

**2019 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
DERMATOLOGY FELLOWS AWARD - PILOT PROGRAM  
SPECIAL UPDATE – MAY 20, 2019**

The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) is delighted to share with you an **updated new award opportunity** to support increased focus on melanoma by post-docs and medical residents in Dermatology.

**UPDATE: General eligibility requirements:**

- **[NEW]** Applicants may be residents, as well as M.D.'s conducting a postdoctoral fellowship.
- **[NEW]** At institutions with policies that prohibit residents from being able to receive research grant funding, the Mentor may serve as the primary investigator on the proposal.
  - In this case, please provide a letter from the Department Chair stating such a policy exists.

**UPDATE: In FAQ section:**

**Q:** What is the expected level of percent effort for a Fellow?

**A:** There is no specific requirement around percent effort, but MRA encourages a minimum of 25% effort on the project. **[NEW]** If 25% effort is prohibitive, please provide an accompanying letter to describe why a reduced effort is necessary.

Please see the full Request for Proposals below for a full description of the funding opportunity, eligibility requirements, and information on how to apply.

## **2019 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

### **DERMATOLOGY FELLOWS AWARD - PILOT PROGRAM**

The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) is pleased to announce a special call for applications to our Dermatology Fellowship Award - Pilot Program. The aim of this training program is to drive greater interest in the prevention, detection, diagnosis, and early intervention treatment of melanoma among dermatologists by investing in post-docs and medical residents focused on dermatology. **The MRA Dermatology Fellows Award - Pilot Program in 2019 is limited to Mayo Clinic – Minnesota Campus, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New York University Langone Health, Stanford University, University of California Los Angeles, Weill Cornell Medicine and Yale University; with the plan to open the program to additional medical institutions in the future.**

Interested applicants should refer to this RFP for complete instructions on eligibility, key criteria, and instructions on how to apply for the MRA Dermatology Fellows Award Pilot Program. MRA plans to award seven MRA Dermatology Fellow awards during the 2019-2020 cycle, with an intent of one award per institution.

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](mailto:tprince@curemelanoma.org).

***Full proposals due 5 p.m. Eastern Time, June 14, 2019***

Recognizing the need to strengthen research into the prevention and detection of melanoma, as well as increase dermatology scientists' and physicians' overall engagement within the field of melanoma research, MRA is launching the MRA Dermatology Fellows Award - Pilot Program. In 2007, when MRA formed, only two FDA-approved treatments existed for metastatic melanoma. Since then, 12 new treatment options have gained approval, improved health outcomes and added years of life for patients. At the same time, less focus has been placed on—and less progress made in—prevention and detection. Improved prevention, detection, and early systemic treatment can deliver a profound impact on melanoma. Early detection greatly improves overall survival and comprehensive and coordinated prevention programs – such as those carried out in Australia – have been proven to reduce melanoma incidence.

**Award Term:** 1 Year with the possibility of a 2<sup>nd</sup> year renewal

**Award Amount:** Up to \$35,000 total costs for one year. A second, renewal year may be possible based on progress and a Year Two Renewal Proposal.

Please see descriptions of and instructions below for specific details on eligibility and instructions on how to apply.

# 2019 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

## Dermatology Fellows Award - Pilot Program

April 29, 2019

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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.

**About the MRA:** Founded in 2007 by Debra and Leon Black under the auspices of the Milken Institute, MRA has become the largest non-profit funder of melanoma research world-wide. 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 \$110 million to support research projects worldwide. Please visit [www.curemelanoma.org](http://www.curemelanoma.org) for further information on MRA and the research initiatives funded in prior award cycles.

## OBJECTIVE

MRA is soliciting proposals that will strengthen the engagement of dermatology scientists and physicians in research and/or practice to improve melanoma prevention, detection, and/or diagnosis. **MRA welcomes proposals in the following areas:**

- **Prevention:**
  - Elucidation of environmental, epidemiological, biological, and/or behavioral factors that lead to increased risk of melanoma, and that can inform prevention and/or detection strategies;
  - Research, design, or implementation of interventions that educate and/or evolve clinical practice related to melanoma among dermatologists, primary care physicians, health systems, residents, medical students, and/or the public to maximize risk-reduction and/or early detection.
  
- **Detection, Diagnosis, Staging, and Early Intervention Treatments:**
  - Development, study, or evaluation of targeted screening methods;
  - Identification and/or validation of diagnostic and prognostic biomarkers;
  - Systems design/interventions that will improve screening rates for melanoma among dermatologists, or that build a knowledge base that will help to further the goal of earlier detection;
  - Early systemic or non-surgical local medical treatments, in the adjuvant or neoadjuvant settings.

Proposed efforts may include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ demonstration projects both within applicants own health system or in community settings,
- ✓ immersive study in areas that can advance melanoma practice,
- ✓ augmentation of larger research efforts and/or clinical trials by applicant that could show value-add in improving prevention and detection efforts, or
- ✓ research appropriate to the scale of resources.

MRA also holds interest in the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across any of these area.

## REVIEW AND SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used to assess the merit of proposals for award:

- **Significance:** Original, innovative, and transformative efforts with strong scientific rationale and clear capacity to enhance prevention, detection, diagnosis, and/or staging 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 and/or Real-World Relevance:** Proposals that articulate a clear path to near-term clinical application, or that can impact practice in prevention and detection strategies will be strongly favored.

- **Investigator:** Applicant has appropriate training, expertise and evidence of productivity to carry out proposed research/project.
- **Mentor:** 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 dermatology trainees.
- Applicants must have a doctoral degree (M.D. or Ph.D.) by the date of award activation and must conduct their proposed research/project under a Mentor who holds a formal appointment at the host institution's Department of Dermatology.
- **UPDATED:** Applicants may be residents, as well as M.D.'s conducting a postdoctoral fellowship
- **UPDATED:** At institutions with policies that prohibit residents from being able to receive research grant funding, the Mentor may serve as the primary investigator on the proposal
  - In this case, please provide a letter from the Department Chair stating such a policy exists.
- Applicants with 4 or more years of relevant research or postdoctoral experience **are not** eligible.
- Applicants need not be specifically trained in melanoma research, but must have a demonstrated interest in melanoma.
- Multiple applications will be accepted, and are encouraged, from a single institution.
- Only these institutions are eligible:

Mayo Clinic – Minnesota Campus, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New York University Langone Health, Stanford University, University of California Los Angeles, Weill Cornell Medicine and Yale University

***(2019/20 is an inaugural year for this program, and as such, under this current RFP – applications are limited to advising institutions as the program is piloted. MRA intends to broaden eligibility in future years)***

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

## APPLICATION FORMAT AND INSTRUCTIONS

All applications are due by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Proposals will not be considered after the deadline. Applicants must utilize the proposalCENTRAL online application tool at <https://proposalcentral.com> and the document templates and requirements therein. Please carefully follow the instructions in proposalCENTRAL and below. Applications include the following steps and components:

### DERMATOLOGY FELLOWS PILOT PROGRAM

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. A Mentor from the same institution is required.
7. **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.
8. **Budget Period Detail:** Enter budget detail for the award period requested. Awards will not support indirect costs, overhead costs, or other similar institutional charges. Fringe benefits for personnel salaries are allowable.
9. **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.
10. **Organizational Assurances:** IRB and IACUC approvals, if applicable.
11. **Upload Attachments:** Upload the following:
  - a) **Biosketch for PI and key personnel:** Please upload an NIH format Biosketch for applicant, Mentor and any additional 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) **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 3 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.
  - c) **Literature references:** A list of up to 20 references supporting the project description is allowed, in addition to the 3-page project description.
  - d) **Mentor Letter of Support:** Include a letter of support from an established scientific Mentor at the same institution who holds a formal appointment in the Department of Dermatology, 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 interest in dermatology research 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>.
12. **PI Data Sheet:** Please provide your ORCID ID. If you do not have an ORCID ID, you can register for one here: <https://orcid.org/register>. MRA requests that applicants provide additional demographic information, but it is not required and is not used in any way during the selection process.
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

**Application deadline concludes at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on June 14<sup>th</sup>. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered.**

**April 29, 2019:** Dermatology Fellows Award - Pilot Program Request-for-Proposals (RFP) issued

**June 14, 2019:** Full proposal applications are due

**Late July, 2019:** Awardees notified

**September 1, 2019:** Projects start

## REVIEW MECHANISM

All proposals will undergo rigorous peer review by the MRA Dermatology Council (DC), comprised of experts in diverse areas of dermatology, translational and clinical research. Applications will be scored according to MRA Review and Selection Criteria. To minimize any real or perceived conflicts of interest (COI), MRA asks Dermatology Council 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](mailto:tprince@curemelanoma.org). All awards are contingent upon ratification by the MRA Board of Directors.

## 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.

### FUNDING

For all proposals, the level of funding may be adjusted by MRA as appropriate for the scope of the proposal and the funds available. **Awards will not support indirect costs, overhead costs, or other similar institutional charges;** however, fringe benefits for personnel salaries are allowable.

## **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 or project outcomes made under their awards at these meetings. MRA will cover reasonable travel costs related to participation in the Scientific Retreat.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Dermatology Fellows Awards**

**Q: I do not hold the title of Fellow but I do hold the title of my institution's entry level, postdoctoral appointment. Am I eligible to apply?**

A: Post-terminal degree, training appointments that are not tenure-track/permanent positions may be eligible to apply. Applicants cannot hold independent, faculty-level appointments.

**Q: I am within my first four years of a Fellow position, but previously held a position gaining relevant postdoctoral experience, either at my current institution or at a different institution. Am I still eligible to apply?**

A: No. If you held any position in which you gained relevant postdoctoral experience prior to June 14, 2015, then you are not eligible to apply.

**Q: I will be past the first four years of my first postdoctoral appointment at the time the project starts. May I still apply?**

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

**Q: I will be past the first four years of receiving my doctorate 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 a 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 an Assistant Professor at an academic institution. Am I eligible to apply?**

A: Generally, no, unless the Assistant Professor title is equivalent to a Fellow position (which is sometimes the case outside of the U.S.). Those currently in training positions are eligible. Only those who are postdocs or medical residents will be considered. Dermatology Fellow Award applicants who do not hold a 'Fellow' title must contact MRA to verify their eligibility prior to submitting a proposal (see contact information in this RFP).

**Q: What is the role of the Mentor?**

A: It is expected that Fellows have appropriate expertise and evidence of productivity to carry out the proposed research training project. However, a Mentor is required and it is expected the applicant will work closely with the Mentor in execution of this training project. The Mentor must hold a formal appointment at the applicant's institution's Department of Dermatology.

- Q: I would like to have a Mentor that is not at my institution. Is this allowed?**  
A: No. All Fellow applicants must have a designated Mentor at their institution to help to ensure that the Fellow 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 Fellow applicants allowed to be a PI of an existing MRA award or award application during the 2019-2020 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 should be covered in the Mentor Letter of Support?**  
A: Applicants should include a letter of support from an established scientific Mentor at the same institution, from within the Department of Dermatology, 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 interest in dermatology research 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>.
- Q: Are Assistant Professors allowed to be Mentors?**  
A: Applicants are encouraged to select a Mentor who is a tenured faculty member.
- Q: Can a faculty member serve as a Mentor for more than one applicant?**  
A: Yes, faculty may serve as a Mentor for more than one applicant.
- Q: What is the expected level of percent effort for a Fellow?**  
A: There is no specific requirement around percent effort, but MRA encourages a minimum of 25% effort on the project. **UPDATED:** If 25% effort is prohibitive, please provide an accompanying letter to describe why a reduced effort is necessary.
- Q: I will not receive my Ph.D. or M.D. until after the application deadline. May I apply?**  
A: Applicants must have received their advanced degree at the time of proposal submission deadline.
- Q: Will you consider postdocs or medical residents who are not trained in melanoma research?**  
A: Yes. Investigators need not be specifically trained in melanoma research, but must have a demonstrated interest in melanoma.

## 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 any potential 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.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: 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.