



2018-2019 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

August 6, 2018

The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) is pleased to announce a Request for Proposals (RFP) for pre-clinical, translational, and early clinical research with the potential to produce unusually high impact, near-term advancements in melanoma prevention, detection, diagnosis, staging, and treatment. This cycle, proposals will be accepted for Established Investigator Awards, Young Investigator Awards, Pilot Awards and Special Opportunity Awards in Artificial Intelligence, Dermatology, Immunotherapy and Radiation Oncology. MRA plans to support at least \$9 million in new funding in the 2018-2019 cycle.

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INTRODUCTION

About Melanoma: According to the National Cancer Institute, melanoma is the fifth most common cancer in the United States and rates continue to increase. 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 for developing new treatment approaches, optimizing the effectiveness of existing and emerging therapies, and better preventing, detecting and diagnosing melanoma. From a basic and clinical research perspective, melanoma occupies the crossroads of molecular biology and immunology. Cutaneous melanomas can be analyzed 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. The mission of MRA is to **end suffering and death due to melanoma** by collaborating with all stakeholders to accelerate powerful research, advance cures for all patients, and prevent more melanomas. To date, the MRA has awarded \$101 million to support research projects worldwide. Please visit www.curemelanoma.org for further information on MRA and the research initiatives funded in prior award cycles.

OBJECTIVE: *EMPHASIS ON TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE*

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 have the potential of applying important basic and preclinical discoveries to the near-term development of clinical trials and studies impacting melanoma detection, prevention, diagnosis, staging, and/or treatment.

Proposals for clinical studies testing well-defined and clearly articulated hypotheses are welcome and should be accompanied by a brief protocol synopsis and timeline with milestones. IRB approval is not required at the time of application but is required before initial payments are made. **MRA welcomes proposals in the following areas:**

- **Prevention:** Elucidation of environmental, epidemiological, and biological factors in melanomagenesis that lead to prevention strategies.
- **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 2018-2019 cycle, MRA seeks proposals in the following areas, which are focused on current unmet clinical needs in melanoma. These areas are of particular interest, will receive special consideration, and can include pre-clinical, translational, clinical, and/or correlative studies:

- Identifying strategies to overcome resistance, treatment failure, and/or difficult-to-treat melanoma subtypes such as acral, mucosal or uveal melanoma
- Informing logical and optimal combination therapies, therapeutic sequences, and/or treatment regimens including adjuvant and neoadjuvant approaches
- Developing strategies to prevent and/or treat metastatic disease
- Identifying markers of response, resistance, and/or risk of recurrence or death
- Improving prevention and early detection strategies by understanding of the biological basis for melanoma formation and/or developing new diagnostic approaches

REVIEW AND SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used to assess the scientific merit, originality, translational nature of and degree to which the proposal will lead to rapid clinical benefit.

- **Significance:** Original, innovative, and transformative research approaches with strong scientific rationale and clear capacity to enhance prevention, detection, diagnosis, staging, or treatment for patients with melanoma or for individuals at risk will be prioritized.
- **Approach:** MRA seeks outstanding and technically rigorous proposals as determined by peer review. Overall study design, methodology and analyses must be appropriate to accomplish specific aims.
- **Clinical Relevance:** Proposals that articulate a clear path to near-term clinical application will be strongly favored.
- **Investigator:** Applicant has appropriate training, expertise and evidence of productivity to carry out proposed research.
- **Environment:** Applicant's institution and department are sufficiently committed to area of research proposed and to the applicant. Equipment and other institutional resources are sufficient to support the applicant. In the case of Young Investigator and ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator applicants, selected Mentor is appropriate to advance applicant's career and project with evidence of strong mentorship relationship.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

General eligibility requirements:

- MRA encourages applications from a diverse pool of investigators.
- **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.** Please note, however, that the ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Award is limited to U.S. applicants only.
- 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 to apply.
- Individuals employed by state or federal government agencies may participate in research proposals as non-funded collaborators, but may not apply for MRA funding.

- 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.
- **An investigator may serve as PI on only one proposal submitted to MRA for any of the award mechanisms in this cycle. This includes any Special Opportunity Awards.**
- Mentors for Young Investigator or ASTRO-MRA Early Career Award applicants may serve as a PI on separate proposal this cycle; however, that proposal must represent a distinct hypothesis from the Young Investigator's or Early Career Investigator's proposal.
- Multiple applications will be accepted from a single institution, provided that each application has a different PI and represents a distinct hypothesis.

If there are any questions about eligibility, please contact Tasheema Prince, MRA Scientific Program Manager, at tprince@curemelanoma.org before submitting an application. Applications from PIs who do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be reviewed.

TYPES OF AWARDS

YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARD

Applicant Eligibility Checklist due October 19, 2018
Full proposals due 5 p.m. Eastern Time, November 2, 2018

Description: Young Investigator Awards aim to attract early career faculty with original ideas into the field of melanoma, thereby recruiting and supporting the next generation of melanoma research leaders. Awardees will be provided funding to accomplish innovative and original, preclinical, translational, and/or early clinical research projects. Young Investigators are scientists within the first four years of their first academic faculty appointment. A mentorship commitment from a senior investigator is required.

Term: 3 Years

Amount: Up to \$75,000 per year for three years (up to \$225,000 total)

Eligibility Requirements:

- **Applicants must be within the first four years of their first independent, full time academic faculty appointment at the application deadline at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent position).**
- Applicants must designate at least one Mentor who is an established investigator at the same institution who will ensure that adequate support and guidance are provided for successful completion of the proposed research project and provide career mentorship.
- Applicants who have secured an independent full-time faculty position commencing by July 1, 2019 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.
- Applicants do not have to be on a tenure-track; however, fellows or others who are in training positions are not eligible to apply.

- Applicants who are in research support positions are not eligible to apply.
- Applicants who have been awarded a prior MRA Young Investigator Award are not eligible to apply for an additional MRA Young Investigator Award.
- Applicants may serve as PI on only one proposal submitted to MRA for any of the award mechanisms in this cycle.
- **All Young Investigator applicants must complete and return the [Applicant Eligibility Checklist](#) by October 19, 2018. Please email the completed checklist to MRA Scientific Program Manager Tasheema Prince at tprince@curemelanoma.org.**

ESTABLISHED INVESTIGATOR AWARD

Full proposals due 5 p.m. Eastern Time, November 2, 2018

Description: Established Investigator Awards support senior investigators with an established record of scientific productivity and accomplishment.

Term: 3 Years

Amount: Up to \$125,000 per year for three years (up to \$375,000 total)

Eligibility:

- Applicants must be a senior investigator, past the initial four years of their first academic faculty appointment.
- Applicants must hold a full-time faculty appointment at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent) or above.

PILOT AWARD

Full proposals due 5 p.m. Eastern Time, November 2, 2018

Description: Pilot Awards support senior investigators who propose potentially transformative ideas that do not have extensive preliminary data but articulate a clear hypothesis and translational goals. Resources for such "high-risk, high-reward" projects are important to establish proof-of-concept, which may then leverage additional funding through more traditional avenues.

Term: 2 Years

Amount: Up to \$50,000 per year for two years (up to \$100,000 total)

Eligibility:

- Applicants must be a senior investigator, past the initial four years of their first academic faculty appointment
- Applicants must hold a full-time faculty appointment at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent) or above

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY: MRA YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARD AND MRA ESTABLISHED INVESTIGATOR AWARDS FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE APPLIED TO MELANOMA

Applicant Eligibility Checklist due October 19, 2018 (Young Investigator applicants only)
Full proposals due 5 p.m. Eastern Time, November 2, 2018

Advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are rapidly impacting the oncology landscape, with potential applications in target identification and development, medical and diagnostic imaging, prognostics and clinical decision making, among others. MRA seeks to support research efforts that use AI to advance melanoma detection, prevention, diagnosis, staging, and/or treatment by **offering two AI-focused Established Investigator Awards and one Young Investigator Award. While any proposal that applies AI to melanoma will be considered, priority will be given to proposals addressing following applications:**

- **Melanoma diagnosis:** Improving the detection and/or diagnosis of melanoma from digital images, including dermatopathology images
- **Prognostic indicators for melanoma patient outcomes:** Analyzing diverse datasets to identify novel biomarkers for patient prognosis and/or response to treatment
- **Discovery of novel drug targets:** Identifying novel drug candidates for melanoma through AI-driven data analysis

Please see descriptions of and instructions for Young Investigator and Established Investigator Awards for specific details on eligibility, award terms and amount, as well as instructions on how to apply.

Applicants should submit to the general Young Investigator Award or Established Investigator Award program and designate their desire to be considered for this award when completing their online application in proposalCENTRAL. To do this, please select “AI for Melanoma” under subprogram in the Title Page step of the online application. **Selecting “AI for Melanoma” will not limit an applicant’s opportunity to also be selected under the general Young Investigator Award and Established Investigator Award mechanisms, but instead is meant to expand opportunities in an effort to increase overall funding of AI-specific applications for melanoma.**

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY: MRA YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARD AND MRA ESTABLISHED INVESTIGATOR AWARD IN DERMATOLOGY

Applicant Eligibility Checklist due October 19, 2018 (Young Investigator applicants only)
Full proposals due 5 p.m. Eastern Time, November 2, 2018

With this Special Opportunity, MRA is **offering one Young Investigator Award and one Established Investigator Award to support academic research carried out by dermatology faculty.** Eligible applicants must hold an appointment in a department or division of dermatology. Research proposals can focus on prevention, diagnosis, and/or treatment of melanoma, and may include research related to dermatology, dermatopathology, and/or dermatologic surgery.

Please see general descriptions of and instructions for Young Investigator and Established Investigator Awards for specific details on eligibility, award terms and amount, as well as instructions on how to apply.

Applicants should submit to the general Young Investigator Award or Established Investigator Award program and designate their desire to be considered for this award when completing their online application in proposalCENTRAL. To do this, please select “Dermatology” under subprogram in the Title Page step of the online application. **Selecting “Dermatology” will not limit an applicant’s opportunity to also be selected under the general Young Investigator Award and Established Investigator Award mechanisms, but instead is meant to expand opportunities in an effort to increase overall funding for melanoma research carried out by the dermatology community.**

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY: BRISTOL-MYERS SQUIBB-MRA YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARDS IN IMMUNOTHERAPY

Applicant Eligibility Checklist due October 19, 2018
Full proposals due 5 p.m. Eastern Time, November 2, 2018

Through the generous support of Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS), MRA is offering two awards for Young Investigators to conduct projects supported by preliminary data and focused on advancing immunotherapies in melanoma.

Please see descriptions of and instructions for Young Investigator Awards for specific details on eligibility, award terms and amount, as well as instructions on how to apply.

Applicants should submit to the general Young Investigator Award program and designate their desire to be considered for this award when completing their online application in proposalCENTRAL. To do this, please select “BMS Immunotherapy” under subprogram in the Title Page step of the online application. **Selecting “BMS Immunotherapy” will not limit an applicant’s opportunity to also be selected under the general Young Investigator Award, but instead is meant to expand opportunities in an effort to increase overall funding of immunotherapy approaches for melanoma.**

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY: ASTRO-MRA EARLY CAREER INVESTIGATOR AWARD IN RADIATION ONCOLOGY

Early Career Applicant Eligibility Checklist due October 29, 2018
Full proposals due 5 p.m. Eastern Time, November 9, 2018

Research in radiation oncology has led to advancements in technology and therapy that have improved patient outcomes and care. The MRA is pleased to partner with the [American Society for Radiation Oncology \(ASTRO\)](#) to offer a special opportunity to support research in radiation oncology to improve treatment options for melanoma patients. Early career radiation oncologists, radiation or cancer biologists, or a physicists are encouraged to submit radiation oncology Research Proposals that include at least 50% effort on melanoma

Term: Up to 3 years

Amount: Up to \$67,000 per year for three years (up to \$200,000 total). **The award also requires a match of \$100,000 from the Awardee's institution, either in matching funds or in-kind contribution.** This could include facilities and administration costs (F&A), dedicated research time, or other costs covered by the institution. The matching funds can be supplied over the full timeframe of the grant.

Eligibility:

- Applicants must be within the first five years of their first independent, full time academic faculty appointment at the application deadline at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent position).
- Applicant must hold a position at an academic or other non-profit research institution within the United States.
- Applicant must be a member in good standing of ASTRO.
- Applicants must designate at least one Mentor who is an established investigator at the same institution who will ensure that adequate support and guidance are provided for successful completion of the proposed research project and provide career mentorship.
- Applicants who have secured an independent full-time faculty position commencing by July 1, 2019 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.
- Applicants do not have to be on a tenure-track; however, fellows or others who are in training positions are not eligible to apply.
- Applicants who are in research support positions are not eligible to apply.
- Applicants who have been awarded a prior MRA Young Investigator Award are not eligible to apply for an ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Award.
- Applicants may serve as PI on only one proposal submitted to MRA for any of the award mechanisms in this cycle.
- **All applicants must complete and return the [ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Applicant Eligibility Checklist](#) by October 19, 2018. Please email the completed checklist to MRA Scientific Program Manager Tasheema Prince at tprince@curemelanoma.org.**

Please see instructions below on how to apply. Please contact Tasheema Prince, MRA Scientific Program Manager at tprince@curemelanoma.org with questions.

APPLICATION FORMAT AND INSTRUCTIONS

All applications are due by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Proposals will not be considered after the deadline. Applicants must utilize the proposalCENTRAL online application tool at <https://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:

ESTABLISHED INVESTIGATOR, PILOT, AND YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARDS

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. **Data and Renewable Reagent Sharing Plan:** Provide information for the types of data and renewable reagents that will be generated as part of the award and how they will be shared.
8. **Abstracts and Keywords:** Provide a general audience abstract (non-technical) and a technical abstract (2,000 characters maximum each) and keywords. Please note: the general audience abstract will become public if the award is selected for funding, therefore, it should not contain any proprietary information.
9. **Budget Period Detail:** Enter budget detail for each award period requested. Awards will not support indirect costs, overhead costs, or other similar institutional charges. Fringe benefits for personnel salaries are allowable.
10. **Budget Summary and Justification:** A summary of the budget detail will be shown in this step. 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 # 12.
11. **Organizational Assurances:** IRB and IACUC approvals, if applicable.
12. **Upload Attachments:** Upload the following:
 - a) **Biosketch for PI and key personnel:** Please upload an NIH format biosketch for yourself and any Key Personnel. Biosketches for research support staff, students, postdocs and other training positions are not required. Applicants who do not have an NIH biosketch may use the template provided in proposalCENTRAL.
 - 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. The project description should be 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) **Data and resource sharing plan:** In order to promote rapid research advancement, transparency, reproducibility and collaboration, MRA encourages the open sharing of data and resources generated from its funded awards. Please answer questions about how you plan to share your data and resources using the template provided.
- f) **For Young Investigator Award proposals:**
- *Mentor Letter of Support:* 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, and sources of institutional support that the applicant will utilize in conducting the project. MRA recognizes that unconscious bias can manifest in such support letters and therefore strongly recommends considering these or similar guidelines when preparing such letters: <https://tinyurl.com/yapwnw3a>.
 - *Young Investigator Applicant Eligibility Checklist:* Required to confirm eligibility. Requires signature Department Chair, Division Head or Dean. Must be returned via email to MRA Scientific Program Manager Tasheema Prince at tprince@curemelanoma.org by October 19, 2018. Please also upload a copy as part of the application.
- g) **For proposals involving clinical trials:** Attach a brief protocol synopsis (5 pages maximum), 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.
13. **Validate:** Check for any missing required information.
14. **Signature Page(s):** 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.
15. **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.

ASTRO-MRA EARLY CAREER INVESTIGATOR AWARD IN RADIATION ONCOLOGY

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 ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Award applicants, a Mentor from the same institution is required.
7. **Data and Renewable Reagent Sharing Plan:** Provide information for the types of data and renewable reagents that will be generated as part of the award and how they will be shared.
8. **Abstracts and Keywords:** Provide a general audience abstract (non-technical) and a technical abstract (2,000 characters maximum each) and keywords. Please note: the general audience abstract will become public if the award is selected for funding, therefore, it should not contain any proprietary information.
9. **Budget Period Detail:** Enter budget detail for each award period requested. This should include the complete budget for the project, which includes MRA, ASTRO, and Institution contributions (direct costs only). MRA and ASTRO Award funds will not support indirect costs, overhead costs, or other similar institutional charges. Fringe benefits for personnel salaries are allowable.
10. **Budget Summary and Justification:** A summary of the budget detail will be shown in this step. 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 # 12. The amount of funding anticipated from both ASTRO, MRA, and Institution should be clearly indicated.
11. **Organizational Assurances:** IRB and IACUC approvals, if applicable.
12. **Upload Attachments:** Upload the following:
 - a) **Biosketch for PI and key personnel:** Please upload an NIH format biosketch for yourself and any Key Personnel. Biosketches for research support staff, students, postdocs and other training positions are not required. Applicants who do not have an NIH biosketch may use the template provided in proposalCENTRAL.
 - 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 ASTRO-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. The project description should be 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) **Data and resource sharing plan:** In order to promote rapid research advancement, transparency, reproducibility and collaboration, MRA encourages the open sharing of data and resources generated from its funded awards. Please answer questions about how you plan to share your data and resources using the template provided.
 - f) **Mentor Letter of Support:** 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, and sources of institutional support that the applicant will utilize in conducting the project. MRA recognizes that unconscious bias can manifest in such support letters and therefore strongly recommends considering these or similar guidelines when preparing such letters: <https://tinyurl.com/yapwnw3a>.
 - g) **Early Career Investigator Applicant Eligibility Checklist:** Required to confirm eligibility. Requires signature from Department Chair, Division Head or Dean. Must be returned via email to MRA Scientific Program Manager Tasheema Prince at tprince@curemelanoma.org by October 29, 2018. Please also upload a copy as part of the application.
 - h) **For proposals involving clinical trials:** Attach a brief protocol synopsis (5 pages maximum), 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.
13. **Validate:** Check for any missing required information.
 14. **Signature Page(s):** 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.
 15. **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 19, 2018: Deadline for Young Investigator applicants to submit Applicant Eligibility Checklist.

October 29, 2018: Deadline for ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Award applicants to submit Applicant Eligibility Checklist.

November 2, 2018: Established Investigator, Pilot, and Young Investigator full proposal applications are due.

November 9, 2018: ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator full proposal applications are due.

Late March/Early April 2019: Awardees notified (Note that MRA may adjust the notification date without notice to applicants).

June 2019: 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 MRA Review and Selection Criteria. To minimize any real or perceived conflicts of interest (COI), MRA asks GRC members to adhere to a rigorous set of COI guidelines. Further information about these guidelines are available upon request. Please contact Tasheema Prince, MRA Scientific Program Manager, at tprince@curemelanoma.org. All awards are contingent upon ratification by the MRA Board of Directors. **MRA will make every effort to provide brief, written reviewer feedback to all applicants; however, occasionally such comments may not be available due to unforeseen circumstances.** A listing of GRC membership and descriptions of the projects funded in 2008-2018 are provided on our website, www.curemelanoma.org.

COLLABORATIVE FUNDING OFFERS

For outstanding research proposals as determined by peer review that fall beyond MRA's funding pay-line, MRA may seek co-funding from applicant institutions in order to support these proposals. MRA will reserve \$1 million of its support for the Collaborative Funding program this cycle. For our Collaborative Funding program, MRA will provide one third of the award funds made under this program and each PI's institution will provide the remaining two thirds of the relevant budget for that institution. In case of questions, please contact Tasheema Prince, MRA Scientific Program Manager at tprince@curemelanoma.org.

For proposals that meet the above criteria, MRA will contact the institutions for this Collaborative Funding offer, and institutions will be asked to verbally decline or accept the offer within 14 days. Signed agreements between MRA and the institution will be required within 30 days. Collaborative Funding terms are non-negotiable and relevant awardees are automatically considered for this program.

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, which can be found here <https://www.curemelanoma.org/assets/Uploads/PDFs/TermsAndConditions2019.pdf>. MRA must be notified in advance and approve any significant changes in research objectives, key personnel (including transfer to another employee), or budget.

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. **Awards will not support indirect costs, overhead costs, or other similar institutional charges**; 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, financial reports and demonstrated progress on the funded proposal.

MRA SCIENTIFIC RETREAT

PIs 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. MRA will cover reasonable travel costs related to participation in the Scientific Retreat.

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, a tenure-track appointment is not

required. Evidence of independent investigator status and an environment conducive and supportive of melanoma research is required. If there is any doubt or question about a PI's eligibility, please contact MRA (contacts provided in this RFP) before an application is submitted. Applications from PIs who do not fit the eligibility criteria will not be reviewed. **To confirm eligibility, Young Investigator and Early Career Investigator applicants must complete the Applicant Eligibility Checklist** (see additional FAQs for Young Investigators and ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigators below).

Q: Does MRA fund investigators and institutions outside of the United States?

A: Yes. Investigators at non-profit institutions outside of the United States are eligible. PIs must be at the level of 'Assistant Professor' or equivalent. Academic appointments at institutions outside of the U.S. can differ from those traditionally found in the U.S. Contact MRA if there are any questions about eligibility prior to submitting a proposal. Please note that the ASTRO-MRA Special Opportunity is limited to U.S. applicants only.

Young Investigator Awards

Q: I do not hold the title of Assistant Professor but I do hold the title of my institution's entry level, full-time faculty position. Am I eligible to apply?

A: Appointments such as research assistant professor, adjunct assistant professor, assistant professor research track, instructor, or lecturer may be eligible to apply as long as your institution considers this an independent, faculty-level position and you have independent lab space. Please verify your eligibility by October 19, 2018, by emailing the signed and completed Applicant Eligibility Checklist to Tasheema Prince, at tprince@curemelanoma.org.

Q: I am within my first four years of an Assistant Professor position, but previously held an entry level full-time faculty position such as research assistant professor, adjunct assistant professor, assistant professor research track, instructor, or lecturer, either at my current institution or at a different institution. Am I still eligible to apply?

A: If you held any independent faculty-level position prior to November 2, 2014, then you are not eligible to apply.

Q: I will be past the first four years of my first faculty appointment at the time the project starts. May I apply to the Young Investigator?

A: Applicants should be within the first four years of their first faculty appointment at the time of proposal submission.

Q: I will be past the first four years of my first faculty appointment at the time of application but I took time off for personal, family or professional reasons. Does this count against eligibility?

A: If an applicant took leave of absence for family or medical leave or other personal or professional reasons, please inquire to MRA about eligibility. An appropriately documented leave of absence will not be counted in the four years of eligibility. Leaves of absence may include: military service (that does not include research training/experience), family leave, and maternity leave. MRA will extend the period of eligibility for a period equivalent to the time away from research.

Q: I am a Fellow at an academic institution. Am I eligible to apply for the Young Investigator Award?

A: Generally, no, unless the Fellow title is at least equivalent to Assistant Professor position (which is sometimes the case outside of the U.S.). Those in training positions are not eligible. Only those with a faculty level appointment will be considered. Young Investigator Award applicants who do not hold an 'Assistant Professor' title must contact MRA to verify their eligibility prior to submitting a proposal (see contact information in this RFP) and complete and the Applicant Eligibility Checklist.

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 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 additional mentors outside of their institution for other purposes, including providing scientific guidance for the project, but they will not be considered a Mentor for the award.

Q: Are Mentors of Young Investigator applicants allowed to be a PI of an existing MRA award or award application this cycle?

A: Yes, however, each research proposal must have a distinct hypothesis.

Q: Can I apply for both an ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Award and a Young Investigator Award?

A: No. You may only apply for one award per cycle.

Q: Is there a minimum level of effort for the Mentor?

A: No. Mentors should not be listed as having any percent effort on the award.

Q: What is the expected level of percent effort for a Young Investigator?

A: There is no specific requirement around percent effort, but MRA encourages a minimum of 10% effort on the project.

ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Awards

Q: I do not hold the title of Assistant Professor but I do hold the title of my institution's entry level, full-time faculty position. Am I eligible to apply?

A: Appointments such as research assistant professor, adjunct assistant professor, assistant professor research track, instructor, or lecturer may be eligible to apply as long as your institution considers this an independent, faculty-level position and you have independent lab space. Please verify your eligibility by October 29, 2018, by emailing the signed and completed Early Career Investigator Applicant Eligibility Checklist to Tasheema Prince, at tprince@curemelanoma.org.

Q: I am within my first five years of an Assistant Professor position, but previously held an entry level full-time faculty position such as research assistant professor, adjunct assistant professor, assistant professor research track, instructor, or lecturer, either at my current institution or at a different institution. Am I still eligible to apply?

- A: If you held any independent faculty-level position prior to November 2, 2013, then you are not eligible to apply.
- Q: I will be past the first five years of my first faculty appointment at the time the project starts. May I apply to the ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Award?
- A: Applicants should be within the first five years of their first faculty appointment at the time of proposal submission.
- Q: I will be past the first five years of my first faculty appointment at the time of application but I took time off for personal, family or professional reasons. Does this count against eligibility?
- A: If an applicant took leave of absence for family or medical leave or other personal or professional reasons, please inquire to MRA about eligibility. An appropriately documented leave of absence will not be counted in the five years of eligibility. Leaves of absence may include: military service (that does not include research training/experience), family leave, and maternity leave. MRA will extend the period of eligibility for a period equivalent to the time away from research.
- Q: I am a Fellow at an academic institution. Am I eligible to apply for the ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Award?
- A: Generally, no, unless the Fellow title is at least equivalent to Assistant Professor position. Those in training positions are not eligible. Only those with a faculty level appointment will be considered.
- Q: I hold an appointment at an institution outside of the United States. Am I still eligible to apply for ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Award?
- A: No. Applicants must hold an appointment at an institution in the U.S.
- Q: I am not a member of ASTRO. Am I still eligible to apply for ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Award?
- A: No. You must be a member of ASTRO in good standing at the time of application. You can join ASTRO by visiting www.astro.org.
- Q: What is the role of the Mentor?
- A: It is expected that the ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator is an independent faculty member and not in training or in a research support position. However, a Mentor is required to help ensure that the Early Career 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 ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Award applicants must have a designated Mentor at their institution to help to ensure that the Early Career Investigator has the resources they need to successfully carry out the work at their institution. An applicant may have additional mentors outside of their institution for other purposes, including providing scientific guidance for the project, but they will not be considered a Mentor for the award.
- Q: Can I apply for both an ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Award and a Young Investigator Award?
- A: No. You may only apply for one award per cycle.

- Q: I have previously been awarded an MRA Young Investigator Award and/or an ASTRO Junior Faculty or Career Development Award. Am I still eligible to apply for ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Award?
- A: No. Previous MRA Young Investigator Awardees and ASTRO Junior Faculty or Career Development Awardees are not eligible to apply.
- Q: Are Mentors of ASTRO-MRA Early Career Investigator Award applicants allowed to be a PI of an existing MRA award or award application this cycle?
- A: Yes, however, each research proposal must have a distinct hypothesis.
- Q: Is there a minimum level of effort for the Mentor?
- A: No. Mentors should not be listed as having any percent effort on the award.
- Q: What is the expected level of percent effort for Young Investigator?
- A: There is no specific requirement around percent effort, but MRA encourages a minimum of 10% effort on the project.

Collaborative Funding Program

- Q: Is my institution's willingness to participate in the Collaborative Funding Program going to affect my score in this or any future funding cycle?
- A: No. The evaluation by MRA's Grant Review Committee will not be influenced by any co-funding or collaborative funding considerations. Only those proposals that are deemed outstanding by peer review but fall below MRA's pay line will be considered for MRA's Collaborative Funding Program. The collaborative funding process will be conducted after the scientific review process has been completed.

Application components

- Q: Do I need to have an ORCID ID?
- A: Yes. MRA now requires that all applicants provide an ORCID ID. If you do not have an ORCID ID, you can register for one here: <https://orcid.org/register>. More information about ORCID IDs can be found here: <https://orcid.org/>.
- Q: Why is MRA collecting demographic information?
- A: MRA now requests that applicants provide demographic information in proposalCENTRAL; however, this information is NOT required and will NOT be used in any way during the selection process. Having such information will help MRA better understand its applicant and awardee pool and detect and address inequities that exist in the selection process.
- Q: How are proposals submitted? Do I need to send a hard copy?
- A: All proposals must be submitted electronically via proposalCENTRAL, <https://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 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 format acceptable for submission to MRA?

A: MRA encourages you to use your NIH biosketch. You may also use the template provided in proposalCENTRAL.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

Email questions about this RFP, eligibility, or other issues about MRA or its awards to Tasheema Prince, MRA Scientific Program Manager at tprince@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. Support is available from 8:30am-5pm Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.