REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

MSCRF Launch Program

INTRODUCTION:

Stem cell research offers extraordinary promise for new medical therapies and a better understanding of debilitating human diseases, injuries and conditions. The development of new medical strategies for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and cure of human diseases, injuries and conditions through human stem cell research is a high priority for the State of Maryland.

FUNDING OBJECTIVES AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The primary aim of this Program is to provide support to researchers in the early stages of their academic careers in the field of stem cell research. Additionally, it serves the objective of assisting established researchers who wish to gain experience in the stem cell field, recognizing that this is a pivotal step in advancing their research objectives. It is also the intent of the Program to foster collaborations between various schools, departments, and institutions within academic research organizations, and between public and private sectors.

This Launch Request for Applications is soliciting applications from faculty members in Maryland who aspire to contribute to the field of stem cell research and regenerative medicine, driving innovative research for improving patient outcomes. The RFA is for research grants on new and innovative hypotheses, approaches, mechanisms, or models. Although some preliminary or proof-of-concept data supporting the application is preferred, it is not required. Grants awarded under this RFA will fund both basic and translational research projects involving human stem cells, stem cell derivatives (including extracellular vesicles and secretome), or other technologies enabling or supportive of stem cells.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

The following requirements must be met to apply for grant funding through this Program:

a) The Applicant PI is a researcher who has either:

(i) begun a tenure-track position (or equivalent academic position) no more than five years prior to the application submission deadline; **or**

(ii) a faculty member at any career stage who is a newcomer to the field of stem cell research, lacking prior grants or publications in the area, yet possesses established expertise and a proven track record in another field, and is seeking to contribute to the field of stem cell research. If the Applicant PI has contributed as co-author in a publication(s) directed to stem cells, they must justify why they should be considered eligible for the Launch grant program. Such Applicant PI are encouraged to discuss their eligibility for the Launch grant program with the MSCRF team in advance to ensure their application is not rejected.

b) The Applicant PI may not have been previously funded by any of the MSCRF programs. The project for which the Applicant PI has submitted the Launch application ("Research Project") must not be funded by any other funding source. However, an Applicant PI may receive complementary funding from another source to cover other work that is outside the scope of the Research Project proposed in the Application.

c) All MSCRF-funded personnel must conduct research directed to the Research Project in Maryland and remain employed or retained by an eligible Maryland-based organization while conducting such work. This employment or retainer may be permanent, temporary, full-time, or part-time.

Applicants from Maryland-based public and private, not-for-profit research organizations of all types (not including Federal research labs) are eligible for this Award (e.g., universities, colleges, research institutes, and medical centers). The Applicant PI may collaborate on the Research Project with any Maryland-based institution, including any federal lab. In the event of Federal Lab collaboration, the applicant must discuss the nature of collaboration with the MSCRF team in advance to ensure that the program requirements are satisfactorily met.

Applicant PI may submit a Revised Application for a Research Project that underwent a previous review by the MD Stem Cell Research Commission ("Commission") but was not awarded funding.

Each Application for a Launch Program grant shall have only one Principal Investigator (PI), but may have multiple Co-PIs, Investigators and/or collaborators. PIs may participate as Investigators or collaborators in any number of MSCRF-funded Projects in the same funding cycle. Individuals from under-represented minorities and individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

ELIGIBLE RESEARCH AND CELL TYPES:

All research funded by MSCRF **must** involve human stem cells or stem cell derivative or other technologies enabling or supportive of human stem cells s. Animal cells may be used to supplement studies with human stem cells. Basic and translational Research Projects are all eligible for funding. The MD Stem Cell Act defines eligible human stem cells as follows: human cell that has the ability to: (1) divide indefinitely; (2) give rise to many other types of specialized cells; and (3) give rise to new stem cells with identical potential. The full text of the Stem Cell Act is available on the MSCRF Web site (see www.MSCRF.org).

OTHER ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Awardees will receive MSCRF funds only after providing documentation to MSCRF confirming that the research to be conducted with MSCRF funds has been approved or exempted by the relevant Institutional Review Board ("IRB") and, if applicable, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee ("IACUC") as well as documentation of approval or exemption by a Stem Cell Research Oversight (SCRO) Committee before MSCRF funds shall be released.

AWARD INFORMATION

AVAILABLE FUNDS

The MSCRF is currently budgeted to commit up to $16.05 million, in aggregate, in FY 2027 to fund Grants under all of its RFAs. The number of Grants awarded will depend upon the quality, size and mix of Applications received.

AWARD SIZE, DURATION & TERMS

Under this RFA, the total costs proposed may not exceed $350,000 per award for a maximum of 2 years duration. This includes indirect costs, not to exceed 15% of direct costs. Maximum amount per Award is $350,000.

Because the nature and scope of the proposed research will vary from Application to Application, the size and duration of Awards may also vary. Approved Research Projects may be funded at or below the requested/proposed amount, for a number of reasons, including potential reductions in State appropriations or funding otherwise available to MSCRF.

The Applicant PI shall assume responsibility for the planning, directing and execution of their Research Project. MSCRF-funded Launch Research Grants will be subject to the terms and conditions set forth in detail in the Grant Agreement entered between Applicant and MSCRF.

Under this RFA, MSCRF Grant Award funds may be used for the following direct costs, commensurate with the time dedicated solely to the Research Project:

- Salary and fringe benefits for the Applicant PI and essential personnel
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Consultant costs
- Contract services
- Collaboration expenses
- Domestic travel and conference expenses (capped at $5000; international travel is not an allowed expense)
- Publications and miscellaneous costs.

MSCRF funds may not be used to cover personnel costs of Investigators who are located and/or conduct the work outside the State of Maryland, regardless of whether such out-of-State Investigators are employed or retained by a Maryland-based or non-Maryland based organization. Applicants are permitted to include out-of-State Investigators and/or collaborators under the Launch Research Grant if they demonstrate that no MSCRF funds will be used to support work or personnel costs for the out-of-State Investigators.

Purchase of equipment and supplies, publication costs, conference expenses, contract manufacturing and services and other non-personnel costs may be incurred outside the State of Maryland, in accordance with customary practices of researchers.

Certain pre-Award costs are allowable. Applicants may, at their own risk, and without MSCRF's prior approval, incur obligations and expenditures to cover costs up to ninety (90) days before the effective date of resulting Grant Agreement, if such costs are necessary to conduct the Research Project and would be allowable under the Grant, if awarded.

The incurring of pre-Award costs in anticipation of Award of a Launch Research Grant imposes no obligation on the MSCRF either to make an Award, or to increase the amount of the approved budget if an Award is made for less than the amount anticipated. Awardees should be aware that pre-Award costs result in essentially "borrowing" against potential future support, and that such borrowing must not impair Awardees' ability to accomplish their Research Project objectives in the approved time frame or in any way adversely affect the conduct of their Research Projects.

Once a Grant has been awarded, up to ten (10) percent of funds can be reallocated between budget categories without prior MSCRF approval (e.g., from salaries to supplies). However, reallocations in excess of ten (10) percent must be approved in advance and in writing by MSCRF.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Invention disclosures and intellectual property developed by the Applicant PI under this Program will be owned by, and the responsibility of, the Applicant, in accordance with standard U.S. intellectual property law on inventorship and ownership and the Applicant's institutional guidelines.

Applicant PI and the Applicant shall determine whether to apply for patents or other intellectual property protections on discoveries or inventions developed with MSCRF funding under the Grant. In the event that an Applicant decides to apply for such intellectual property protections, the Applicant shall be responsible for all fees and expenses involved.

SHARING RESEARCH RESULTS AND NEW CELL LINES

Applicant PI and the Applicant are required to share, with qualified researchers, their research results, any cell lines and other materials developed with MSCRF funding. Cell lines therefore must be derived from the tissues of individuals who provided consent to such sharing. Applicant PI and the Applicant may require that the recipient researcher(s) pay reasonable compensation for such new cell lines or materials. Applicant PI and the Applicant may include in the Grant Budget and use MSCRF funds to pay for reasonable expenses associated with sharing arrangements. Applicant PI and the Applicant shall determine whether and to what extent to cover such sharing of new cell lines and materials with intellectual property and contractual protections (i.e., Confidentiality Agreements, Material Transfer Agreements, Data-Sharing Agreements, License Agreements, Supply Agreements, etc.).

PUBLISHING

Applicant PIs must commit to making the results of their MSCRF-funded research readily available to others, through publications (preferably), public presentations, or other accessible means.

APPLICATION INFORMATION

DEI REGISTRATION

Pursuant to its enabling legislation, TEDCO is required to foster inclusive and diverse entrepreneurship and innovation throughout Maryland. Accordingly, TEDCO is now collecting race, gender, and ethnicity data, to better understand the communities that are accessing MSCRF resources/funding. This data will not be accessible to MSCRF/TEDCO program/fund managers and will only be provided to them in an aggregated (anonymous) form. The data will not be used for funding consideration.

CONTENT & FORMAT OF APPLICATION

All Sections of the Application must be submitted through the MSCRF online submission system. The document must be formatted using point size 12 Arial font with margins no smaller than one-half (0.5) inch on all sides and uploaded in a PDF format using the instructions in the portal. Applications not meeting the minimum requirements will be rejected without further consideration and the Applicant will be so notified. Information or documents submitted after the Application Submission Deadline will not be accepted, included, or considered in the review of the Application.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

The intent of the Application is to provide enough information so a panel of reviewers can effectively evaluate the merit of the Research Project. Application must include the following information:

Section I. Title of the Research Project

Section II. Web form Questions: Applicant must respond to the following questions:

- New application or resubmission and the prior application number(s) for prior MSCRF applications
- Proposed Research Project period of performance
- The total amount of funding requested, broken down into direct and indirect costs
- Whether the research is translational or basic
- IP status - whether there is a pending or issued patent application (s) directed to the Research Project
- Type of stem cell type that will be used for Research Project
- List the disease indication and disease category for the Research Project
- List Keywords for the Research Project (100 characters limit)
- Short non-confidential summary of the Research Project. If awarded, this information becomes public. Do not include any confidential or proprietary information. (1800 characters limit)
- Public Health Impact Statement: 2-3 sentences on public health impact. If the Research Project outcome will inform the development of a product that serves medically underserved communities or a rare disease, please also specify. (500 characters limit)
- Bioethics statement: describing the ethical issues relevant to the proposed research and how these issues will be addressed, including, but not limited to, a discussion of the ethical issues related to the cell type(s) and cell line(s) to be used; animal welfare (i.e., IACUC); IRB review and related concerns regarding human subjects, if applicable. (1800 characters limit)
- Impact on Biotechnology in Maryland. Describe the potential of this application to impact the biotechnology sector in the state of Maryland. Some examples may include IP that may be

licensed or lead to commercialization, existing or proposed collaborations, creation of new jobs, and workforce development. (1800 characters limit)

- Translational Potential and/or Plan: Provide an explanation of (i) the relationship between the proposed research and the etiology, prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of human diseases or conditions; (ii) how clinical practice and treatment of human diseases or conditions will be advanced by the proposed research; (iii) how the proposed research may contribute to new medical therapies or test new therapies in human patients; and/or (iv) how the proposed research will translate prior research results into new medical therapies or test new therapies in human patients, and the projected timeline for accomplishing such clinical application(s) (1800 characters limit)
- PI Areas of scientific expertise (100 characters limit)
- PI Primary research focus (500 characters limit)
- Areas of potential collaboration that the PI is seeking (500 characters limit)
- Indicate the PI's previous experience as an MSCRF applicant and provide the application number if previously funded.
- Enter the URL address of your laboratory.

Section III. Attachments: Ensure strict adherence to the page limits. Incompliance with the application requirements will result in disqualification.

1. **Research Project Summary - Limited to one (1) page.**
   Research Project Summary describing the proposed research and its potential contribution toward the goals of the MSCRF and this RFA, as set forth in this document.

2. **Research Plan - Limited to eight (8) pages, including all tables, figures and charts.**
   A description of the Research Strategy and Design, Data in support of the Research Project, Significance, Specific Aims, Rationale, Approach and Innovation**.**

3. **Resources and Environment - Limited to one (1) page.**
   A description of the facilities in which the work will be conducted and how the scientific environment will contribute to the probability of success, especially such things as independent space, department support and institutional support, collaborative arrangements involving on-site resources.

4. **Data Sharing and Management Strategy - Limited to one (1) page.**
   Facilitating the sharing of data and insights resulting from MSCRF-funded projects is pivotal for propelling stem cell research and expediting patient treatments. MSCRF mandates awardees to create and implement a comprehensive Data Sharing and Management Strategy encompassing data handling, preservation, and accessible dissemination to the wider scientific community. Moreover, MSCRF enforces adherence to FAIR data principles and necessitates data sharing via recognized repositories like specialized NIH-supported repositories, generalist repositories, cloud platforms, and institutional repositories.

5. **Resubmissions - Limited to two (2) pages.**
   In the event that an Applicant PI's proposal is initially rejected, and the Applicant PI chooses to reapply for Program funding, the Applicant PI must submit a written response to the reviewers' comments

including how those comments were addressed in the resubmitted application. Please include an introduction to the revised Application, including the Application Number of the previous MSCRF submission, and a point-by-point response to the prior scientific review.

6. **Collaboration Plan, if applicable - Limited to two (2) pages.**
   A detailed description of the nature and terms of the collaboration, and a management plan explaining such issues as how the Applicant PI and collaborator(s) will communicate and handle confidential information, use milestones to determine resource allocation and Research Project direction, share data and resources, prepare required reports and handle geographic separation, if applicable.

7. **Bioethics**: A detailed bioethics section describing the ethical issues relevant to the proposed Research Project and how these issues will be addressed, including:
   - Cell lines and ISCRO review
     - Does the proposed project use adult, embryonic, iPS or other human stem cell lines?
     - If human embryonic stem cells are involved, has the Proposal been approved by an ESCRO/SCRO Committee?
     - If an existing stem cell line is to be used, what are the justifications for that line?
     - From where will they be obtained (e.g., commercial source, laboratory and under what protocol or with what institutional approval)?
     - If new lines are to be created, what measures will be taken to comply with the Stem Cell Act, as well as existing stem cell research bioethics guidelines?
     - If human donors are involved, have they been properly consented?
     - Has an ISCRO reviewed and approved the proposed research?

   - Human subjects and IRB review
     - Will human subjects be enrolled in the proposed research?
     - If human subjects are involved, what protections will be in place to ensure their rights and welfare?
     - Has IRB approval or exemption been obtained for the proposed research, or will it be?

   - Nonhuman animals and IACUC review
     - Will nonhuman animals be used in the proposed research?
     - If so, what type/model will be used, sex, and what is the justification?
     - How many? What is the justification for the number to be used?
     - Has IACUC approval been received, or will it be?
     - What measures will be taken to comply with IACUC guidelines?

8. **Supporting Literature - Limited to three (3) pages.**
   Provide a list of scientific Literature in support of the Research Project.

9. **Biosketches:** Do not exceed five (5) pages for the PI and two (2) pages each for other key project personnel. NIH biosketch format is permitted as long as it meets the above page requirements.

10. **Other Support:** List Other Support for the PI, including both current and pending support as described in the instructions.

11. **Statement of Work (SoW) - Limited to one (1) page.** Applicants must use the provided template to prepare a Statement of Work that defines the project's period of performance, overall objective and scope, and the specific aims or tasks, key activities/milestones, target completion date, and measurable success criteria for each milestone. Such information is required only for each significant developmental milestone rather than for every aim listed in the application. Milestones and deliverables should be concise, measurable, and consistent with the proposed project timeline and budget.

12. **Budget and Budget Justification:** A list of the names, affiliate organizations, and roles of all key personnel, in addition to the Applicant PI, who will contribute to the scientific development or execution of the Research Project in a substantive way and devote measurable effort (in person months) to the Research Project, whether or not salaries are requested. Typically, these individuals have doctoral or other professional degrees, although individuals at the master's or baccalaureate level should be included if their involvement meets the definition of key personnel. "Effort of zero person months" and "as needed" are not acceptable levels of involvement for key personnel.

    Up to 15% of Launch awards may be used for indirect costs. Expenses for domestic travel are capped at $5000. International travel is not an allowable expense.

    Applicants are advised that requested salaries should not exceed fifty percent (50%) of the total project budget. Budgets should be planned accordingly.

    All expenses directed to the Research Project should adhere to the specific line items listed in the proposal. Any budget changes or reallocation of funds between budget categories over 10% of the overall budget must be approved by MSCRF **prior to** reallocation. In the event of remaining unspent funds from one installment, a carryover request must be submitted to MSCRF for approval to carry the funds to the next installment with a justification of why the funds were not used and how they will be used in the next installment.

    MSCRF funds may not be used to cover personnel costs of Investigators who are located and/or conduct the work outside the State of Maryland, regardless of whether such out-of-State Investigators are employed or retained by a Maryland-based or non-Maryland based organization. Applicants are permitted to include out-of-State Investigators and/or collaborators under the Launch Research Grant if they demonstrate that no MSCRF funds will be used to support work or personnel costs for the out-of-State Investigators.

13. **Appendix - Collaborator Letters:** The PI should include Letters of Collaboration, if applicable. A Letter of collaboration from each collaborator on university, institute, or company letterhead (i) agreeing to the proposed collaborative research; (ii) briefly outlining the nature of the collaboration; and (iii) agreeing that, if MSCRF funding is awarded, they shall share research results with each other and comply with the progress reporting duties under the MSCRF Grant Agreement, conditioned upon TEDCO's duty to maintain the confidentiality of the reported information to the extent reasonably permitted by Title 10, Subtitle 6 of the State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. Such letters must be co-signed by the collaborators and responsible officials at the collaborator's affiliate institutions. Limited to one (1) page per Collaborator.

14. **Appendix – Supporting Materials:** This section may not be used to circumvent the length limitations of the Application. Do not include information that should be in the main proposal application. Compile all supporting documents into a single PDF file.

15. **Photo:** Upload a headshot photo of the PI for publishing on the MSCRF website if awarded.

Notes:

- The Appendix may not be used to circumvent the length limitations of the Application. Applications that are incomplete, do not meet the format and/or content requirements, exceed specified length limits, are non-responsive to this RFA or are from ineligible Applicants will not be reviewed.
- University Applicant PIs must obtain approval from their research/grants administration office before submitting an application.

- Prior to submission, compile all documents into a single PDF file using the template provided in the applicant portal.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

SUBMISSION DEADLINES & REVIEW DATES

- **Application submission deadline:** January 20, 2027, by 5:00 p.m. EST

- **Peer review meeting:** Week of April 4, 2027

- **Commission review date(s) and announcement of awards:** May 2027

METHODS OF SUBMISSION

The MSCRF online submission system is now open for application submissions. Applicant PIs are encouraged to submit their application at least one week before the Application Submission Deadline. The Grant Application must be submitted by **January 20, 2027, no later than 5:00 p.m. EST**. **Late submissions will not be considered.** Applicants are advised to submit well in advance of the deadline, as technical support cannot be guaranteed for issues encountered on the submission date.

REVIEW INFORMATION

ELIGIBILITY AND COMPLIANCE REVIEW:

All applications will be initially reviewed by the MSCRF staff to ensure that they meet the minimum requirements, as specified in this RFA (the "Compliance Review"). Applications not meeting the minimum requirements will be rejected without further consideration and the applicant will be notified. A complete submission (all sections) cannot exceed the page limit as included for each section or it will be rejected without consideration.

REVIEW PROCESS:

Following the Eligibility and Compliance Review, all Applications will be assigned by the MSCRF Scientific Review Officer (SRO) to a number of reviewers for review and preliminary scoring. All Applications,

receiving average scores above a threshold determined by the Program will be brought to the full MSCRF Review Committee.

The MSCRF Review Committee will consist of representatives of the research, business and investor community and are all from outside of the state of Maryland. Each applicant will receive a copy of the reviewers' comments and scores at the end of the process, whether the applicant is approved or declined for funding.

REVIEW CRITERIA:

Applicants will be evaluated on each section of their proposal listed under the application components and the applicant's ability to address each criterion listed in those sections. **Consideration will be based on how completely the applicant has provided information requested for the section and how convincingly the applicant has made a case for the opportunity based on the subject Technology.**

To receive a high scientific priority score, Applicants are encouraged to address the following categories:

- **Scientific Rationale, Innovation, and Significance:** Is the Research Project likely to have a major scientific impact and make a substantial contribution toward accomplishing the goals of the MSCRF program? Does this Research Project address an important scientific problem relevant to human stem cells? Is the Research Project original or innovative; does it challenge existing paradigms, address a critical barrier to progress, or develop/employ new concepts, approaches, and methodologies? What is the relationship between the proposed research and etiology, prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of human diseases or conditions? If the aims of the Application are achieved, how will scientific knowledge or clinical practice and treatment of human diseases or conditions be advanced? What effect will these studies have on the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, and/or preventative interventions that drive stem cell biology?

- **Investigators and Collaboration(s):** Does the proposed research involve collaboration(s) among scientists and/or clinicians from for-profit and not-for-profit institutions, companies, and organizations? If so, is there a demonstrated commitment from each institution? Is there a management plan that addresses how the Applicant and collaborator(s) will communicate, handle confidential information, use milestones to determine resource allocation and Research Project re-direction, share data and resources, prepare required reports, and handle geographic separation, if applicable? Are the Investigators appropriately trained and well-suited to carry out the Research Project? Is the proposed Research Project appropriate to the experience level of the PI and other Investigators? Does the research team bring complementary and integrated expertise to the Research Project? If the PI's work was previously funded by other funding sources, in whole or in part, the following additional factors will be evaluated: Did the PI make significant scientific progress towards the goals of the previously funded research? Were results of the previously funded project reported in scientific publications and/or presented at conferences? Did the previously funded research result in new collaborations, inventions, or resources?

- **Approach**: Is there enough support from the literature/or preliminary data to support the rationale of the Research Project? Are the conceptual or clinical framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well-integrated, well-reasoned, and appropriate to the aims of the Research Project? Is relevant literature appropriately referenced? Are anticipated results discussed? Does the

Applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics? Are the experiments, as designed, likely to significantly impact the field?

- **Resources and Environment**: Does the scientific environment in which the work will be conducted contribute to the probability of success? Do the proposed studies benefit from any unique features of the scientific environment or subject population? Do these studies employ useful collaborative arrangements involving on-site resources or personnel? Is the institutional support adequate?

- **Translation Potential and Plan and Impact on Biotechnology in Maryland:** Does the Application include strong interactions between basic, translational, and/or clinical components? Will the Research Project lead to new medical therapies or test new therapies in patients? Will the research help explain the course of any human disease(s) or condition(s)? Will it identify new biomarkers or other methods for preventing or diagnosing disease(s) or condition(s)? Will it identify new targets for treatment? Will it develop new treatment strategies, products, or tools? What is the potential impact of the proposed research on the advancement of biotechnology in Maryland's academic, business, and/or non-profit sector(s)? Will this Research Project help create new biotechnology jobs, grow companies, and/or program opportunities in Maryland?

- **Bioethics**: Does the proposed research use adult, embryonic, iPS or other human stem cell lines? If an existing line is to be used, what are the justifications for that line? If new lines are to be created, what measures will be taken to comply with the Stem Cell Act as well as existing stem cell research bioethics guidelines? If human donors are involved, have they been properly consented? If human subjects are involved, what protections will be in place to ensure their rights and welfare? If animal subjects are to be used, what measures are taken to comply with IACUC guidelines?

- **Budget and Budget Justification**: Is the requested period of support appropriate for the scope of the Research Project? Is the effort listed for all personnel appropriate for the proposed work? Is each budget category realistic and justified in terms of the aims and methodology? If equipment is requested, is it justified, cost-effective, and budgeted appropriately?

The Commission reserves the right to pursue collaborative funding arrangements with third parties and, in such an event, the further right to share the application materials and/or the review summaries with those potential co-funders upon the execution of a Confidentiality Agreement restricting their further disclosure.

SCORING

A Scientific Peer Review Committee will review all Applications and similar to the NIH, a scoring system of 1-9 will be used to rate the overall impact/priority of the proposed research. In this system, "1" indicates the highest impact/priority and "9" indicates the lowest impact/priority. The Commission will then review the ranked Applications and make final funding decisions.

AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

NOTIFICATION

The Applicant will be notified electronically when the Application is received. A formal notification, in the form of a Notice of Award ("NOA"), signed by the MSCRF Executive Director, will be sent via email to successful Applicant PIs.

CLOSING AND AWARD PAYMENTS

After receiving the Notice of Award (NOA), the Applicant will be required to sign a Grant Agreement. This agreement will outline the terms and conditions of the award and specify the number of mid-term and final milestones for each project, along with the due dates for mid-term and final project reports (as described below).

Furthermore, the applicant must furnish specific regulatory compliance documents listed below before commencing the Research Project. Once these compliance documents are received and approved by MSCRF, the applicant's Principal Investigator (PI) will receive the first disbursement of funds and must promptly initiate work on the Research Project.

Regulatory Compliance Documents list:

- Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval or exemption, including the Applicant's name, project title (matching the title of the Award), and expiration date.
- Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approval if animal work is to be conducted, including the Applicant's name, project title that matches the award's title, and expiration date. In the event the title of the approved IACUC protocol is different, an official letter from an authorized IACUC representative must be furnished to indicate that the animal research to be conducted under the newly awarded MSCRF Research Project is covered under that IACUC protocol.
- Stem Cell Research Committee (SCRO) approval or exemption including the Applicant's name, project title that matches the award's title, and expiration date if the research involves embryonic stem cells. In the event the title of the SCRO approval/exemption is different, an official letter from an authorized SCRO representative must be furnished to indicate that the stem cell research to be conducted under the newly awarded MSCRF Research Project is covered under that SCRO approval/exemption.

Award payments for Launch projects will be made as follows: 50% following execution of the grant agreement and regulatory documentation, and 50% upon submission and approval of a Mid-term Report and the successful completion of approved milestones. In all cases, any unused funds must be returned to MSCRF.

POST AWARD REPORTING

Launch Program awardees must submit the following reports to the MSCRF Program:

a. **MSCRF Award Meeting** – Each awardee is encouraged to meet with the MSCRF Award Manager at least once, prior to the mid-term. This is to assist each awardee in understanding and meeting expectations for the program. This is also an opportunity for the awardee to share feedback,

discuss ideas and ask for additional assistance. The applicant can reach out to MSCRF staff at mscrfinfo@tedcomd.com email to schedule this meeting.

b. **Mid-Term Project Reports** – Each awardee is required to submit the mid-term project report ("progress report") on MSCRF portal, the link to which will be provided in advance of the submission date by MSCRF. The progress report must include a description of project activities and outcomes to date, progress toward meeting mid-term milestones, an accounting of expenditures charged to the award, and information on any deliverables, such as products, public presentations, publications, intellectual property, and follow-on funding. This step is required before the report is approved and the remaining award payment disbursement is made.

c. **Final Reports -** Each awardee is required to submit the final report on MSCRF portal, the link to which will be provided in advance of the submission date by MSCRF. A final report must provide an overview of all activities undertaken during the course of the funded project, a description of the results of the project, the success with achieving the proposed milestones, jobs created/supported, information on any deliverables, such as products, public presentations, publications, intellectual property, and follow-on funding, as well as a full accounting of all expenditures charged to the award in a tabular format signed by the financial officer, and a formal closeout letter.

COMPLIANCE

A Principal Investigator not in compliance with the reporting obligations under the Launch Research Grant shall not be eligible to apply for continued or subsequent MSCRF funding.

AGENCY CONTACTS

- Inquiries about this RFA or other programmatic matters should be submitted by email to: mscrfinfo@tedcomd.com

- Inquiries regarding technical assistance with the application and/or reporting portal should be submitted by email to: mscrfinfo@tedcomd.com