

**New York State Department of Health  
and the  
New York State Spinal Cord Injury Research Board  
Request for Applications**

Individual Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowships  
in Spinal Cord Injury Research (Round 4)

**KEY DATES:**

**RELEASE DATE:** 6/13/2018

**APPLICANT CONFERENCE REGISTRATION DUE:** 6/25/2018

**APPLICANT CONFERENCE:** 6/27/2018 at 10:30 AM EST  
By Webex at:  
1-844-633-8697 or 1-518-549-0500  
Meeting ID # 642 285 879

**LETTER OF INTENT DUE (Strongly encouraged):** 6/27/2018

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST DUE (Optional):** 6/27/2018

**QUESTIONS DUE:** 7/2/2018  
**QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND  
UPDATES POSTED:** 7/6/2018

**APPLICATIONS DUE:** 7/30/2018 by 4:00 PM EST

**DOH CONTACT NAME AND ADDRESS:**

Charles J. Burns  
Extramural Grants Administration  
New York State Department of Health  
Wadsworth Center  
Empire State Plaza, Room C345  
PO Box 509, Albany, NY 12201-0509  
(518) 474-7002 (phone)  
[scirb@health.ny.gov](mailto:scirb@health.ny.gov)

Staff will be available at the phone number and email address above to answer questions about the RFA during regular business hours and up to 4PM on the application due date.

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## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Background**

Approximately 1,000 New York residents suffer a traumatic spinal cord injury (SCI) each year, joining the estimated six million people in the United States who are living with paralysis and other effects of SCI. The personal and economic costs to these persons, their families and to society are immense. Since 1998, the New York State Spinal Cord Injury Research Board (SCIRB) advises the New York State Department of Health (Department), Extramural Grants Administration Program (Program) regarding research focused on cures for SCI and SCI-induced paralysis.

The SCIRB's mission and goal is to:

1. Seek major advances toward a cure and not simply incremental research gains or incremental improvements for SCI patients.
2. Support research that tests novel hypotheses and/or advances innovative research approaches that could move the field of SCI research significantly toward discovering a cure for SCI.

The SCIRB's mission is to stimulate high-quality, innovative SCI research that will help promote treatment and cure for SCI, including methods for reversing paralysis or restoring function caused by injury, or for minimizing or preventing damage occurring during acute phases of injury. To achieve this mission, the Program offers a portfolio of competitive research awards to support the New York State scientists and their collaborators from a variety of biomedical disciplines in initiating and pursuing such efforts. Information about the SCIRB can be found at: <http://www.wadsworth.org/extramural/spinalcord.htm>.

### **B. Purpose of the Funds**

The SCIRB wishes to stimulate the growth of SCI research and to accelerate the pace with which basic (preclinical) findings are translated into clinical benefits for spinal cord-injured persons. In addition, SCIRB wishes to fill fundamental gaps in knowledge that are barriers to scientific advances in SCI research.

This Request for Applications (RFA) provides funding for individual predoctoral and postdoctoral fellowships (similar to NIH F31 and F32 awards, respectively) that will enable New York State to attract and retain the most promising and exceptionally-talented predoctoral and postdoctoral fellows. Substitutions of the named Fellow will not be accepted. The intent of this initiative is to support the continued training of researchers with extraordinary potential for making significant contributions to the fields of SCI research.

### **C. Available Funds**

Projects will be supported by State funds. Approximately \$1.5 million will be available for this RFA to fund approximately six (6) training (pre- or post- doctoral) awards. The amount of funds awarded will be contingent upon the quality of applications submitted. In determining final awards, the Department reserves the right to allocate funds between the two funding mechanisms offered within this RFA as it deems appropriate.

Eligible organizations are invited to submit applications for the following funding mechanisms:

1. Predoctoral fellowships will be a three year award with total annual costs of up to \$45,200 per year (see RFA Attachment 2 pages 8-9).

2. Postdoctoral fellowships will be a three year award with total annual costs of up to \$74,086 per year (see RFA Attachment 2 pages 8-9).

## II. Who May Apply

**The applicant must be a not-for-profit organization or governmental organization in New York State.** Awarded organizations will be expected to monitor the use of funds, maintain individual accounts and fulfill other fiscal management criteria. Subcontracting and collaborating organizations may include public, not-for-profit and for-profit entities within or outside of New York State.

- The eligible Principal Investigator (PI) is designated by the applicant organization, has the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed Workplan, and is not a postdoctoral fellow or other dependent research staff. **It is necessary to identify the financial resources to cover the costs of the proposed research project and career development plan (refer to the Instructions for Form 10 in RFA Attachment 2).**

An eligible organization is not limited to the number of applications it can submit in response to this RFA provided that each application is scientifically distinct. However, the eligible PI may submit only one application per funding mechanism in response to this RFA, regardless of the organization under which (s)he submits the applications. If an eligible PI submits more than one application per funding mechanism, all applications for the particular funding mechanism(s) from that PI will be disqualified and will not be forwarded to peer review.

Eligibility to apply also includes the following mandatory items:

- The applicant organization is Pre-Qualified in the Grants Gateway, if not exempt.
- For predoctoral fellowship applications, the applicant organization is a degree-granting institution.
- The PI/sponsor is not restricted from receiving Public Health Service (PHS) funding or debarred by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or any other federal or New York State government entity.
- The fellow is not restricted from receiving Public Health Service (PHS) funding or debarred by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or any other federal or New York State government entity
- The fellow is committed to a full time 100% professional effort, unless otherwise defined by organizational policies provided in the application, directly associated with the fellowship research training program described in the application.
- The predoctoral fellow has a baccalaureate degree and is currently enrolled in a PhD or equivalent research degree program. *(this is not applicable to postdoctoral fellow applications)*
- The postdoctoral fellow has earned a PhD or equivalent. *(this is not applicable to predoctoral fellow applications)*
- The postdoctoral fellow will have no more than two years of prior postdoctoral training under the current sponsor's supervision by the expected start date of the award *(this is not applicable to predoctoral fellow applications)*
- The postdoctoral fellow will have no more than three years total fellowship experience under any mentor(s) by the expected start date of the award *(this is not applicable to predoctoral fellow applications)*
- The Letter of Support from the PI/sponsor and institution is included in the appendix. *(placed in the Forms 7-12 PDF file)*

Submission of an application certifies that the applicant organization and the PI meet the eligibility criteria stated here.

### III. Project Narrative/Workplan Outcomes

The purpose of these awards is to support promising fellows during their mentored training and research period under the guidance of outstanding faculty PI/sponsors. ***This award is not designed to fund the proposed research.*** The integrated program of research and training should enhance the individual's potential to develop into a productive, independent researcher. The training plan should document the need for, and the anticipated value of, the proposed mentored training in relationship to the individual's research career goals. The training plan should also facilitate the fellow's transition to the next stage of his/her career.

It is expected that the mentored training experience will provide:

- A strong foundation in research design, methods, and analytic techniques appropriate to the proposed SCI research;
- The enhancement of the fellow's ability to conceptualize and think through research problems with increasing independence;
- Experience conducting research using appropriate, state-of-the-art methods, as well as presenting and publishing the research findings as first author;
- The opportunity to interact with members of the scientific community at appropriate scientific meetings and workshops;
- The skills needed to transition to the next stage of the fellow's research career; and
- The opportunity to enhance the fellow's understanding of SCI-related sciences and the relationship of his/her research to spinal cord health, injury and disease.

There are no citizenship restrictions on fellows. Each must commit a **full time professional effort** directly associated with the fellowship research training program described in the application. Full time professional effort is expected to be 100% unless otherwise defined by organizational policies provided in the application. Additional program policies, consistent with the requirements of this RFA, are expected to be developed by the applicant organization and detailed in the application.

**Substitution of named fellows will not be accepted.**

No salary support shall be made available to the PI/sponsor or mentor(s).

For those applicants that propose subcontracting, it is preferable to identify subcontracting agencies during the application process. Applicants that plan to subcontract are expected to state in the application the specific components of the scope of work to be performed through subcontracts. Applicants should note that the lead organization (contractor) will have overall responsibility for all contract activities, including those performed by subcontractors, and will be the primary contact for the Department. All subcontractors should be approved by the Department.

#### A. Individual Predoctoral Fellowships

##### 1. Predoctoral Fellows

The predoctoral fellow must have a baccalaureate degree and be currently enrolled in a PhD or equivalent research degree program at the time of application. The predoctoral fellow must be at the dissertation research stage of training at the time of award and must show evidence of high academic performance and a commitment to a career as an independent research scientist. The fellow must work with the PI/sponsor to develop the SCI-focused mentored research and training plan included in the application.

##### 2. PI/sponsor and Mentor(s)

The predoctoral fellow will identify a PI/sponsor with the appropriate background and experience to support the research and mentored training plan described in the application. The PI/sponsor should have a track record of funded research related to the selected SCI research topic and experience as a supervisor and mentor. To encourage novel SCI research, the PI/sponsor could be from a primary field outside of SCI research provided the research project will directly contribute directly to the SCI research field.

The predoctoral fellow may choose more than one mentor to enhance the training experience, but a primary PI/sponsor of record must be established for the application. As part of the application, the PI/sponsor will provide an outline of the individualized training that will be provided to the fellow and include the amount of time that the PI/sponsor will devote to working with the fellow. The PI/sponsor should have sufficient research support to support the costs of the proposed research project and any other costs that are in excess of the allowable costs of this award.

An advisory committee may be formed to assist with the development of a program of study or to monitor the predoctoral fellow's progress through the career development program. The mentor(s) will demonstrate a commitment to training, mentorship and career development of the predoctoral fellow.

## **B. Individual Postdoctoral Fellowships**

### **1. Postdoctoral Fellows**

The postdoctoral fellow must have earned a doctoral-level degree at the time of application and must have no more than two years of prior postdoctoral training under the current PI/sponsor's supervision by the expected start date of the award. Candidates with more than three years total fellowship experience under any mentor(s) by the expected start date of the award will not be considered. The fellow must work with the PI/sponsor to develop the SCI-focused mentored research and training plan included in the application. The postdoctoral fellow must focus on a specific well-defined SCI research project.

### **2. PI/sponsor and Mentor(s)**

The postdoctoral fellow will identify a PI/sponsor with the appropriate background and experience to support the research and mentored career development plan described in the application. The PI/sponsor should have a track record of funded research related to the selected SCI research topic and experience as a supervisor and mentor. To encourage novel SCI research, the PI/sponsor could be from a primary field outside of SCI research provided the research project will contribute directly to the SCI research field.

The postdoctoral fellow may choose more than one mentor to enhance the training experience, but a primary PI/sponsor of record must be established for the application. As part of the application, the PI/sponsor will provide an outline of the individualized training that will be provided to the fellow and include the amount of time that the PI/sponsor will devote to working with the fellow. The PI/sponsor should have sufficient research support to cover the costs of the proposed research project that are in excess of the allowable costs of this award.

An advisory committee may be formed to assist with the development of a program of study or to monitor the postdoctoral fellow's progress through the career development program. The mentor(s) will demonstrate a commitment to training, mentorship and career development of the postdoctoral fellow.

## IV. Administrative Requirements

### A. Issuing Agency

This RFA is issued by the New York State Department of Health (Department), Wadsworth Center, Extramural Grants Administration. The Department is responsible for the requirements specified herein and for the evaluation of all applications.

### B. Question and Answer Phase

All substantive questions must be submitted in writing or via email to:

Charles J. Burns  
Extramural Grants Administration  
[scirb@health.ny.gov](mailto:scirb@health.ny.gov)

To the degree possible, each inquiry should cite the RFA section and paragraph to which it refers. Written questions will be accepted until the date posted on the cover of this RFA. This includes Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) questions and questions pertaining to the MWBE forms.

Questions of a technical nature can be addressed in writing or via telephone by calling Charles J. Burns at (518) 474-7002. **Questions are of a technical nature if they are limited to how to prepare your application (e.g., formatting) rather than relating to the substance of the application.**

Some helpful links for questions of a technical nature are below. Questions regarding specific opportunities or applications should be directed to the DOH contact listed on the cover of this RFA.

- <https://grantsreform.ny.gov>
- Grants Gateway Videos (includes a document vault tutorial and an application tutorial) on YouTube: <https://grantsreform.ny.gov/youtube>
- Grants Gateway Team Email: [grantsgateway@its.ny.gov](mailto:grantsgateway@its.ny.gov)  
Phone: 518-474-5595  
Hours: Monday thru Friday 8am to 4:30pm  
(Application Completion, Policy, and Registration questions)
- Agate Technical Support Help Desk  
Phone: 1-800-820-1890  
Hours: Monday thru Friday 8am to 8pm  
Email: [helpdesk@agatesoftware.com](mailto:helpdesk@agatesoftware.com)  
(Technical questions)

Prospective applicants should note that all clarifications and exceptions, including those relating to the terms and conditions of the contract, are to be raised prior to the submission of an application.

This RFA has been posted on the NYS Grants Gateway website at: [https://grantsgateway.ny.gov/IntelliGrants\\_NYSGG/module/nysgg/goportal.aspx](https://grantsgateway.ny.gov/IntelliGrants_NYSGG/module/nysgg/goportal.aspx) and a link provided on the Department's public website at: <http://www.health.ny.gov/funding/>. Questions

and answers, as well as any updates and/or modifications, will be posted on the Grants Gateway. All such updates will be posted by the date identified on the cover of this RFA.

### C. Letter of Intent

Prospective applicant institution is **strongly encouraged** to complete and submit a letter of intent (**see RFA Attachment #1**). This form will be used to develop the review panel in a timely manner. Letters of intent should be submitted via the Grants Gateway in the Pre-Submission Uploads section of the online application. A copy must also be emailed to [scirb@health.ny.gov](mailto:scirb@health.ny.gov). Please ensure that the RFA number is noted in the subject line and are submitted by the date posted on the cover of the RFA.

Submission of a Letter of Intent is not a requirement or obligation upon the applicant to submit an application in response to this RFA. Applications may be submitted without first having submitted a Letter of Intent.

### D. Applicant Conference

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to participate in the applicant conference to receive an overview of the RFA and ask specific questions. The conference will be held via webinar (WebEx) only on the date and time posted on the cover sheet of this RFA. The Department requests that potential applicants register for this conference by emailing [scirb@health.ny.gov](mailto:scirb@health.ny.gov). The Department will send a confirmation email with instructions for joining the conference to all registrants. The deadline for reservations is posted on the cover page of this RFA. Applicants unable to participate in the webinar will have the option to view the applicant conference slides at their convenience. The applicant conference slides will be posted with the Questions and Answers document on the NYS Grants Gateway website at: <https://grantsgateway.ny.gov> by the date posted on the cover of this RFA. Failure to attend the applicant conference will not preclude the submission of an application.

### E. How to Complete and File an Application

Applications must be submitted online via the Grants Gateway by the date and time posted on the cover of this RFA. Reference materials and videos are available for Grantees applying to funding opportunities on the NYS Grants Gateway. Please visit the Grants Reform website at the following web address: <https://grantsreform.ny.gov/Grantees> and select the “Grantee Quick Start Guide Applications” from the menu on the left. There is also a more detailed “Grantee User Guide” available on this page as well. Training webinars are also provided by the Grants Gateway Team. Dates and times for webinar instruction can be located at the following web address: <https://grantsreform.ny.gov/training-calendar>.

To apply for this opportunity:

1. Log into the Grants Gateway as either a “Grantee” or “Grantee Contract Signatory”.
2. Click on the “View Opportunities” button under “View Available Opportunities”.
3. In the Search Criteria, enter the Grant Opportunity name “Individual Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowships in Spinal Cord Injury Rd 4 RFA” and select the Department of Health as the Funding Agency.
4. Click on “Search” button to initiate the search.
5. Click on the name of the Grant Opportunity from the search results grid and then select the “APPLY FOR GRANT OPPORTUNITY” button located bottom left of the Main page of the Grant Opportunity.

Once the application is complete, prospective grantees are **strongly encouraged** to submit their applications at least 48 hours prior to the due date and time. This will allow sufficient opportunity for the applicant to obtain assistance and take corrective action should there be a technical issue with the submission process. **Failure to leave adequate time to address issues identified during this process may jeopardize an applicant’s ability to submit their application.** Both DOH and Grants Gateway staff are available to answer applicant’s technical questions and provide technical assistance prior to the application due date and time. Contact information for the Grants Gateway Team is available under Section IV. B. of this RFA.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Although DOH and the Grants Gateway staff will do their best to address concerns that are identified less than 48 hours prior to the due date and time, there is no guarantee that they will be resolved in time for the application to be submitted and, therefore, considered for funding.

The Grants Gateway will always notify applicants of successful submission. If a prospective grantee does not get a successful submission message assigning their application a unique ID number, it has not successfully submitted an application. During the application process, please pay particular attention to the following:

- Not-for-profit applicants must be prequalified on the due date for this application submission. Be sure to maintain prequalification status between funding opportunities. Three of a not-for-profit’s essential financial documents - the IRS990, Financial Statement and Charities Bureau filing - expire on an annual basis. If these documents are allowed to expire, the not-for-profit’s prequalification status expires as well, and it will not be eligible for State grant funding until its documentation is updated and approved, and prequalified status is reinstated.
- Only individuals with the roles “Grantee Contract Signatory” or “Grantee System Administrator” can submit an application.
- Prior to submission, the system will automatically initiate a global error checking process to protect against incomplete applications. An applicant may need to attend to certain parts of the application prior to being able to submit the application successfully. Be sure to allow time after pressing the submit button to clean up any global errors that may arise. You can also run the global error check at any time in the application process. (see p.66 of the Grantee User Guide).
- Grantees should use numbers, letters and underscores when naming their uploaded files. There cannot be any special characters in the uploaded file name. Also be aware of the restriction on file size (10 MB) when uploading documents.

The following table provides a snapshot of which roles are allowed to Initiate, Complete, and Submit the Grant Application(s) in the Grants Gateway.

Role	Create and Maintain User Roles	Initiate Application	Complete Application	Submit Application	Only View the Application
Delegated Admin	X				
Grantee		X	X		
Grantee Contract Signatory		X	X	X	
Grantee Payment Signatory		X	X		
Grantee System Administrator		X	X	X	
Grantee View Only					X

**PLEASE NOTE: Waiting until the last several days to complete your application online can be dangerous, as you may have technical questions. Beginning the process of applying as soon as possible will produce the best results.**

Late applications will not be accepted. **Applications will not be accepted via fax, e-mail, hard copy or hand delivery.**

#### **F. Department of Health's Reserved Rights**

The Department of Health reserves the right to:

1. Reject any or all applications received in response to this RFA.
2. Withdraw the RFA at any time, at the Department's sole discretion.
3. Make an award under the RFA in whole or in part.
4. Disqualify any applicant whose conduct and/or proposal fails to conform to the requirements of the RFA.
5. Seek clarifications and revisions of applications.
6. Use application information obtained through site visits, management interviews and the state's investigation of an applicant's qualifications, experience, ability or financial standing, and any material or information submitted by the applicant in response to the agency's request for clarifying information in the course of evaluation and/or selection under the RFA.
7. Prior to application opening, amend the RFA specifications to correct errors or oversights, or to supply additional information, as it becomes available.
8. Prior to application opening, direct applicants to submit proposal modifications addressing subsequent RFA amendments.
9. Change any of the scheduled dates.
10. Waive any requirements that are not material.
11. Award more than one contract resulting from this RFA.
12. Conduct contract negotiations with the next responsible applicant, should the Department be unsuccessful in negotiating with the selected applicant.
13. Utilize any and all ideas submitted with the applications received.
14. Unless otherwise specified in the RFA, every offer is firm and not revocable for a period of 60 days from the bid opening.
15. Waive or modify minor irregularities in applications received after prior notification to the applicant.
16. Require clarification at any time during the procurement process and/or require correction of arithmetic or other apparent errors for the purpose of assuring a full and complete

understanding of an offerer's application and/or to determine an offerer's compliance with the requirements of the RFA.

17. Negotiate with successful applicants within the scope of the RFA in the best interests of the State.
18. Eliminate any mandatory, non-material specifications that cannot be complied with by all applicants.
19. Award grants based on geographic or regional considerations to serve the best interests of the State.

## **G. Term of Contract**

Any contract(s) resulting from this RFA will be effective only upon approval by the New York State Office of the State Comptroller.

It is expected that contracts resulting from this RFA will have the following time period: August 1, 2019 – July 31, 2022 for a multi-year term of up to three years. Contracts will not be renewable.

Continued funding throughout this period is contingent upon availability of funding and state budget appropriations. The Department also reserves the right to revise the award amount as necessary due to changes in the availability of funding.

A sample New York State Master Contract for Grants can be found in the Forms Menu once an application to this funding opportunity is started.

## **H. Payment and Reporting Requirements**

1. No advances will be allowed for contracts resulting from this procurement.
2. The grant contractor will be required to submit quarterly invoices and required reports of expenditures to the State's designated payment office (below) or, in the future, through the Grants Gateway:

New York State Department of Health  
Wadsworth Center  
Extramural Grants Administration  
Empire State Plaza, Room C345  
PO Box 509  
Albany, NY 12201-0509

Grant contractors must provide complete and accurate billing invoices to the Department's designated payment office in order to receive payment. Billing invoices submitted to the Department must contain all information and supporting documentation required by the Contract, the Department and the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC). Payment for invoices submitted by the CONTRACTOR shall only be rendered electronically unless payment by paper check is expressly authorized by the Commissioner, in the Commissioner's sole discretion, due to extenuating circumstances. Such electronic payment shall be made in accordance with OSC's procedures and practices. The CONTRACTOR shall comply with the State Comptroller's procedures to authorize electronic payments. Authorization forms are available at OSC's website at: <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/epay/index.htm>, by email at: [epayments@osc.state.ny.us](mailto:epayments@osc.state.ny.us) or by telephone at 855-233-8363. CONTRACTOR

acknowledges that it will not receive payment on any claims for reimbursement submitted under this contract if it does not comply with OSC's electronic payment procedures, except where the Commissioner has expressly authorized payment by paper as set forth above.

Payment of such claims for reimbursement by the State (NYS Department of Health) shall be made in accordance with Article XI-A of the New York State Finance Law. Payment terms will be:

- The contractor will be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred as allowed in the Contract Budget and Workplan.
  - All claims for payment submitted by the contractor pursuant to this agreement shall be submitted to the State no later than 30 days after the end of the quarter for which reimbursement is being claimed.
  - Quarterly claims for payment will not be paid until all required progress reports for that period are submitted and deemed acceptable by Extramural Grants Administration Program staff.
  - The final claim for payment will be paid following the acceptance and approval of the final progress report.
  - In no event shall the amount received by the contractor exceed the amount approved by the State.
3. The grant contractor will be required to submit the following progress reports to the Department of Health at the address above or, in the future, through the Grants Gateway:
- Written progress reports in accordance with the forms and formats provided by the Extramural Grants Administration Program, no later than 30 days after the end of each reporting period.
  - A final cumulative progress report in accordance with the forms and formats provided by the Extramural Grants Administration Program, no later than 60 days after the end of the contract term.

All payment and reporting requirements will be detailed in Attachment D of the final NYS Master Contract for Grants.

#### **I. Minority & Woman-Owned Business Enterprise Requirements**

Pursuant to New York State Executive Law Article 15-A, the New York State Department of Health ("DOH") recognizes its obligation to promote opportunities for maximum feasible participation of certified minority- and women-owned business enterprises and the employment of minority group members and women in the performance of DOH contracts.

In 2006, the State of New York commissioned a disparity study to evaluate whether minority and women-owned business enterprises had a full and fair opportunity to participate in state contracting. The findings of the study were published on April 29, 2010, under the title "The State of Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises: Evidence from New York" ("Disparity Study"). The report found evidence of statistically significant disparities between the level of participation of minority- and women-owned business enterprises in state procurement contracting versus the number of minority- and women-owned business enterprises that were ready, willing and able to participate in state procurements. As a result of these findings, the

Disparity Study made recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of the statewide certified minority- and women-owned business enterprises program. The recommendations from the Disparity Study culminated in the enactment and the implementation of New York State Executive Law Article 15-A, which requires, among other things, that DOH establish goals for maximum feasible participation of New York State Certified minority- and women-owned business enterprises ("MWBE") and the employment of minority groups members and women in the performance of New York State contracts.

### **Business Participation Opportunities for MWBEs**

For purposes of this solicitation, the New York State Department of Health hereby establishes a goal of 30% as follows:

- 1) For Not-for Profit Applicants: Eligible Expenditures include any subcontracted labor or services, equipment, materials, or any combined purchase of the foregoing under a contract awarded from this solicitation.
- 2) For-Profit and Municipality Applicants: Eligible Expenditures include the value of the budget in total.

The goal on the eligible portion of this contract will be 15% for Minority-Owned Business Enterprises ("MBE") participation and 15% for Women-Owned Business Enterprises ("WBE") participation (based on the current availability of qualified MBEs and WBEs and outreach efforts to certified MWBE firms). A contractor ("Contractor") on the subject contract ("Contract") must document good faith efforts to provide meaningful participation by MWBEs as subcontractors or suppliers in the performance of the Contract and Contractor agrees that DOH may withhold payment pending receipt of the required MWBE documentation. For guidance on how DOH will determine "good faith efforts," refer to 5 NYCRR §142.8.

The directory of New York State Certified MWBEs can be viewed at: <https://ny.newnycontracts.com>. The directory is found in the upper right hand side of the webpage under "Search for Certified Firms" and accessed by clicking on the link entitled "MWBE Directory". Engaging with firms found in the directory with like product(s) and/or service(s) is strongly encouraged and all communication efforts and responses should be well documented.

By submitting an application, a grantee agrees to complete an MWBE Utilization plan as directed in Attachment 11 of this RFA. DOH will review the submitted MWBE Utilization Plan. If the plan is not accepted, DOH may issue a notice of deficiency. If a notice of deficiency is issued, Grantee agrees that it shall respond to the notice of deficiency within seven (7) business days of receipt. DOH may disqualify a Grantee as being non-responsive under the following circumstances:

- a) If a Grantee fails to submit a MWBE Utilization Plan;
- b) If a Grantee fails to submit a written remedy to a notice of deficiency;
- c) If a Grantee fails to submit a request for waiver (if applicable); or
- d) If DOH determines that the Grantee has failed to document good-faith efforts to meet the established DOH MWBE participation goals for the procurement.

In addition, successful awardees will be required to certify they have an acceptable Equal Employment Opportunity policy statement.

### **J. Limits on Administrative Expenses and Executive Compensation**

On July 1, 2013, limitations on administrative expenses and executive compensation contained within Governor Cuomo's Executive Order #38 and related regulations published by the

Department (Part 1002 to 10 NYCRR – Limits on Administrative Expenses and Executive Compensation) went into effect. Applicants agree that all state funds dispersed under this procurement will, if applicable to them, be bound by the terms, conditions, obligations and regulations promulgated by the Department. To provide assistance with compliance regarding Executive Order #38 and the related regulations, please refer to the Executive Order #38 website at: <http://executiveorder38.ny.gov>.

#### **K. Vendor Identification Number**

Effective January 1, 2012, in order to do business with New York State, you must have a vendor identification number. As part of the Statewide Financial System (SFS), the Office of the State Comptroller's Bureau of State Expenditures has created a centralized vendor repository called the New York State Vendor File. In the event of an award and in order to initiate a contract with the New York State Department of Health, vendors must be registered in the New York State Vendor File and have a valid New York State Vendor ID.

If already enrolled in the Vendor File, please include the Vendor Identification number on the application cover sheet. If not enrolled, to request assignment of a Vendor Identification number, please submit a New York State Office of the State Comptroller Substitute Form W-9, which can be found on-line at: [http://www.osc.state.ny.us/vendor\\_management/forms.htm](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/vendor_management/forms.htm).

Additional information concerning the New York State Vendor File can be obtained on-line at: [http://www.osc.state.ny.us/vendor\\_management/index.htm](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/vendor_management/index.htm), by contacting the SFS Help Desk at 855-233-8363 or by emailing at [helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov](mailto:helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov).

#### **L. Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire**

The New York State Department of Health recommends that vendors file the required Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire online via the New York State VendRep System. To enroll in and use the New York State VendRep System, see the VendRep System Instructions available at [http://www.osc.state.ny.us/vendrep/vendor\\_index.htm](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/vendrep/vendor_index.htm) or go directly to the VendRep system online at <https://portal.osc.state.ny.us>.

Vendors must provide their New York State Vendor Identification Number when enrolling. To request assignment of a Vendor ID or for VendRep System assistance, contact the Office of the State Comptroller's Help Desk at 866-370-4672 or 518-408-4672 or by email at [ciohelpdesk@osc.state.ny.us](mailto:ciohelpdesk@osc.state.ny.us).

Applicants should complete and submit the Vendor Responsibility Attestation (see RFA Attachment 10).

#### **M. Vendor Prequalification for Not-for-Profits**

All not-for-profit vendors subject to prequalification are required to prequalify prior to grant application and execution of contracts.

Pursuant to the New York State Division of Budget Bulletin H-1032, dated July 16, 2014, New York State has instituted key reform initiatives to the grant contract process which requires not-for-profits to register in the Grants Gateway and complete the Vendor Prequalification process in order for applications to be evaluated. Information on these initiatives can be found on the [Grants Reform Website](#).

**Applications received from not-for-profit applicants that have not Registered and are not Prequalified in the Grants Gateway on the application due date listed on the cover of this**

**RFA cannot be evaluated. Such applications will be disqualified from further consideration.**

Below is a summary of the steps that must be completed to meet registration and prequalification requirements. The [Vendor Prequalification Manual](#) on the Grants Reform Website details the requirements and an [online tutorial](#) are available to walk users through the process.

### 1) Register for the Grants Gateway

- On the Grants Reform Website, download a copy of the [Registration Form for Administrator](#). A signed, notarized original form must be sent to the Division of Budget at the address provided in the instructions. You will be provided with a Username and Password allowing you to access the Grants Gateway.

If you have previously registered and do not know your Username, please email [grantsgateway@its.ny.gov](mailto:grantsgateway@its.ny.gov). If you do not know your Password, please click the [Forgot Password](#) link from the main log in page and follow the prompts.

### 2) Complete your Prequalification Application

- Log in to the [Grants Gateway](#). **If this is your first time logging in**, you will be prompted to change your password at the bottom of your Profile page. Enter a new password and click SAVE.
- Click the *Organization(s)* link at the top of the page and complete the required fields including selecting the State agency you have the most grants with. This page should be completed in its entirety before you SAVE. A *Document Vault* link will become available near the top of the page. Click this link to access the main Document Vault page.
- Answer the questions in the *Required Forms* and upload *Required Documents*. This constitutes your Prequalification Application. Optional Documents are not required unless specified in this Request for Application.
- Specific questions about the prequalification process should be referred to your agency representative or to the Grants Gateway Team at [grantsgateway@its.ny.gov](mailto:grantsgateway@its.ny.gov)

### 3) Submit Your Prequalification Application

- After completing your Prequalification Application, click the **Submit Document Vault Link** located below the Required Documents section to submit your Prequalification Application for State agency review. Once submitted the status of the Document Vault will change to *In Review*.
- If your Prequalification reviewer has questions or requests changes you will receive email notification from the Gateway system.
- Once your Prequalification Application has been approved, you will receive a Gateway notification that you are now prequalified to do business with New York State.

**Vendors are strongly encouraged to begin the process as soon as possible in order to participate in this opportunity.**

## N. General Specifications

1. By submitting the "Application Form" each applicant attests to its express authority to sign on behalf of the applicant.
2. Contractors will possess, at no cost to the State, all qualifications, licenses and permits to engage in the required business as may be required within the jurisdiction where the work specified is to be performed. Workers to be employed in the performance of this contract will possess the qualifications, training, licenses and permits as may be required within such jurisdiction.
3. Submission of an application indicates the applicant's acceptance of all conditions and terms contained in this RFA, including the terms and conditions of the contract. Any exceptions allowed by the Department during the Question and Answer Phase (Section IV.B.) must be clearly noted in a cover letter attached to the application.
4. An applicant may be disqualified from receiving awards if such applicant or any subsidiary, affiliate, partner, officer, agent or principal thereof, or anyone in its employ, has previously failed to perform satisfactorily in connection with public bidding or contracts.
5. Provisions Upon Default
  - a. The services to be performed by the Applicant shall be at all times subject to the direction and control of the Department as to all matters arising in connection with or relating to the contract resulting from this RFA.
  - b. In the event that the Applicant, through any cause, fails to perform any of the terms, covenants or promises of any contract resulting from this RFA, the Department acting for and on behalf of the State, shall thereupon have the right to terminate the contract by giving notice in writing of the fact and date of such termination to the Applicant.
  - c. If, in the judgement of the Department, the Applicant acts in such a way which is likely to or does impair or prejudice the interests of the State, the Department acting on behalf of the State, shall thereupon have the right to terminate any contract resulting from this RFA by giving notice in writing of the fact and date of such termination to the Contractor. In such case the Contractor shall receive equitable compensation for such services as shall, in the judgement of the State Comptroller, have been satisfactorily performed by the Contractor up to the date of the termination of this agreement, which such compensation shall not exceed the total cost incurred for the work which the Contractor was engaged in at the time of such termination, subject to audit by the State Comptroller.

## **V. Completing the Application, Review and Award Process**

### **A. How to Apply**

Please refer to the Quick Start Guide for assistance in applying for this procurement through the NYS Grants Gateway. This guide is available on the Grants Reform website at: <https://grantsreform.ny.gov/Grantees>.

ALL APPLICATIONS SHOULD CONFORM TO THE FORMAT/CONTENT PRESCRIBED in Attachment 2 – Application Checklist and Instructions. POINTS WILL BE DEDUCTED FROM APPLICATIONS WHICH DEVIATE FROM THE PRESCRIBED FORMAT.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all materials to be included in the application have been properly prepared and submitted. Applications must be submitted via the Grants Gateway by the date and time posted on the cover of this RFA.

## **B. Freedom of Information Law**

All applications may be disclosed or used by DOH to the extent permitted by law. DOH may disclose an application to any person for the purpose of assisting in evaluating the application or for any other lawful purpose. All applications will become State agency records, which will be available to the public in accordance with the Freedom of Information Law. **Any portion of the application that an applicant believes constitutes proprietary information entitled to confidential handling, as an exception to the Freedom of Information Law, must be clearly and specifically designated in the application.** If DOH agrees with the proprietary claim, the designated portion of the application will be withheld from public disclosure. Blanket assertions of proprietary material will not be accepted, and failure to specifically designate proprietary material may be deemed a waiver of any right to confidential handling of such material.

## **C. Review and Award Process**

Applications will first be examined against mandatory Pass/Fail requirements by Extramural Grants Administration staff (see RFA Attachment 2). Applications that do not meet the mandatory requirements will not be considered for review, and the applicant organization and PI will be notified.

Applications with minor issues (missing information that is not essential to timely review and would not impact review scores) MAY be processed, at the discretion of the State, but all issues need to be resolved prior to time of award. An application with unresolved issues at the time award recommendations are made will be determined to be non-responsive and will be disqualified.

The Department contracts with an independent peer review organization to develop and coordinate the review and scoring of applications. Each eligible application will be evaluated by an Independent Peer Review Panel (the Review Panel) assigned by the Peer Review Contractor. The Review Panel members will be selected from among non-New York State experts in the fields appropriate to the nature of the applications received. The Peer Review Contractor has established a standing Review Panel to which expertise is added to evaluate the merit of actual applications submitted in response to the RFA.

The Review Panel will be assigned based on the category of research being conducted. All applications must include the category of research being conducted as "Rehabilitation" (Rehabilitation) or "Cellular Regeneration & Therapeutics" (Cellular Regeneration). This information will be requested on Form 4 in RFA Attachment 3.

Applications will be reviewed based on the criteria specified in Section V.F. Initially, a subcommittee of the applicable Review Panel consisting of three peer reviewers will consider each application. At least two members of each subcommittee, including the primary reviewer, shall be considered senior review scientists. For purposes of this RFA, a senior review scientist is a researcher who has been a primary investigator or co-primary investigator on more than one scientific research project, which has been previously funded in the field of spinal cord injury. The

subcommittee of the Review Panel will use an established combination of processes to evaluate each application:

1. pre-meeting review with adjectival scoring (see table below)
2. on-line conferral among assigned reviewers
3. panel meeting discussion via teleconference, videoconference or in-person (review method chosen at the discretion of the Department) with numerical scoring (see table below).

The primary reviewer of each panel will prepare a written evaluation of each assigned application that is to be discussed by the Review Panel. Additionally, each of the assigned reviewers of a particular subcommittee will provide a written critique of the application based on established evaluation criteria.

Thereafter, the entire Review Panel will meet via teleconference, videoconference or in person (review method chosen at the discretion of the Department) to discuss and score each of the applications. Each member of the Review Panel will provide a confidential numerical score for each application they are eligible to review.

Applications will receive numerical scores from each participating panel member for each evaluation criterion using an integer scale that equates to adjectival scores, where 1 equates to highest merit and 9 equates to lowest merit. The numerical score given each criterion will be multiplied by that criterion's weight. Each panel member's weighted scores for each criterion will be added together to give their individual total score. Review Panel members' individual total scores will be added together and divided by the number of Review Panel members who scored the application to give an overall panel score for the application.

	<b>Numerical Score</b>	<b>Adjectival Score</b>	<b>Guidance</b>
<b>HIGH</b>	1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
	2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
	3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor <sup>a</sup> weaknesses
<b>MEDIUM</b>	4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
	5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate <sup>b</sup> weakness
	6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
<b>LOW</b>	7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major <sup>c</sup> weakness
	8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
	9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses

<sup>a</sup>**Minor weakness:** An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen merit and/or the expected successful completion of the overall project

<sup>b</sup>**Moderate weakness:** A weakness that lessens merit and/or the expected successful completion of the overall project

<sup>c</sup>**Major weakness:** A weakness that severely limits merit and/or the expected successful completion of the overall project

The Review Panel will comment on the responsiveness of the application to the funding mechanism as described in Section III (Project Narrative / Workplan Outcomes). The Review Panel will identify potential overlap with other resources. Additionally, the Review Panel will comment on the application with regard to the Contract Policy Statements and Conditions (NYS Master Grant Contract Attachment A-1 Part B). The Review Panel may recommend administrative review and resolution prior to contract execution. Award recommendations made

by the SCIRB may be contingent upon the applicant's acceptance of reductions or required revisions.

#### **D. Conflicts of Interest and Reviewer Exclusions**

The SCIRB aims to conduct a review process that is rigorous and impartial. All participants in a review (including scientific reviewers, Department employees and members of the SCIRB) are required to disclose financial interests and declare all conflicts that meet relevant SCIRB and State of New York conflict of interest regulations.

In addition, the SCIRB understands that even strict policies may not account for every perceived conflict. Therefore, all applicants seeking funding may identify up to three individuals (excluding SCIRB member and Department employees) and/or for-profit organizations that such applicant believes could be biased whether for personal, professional, or competitive reasons (e.g., a company that is a direct competitor with respect to the applicant's proposed research or product). Individuals, and current employees, board members, and consultants (working on potentially competing research or product) of companies, identified by applicants pursuant to this screening mechanism will not be permitted to participate in the review of such applicant's application.

Applicants who wish to submit a Conflict of Interest Form, **must do so as part of the Letter of Intent (see Section IV.C.)** by the deadline stated on the cover of this RFA. Applicants may use RFA Attachment 9 to identify perceived conflicts with up to 3 individuals and/or for-profit organizations excluding SCIRB members and Department employees.

Please refer to RFA Attachment 9.

#### **E. Application Format, Penalties and Summary Statements**

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all materials to be included in the application have been properly prepared and submitted. ALL APPLICATIONS SHOULD CONFORM TO THE FORMAT/CONTENT PRESCRIBED IN RFA ATTACHMENT 2. The Peer Review Contractor will assess a penalty of 0.1 point for any application that deviates from the instructions (see Application Checklist and Instructions, RFA Attachment 2).

The Peer Review Contractor will calculate final scores for the research project and compile a Summary Statement for each application for SCIRB. The Summary Statements will document the merit evaluation and serve as the primary basis for the panel recommendation for the applications.

#### **F. Review Criteria**

The Review Panel will score each application based on the following four criteria. The value assigned to each section is an indication of the respective weight that will be given when scoring an application.

##### **Fellow and Development Plan (30%)**

###### **Fellow:**

- What is the fellow's record of research productivity, including the quality of peer-reviewed scientific publications?
- What is the quality of the fellow's pre- and/or postdoctoral research training experience, including expertise gained?

- Based on the fellow's experience, track record and prior research training, what is his/her potential to become an outstanding, successful independent investigator who will contribute significantly to SCI research?
- To what extent does the application provide evidence to suggest that the fellow has the potential to develop a creative, independent SCI research program?
- Does the PI/sponsor's letter provide strong evidence that the fellow has a high potential to become an independent investigator and an important contributor to the field?

#### **Training/Career Development Plan:**

- Are the content and duration of the proposed didactic and research components of the training/career development plan appropriate for the fellow's current stage of scientific and professional development and proposed research career goals?
- To what extent does the plan fulfill the NIH requirements for instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)?
- Predoctoral fellows: Is the proposed training/career development plan likely to contribute substantially to the scientific and professional development of the fellow?
- Postdoctoral fellows: Is the proposed career development plan likely to contribute substantially to the scientific and professional development of the fellow, including his/her successful transition to independence?
- To what extent is the training/career development plan well-integrated with the research plan?
- To what extent are the plans for evaluating the fellow's progress adequate and appropriate for guiding the fellow toward a successful transition to independence?

#### **Workplan (25%)**

- Are the scientific and technical merits of the research question, experimental design and methodology appropriate for the fellow's level of training, an appropriate vehicle for developing the research skills described in the career development plan and appropriate for developing a highly successful independent research program?
- Does the sponsor have the experience and technical skill for this project?
- Does the sponsor have the mentoring skills to supervise the fellow?
- Are the proposed research plan aims/objectives feasible to complete during the three year award?
- To what extent is the proposed research significant and to what extent is the proposed research likely to accelerate major advances towards a cure for SCI?
- Does the project address an innovative hypothesis or challenge existing paradigms?
- Does the project develop or employ novel concepts, approaches, methodologies, tools or technologies?
- Postdoctoral fellows: Is the proposed research project sufficiently distinct from the PI/sponsor's funded research for the fellow to forge independence?

#### **PI/sponsor, Mentor(s) and Environment (25%)**

##### **PI/sponsor, Mentor(s), Consultant(s), Collaborator(s):**

- Does the PI/sponsor have a strong track record in training future independent researchers?
- Are the PI/sponsor and mentor(s) research qualifications and experience, scientific stature and mentoring track record appropriate for the fellow's training/career development needs?
- Does the PI/sponsor's letter adequately address the above review criteria including the fellow's potential as well as his/her strengths and areas needing improvement?
- Is the proposed supervision that will occur during the award adequate and is the commitment of the mentor(s) to the fellow's continued training/career development appropriate?

- Is there evidence of adequate research funds to support the fellow's research training for the duration of the fellowship?
- Does the PI/sponsor present a comprehensive plan to support the proposed training/career development and research plans?
- If applicable, are the consultants'/collaborators' research and/or mentoring qualifications appropriate for their roles on the award?

**Environment and Institutional Commitment to the Fellow:**

- To what extent does the institution provide a high quality environment for the fellow's development?
- To what extent are the research facilities and educational opportunities, including collaborating faculty, adequate and appropriate for the fellow's research and training/career development goals?
- What evidence is provided that the sponsoring institution is strongly committed to fostering the fellow's development and transition to independence?
- Is there adequate assurance that the required effort of the fellow will be devoted directly to the research training/career development and research activities described in the proposed training/career development and research plans?

***Budget (20%)***

- Are the items for each budget line explained?
- Are budget line items adequately justified as necessary for completion of the project?
- Are the budgeted amounts reasonable, cost effective and appropriate to accomplish the training program?
- Are there specific excessive or unnecessary budget items?
- Does the budget reflect understanding of the human, material and financial resources needed, and the timeframes in which they are needed, for successful completion of the project within the contract term?

(Note: The entire Review Panel will review and comment on the Budget section. Numeric scores for the Budget criterion will be provided only by the assigned reviewers).

**G. Spinal Cord Injury Research Board Review**

The SCIRB will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of all applications, administrative and budget recommendations as outlined in the reports of the Review Panel. When making funding recommendations, the SCIRB will consider Review Panel Scores and recommendations, responsiveness to the mission of the SCIRB and responsiveness to the RFA, programmatic balance and availability of funds. The SCIRB may vote in favor or against any application submitted for funding. Scoring ties will be resolved on the basis of the above and with consideration of the score for "Fellow and Development Plan" among those applications involved in the tie.

The SCIRB will vote on each application in compliance with SCIRB bylaws as well as applicable laws and regulations. If an application for which there are available funds is not recommended for funding, the SCIRB will fully justify in writing why the application was not approved.

The SCIRB may elect, at its discretion, to continue making recommendations for possible funding of proposals beyond what is available for the funding mechanism and the RFA. These applications will be given the status "Approved but not funded." "Approved but not funded" applications may be funded should additional funds become available.

The SCIRB will make recommendations for funding to the Commissioner of Health.

## H. Award Decisions and Pre-Funding Requirements

Grant award contracts are entered into between New York State applicant organizations and the New York State Department of Health. Funding is contingent upon full execution of a contract between the applicant organization and the New York State Department of Health and approval by the Commissioner of Health, State Attorney General and State Comptroller.

Following the Commissioner's approval of awards, PIs and their applicant organizations will receive formal notification in writing.

Prior to contract execution, program administrators will require resolution/submission/confirmation of the following items, as relevant to each application:

- Revisions to Workplan, project duration or budget
- Overlap
- Areas of possible concern with regard to Contract Policy Statements and Conditions (NYS Master Grant Contract Attachment A-1 Part B)
- Approved Facilities and Administrative Cost Rate

Once an award has been made, all applicants (whether their application has been funded or not funded) may request a debriefing of their application. Please note the debriefing will be limited only to the strengths and weaknesses of the subject application and will not include any discussion of other applications. Requests must be received no later than fifteen (15) business days from date of award or non-award announcement.

To request a debriefing, please send an email to [scirb@health.ny.gov](mailto:scirb@health.ny.gov). In the subject line, please write: Debriefing Request (Individual Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowships in Spinal Cord Injury Rd 4 RFA).

In the event unsuccessful applicants wish to protest the award resulting from this RFA, applicants should follow the protest procedures established by the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC). These procedures can be found on the OSC website at <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/agencies/guide/MyWebHelp>.

## I. Award Announcements

SCIRB makes public in press releases and annual reports to the Governor and Legislature, the project title, the PI(s), the name of the organization, total projects costs and duration. The project abstract and progress report abstracts may also be edited and made public.

## VI. Attachments

Please note that attachments can be accessed in the "Pre-Submission Uploads" section of an online application. In order to access the online application and other required documents such as the attachments, prospective applicants must be registered and logged into the NYS Grants Gateway in the user role of either a "Grantee" or a "Grantee Contract Signatory".

Attachment 1:	Letter of Intent
Attachment 2:	Application Checklist and Instructions
Attachment 3:	Application Forms 1-5
Attachment 4:	Application Form 1-S
Attachment 5:	Application Form 6
Attachment 6:	Application Form 6-S
Attachment 7:	Application Forms 7-12

- Attachment 8: Application Form 13
- Attachment 9: Conflict of Interest (Reviewer Exclusion) Form
- Attachment 10: Vendor Responsibility Attestation
- Attachment 11: Minority & Women-Owned Business Enterprise Requirement Forms