



California Initiative to Advance Precision Medicine

CIAPM Limited Competition for Supplemental Funds: Request for Proposals Instructions for Peer Review Process

Overview

The CIAPM Limited Competition for Supplemental Funds: Request for Proposals (RFP) is posted at ciapm.org. The CIAPM peer review process is modeled on the NIH peer review process, and is designed to ensure that applications are evaluated in a manner that is fair, equitable, timely and free of bias.

The application process is outlined in the RFP. A Selection Committee will evaluate the proposals and will make recommendations for supplemental awards to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR). The Selection Committee is composed of experts who have expertise in disciplines relevant to this RFP and the proposals. The composition of the Selection Committee, once established, can be viewed at ciapm.org.

The scientific review meeting is closed to the public as it is a deliberative process in which the committee will review and rank proposals. Everyone who will have access to proposals or who will attend the review meetings will be required to maintain confidentiality and [NIH conflict screening rules](#) will apply.

Review of Proposals

The RFP specifies the review criteria and other considerations that will be used in the evaluation and selection of proposals.

A. Peer Review Roles

The Selection Committee process is overseen by a Scientific Review Officer (SRO). The SRO is responsible for ensuring that each application receives an objective and fair peer review, and that the process described herein is followed.

Scientific Review Officer:

- Analyzes the content of each application, and checks for completeness.
- Documents and manages conflicts of interest.
- Assigns applications to reviewers for critique preparation and assignment of individual criterion scores.
- Attends and oversees administrative aspects of peer review meetings.
- Keeps detailed minutes of all the meetings

Selection Committee Members

Chair:

- Serves as moderator of the discussion of merit of the applications under review.
- Is also a peer reviewer.

Reviewers:

- Declare Conflicts of Interest with specific applications according to NIH conflict screening rules.
- Receive access to the applications prior to the peer review meeting.
- Prepare a brief written critique for each application assigned, based on review criteria and judgment of merit.
- Assign a numerical score to each scored review criterion.
- Make recommendations concerning the scientific and technical merit and the potential to enhance the goals and impact of the parent award and advance precision medicine, in the form of final numerical scores.
- Submit a rank order of proposals to OPR where the final decision will be made for funding.
- Submit recommendations concerning appropriateness of budget requests to OPR.

Other CIAPM affiliated individuals:

- CIAPM affiliated individuals are permitted to attend closed review meetings.
- These individuals may provide administrative and programmatic input during the review meeting.

B. Peer Review Meeting Procedures

- Applications are reviewed based on established review criteria (see RFP and section C below).
- Assigned reviewers summarize their prepared brief written critiques for the group.
- A discussion with Selection Committee members follows.
- Final scoring of overall impact scores is conducted by private ballot.

C. Review Criteria

Proposals are submitted to CIAPM and are evaluated for their scientific and technical merit and their potential to enhance the goals and impact of the parent project and to advance precision medicine.

Scored Review Criteria. Reviewers will be asked to consider the review criteria listed in the RFP in the determination of merit. Reviewers will be asked to give a separate score for each of the five review criteria.

Detailed considerations for review criteria are as follows:

1. **Accomplishments on parent CIAPM project to date.** For currently active projects, has the parent project made adequate progress toward its milestones to date? If there have been delays or changes, do they jeopardize achieving the goals of the project? If the project is complete, has it achieved its overall goals? Has it had an impact on precision medicine?
2. **Innovation and potential for impact of added activities.** Does the supplemental proposal use innovative concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions to advance precision medicine? Does it add substantial value to the parent project, either by addressing a focus area(s) not yet covered in the parent project or significantly enhancing an existing aim(s)? Will the proposed activities likely have a substantial impact on advancing precision medicine?

Note: Although innovation is highly valued, it is not required for a project to be competitive as long as the proposed activities are likely to have a substantial impact on advancing precision medicine.

3. **Rationale and Approach.** Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the proposed supplemental activities? Are potential problems and alternative strategies presented? Are the proposed milestones, timeline and success metrics well thought out?

If additional human subject research is proposed, have the investigators presented adequate plans to address relevant biological variables, such as sex, for studies in human subjects? Are the plans to address the protection of human subjects from research risks, and the inclusion (or exclusion) of individuals on the basis of sex/gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as the inclusion (exclusion) of children, justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed?

4. **Demonstrated ability to attract and leverage matching funds.** Has the team attracted matching funds from third parties since July 1, 2017 (sponsor letter dated 7.1.17 or later)? If so, are those funds significant both in amount and in their ability to enhance project goals?
5. **Ability to achieve expanded CIAPM-funded project within the contract period.** Can the project plan for the CIAPM-supported supplemental activities be achieved within the proposed timeline? If proposed, are activities supported by matching funds achievable? (Note: activities supported by matching funds may continue beyond the CIAPM funding period.)

Are the PI, collaborators, and other team members well suited to conduct the supplemental activities? If new collaborators or partners have been added, do they add critical expertise or needed effort?

Will the professional environment in which the supplemental work will be conducted contribute to the probability of success? Are the institutional support, equipment and other resources available to the investigators adequate for the proposed supplemental activities? Will the supplemental activities benefit from unique features of the professional environment, subject populations, collaborative arrangements or access to additional funds?

The assessment of the projects according to the five review criteria will be guided by the following criteria used in selecting the parent awards *as set forth in Section 65057 of the Government Code*:

- The depth and breadth of data available in the disease focus areas across institutions.
- The prospects for efficient and effective data integration and analysis.
- The expertise of potential team members.
- The resources available for the project outside of the initiative, including the potential for leveraging non-state funding.
- The clinical and commercial potential of the project.
- The potential to reduce health disparities.
- The potential to scale and leverage multiple electronic health records systems.
- The potential to develop the use of tools, measurements, and data, including publicly generated and available data.

The reviewers may also consider additional factors in reviewing the proposals such as:

- The potential for positive economic impact of the proposed intervention or platform, if implemented into clinical practice.
- The quality and extent of patient engagement.
- Where the project is located in California to ensure that at least one proposal each from a public institution in northern and in southern California is included.
- The host institution, as a maximum of one supplemental funding award is allowed per host institution.

Overall Impact. In consideration of the above review criteria, reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood that the supplemental activities will enhance the goals and impact of the parent project and advance precision medicine. A supplemental proposal does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have a major impact.

D. Scoring

Scores will be used to guide the review process, they will not be provided to the applicants. CIAPM will use the NIH scoring system, which utilizes a 9-point rating scale (1 = exceptional; 9 = poor) for overall impact scores. ([NOT-OD-09-024](#)). A modified system, using letters (a= exceptional; e=poor), will be used for criterion scores.

- Before the peer review meeting, each reviewer assigned to an application gives a separate score for each of the scored review criteria categories.
- In addition, each reviewer assigned to an application gives a preliminary overall impact score for that application.
- During the review meeting, a final impact score is given for each proposal by each eligible reviewer (without conflicts of interest) including the assigned reviewers.
- Each reviewer's score reflects his/her evaluation of the overall impact that the supplemental activities are likely to have on enhancing the goals and impact of the parent project and advancing precision medicine, rather than being a calculation of the reviewer's scores for each criterion.
- The final overall impact score for each discussed application is determined by calculating the mean score from all the eligible reviewers' impact scores, and multiplying the average by 10. Thus, the final overall impact scores range from 10 (high impact) through 90 (low impact).

E. Decision Process

Merit as determined by the final overall impact scores will be the main determinant of supplemental proposal selection and final award recommendations. However, OPR aims to fund a balanced portfolio that represents diversity in several areas, including but not limited to, approaches, disease areas, focus areas, types of partners, and types of patient populations. Furthermore, a maximum of one supplemental funding award is allowed per host institution and statute requires that public institutions in both northern and southern California are included.

The Selection Committee will be asked to select approximately 3-4 proposals to recommend for funding, based primarily on rank order while also ensuring that at least one proposal each from a public institution in northern and in southern California is included and that a maximum of one supplemental award is recommended per host institution. The Selection Committee may also choose to adjust the list of recommended proposals to achieve a balanced portfolio as described above.

During the decision making process, [Robert's Rules of Order](#) will be used to take actions.

F. Review Results

Scores will be used to guide the review process, they will not be provided to the applicants.

Based on the review discussions for the supplemental proposals, feedback from reviewers for the selected proposals may be implemented during the agreement negotiations.