



2014-2015 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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: The Melanoma Research Alliance (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 this recent 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 more than \$60 million to research projects worldwide. Please visit 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; turning scientific discoveries into tools and/or treatments for high risk individuals and melanoma patients. Proposals will be accepted for Established Investigator Awards, Pilot Awards, Young Investigator Awards, Academic-Industry Partnership Awards (Established Investigator and Teams), and Special Opportunity Awards. 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; local IRB approval is not required at the time of application but is required in order to grant the award. MRA plans to support at least \$7 million in new funding during the 2014-2015 cycle.

MRA seeks proposals in the following areas:

- **Prevention:** Elucidation of environmental, epidemiological, and biological factors in melanoma carcinogenesis.
- **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 are solicited. 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 2014-2015 cycle, proposals in the following areas are of particular interest and will receive special consideration. These can include pre-clinical, clinical, and/or correlative scientific studies:

1. Early stage melanoma biomarkers: Identifying biomarkers of risk and markers of long term outcomes for improved clinical management and to speed the development of adjuvant therapies for patients with Stage I – III melanoma.
2. Treatment-related biomarkers: Identifying biomarkers predictive of clinical outcomes of treatment regimens, both approved and investigational, which may include studies of the tumor microenvironment, invasion, and metastasis and the study of ‘exceptional cases.’ Investigational studies of mechanisms underlying treatment-related side effects are also of interest.
3. Combination therapies: Undertaking studies that define logical and optimal combination therapies to improve outcomes and curtail resistance to current and emerging therapies.
4. New targets: Identifying and characterizing new targets and treatment modalities for melanomas that are not well-managed by existing or emerging therapies (e.g., brain metastases), including drivers of tumor invasion and metastasis in melanoma broadly and in melanoma sub-types.

KEY REVIEW AND SELECTION CRITERIA

- **Innovative and transformative research:** Novel approaches with strong scientific rationale and clear capacity to revolutionize prevention, early 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 the MRA before submitting an application. Applications from PIs who do not fit the eligibility criteria will not be reviewed.

An investigator may serve as PI on only one proposal submitted to the MRA under any of the mechanisms in this cycle. This includes PIs on team science awards. 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

Applications for all Established Investigator Awards, Pilot Awards, and Young Investigator Awards are due on **November 11, 2014**. Applications for all Academic-Industry Partnership Awards (established investigators and teams) and BMS-MRA Team Science Awards are due on **November 21, 2014**. All applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. Proposals submitted past their deadline will not be considered.

AWARDS FOR ESTABLISHED INVESTIGATORS

An investigator may serve as PI on only one proposal submitted to the MRA under any of the mechanisms in this cycle. This includes PIs on team science awards.

- **Established Investigator Awards:** These awards are designed to support projects led by investigators with an established record of scientific productivity.
 - **MRA Established Investigator Awards:** Investigators with an established record of scientific productivity will receive up to \$125,000 per year for 2 to 3 years to conduct projects supported by preliminary data.
 - **Special Opportunity: Bristol-Myers Squibb-MRA Established Investigator Awards in Immunotherapy:** Through the generous support of Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS), MRA is offering awards for established investigators to conduct projects supported by preliminary data and focused on advancing the immunotherapies in melanoma. Up to \$125,000 per year for 2 to 3 years may be requested. Interested applicants should submit to the general Established Investigator Award program, and any applicant in this Established Investigator Award category proposing research focused in the field of immunotherapy may be considered for this Special Opportunity.
- **Pilot Awards:** These awards are designed to establish proof-of-concept for potentially transformative ideas from established investigators.
 - **MRA Pilot Awards:** Potentially transformative pilot studies from investigators who are past the initial 4 years of their first academic faculty appointment will be considered for an award of \$50,000 per year for 2 years. Pilot proposals are not required to contain extensive preliminary data, but must articulate a clear hypothesis and translational goals.
 - **Special Opportunity: Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer-MRA Pilot Award:** In collaboration with the Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer (SITC), MRA will jointly support a Pilot Award for investigators who are past the initial 4 years of their first academic faculty appointment to conduct potentially transformative pilot studies in

the area of immunotherapy. Pilot proposals are not required to contain extensive preliminary data, but must articulate a clear hypothesis and translational goals. Proposals will be considered for an award of \$50,000 per year for 2 years. Applicants should submit to the general Pilot Award program, and any applicant in this category proposing research focused in the field of immunotherapy will be considered for this Special Opportunity.

- **Academic-Industry Partnership Awards:** These awards are designed to facilitate progress via interactions between the academic and industrial research sectors, and will be co-funded by MRA and an industrial collaborator whose involvement is essential to the project.

- **MRA Established Investigator Academic-Industry Partnership Awards:** 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.

Industry will negotiate contract terms directly with the awardee's institution and will dispense its portion of the research funds directly to that institution. Applications should include a letter of support from industry to MRA to support the project for the full term of the award. In the event that an award is granted by MRA, both a finalized contract between industry and the institution, and a letter agreement between the industry partner and MRA, must be executed within 90 days of the award date, barring extenuating circumstances, before funds can be dispensed, or MRA may withdraw its offer of award.

- **Special Opportunity: Amgen-MRA Established Investigator Academic-Industry Partnership Award:** In collaboration with Amgen, applications are solicited for preclinical or correlative laboratory studies related to the therapeutic potential of oncolytic virus immunotherapy in melanoma, alone or in combination with immune modulators (e.g., checkpoint inhibitors) or targeted therapies. Potential biomarkers of response in local and distant tumors and immune cell-type identification/evaluation in tumors and systemic changes related to oncolytic virus immunotherapy treatment are of interest. Mechanism of action studies using in vivo imaging or molecular techniques to differentiate direct versus immune-mediated effects are encouraged.

Up to \$100,000 per year for 2 to 3 years from MRA may be requested. Amgen funds will match MRA funds for the award period for a total combined award amount of up to \$600,000.

A letter of support from Amgen is required at the time of application. All letters of intent as well as questions related to Amgen-specific issues for the research proposals should be directed to the attention of Jennifer Gansert, M.D., Ph.D., at jgansert@amgen.com with "MRA" clearly stated in the title. All e-mail correspondence should clearly indicate "MRA-Amgen Established Investigator Partnership Award" in the e-mail subject line. Please refer to information on Academic-Industry Partnership Awards for individual

established investigators, provided above in this RFP, for other application requirements and grant terms and conditions.

AWARDS FOR YOUNG INVESTIGATORS

These 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. An investigator may serve as PI on only one proposal submitted to the MRA under any of the mechanisms in this cycle. This includes PIs on team science awards.

- **MRA Young Investigator Awards:** Investigators within 4 years of their first academic faculty appointment at the time of application will be provided up to \$75,000 per year for 3 years to accomplish innovative, translational research projects.

Fellows or others who are in training or support positions are not eligible to apply. However, applications from those who have secured an independent full-time faculty position commencing by July 1, 2015 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, 2015 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 Alex Carney at MRA at acarney@curemelanoma.org by **November 7, 2014**.

Young Investigator applicants must designate a Mentor, i.e. 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.

Investigators who have been awarded a prior MRA Young Investigator Award are not eligible to apply for an additional MRA Young Investigator Award.

- **Special Opportunity: MRA Young Investigator Award in Dermatology:** In this cycle, we encourage applications from dermatologist young investigators who remain actively engaged in patient care and are proposing studies in melanoma prevention, diagnosis/staging, and treatment. Applicants must meet the Young Investigator eligibility described above and are required to have a degree of M.D., D.O., or international equivalent and a documented clinical dermatology focus. In addition, they will have completed a dermatology residency or a similar international training program in dermatology and will be clinically active in conjunction with their research activities. Applicants should submit to the general Young Investigator Award program and designate that they would like to be considered for this Special Opportunity. To fulfill the requirement of documentation of a clinical dermatology focus, as part of the application package, applicants should include a letter of support from the department chair or dermatology section chief that includes a description of the candidate's current clinical activities.

AWARDS FOR TEAMS

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. A multidisciplinary team consists of established Principal Investigators with complementary expertise who may be from the same institution, inter-institutional, and/or international. An investigator may serve as

PI on only one proposal submitted to the MRA under any of the mechanisms in this cycle. This includes PIs on team science awards.

- **Special Opportunity: Bristol-Myers Squibb-MRA Team Science Awards in Immunotherapy:** Through the generous support of Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS), MRA is offering awards for multidisciplinary teams of two or more established PIs to conduct projects with the potential to lead to transformative advances in melanoma immunotherapies. Up to \$900,000 total over 2 to 3 years may be requested. All PIs in the team share authority for scientific leadership. The designated Administrative PI is responsible for administrative leadership. An investigator may serve as a PI, including Administrative PI and all collaborating PIs, on only one proposal. **Each team must include at least one Young Investigator as a co-investigator** (see and comply with all Young Investigator eligibility criteria above), 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 only one team science application.

Up to two teams may be awarded. This is not an Academic-Industry Partnership mechanism; applicants do not need to contact BMS or secure matching support from BMS for this opportunity.

- **MRA Team Science Academic-Industry Partnership Awards:** These awards are designed to facilitate progress via interactions between the academic and industrial research sectors in the team setting, and will be co-funded by MRA and an industrial collaborator whose involvement is essential to the project. Multidisciplinary teams of two or more established PIs will receive up to \$500,000 total over 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.

The PI(s) must be academic investigators. Industry scientists may serve as co-investigators or collaborators, but may not be PIs. All PIs in the team share authority for scientific leadership. The designated Administrative PI is responsible for administrative leadership. **Each team must include at least one Young Investigator as a co-investigator** (see and comply with all Young Investigator eligibility criteria). 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 only one team science application.

Industry will negotiate contract terms directly with the awardee's institution and will dispense its portion of the research funds directly to that institution. Applications should include a letter of support from industry to MRA to support the project for the full term of the award. In the event that an award is granted by MRA, both a finalized contract between industry and the institution, and a letter agreement between the industry partner and MRA, must be executed within 90 days of the award date, barring extenuating circumstances, before funds can be dispensed, or MRA may withdraw its offer of award.

APPLICATION FORMAT AND INSTRUCTIONS

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:

1. **Title Page:** Enter the project title
 - a. For Young Investigator Awards: Designate if you would like to be considered for the MRA Young Investigator Award in Dermatology.
 - b. For Established Investigator Academic-Industry Partnership Awards: Identify the type of proposal: MRA Established Investigator Academic-Industry Partnership Award or MRA-Amgen Academic-Industry Partnership Award.
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.
 - a. Young Investigator Award applicants: A Mentor from the same institution is required.
 - b. Team science applications (Team Science Academic-Industry Partnership and BMS-MRA Team Science Awards): Include all other PIs on the proposal as well as any additional key personnel. A designated Young Investigator and their Mentor is required.
5. **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.
6. **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).
7. **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.
 - a. For Academic-Industry Partnership applications: The amount of funding anticipated solely from MRA must be **clearly indicated** in the Budget Justification.
 - b. For proposals involving more than one institution: Do not include partner institution costs under consortium and contract costs; this category should only be used for contracts with outside facilities for performance of services.
8. **Organizational Assurances:** IRB and IACUC approvals, if applicable.

9. **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(s):** 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 a description of the potential for clinical impact with milestones (if applicable).
 - 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 include a brief statement about the applicant, the Mentor's role, and the research environment, core facilities, and other sources of institutional support (monetary or in-kind) which the applicant will utilize in conducting the project. For MRA Young Investigator Award in Dermatology applicants: Include a letter of support from the department chair or dermatology section chief that includes a description of the candidate's current clinical activities.
 - f. **For Academic-Industry Partnership Awards:** Include a letter of support from the corporate partner to negotiate a contract with the awardee's Institution, provide at least 50% support for the project, monetary (direct costs only) and/or in-kind, if the award is granted by MRA. Please include the proposed type and amount of matching support to be provided. In the event that MRA makes an offer of award, a signed letter of agreement will be required between the industry partner and MRA to support the project for the full term of the award. Industry partners should contact Alex Carney, acarney@curemelanoma.org, at MRA prior to application submission for a copy of the MRA-industry agreement related to these awards.
 - g. **For clinical trials proposals:** Attach a brief protocol synopsis (no longer than 5 pages).
 - h. **For multi-institutional proposals (e.g., team science applications):** Attach a letter from the Administrative PI's institution confirming that if the award is made, the institution will set up necessary sub-award agreements and transfer funds from their institution to the collaborating institution(s).
10. **Validate:** Check for any missing required information.
11. **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.
12. **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.

SUMMARY OF TIMELINE

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

- November 7, 2014: For Young Investigators: Deadline to confirm eligibility with MRA for those applicants that do not have Assistant Professor titles
- **November 11, 2014:** Young Investigator Award (including Dermatology Young Investigators), Established Investigator Award (including BMS-MRA Established Investigators), and Pilot Award (including SITC-MRA Pilot Award) proposals are due
- **November 21, 2014:** All Academic-Industry Partnership Award (for established investigator and teams) and BMS-MRA Team Science Award proposals are due
- Late February/Early March 2015: Peer and organizational review
- Late March 2015: Awardees notified (Note that MRA may adjust the notification date without notice to applicants)
- May 2015: 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.** A listing of GRC membership and descriptions of the projects funded in 2008-2014 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. Young Investigator, Established Investigator, and Pilot Awards are eligible for this program. Academic-Industry Partnership Awards and Special Opportunity Awards will not be considered for this program.

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.

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. Failure to secure such approvals 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.

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 meeting certain milestones and deliverables, including submission of complete and accurate progress reports.

MRA SCIENTIFIC RETREAT

PIs and, in the case of Academic-Industry Partnership Awards, corporate sponsors will be invited to attend the annual MRA Scientific Retreat. PIs are expected to attend and will 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. This includes the Academic-Industry Partnership Team Science Awards and the BMS-MRA Team Science Awards.
- Q: I would like to have a Mentor that is not at my institution. Is this allowed?
- A: All Young Investigator Award applicants must have a designated Mentor at their institution whose role is to help to ensure that the Young Investigator has the resources they need to successfully carry out the work at their institution. However, an applicant may designate two Mentors to include a senior investigator outside of their institution for other purposes, including providing scientific guidance for the project.
- 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.
- 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 (including Academic-Industry Team Science Partnership Awards and BMS-MRA Team Science Awards)

- Q: Can a Young Investigator Award applicant be the designated Young Investigator on a Team Science Award?
- A: Yes, but only if the project represents a distinct hypothesis and is non-overlapping.

- 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 same institution as part of the team. The Mentor can also serve as a PI or other key person on the project.
- 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. This includes the Academic-Industry Partnership Team Science Awards and the BMS-MRA Team Science Awards.
- Q: Is the BMS-MRA Team Science Award an Academic-Industry Partnership mechanism?
A: No. Applicants do not need to contact BMS or secure matching support from BMS for this opportunity.

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 PC. 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.
- 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 Alex Carney, MRA Scientific Program Manager at acarney@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.