

How to Apply for Medical Research Foundation Funding

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Grants

What is MRF

- The Medical Research Foundation of Oregon was founded in 1942 as an independent foundation to support medical research.
- During its independent period, it raised funds to support grants, and also owned and operated the Oregon Primate Center.
- It was later acquired by OHSU, at which time, the MRF became a wholly owned subsidiary of the OHSU foundation.
- Importantly, because the MRF's mission was to fund research throughout Oregon, this mission has remained.
- Today, MRF continues to fund the best research being conducted at institutions throughout Oregon.

What are the Awards

- MRF currently supports 4 types of awards. These will be detailed later, but include:
 - Awards for fellows or residents (Early Clinical Investigator)
 - Fellow to Faculty transition awards (Oregon Scientist Development Awards)
 - Awards for New Faculty (New Investigator Awards)
 - Support for established investigators who have a lapse in funding.

Who Reviews the Proposals?

- The School of Medicine Research Committee, together with a few investigators from other institutions and from other schools at OHSU, are charged with reviewing the grant proposals.
- The committee comprises experienced investigators with both clinical and basic expertise.
- The group has been exceptionally unbiased and fair in its approach to review.

Who Decides on Funding?

- The final funding decisions are made by the MRF Committee.
- This committee, currently chaired by Susan Smith, comprises senior scientists from throughout OHSU and from other institutions in Oregon.
- Decisions are made based on the advice of the review committee.

When are they Awarded?

Grants are awarded by the MRF Research and Education Committee in February, May, August, and November. Deadlines are:

Application Deadline Date*	Month of MRF Committee Meeting	Effective date of Grants
February 15	April	June 1-May 31
May 15	July	Sep 1-Aug 31
August 15	October	Dec 1-Nov 30
November 15	January	Mar 1-Feb 28

*If the 15th day falls on a weekend or holiday, the grants are due on the following workday.

Early Clinical Investigator

Amount: \$20,000

Qualifiers:

- Projects interact with human subjects (research on animal models will be considered only if there is obvious relevance to human health disease and a high probability of leading to research on human subjects).
- For scientists who are planning a career in clinical research
- Applicant must be a post-doctoral trainee, fellow, or researcher in an established training program.
- A career development plan must be addressed in the application.
- The career plan and training environment will have significant impact on the overall score.

Goal:

Enable developing scientists time and experience to submit for ongoing, nationally supported career development awards.

GUIDELINES

- The research facility with which the applicant is affiliated must be fully prepared to accommodate the project in terms of the principal investigator's salary and space.
- Proposals should not overlap with established funding.
- All applicants must include a letter from the Department Chair addressing the applicant's qualifications for a career in clinical research and the proposed training plan. The Chair should comment on the commitment of the Department/Division to the applicant's research and career goals to develop a career in human investigation and on the availability of time to perform the proposed project. The Department Chair should commit to the applicant's training plan for a minimum of one year. The letter should also discuss any additional support for the applicant, such as core research facilities, laboratory space, course work, etc.
- All applicants must include a letter from the mentor that comments on the applicant's qualifications and career plans. The mentor should describe in some detail the proposed training and career development program that is being proposed to foster career independence. The mentor should address his or her track record as a mentor, current funding and the research facilities available to the applicant. In addition, the mentor must fill out the Applicant Qualifications Form.

GUIDELINES continued

- All applicants must address their intentions to pursue clinical research through applying for future grants, such as a career development award or other federal funding. Describe the plan to use the data collected under this award to apply for future grants. For applicants who are not US citizens or do not have permanent resident status, they must address their plans about citizenship status, as this will affect their eligibility for future grant applications. They should also discuss their plans to remain in the United States and conduct clinical research.
- Strong preference is given to proposals having the potential to evolve into ongoing, nationally supported career development awards.

A Successful Application Generally Includes

- A clearly stated and testable hypothesis.
- A discussion of how the data will be obtained and analyzed.
- Methods of approach to be used.
- Alternate approaches should proposed methods fail.
- The application should include a section entitled “career plans” that provides a description of how the proposed work fits into the applicant's research training and long-range goals. Particular emphasis should be given to how the award may enable the investigator to obtain career development funding in the future.

EARLY CLINICAL INVESTIGATOR (ECI) GRANT SCORING GUIDELINES

#1 Evaluation of the trainee (score 1.0 – 9.0, then x 0.25)

- Potential for research (academic record, comments in letters of support)
- Track record to date (research experience, publications)
- Is there a clear rationale supporting need for proposed training
- Are career plans specified (to be covered in specific section of application)

#2 Evaluation of the mentor and training program/environment (score 1.0 – 9.0, then x 0.25)

- Is mentor an independent investigator (current funding, publications)?
- Track record of successful mentorship (mentor will be asked to put one paragraph in his or her letter of support addressing accomplishments as a mentor).
- Quality of the training program that will facilitate the applicant's progress towards his/her research career goals (described by the mentor in his/her letter)

#3 Evaluation of the proposal (score 1.0 – 9.0, then x 0.5)

- Is there a high probability the data generated will enable the trainee to obtain career development funding in the future? *[This is most important - “dead-end” proposals with regards to career development should not be funded.]*
- Is there a clearly stated and testable hypothesis?
- Is there a description of the methods to be used?
- Does the proposal involve human subjects or material of human origin?
- If the proposal is an animal model, is there an obvious relevance to human health or disease?
- Is there a discussion of how the data will be collected and analyzed? (viewed from the stand-point of a high quality pilot project, keeping in mind that a 1 year clinical study supported by \$20,000 will rarely be adequately powered)
- Is the study feasible? (preliminary data not as critical as for an established investigator)
- Are appropriate resources available?
- Are alternate approaches discussed?
- Is it clear how the proposal fits into the applicants training and long-range goals?
- *[Note novelty or importance of the research is not listed as a specific criterion for scoring. The ECI grant is a substrate for training, not requiring the uniqueness of an RO1-level award.]*

Final score (sum of 1 + 2 + 3)

NEW INVESTIGATOR GRANT

- Amount: \$40,000
- Qualifiers:
 - Project must relate to human health.
 - For scientists who are new to research and without major funding resources.
 - Applicant to be a faculty member at Assistant Professor or above. (adjunct or courtesy not eligible)
 - Independence
 - Department/Institutional commitment for space, time, development.
- Goal: Enable new faculty members to improve likelihood of obtaining national awards.

GUIDELINES

1. Basic and Applied studies must directly relate to human health.
2. Proposals to develop or perfect a technology are generally given below average priority scores unless that technology can be used to answer basic questions and unless the technology can be the basis for further research.
3. New Investigator Grants are intended for physicians and scientists who are new to research and are currently without major funding resources. Applicants are expected to be members of the faculty of an academic department/institute and to have strong support from their department/institute. The primary goal of the New Investigator Grant is to enable new faculty members to improve their likelihood of obtaining national support (e.g., NIH, NSF). In this way, the grant can encourage the establishment of outstanding investigators based at Oregon academic centers.
4. Post-doctoral fellows, other trainees, visiting scientists and other investigators not appointed with the expectation of long-term departmental/institutional support are not eligible to apply as PIs.
5. The PI must be an **independent scientist**. Independence is defined by:
 - a) Rank at the level of assistant professor or above;
 - b) Committed institutional support such as space and/or salary;
 - c) First authored or senior authored publications; and
 - d) Planned or pending application for funding on a national level.

GUIDELINES continued

6. New investigators must submit a letter from the Department Chair regarding the status of their independence. The letter of support from the department chair/institute director is essential and must clearly attest to the level of commitment offered to the applicant. Examples of commitment include the assignment of individual and independent space, departmental/institute salary and/or research support, voting privileges in faculty forums, appointment as the result of a national search, tenure, etc. Of greatest importance are a faculty appointment and the provision of tangible, stable support (e.g., space, salary) that demonstrates a clear commitment to the applicant's long-term development as an independent investigator in Oregon. *Uncertainty as to the level of this support can lessen enthusiasm for the funding request during its review.*
7. MRF funding is primarily intended for the support of new research programs for which other funding is not available. Investigators with substantial research support from other sources will be given lower priority consideration.
8. Strong preference is given to proposals having the potential to evolve into ongoing, nationally supported projects.
9. Funding requests will be judged primarily on the basis of scientific merit. However, other factors (such as other sources of research funding available to the investigator, the likelihood that MRF seed funding will result in a nationally supported research program, etc.) will be considered.

GUIDELINES continued

10. A second MRF grant is awarded on rare occasions and given only in the most unusual circumstances. Prior MRF funding within the previous **4 years** (determined from the ending date of the previous MRF grant) is considered a highly negative factor in the review process particularly if national funding has not been acquired on a research project. If the PI has received a MRF ECI grant, the cover letter must describe the progress made during the ECI funding period. Also, the ECI grant must be closed by the time the MRF grant starts.
11. Grants are not made for expensive items of equipment. However, requests will be considered when such equipment will enjoy wide use by a number of investigators or when it will make possible research of unique value. All equipment becomes the property of the grantee institution.
12. No funds are awarded for salary of PIs, indirect costs, travel (unless directly related to the conduct of an approved project), secretarial support or tuition.
13. The research facility with which the applicant is affiliated must be fully prepared to accommodate the project in terms of the PI's salary and space.
14. Proposals should not overlap with established funding with the exception that a new investigator may be permitted some overlapping funding if this is essential to establish a laboratory.
15. A single proposal may be submitted for consideration a maximum of five times.

MRF NEW INVESTIGATOR GRANT INSTRUCTIONS

A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION GENERALLY INCLUDES:

1. A clearly stated and testable hypothesis.
2. Previous work by the applicant and others with key references.
3. A discussion of how the data will be obtained and analyzed.
4. Methods of approach to be used.
5. Alternate approaches should proposed methods fail.
6. An indication of how the proposed work fits into the applicant's research program and long-range goals. Particular emphasis should be given to how the award may enable the investigator to obtain national funding in the future.
7. New Investigators are strongly encouraged to seek the assistance of experienced mentors in the development of a proposal.

The letter of support from the department chair/institute director that accompanies a new investigator's MRF application is essential and must clearly attest to the level of commitment offered to the applicant. Examples of commitment include the assignment of individual and independent space, departmental/institute salary and/or research support, voting privileges in faculty forums, appointment as the result of a national search, tenure, etc. Of greatest importance are a faculty appointment and the provision of tangible, stable support (e.g., space, salary) that demonstrates a clear commitment to the applicant's long-term development as an independent investigator in Oregon. *Uncertainty as to the level of this support can lessen enthusiasm for the funding request during its review.*

For questions or clarification, please call: Peter Mayinger, Ph.D., Chair, OHSU Research Committee (503-494-7159 / mayinger@ohsu.edu) or Susan Smith, Ph.D., Chair, MRF Research and Education Committee (503-690-5300 / smithsu@ohsu.edu).

OREGON SCIENTIST DEVELOPMENT AWARD (OSDA)
REGULATIONS & GUIDELINES
FOR ADMINISTRATION OF GRANTS AWARDED BY THE
MEDICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION COMMITTEE OF OREGON

DESCRIPTION

The Oregon Scientist Development Award is designed to support exceptional, but not yet fully independent young investigators who are making the transition from an intermediate rank to scientific independence. This includes investigators currently at the level of staff scientist, research assistant professor, instructor or similar transitional appointments. Applicants must be in a rank that is eligible to submit independent RO1s and similar grant applications. Because this award is meant to foster development of an independent research program, a minimum 25% FTE must be put to the project.

As this award is aimed at investigators of the highest quality, it is expected that the applicant will have significant first-author publications in top quality journals. This award is not designed for tenure track or new investigators appointed through a national search who have been given a start up package. Such investigators should apply for the conventional MRF award and check the New Investigator box.

GUIDELINES continued

5. The PI must be an investigator transitioning from postdoctoral training to scientific independence who shows exceptional scientific promise. Requirements are:
 - a) Rank at the level of staff scientist, research assistant professor, instructor or similar transitional rank. Tenure track positions and faculty hired as part of a national search and awarded a start-up package are not eligible.
 - b) Evidence of exceptional scientific promise as shown by significant first-author publications in top level journals that constitute a clear body of work and research direction achieved in a timely manner.
 - c) Letters of recommendation. See OSDA Letter of Support Instructions.
 - d) A cover letter as described below.
8. MRF funding is primarily intended for the support of new research programs for which other funding is not available. Investigators with substantial research support from other sources will be given lower priority consideration.
9. Strong preference is given to proposals having the potential to evolve into ongoing, nationally supported projects.
10. Funding requests will be judged primarily on the basis of scientific merit. However, other factors (such as other sources of research funding available to the investigator, the likelihood that MRF seed funding will result in a nationally supported research program, etc.) will be considered.

GUIDELINES continued

11. Applicants who have received a prior MRF or OSDA grant will not be eligible for this award, with the exception of ECI grants. If the PI has received a MRF ECI grant, the cover letter must describe the progress made during the ECI funding period.
12. Grants are generally not made for expensive items of equipment. However, requests will be considered when such equipment will significantly assist in the investigators transition to independence. All equipment becomes the property of the grantee institution.
13. At least 25% FTE must be devoted to the project and commensurate salary support may be requested, though is not required. If commensurate salary support for FTE is not requested, the source of the remaining salary support should be described in item 5 page 3 of the application.
14. The research facility with which the applicant is affiliated must be fully prepared to accommodate the project in terms of the PI's salary and space.
15. Proposals should not overlap with established funding.
16. An OSDA proposal may be submitted for consideration a maximum of two times (initial submission and one resubmission).

SCORING CRITERIA

Applications will be scored similarly to the new NIH system. Reviewers will score applications from 1-9 in whole integers. Scores from all reviewers will be averaged then multiplied by 10 so the best possible score will be 10 and the worst possible 90. As a matter of policy this award will only be given to grants receiving an overall score of 15 or below.

Separate integer scores will be given for:

1. Quality of the investigator
2. Quality of the research plan
3. Quality of the career development plan
4. Quality of the research environment
5. Strength of institutional/mentor support
6. Overall score

The overall score will not be an average of the individual components but will be an overall assessment of the quality of the application.

A Piece of Advice

- They have the money.
- You want the money.
- They make the decisions.
- Lose your ego; do what they want...