind support (e.g., reagents, clinical grade drugs, equipment, contract services) must match but may exceed MRA funds for the award period. Industry scientists may serve as co-investigators or collaborators, but may not be PIs. Non-contract industry personnel costs may not be counted as in-kind support. Industry will negotiate contract terms directly with the PI's institution and will dispense its portion of the research funds directly to that institution.

In the event that an award is granted by MRA, **both a finalized contract between the industry partner and the institution, as well as a letter agreement between the industry partner and MRA, must be executed within 90 days of the award date**, before funds can be dispensed else MRA may withdraw its offer of award.

Applications must include a letter of support from the industry partner, which should include at a minimum the following:

- A description of the total amount of support, clearly indicating the portion that is monetary and/or in-kind, for the full term of the award (which must be at least 50% of the total support for the project).
- Acknowledgement that if the Award is made the industry partner will execute an agreement with the awardee Institution within 90 days.
- Acknowledgement that if the Award is made the industry partner will execute an agreement with MRA within 90 days agreeing to terms that are substantially similar to those described in the template provided in proposalCENTRAL. **Applicants should download the "MRA-Industry Agreement" template and provide it to the Industry Partner.**

Any questions about this can be directed to Laura Brockway-Lunardi, Ph.D., MRA Scientific Program Director at [lbl@curemelanoma.org](mailto:lbl@curemelanoma.org).

## **APPLICATION FORMAT AND INSTRUCTIONS**

**All applications are due by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered.** Applicants must utilize the proposalCENTRAL on-line application tool at <http://proposalcentral.altum.com> and the document templates and requirements therein. Please carefully follow the instructions in proposalCENTRAL and below. Applications include the following steps and components:



## **TEAM SCIENCE AWARDS**

### **Letters of Intent are due on October 12, 2015**

Applicants must submit a one-page letter of intent (LOI) to MRA prior to submission of a full proposal. Please carefully follow the instructions in proposalCENTRAL. The LOI application consists of the following components:

1. **Title Page:** Enter the project title.
2. **Applicant/PI Information:** Team Science applications must identify one PI for administrative purposes (the Administrative PI for the proposal). This is the Applicant.
3. **Organization/Institution Information:** This is the Administrative PI's institution.
4. **Key Personnel Information:** Identify other PIs on the team as well as the Young Investigator and their Mentor. All PIs share authority for project leadership. The position of "co-PI" is not offered under this mechanism.
5. **Letter of Intent: One page maximum** that includes a) a description of the scientific aims and translational potential; and b) the nature of and rationale for the proposed collaboration, the specific role of each participant, and synergistic opportunities. **Letters exceeding the one-page limit will not be considered.**

Full length applications will be invited from meritorious LOIs. They must be prepared according to the following instructions and according to instructions in proposalCENTRAL, and will be due on **January 8, 2016**. The application consists of the following components:

1. **Title Page:** Enter the project title. For proposals involving multiple institutions, please include a total amount requested for each institution in the designated spaces provided.
2. **Templates and Instructions:** Download RFP and templates.
3. **Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal:** Allow others (e.g., institutional administrators or collaborators) to view, edit, or submit your proposal.
4. **Applicant/PI:** Key information about the applicant PI. This must be the Administrative PI on team science applications.
5. **Organization/Institution:** Key information about the Applicant/PI's institution, including name and email address of the signing official who, in addition to the PI, will be contacted if the award is selected for funding.
6. **Key Personnel:** List and provide contact information for key persons. Include all PIs on the proposal as well as any additional key personnel. A designated Young Investigator and their Mentor is required.
7. **Abstracts and Keywords:** Provide a lay audience friendly abstract and a technical abstract (2,000 characters maximum each) and key words. Please note: the lay abstract will become public if the award is selected for funding, therefore it should not contain any proprietary information.
8. **Budget Period Detail:** Enter budget detail for each award period requested. **MRA will not support indirect costs, overhead costs, or other similar institutional levies.** Fringe benefits for personnel salaries are allowable.

9. **Budget Summary and Justification:** A summary of the budget detail will be shown. In addition, provide sufficient detail for the evaluation of the major portions of the budget that are being requested. If more space is required than is provided in the proposalCENTRAL forms (2,000 characters), applicants may upload the budget justification in document form in step # 11. For proposals involving more than one institution: Do not include partner institution costs under contract costs; this category should only be used for contracts with outside facilities for performance of services.
10. **Organizational Assurances:** IRB and IACUC approvals, if applicable.
11. **Upload Attachments:** Upload the following:
  - a. **Curriculum vitae for PIs, Young Investigator, and other key personnel:** Applicants may use the template provided or the NIH biosketch format.
  - b. **Current and pending research support for the PIs and Young Investigator:** Use the template provided in proposalCENTRAL, which includes a statement of overlap. Any overlap of current or pending support with the MRA proposal must be described and explained.
  - c. **Project description:** Must be formatted in Arial 11 point or Times New Roman 12 point font with no less than ½ inch margins. **5 pages maximum**, inclusive of the following: Background and specific aims, preliminary data, experimental design and methods, figures (which may be embedded within the above sections), and rationale/fit with key criteria, including the potential for clinical impact.
  - d. **Literature references:** a list of up to 20 references supporting the project description is allowed, in addition to the 5-page project description.
  - e. **Young Investigator Mentor Letter:** Include a letter of support from an established scientific Mentor at the same institution, who is familiar with the Young Investigator and his/her work and will provide guidance and support for the project. The Mentor's letter should confirm that the Young Investigator has an independent research program and include a brief statement about the Young Investigator, the Mentor's role, mentoring plan, the research environment, core facilities, and other sources of institutional support (monetary or in-kind) which the applicant will utilize in conducting the project.
  - f. **For clinical trials proposals:** Attach a brief protocol synopsis (no longer than 5 pages), along with a timeline and milestones, including but not limited to IRB and regulatory approval (if applicable), patient accrual timeline, and timeline for completion of analyses.
  - g. **For multi-institutional proposals:** Attach a letter from the Administrative PI's institution confirming that if the award is made, the institution will execute the necessary sub-award agreements within 60 days of execution of the award agreement between MRA and the applicant institution and will transfer funds from their institution to the collaborating institution(s).
12. **Validate:** Check for any missing required information.
13. **Signature pages:** Print the signature page, which must be signed by the PI and the institution's signing official, and uploaded as part of the application package.
14. **Submit:** Please note that no proposals will be able to be submitted past their deadline. Technical support for the on-line application system is not available after 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

## **YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARDS AND ACADEMIC-INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP AWARDS**

**Complete applications are due on November 16, 2015**

Please carefully follow the instructions in proposalCENTRAL. The application consists of the following components:

1. **Title Page:** Enter the project title
2. **Templates and Instructions:** Download RFP and templates.
3. **Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal:** Allow others (e.g., institutional administrators or collaborators) to view, edit, or submit your proposal.
4. **Applicant/PI:** Key information about the applicant PI.
5. **Organization/Institution:** Key information about the PI's institution, including name and email address of the signing official who, in addition to the PI, will be contacted if the award is selected for funding.
6. **Key Personnel:** List and provide contact information for key persons. For Young Investigator Award applicants, a Mentor from the same institution is required.
7. **Abstracts and Keywords:** Provide a lay audience friendly abstract and a technical abstract (2,000 characters maximum each) and key words. Please note: the lay abstract will become public if the award is selected for funding, therefore it should not contain any proprietary information.
8. **Budget Period Detail:** Enter budget detail for each award period requested. **MRA will not support indirect costs, overhead costs, or other similar institutional levies.** Fringe benefits for personnel salaries are allowable. Academic-Industry Partnership Award proposals should contain the complete budget for the project, which includes both the MRA and industry partner contributions (direct costs only).
9. **Budget Summary and Justification:** A summary of the budget detail will be shown. In addition, provide sufficient detail for the evaluation of the major portions of the budget that are being requested. If more space is required than is provided in the proposalCENTRAL forms (2,000 characters), applicants may upload the budget justification in document form in step # 11. For Academic-Industry Partnership applications: The amount of funding anticipated solely from MRA must be **clearly indicated** in the Budget Justification.
10. **Organizational Assurances:** IRB and IACUC approvals, if applicable.
11. **Upload Attachments:** Upload the following:
  - a. **Curriculum vitae for PI(s) and key personnel:** Applicants may use the template provided or the NIH biosketch format.
  - b. **Current and pending research support for the PI:** Use the template provided in proposalCENTRAL, which includes a statement of overlap. Any overlap of current or pending support with the MRA proposal must be described and explained.
  - c. **Project description:** Must be formatted in Arial 11 point or Times New Roman 12 point font with no less than ½ inch margins. **5 pages maximum**, inclusive of the following: Background and specific aims, preliminary data, experimental design and methods, figures (which may be embedded within the above sections), and rationale/fit with key criteria, including the potential for clinical impact.

- d. **Literature references:** a list of up to 20 references supporting the project description is allowed, in addition to the 5-page project description.
  - e. **For Young Investigators Awards:** Include a letter of support from an established scientific Mentor at the same institution, who is familiar with the applicant and his/her work and will provide guidance and support for the project. The Mentor's letter should confirm that the applicant has an independent research program and include a brief statement about the applicant, the Mentor's role, mentoring plan, the research environment, core facilities, and other sources of institutional support (monetary or in-kind) that the applicant will utilize in conducting the project.
  - f. **For Academic-Industry Partnership Awards:** Include a letter of support from the industry partner, which should include at a minimum:
    - i. A description of the total amount of support, clearly indicating the portion that is monetary and/or in-kind, for the full term of the award (which must be at least 50% of the total support for the project)
    - ii. Acknowledgement that if the Award is made the industry partner will execute an agreement with the awardee Institution within 90 days
    - iii. Acknowledgement that if the Award is made the industry partner will execute an agreement with MRA within 90 days agreeing to terms that are substantially similar to those described in the template provided in proposalCENTRAL. **Applicants should download the "MRA-Industry Agreement" template and provide it to the Industry Partner.** Any questions about this can be directed to Laura Brockway-Lunardi, Ph.D., MRA Scientific Program Director at [lbl@curemelanoma.org](mailto:lbl@curemelanoma.org).
  - g. **For clinical trials proposals:** Attach a brief protocol synopsis (no longer than 5 pages), along with a timeline and milestones, including but not limited to IRB and regulatory approval (if applicable), patient accrual timeline, and timeline for completion of analyses.
  - h. **For multi-institutional proposals:** Attach a letter from the PI's institution confirming that if the award is made, the institution will execute the necessary sub-award agreements within 60 days of execution of the award agreement between MRA and the applicant institution and will transfer funds from their institution to the collaborating institution(s).
12. **Validate:** Check for any missing required information.
13. **Signature pages:** Print the signature page, which must be signed by the PI and the institution's signing official, and uploaded as part of the application package.
14. **Submit:** Please note that no proposals will be able to be submitted past their deadline. Technical support for the on-line application system is not available after 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

## TIMELINE

**All application deadlines conclude at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered.**

- **October 12, 2015:** Team Science Award Letters of Intent are due
- November 13, 2015: For Young Investigators: Deadline to confirm eligibility with MRA for those applicants that do not have Assistant Professor titles
- **November 16, 2015:** Young Investigator Award and Academic-Industry Partnership Award proposals are due
- Mid-November 2015: Teams from meritorious LOIs are invited to submit full length proposals
- **January 8, 2016:** Full length proposals for Team Science Awards are due
- Late February/Early March 2016: Peer and organizational review
- Late March 2016: Awardees notified (Note that MRA may adjust the notification date without notice to applicants)
- May 2016: Projects start

## REVIEW MECHANISM

All proposals will undergo rigorous peer review by the MRA Grant Review Committee (GRC), comprised of experts in diverse areas of translational cancer research. Applications will be scored according to the MRA Key Criteria. All Awards are contingent upon ratification by the MRA Board of Directors. **MRA will not provide reviewer critiques or evaluations to applicants, with the exception of Young Investigator applicants; Young Investigator applicants whose proposals are discussed by the MRA GRC will receive brief commentary.** Verbal feedback is available from MRA upon request to those PIs whose Industry Partnership or Team Science Award proposals are discussed by the MRA GRC. A listing of GRC membership and descriptions of the projects funded in 2008-2015 are provided on our website, <http://www.curemelanoma.org>.

## COLLABORATIVE FUNDING OFFERS

For outstanding research proposals as determined by peer review that fall outside MRA's funding pay-line, MRA may seek co-funding from the applicant institutions in order to support these proposals. MRA will reserve \$1 million for this collaborative funding program this cycle.

For proposals that meet the above criteria, MRA will contact the institutions for this Collaborative Funding offer, and institutions will be asked to decline or accept this offer within 14 days. Signed agreements between MRA and the institution will be required within 30 days.

## AWARD ADMINISTRATION

### AWARD LETTER

Upon acceptance of the award, the PI and his/her employing Institution will be required to sign an Award Letter indicating acceptance of the MRA's Award Terms and Conditions within 30 days (copy available in advance upon request). MRA must be notified in advance and approve of any significant changes in research objectives, key personnel, or budget. For Academic-Industry Partnership Awards, within 90 days the partnering company will be required to sign a letter agreement with MRA and the institution will be required to sign the Award Letter with MRA and finalize their agreement with the industry partner within 90 days.

## **APPROVALS**

MRA requires certification through proposalCENTRAL of compliance with Human Subjects and Animal Care Assurance as applicable. In cases where ethical/regulatory approval is required to perform the work, such approvals will be required before initial payments are made. This includes local IRB approvals of clinical trials supported by MRA funding. For clinical trials, a timeline and milestones must be included in the application package. Failure to meet these milestones within a reasonable time frame may result in termination of the award.

## **MULTI-INSTITUTIONAL PROJECTS**

For projects including key personnel at other institutions, the PI must verify in advance that funds can be transferred from their institution to the collaborating institution. This requirement can be easily met by attaching a letter from the PI's sponsored programs office stating a commitment to comply with this requirement. Sub-award agreements between collaborating institutions must be executed within 60 days of MRA's execution of the award agreement with the applicant institution.

## **FUNDING**

For all proposals, the level and duration of funding may be adjusted by MRA as appropriate for the scope of the proposal and the funds available. Partial funding will also be considered to obtain proof-of-principle data in support of innovative ideas with transformative potential. **MRA will not support indirect costs, overhead costs or other similar institutional levies**; however, fringe benefits for personnel salaries are allowable. **Full term funding will be contingent upon review of annual progress reports and other oversight activities conducted by MRA.** Multi-year support is not automatic for any MRA award and is conditioned on submission of complete and accurate progress reports and demonstrated progress on the funded proposal.

## **MRA SCIENTIFIC RETREAT**

PIs and, in the case of Academic-Industry Partnership Awards, industry partners will be invited to attend the annual MRA Scientific Retreat. PIs are expected to attend and may be asked to present research findings made under their awards at these meetings.

# **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## **Eligibility**

Q: Must PIs have an academic faculty appointment? Is this a hard-and-fast rule?

A: PIs must have a full-time appointment at an academic or non-profit research institution at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent) or above; however, while a tenure-track is preferred, it is not required. Evidence of independent investigator status and an environment conducive and supportive of translational research is required. If there is any doubt or question about a PI's eligibility, please contact the MRA (contacts provided below) before an application is submitted. Applications from PIs who do not fit the eligibility criteria will not be reviewed. Young Investigator applicants who do not hold an Assistant Professor title must contact MRA to verify their eligibility prior to submitting a proposal (see additional FAQs for Young Investigators below).

- Q: Does MRA fund investigators and institutions outside of the United States?  
A: Yes. Investigators at institutions outside of the United States are eligible. PIs must be at the level of Assistant Professor or equivalent. Academic appointments of institutions outside of the U.S. can differ from those traditionally found in the U.S. Contact the MRA if there are any questions about eligibility prior to submitting a proposal.

### **Young Investigator Awards**

- Q: I will be past the first 4 years of my first faculty appointment at the time the project starts. May I apply to the Young Investigator Award?  
A: As long as you are within the first 4 years of your first faculty appointment at the time of application, you are eligible to apply as a Young Investigator.
- Q: I am a Fellow at an academic institution. Am I eligible to apply for the Young Investigator Award?  
A: Generally, no. Those in training positions are not eligible. Only those with a faculty level appointment will be considered. Young Investigator applicants who do not hold an Assistant Professor title must contact MRA to verify their eligibility prior to submitting a proposal (see contact information below in this RFP).
- Q: I would like to apply for a Young Investigator Award and also be the designated Young Investigator on a team science application. Is this allowed?  
A: Yes, but an investigator may be the designated Young Investigator on only one team science application.
- Q: What is the role of the Mentor?  
A: It is expected that Young Investigators are independent faculty members and not in training or in research support positions. However, a Mentor is required to help ensure that the Young Investigator has the resources they need to successfully carry out the work at their institution.
- Q: I would like to have a Mentor that is not at my institution. Is this allowed?  
A: No. All Young Investigator Award applicants must have a designated Mentor at their institution to help to ensure that the Young Investigator has the resources they need to successfully carry out the work at their institution. An applicant may have other mentors outside of their institution for other purposes, including providing scientific guidance for the project, but will not be considered a Mentor for the Award.
- Q: Are Mentors of Young Investigator Award applicants allowed to be a PI of an award or award application?  
A: Yes.
- Q: Is there a minimum level of effort for the Mentor?  
A: No.

### **Academic-Industry Partnership Awards**

- Q: How are partnerships between academic scientists and industry formed?  
A: It is the responsibility of the academic scientist to find an industrial partner whose involvement and collaboration will be vital to conducting the research project, or vice versa. However, applicants interested in this mechanism are welcome to seek MRA's guidance on potential industry partners.

Q: In the Partnership application budget, do I itemize expenses associated with only the request from the MRA or the total budget from both MRA and industry?

A: The overall budget should contain all costs associated with the project including contributions from both MRA and the industrial partner, and the expected contributions from each should be clearly explained in the Budget Justification. In-kind support from industry should be estimated in U.S. Dollars. The amount of funding solely requested from MRA should also be clearly indicated in the Budget Justification.

### **Team Science Awards**

Q: Can a Young Investigator Award applicant be the designated Young Investigator on a Team Science Award?

A: Yes, they can serve as the Young Investigator on one Team Science Award application and only if the project represents a distinct hypothesis and is non-overlapping with the Young Investigator Award proposal.

Q: Can the Young Investigator be from a different institution than the Administrative PI?

A: Yes, as long as the Young Investigator designates a Mentor from the his/her own institution as part of the team. The Mentor can also serve as a PI or other key person on the project (but does not need to be).

Q: Can the same investigator be a Young Investigator on multiple team science applications?

A: No. An investigator may be the designated Young Investigator on only one team science application.

### **Collaborative Funding Program**

Q: Is my institution's willingness to participate in the Collaborative Funding Program going to affect my score?

A: No. Scientific merit evaluation by MRA's Grant Review Committee will not be influenced by any co-funding or collaborative funding support. Only those proposals that are deemed outstanding by peer review but fall below MRA's pay line will be considered for this program. The collaborative funding process will be conducted after the scientific review process has been completed.

### **Application components**

Q: How are proposals submitted? Do I need to send a hard copy?

A: All proposals must be submitted electronically via proposalCENTRAL, <http://proposalcentral.altum.com>. The signature page should be signed and a scanned PDF copy be uploaded as part of the application in proposalCENTRAL. Hard copies will not be accepted.

Q: Does MRA require the NIH salary cap to be used when calculating salary and fringe benefit requests for the budget?

A: No, but applicants may use it at their discretion.

Q: What needs to be included in the "current and pending support" section?

A: Please submit a listing of all sponsored research support for the effort of the PI(s) that is active or pending (submitted or awarded by a research sponsor but not yet started). Include the name of the title of the project, research sponsor, total annual funding, start and end dates, and percent of committed time. For each project, you must include a statement of overlap or non-overlap with the MRA proposal. A template is provided in proposalCENTRAL.



Q: Is the NIH biosketch CV format acceptable for submission to MRA?

A: Yes, you may use your NIH biosketch or the template provided in proposalCENTRAL.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND CONTACTS**

Email questions about this RFP, eligibility, or other issues about MRA or its awards to Laura Brockway-Lunardi, Ph.D., MRA Scientific Program Director at [lbl@curemelanoma.org](mailto:lbl@curemelanoma.org).

Technical questions about the proposalCENTRAL submission system should be directed to their customer support at 800-875-2562 (Toll-free U.S. and Canada), +1 703-964-5840 (Direct Dial International) or by email at [pcsupport@altum.com](mailto:pcsupport@altum.com).