



Melanoma Research Foundation Request for Proposals (RFP) for Team Awards 2023

RESEARCH OVERVIEW:

The Melanoma Research Foundation (MRF) is committed to advancing research across the spectrum of melanoma – from prevention through diagnosis, staging, treatment, and survivorship. The MRF proactively partners with the NCI, Congress, the Department of Defense and other foundations to develop and collaborate on a broad agenda for melanoma research that takes full advantage of all opportunities, while also sharing challenges. Since 1998, the MRF has funded 269 innovative, high impact, basic, translational and clinical research projects. Further, in 2022, the MRF awarded over \$1,913,000 in *new* melanoma research. In 2023, the MRF will offer two types of Team Awards (as discussed in this RFP), as well as Established Investigator Awards, Career Development Awards, Medical Student Awards, Resident-Fellow Awards, Mid-Career Bridge Grants, and a Pilot Translational Award (detailed in separate RFPs as noted below).

Please visit www.melanoma.org for additional information on the MRF and to learn more about previously funded research. All questions or concerns regarding the MRF's Research Grant Program can be directed to the MRF Science Officer at research@melanoma.org or by calling 800-673-1290.

ACTIVE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES (Submission deadline: July 17th, 2023)

Available through this award mechanism

CURE OM Options Bring Hope Team Award in honor of Lindsay Zubeck (CURE OM)

This CURE OM award provides funding of up to \$250,000 over a two-year period (\$150,000 for year one and \$100,000 for year two) to an investigative team whose research will advance treatment for all patients with metastatic uveal melanoma (i.e. not restricted by HLA type). Teams should consist of a PI and at least one co-PI, ideally from different institutions. Teams consisting of both basic scientists and clinicians are encouraged, as is the inclusion of a junior scientist.

MRF Breakthrough Consortium Young Investigator Team Award to Advance the Field of Translational Immuno-Oncology (MRFBC)

The MRFBC Team Award provides funding of **up to \$150,000 per year for two years** to an investigative team whose research focuses on either improving clinical outcomes for patients with melanoma being treated with immuno-oncology agents or advancing the scientific understanding of immuno-oncology and the role of the immune system in melanoma. Teams must involve collaborations from at least two different institutions, one of which must be a MRFBC member institution. Further, the proposed PI and all co-PIs must be junior scientists, all of whom have at least one mentor.

To learn more about other MRF grant opportunities for medical students, residents/ fellows, mid-career investigators, career development awards, and established investigator awards (RFP release dates fall/ winter 2023), please visit the MRF website at <https://melanoma.org/research-science/research-grants/research-grant-rfps/>.

TEAM AWARD ELIGIBILITY & REQUIREMENTS:

General (for both grant types)

- Applicants must hold a PhD or MD degree or equivalent at the time of the grant submission.
- For this RFP, applicants may be the PI or co-PI on only one submitted application.



- Applicants are eligible to respond to other MRF RFPs, as long as the research proposals are significantly different.
- American citizenship is not required.
- Applicants must show evidence of strong departmental or institutional support and commitment.
- PIs and co-PIs may not have an active research award with the MRF (please note: awards currently under no-cost extensions are not considered as active research awards).
- The use of relevant genetic models and/or human derived tumor samples is highly encouraged, but not required.
- Proposed research must comply with all applicable National Institutes of Health (NIH) animal and human welfare guidelines.
- Applicants are encouraged to discuss any eligibility questions with the MRF prior to applying.

CURE OM Options Bring Hope Team Award in honor of Lindsay Zubeck (CURE OM)

- The proposed research must focus on advancing treatment options not limited by HLA type for patients with metastatic uveal melanoma.
- The Principal Investigator (PI) must have a title equivalent to Associate Professor or higher at the time of the grant submission.
- PI is encouraged, although not required, to include a junior faculty member as part of the team.
- PI is encouraged to establish teams consisting of basic scientists and clinicians.
- Teams are expected to consist of a PI and at least one co-PI, ideally from different institutions.
- US-based and International scientists are eligible to apply.

MRF Breakthrough Consortium Young Investigator Team Award to Advance the Field of Translational Immuno-Oncology (MRFBC)

- In addition to the Principal Investigator (PI), at least two co-Principal Investigators (co-PI)s must be identified. If the grant is focused on a rare, niche population, involvement of additional co-PIs and/or institutions is encouraged.
- Grant submissions must involve collaborations from at least two different institutions. Please note: for the sake of this grant, the Harvard Network (Harvard Medical School, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital, and the Broad Institute) will be considered as one institution. Further, the PI must be from a MRFBC institution. Additional institutions may include non-MRFBC sites; however, the proposed research must be conducted in a non-profit research organization, a medical institution or an education institution located in the United States. A list of the MRFBC institutions can be found on the MRF website at <https://melanoma.org/research-science/scientific-initiatives-2/mrf-breakthrough-consortium-mrfbc/>.
- The proposed PI and all co-PIs MUST be either a postdoctoral fellow with less than five years of postdoctoral experience at the time the grant will be awarded OR have a title equivalent to a research associate/ scientist, instructor, or assistant professor at the time of the grant submission. Please note: although the PI and the co-PIs must be junior faculty, additional members of the research team may be senior faculty members.
- PIs, as well as co-PIs, are *each* required to have at least one mentor; the mentors' biosketches and other support must be included in the application.
- Applications must be focused on either improving clinical outcomes for melanoma patients being treated with immuno-oncology agents or advancing the scientific understanding of immuno-oncology and the role of the immune system in melanoma. With respect to types of melanoma, grants could focus on cutaneous or rare subtypes such as ocular, mucosal, and/or pediatric melanoma.

REVIEW PROCESS:

The MRF's Research Grant Program emphasizes basic, translational and clinical research projects that explore innovative approaches to understanding critical problems pertaining to prevention, diagnosis, staging and treatment of melanoma. All proposals will undergo rigorous peer review, where reviewers are selected based on their expertise in diverse areas of basic, translational and clinical melanoma research. Reviewers



include members of the MRF's Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), the MRFBC, CURE OM, and the Dermatology Advisory Council (DAC) as well as members of the scientific and clinical melanoma community who are not in conflict with the application. Applications with the highest scores will be assessed by a panel of representatives from the initial review group. The top ranked grants are recommended for funding to the MRF Board of Directors. The number of grants selected for funding is determined by the MRF Board of Directors, based on available funds.

AWARD ADMINISTRATION AND REPORTING:

The Team Awards must be submitted by **July 17th, 2023**. Funding decisions will be made on or around **September 30th, 2023**. Upon acceptance of the award, the PI and the Institution will be required to sign an award letter accepting the MRF's terms and conditions. Only the institution of the primary investigator will be required to sign the award letter, as the MRF contract will be with the lead site only. The lead site will be responsible for dispersing any funds to the participating team sites.

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

MRFBC Team Awardees will be expected to provide status updates at the biannual MRFBC meetings typically held in conjunction with SMR and ASCO. In addition, for both awards, interim financial and scientific progress reports are to be submitted to the MRF no later than 30 days prior to the end of the grant's first year. Final financial and scientific reports, detailing all activities during the award period, are to be submitted to the MRF within 60 days of the end of the award period (even if a no-cost extension is requested).

Acknowledgment of support from the MRF must accompany any published report using data or findings from research conducted under an award from the MRF. The intellectual property reviewed remains solely within the institution.

STEP-BY-STEP APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS:

The MRF will accept applications from April 21st – July 17th, 2023 for the 2023 award cycle. The deadline is July 17th, 2023 at 5 pm ET. All submissions, notifications and critiques will be completed entirely online through ProposalCENTRAL (<https://proposalcentral.altum.com/>).

Please read the instructions carefully prior to beginning the online grant submission process.

NOTE: Applications that represent resubmission of previously proposed studies, in whole or in part, may be submitted for consideration only twice; however, there is no restriction on the timing of the resubmissions. A one-page letter summarizing the changes to the application from the previous submission, as well as a one-page responses to reviewers' criticisms, must be uploaded as an attachment during Section 11: Upload Attachments.

Section 1: Title Page

The project title should not exceed the space provided (75 characters, including spaces).

Choose the grant program, from the list noted below, to which you are applying. You can only select one grant program; therefore, please select the most specialized grant for which you qualify.

- CURE OM Options Bring Hope Team Award in honor of Lindsay Zubeck (CURE OM) – up to \$250,000 over a two-year period
- MRF Breakthrough Consortium Team Award to Advance the Field of Translational Immuno-Oncology (MRFBC) – up to \$300,000 over a two-year period



The research period for both awards is a two-year period. The award period begins October 1st, 2023 and end September 30th, 2025.

Please specify if this is a new application or a resubmission.

Section 2: Enable Other Users to Access This Proposal

You have the option to allow other individuals access to your application. You can choose from three different levels of permission.

Section 3: Applicant/PI

Profile information is pre-loaded in this section. You may update your profile information here as well.

Section 4: Additional Applicant/PI Information

Additional applicant/ PI information is requested in this section. All answers for this section are optional. This information will only be used for internal MRF purposes.

Section 5: Institution and Contacts

Institution information and contact information can be updated and/or changed here.

Section 6: Key Personnel

Key personnel, other than the applicant, who will provide support to the project, will be listed here. A NIH Biosketch and Other Support Page (both active and pending) for the PI/ co-PI/ and any Mentors will be required (to be uploaded in Section 11). The Other Support page must include information about all types of available research support (including direct costs and percent effort).

Section 7: Abstracts

Scientific Abstract

In the space provided, include a summary of the proposal that gives a brief description of the objectives, rationale, methods and expected results. The total length of the summary may not exceed 3,000 characters (including spaces) and should be written in scientific terms.

Lay Abstract

In the space provided, include a brief (<3,000 characters, including spaces) summary of the proposal. The lay level abstract needs to be written so that the everyday person can understand the significance, impact and innovation of the proposed research.

Keywords

Please select up to six appropriate keywords (from the list provided) that characterize the proposed research project.

If the project is awarded, portions of the abstracts may be used in the MRF's various publications, press releases, fundraisers and educational events.

Section 8: Budget Period Detail

Awards will be made for a two-year period. Please fill out the budget information for **both years**.

Please note for all grants:

- **Only direct costs are allowed.**
- **Cost of living adjustments for personnel or non-personnel costs are not allowed.**



- **When calculating salaries, please use actual costs – not the salary allowed by the NIH salary cap.**
- **No more than 25% of the grant each year should go towards the salaries plus fringe benefits of the PI or co-PI.**
- **Requests for major equipment will be closely scrutinized and should be carefully justified, and should not exceed 15% of the total (two year) budget.**
- **Allowable travel expenses for meetings and research purposes – including to international meetings- are capped at \$2,000 per project year**

Personnel Costs

All personnel must be named in this section. The salary and fringe benefits included in the budget is calculated based on total of salary and fringe benefits multiplied by the % effort. Salary distribution of supporting personnel is up to the discretion of the PI.

Non-Personnel Costs

All budgeted expenses such as consumable supplies, animal costs, service fees and consultant fees must be itemized. Indirect institutional costs are not allowed.

The CURE OM Options Bring Hope Award in honor of Lindsay Zubeck will not exceed \$250,000 in total (\$150,000 the first year and \$100,000 the second year).

The MRFBC Team Award to Advance the Field of Translational Immuno-Oncology will not exceed \$150,000 each year (for a two-year period).

Section 9: Budget Summary

This is a summary of the Budget Period Detail. Also, please give a brief justification for each budget item here.

Section 10: Organization Assurances

Information regarding human subjects, vertebrate animals, and/or recombinant DNA will be entered here (if relevant). If an application has just been submitted, please note that as well.

Section 11: Upload Attachments

All attachments must be in PDF form. Uploaded documents should fall under one of the following descriptions:

Biosketches – Biosketches for the PI, Co-PI(s), and Mentors must be uploaded here.

Letter of Support – A letter of support from your institution is required; additional letters of support are allowed. This letter should be from the department chair or other leader at the institution with direct knowledge of the applicant's value to the department and institution. A research laboratory head/ mentor may write a letter of support for a postdoctoral fellow applicant; however, for all other applicants, it is anticipated that the letter of support will come from a departmental chair or other institutional leader.

Other – If the application is a resubmission of a previously proposed study, a summary of changes to the application from the previous submission (up to 1-page in length) and responses to reviewers' criticisms (up to 1-page in length) must be uploaded here. Other support pages for the PI, Co-PI(s), and Mentors should be uploaded here as well.

Research Plan – The research plan is limited to **6 pages, Arial font, at least 11pt font with ½ inch margins.** Single line spacing is acceptable. The text of the Research Plan should contain sufficient information for the evaluation by the reviewer panel and should cover:



1. Specific Aims
2. Background, rationale, and significance. Include a statement of significance of the proposed work, its clinical relevance to melanoma prevention, diagnosis and/or treatment, potential for further research and the potential for securing future funding for the project.
3. Preliminary Data: results of previous research related to the Project Title. Specify how the original research objectives have been met and include justification of support based on exceptional findings. If the original research objectives were not met or were modified, an explanation must be included.
4. Experimental design and procedures
5. References (References ARE NOT counted in the 6-page limit)

Section 12: Validate

Click the 'Validate' button here to check for any missing required information or files. All missing required information will be listed on the screen. Please correct any missing information before proceeding to the next section.

Section 13: Signature Page(s)

You may print the signature page(s) after you have completed all the proposal sections. Only a signature from the applicant is required.

Section 14: Submit

Submit your application. You will be unable to submit if you have not provided all the required information. We encourage you to submit your application as early as possible so that we can assist you with any issues that may arise. **The deadline is July 17th, 2023 at 5 pm ET.**