

**MINUTES OF THE  
MARYLAND STEM CELL RESEARCH COMMISSION**  
Monday, November 4, 2024  
(Virtual Meeting)

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**Members:**

Mary Armanios  
Rachel Brewster, Chair  
Margaret Conn Himelfarb  
Diane Hoffmann  
Debra Mathews  
David Moser  
Linda Powers  
Avram Reisner  
Ira Schwartz  
Curt Van Tassell  
Barbara Nsiah (attended only the closed session)

**Staff:**

Ruchika Nijhara, MSCRF  
Ben Antebi, MSCRF  
Sabrina Spinner, MSCRF

The Commission meeting was called to order at 2:06 p.m.

**I. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the September 9, 2024 and October 11, 2024 meetings. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion passed (8 approved – 1 abstention)

**II. Executive Director Report**

Dr. Ruchika Nijhara presented the Executive Director's Report, which focused on the following:

**A. TEDCO Expo - Update**

MSCRF will be hosting two panel sessions at the upcoming TEDCO Entrepreneur EXPO Conference, held December 4, 2024 at the Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel. Both MSCRF panel sessions will be held in parallel to the EXPO's programming. The conference will feature many speakers, showcase life science, stem cell, and technology sectors, and will foster collaborations between professionals in these industries.

**B. R2 2025 Funding Cycle Timeline**

- Round 2 (R2) 2025 RFAs will be released for all funding programs on November 6, 2024 and will be accessible online through the MSCRF website.
- The application deadline is January 13, 2025
- The Peer Review meeting is scheduled March 17-21, 2025
- The Commission Review meeting is scheduled for May 5, 2025.

**C. FY'26 Budget Planning**

TEDCO was asked to respond to the proposed budget cut of \$2.3 million for FY'26. If the cut materialize, \$371,785 will be reduced from the MSCRF budget, \$22,823 will be cut from the SBIR Matching Fund, and \$2M from the Equitech Growth Fund. Dr. Nijhara will keep the Commission informed once additional information becomes available.

**D. Update on Outreach Efforts & Annual Report**

Efforts are underway to engage with various organizations and institutions for the upcoming funding cycle.

- Conversations have been held with tech transfer representatives at the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences, in Bethesda, MD to introduce MSCRF programs and explore potential applications from their researchers.
- MSCRF hosted an outreach event (MSCRF Information Session) at the University of Maryland, Baltimore campus, with plans to organize a similar event at Johns Hopkins.
- An outreach webinar is being coordinated with the MD Dept. of Commerce which will be open to all companies and academic institutions
- Ongoing meetings with potential/prior applicants considering submissions for the January 2025 cycle.
- Planning has started for the annual report, with this year's theme centered around celebrating the growth and the successes of our awardees.

**III. Statement for Closing the Meeting**

A motion was made and seconded that the Commission go into closed session. The motion stated the following:

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY TO CLOSE SESSION**

**General Provisions Article §3-108(a)(1)(i):**

This subtitle does not apply to . . . a public body when it is carrying out . . . an administrative function.

**TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED:**

The discussion will focus on the Commission's performance in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities for the operation of MSCRF including: (a) possible formation of temporary working groups; and (b) review of operational considerations impacting the administration of the MSCRF.

**REASONS FOR CLOSING:**

The aforementioned administrative matters do not fall within the scope of coverage of the Open Meetings Act.

The motion passed unanimously. The Commission went into a closed session at 3:01 p.m.

During the closed session, the Commission revisited a previous discussion about forming working groups to discuss priorities for MSCRF. Dr. Brewster agreed to participate in each working group and invited other members to volunteer their time to support these efforts.

Meeting adjourned at 3:52 p.m.