

**MINUTES OF THE
MARYLAND STEM CELL RESEARCH COMMISSION**

Friday, October 11, 2024
Virtual Meeting

Members:

Mary Armanios
Margaret Conn Himelfarb
Mamta Gautam-Basak
Debra Mathews
Barbara Nsiah
Avram Reisner
Ira Schwartz
Curt Van Tassell

Staff:

Ruchika Nijhara, MSCRF
Ben Antebi, MSCRF

The Commission meeting was called to order at 11:25 a.m.

Eligibility and review criteria for MSCRF Commercialization grant

During the Commission meeting on September 9, 2024, the Commission acknowledged the need to discuss whether to continue supporting applications from newly formed spin-offs and early-stage companies through the Commercialization Grant Program or whether an alternative grant program might better serve these companies.

Dr. Nijhara opened the meeting by presenting the eligibility and review criteria for the Commercialization Program. Commissioners provided feedback on the eligibility criteria and considered whether the Validation Grant Program could support such companies. Ultimately, it was decided to maintain the existing eligibility requirements for the Validation Grant Program, limiting it exclusively to academic researchers rather than companies. Since the inception of the Validation and Commercialization Grant Programs, the Commercialization Grant has served as the primary funding mechanism for companies to advance their technologies, while the Validation Grant supports translational research conducted by academic institutions.

The Commission recommended creating two funding levels within the Commercialization Program. The first level, "Level 1 Funding," would support early-stage companies by providing resources for scientific validation of their technology (with further clarification and definition of "validation" required). The second level, "Level 2 Funding," would focus on companies closer to clinical development (with "closer" also requiring further discussion and definition). Each level would feature distinct funding amounts and durations.

The Commission agreed to introduce these funding tiers under the Commercialization Program for the FY26 funding cycle, given current time constraints as staff need to release RFAs for the second funding round of FY25 in the coming days.

Additionally, it was recommended to include language in the Commercialization RFA encouraging spin-off companies to consult with MSCRF staff before submission to determine the most appropriate funding mechanism, particularly in cases where the Validation Program may be a better fit.

A motion was made and seconded to keep the Commercialization Program unchanged for the upcoming FY25 funding cycle. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 12:06 p.m.