Bringing the Patient Perspective to the MRF Scientific Grant Review Process

The MRF, which has been funding peer-reviewed grant research since 1998, is looking to expand its pool of patient-centric reviewers. If you have a strong interest in melanoma research, we encourage you to consider joining our grant review team. Individuals involved with the MRF grant review process may or may not have formal science training. The main goals for the involvement of melanoma advocates in our grant review committees are to 1) ensure that the melanoma patient's point of view is critically represented during the MRF grant review process, and 2) increase the involvement of skilled melanoma advocates to participate in other scientific advisory or review committees at cancer centers or various drug development stakeholders such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), National Cancer Institute (NCI), Department of Defense (DoD), Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), and/or biotech and pharmaceutical companies.

MRF Grant Review Process

Innovative grants are solicited from young investigators, established investigators or teams of investigators in a review process that is overseen by our Scientific Advisory Committee and managed by a Grant Program Manager and Scientific Research Officer (SRO). The MRF's Research Grant Program includes the spectrum of research from preclinical, translational and clinical projects that address critical problems pertaining to prevention, diagnosis, staging and treatment of melanoma. After assessment of any potential conflict of interest, scientific reviewers are then selected based on their expertise in diverse areas of melanoma research. All proposals undergo a rigorous review process. Reviewers use the NIH scoring system which ranges from 1 (Excellent) to 9 (Poor). The highest scoring applications will then be discussed on a final review conference call. Advocates will review each of the high scoring proposals for its significance/innovation/overall impact on the melanoma community and anything that concerns/excites them. To ensure these comments/concerns are taken into consideration when the final votes are placed, an advocate designee (not each individual advocate) will participate on the final review conference call to provide a summary of the advocate evaluations. In the final review conference call, applications are subjected to a vote by Committee – including the advocate designee – and ultimately ranked by score.

How to Apply

If you would like to become an advocate in the MRF grant review process, please complete the eligibility form and provide the requested training documentation. Please note: to be eligible for consideration, the applicant must:

1. Possess good verbal and written communication skills with the English language
2. Express interest in and fundamental knowledge of the medical research process
3. Provide a copy of a current resume or NIH biosketch
4. Become a Certified Melanoma Educator (CME) and provide a copy of your completed certificate upon completion. The course is available on the MRF's Education Institute.
5. Complete science-based training. This training requirement shall be considered fulfilled if the advocate can provide documentation of completion of *at least one* of the programs below:
    A. Attendance of a science-based training program from (typically a one-day time commitment):
        1. The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) Survivor-Scientist Program
        2. Research Advocacy Network (RAN) Advocate Institute Basics for Research Advocacy
        3. National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC) Project LEAD
        4. A similar type of program as those outlined above
    B. Participation in at least one full cycle of grant reviews conducted by (typically a several day time commitment):
        1. National Institutes of Health (NIH)

2. Department of Defense (DoD) Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP)
3. Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)
4. A similar type of program as those outlined above

C. Completion of the MRF's Friends of Cancer Research (FOCR) Training Program (a 3-5 hour program with various modules that allows you to stop/start numerous times before you complete the training). Log-in information is copied below.
   1. Self-Sign-up Link**:** http://friends.litmos.com/self-signup/
   2. Code: mrf

6. Sign the MRF Conflict of Interest & Confidentiality Statement
7. If selected, participate in a MRF pre-grant conference call

Timeline

The MRF Grant RFP (Request for Proposals) was released in late May with a submission deadline of July 12th, 2021. All proposals undergo a rigorous grant review process. Reviews occur in July-early September 2021; the review conference call is in mid-October/early November.

Advocate application materials must be received by July 30th, 2021. The introductory MRF conference call will be held in mid-August 2021. Applications will be sent for review in September; evaluations will be due approximately two weeks later. A de-briefing call with the melanoma advocates involved in the review process as well a feedback survey will be held/distributed in early December, upon announcement of the grant recipients.

MRF Advocate Application Form Checklist

Please use this list as a guide to help ensure you have submitted all necessary documents.

- ☐ Complete the MRF Advocate Eligibility Form

- ☐ Sign the MRF Conflict of Interest & Confidentiality Policy

- ☐ Provide a copy of a current resume or NIH biosketch

- ☐ Visit the MRF's Education Institute and become a Certified Melanoma Educator. Afterwards, provide a completed copy of your certificate.

- ☐ Provide documentation of completion of a science-based training program. At least one of the following must be included:
  - Attendance of a science-based training program from:
    - The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) Survivor-Scientist Program
    - Research Advocacy Network (RAN) Advocate Institute Basics for Research Advocacy
    - National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC) Project LEAD
    - A similar type of program as those outlined above
  - Participation in at least one full cycle of grant review conducted by:
    - National Institutes of Health (NIH)
    - Department of Defense (DoD) Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP)
    - Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)
    - A similar type of program as those outlined above
  - Completion of the MRF's Friends of Cancer Research Training Program. Log-in information is copied below.
    - Self-Sign-up Link**:** http://friends.litmos.com/self-signup/
    - Code: mrf

- ☐ If possible, all components of the application (application, biosketch/resume, certificates, etc.) should be scanned and emailed **as one PDF document** to the MRF Grant Program Manager at research@melanoma.org.

MRF Advocate Eligibility Form

1. Please tell us about yourself.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____
_____
_____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Occupation: _____

2. Gender *(please "X" one)*

Male___
Female ___

3. Highest Degree Attained *(please "X" one)*

High School or equivalent___
AA___
BA/BS___
MA/MS/MSW/MPH/MBA___
JD___
PhD or equivalent___
MD/DDS/ or equivalent___
Other___

4. Are you a: *(please "X" one)*

Melanoma Survivor/Patient___
Family member/Friend/Caregiver of a Melanoma Patient___

5. Are you a Healthcare Professional or Researcher? *(please "X" one)*

Yes___ (if yes, please specify: _____)
No___

6. Years as Melanoma Advocate *(please "X" one)*

0-1 year___
1-4 years___
5-10 years___
10+ years___

7. Have you participated in or do you have experience with any of the following? *(please "X" all that apply)*

Serving on scientific advisory or review committees at cancer centers [e.g. Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), Cancer Center Protocol Review Committees (PRCs), Data Safety Monitoring Boards (DSMBs)] and drug development stakeholders such as the FDA, NCI, DoD, PCORI, and/or biotech/pharmaceutical sponsors___

Research grant review___

As an advocate on a research grant___

Fundraising___

Legislative/Regulatory Advocacy___

Other (Please specify): _____

8. Tell us why you are interested in becoming involved in the MRF Grant Review Process.

9. Can we share your contact information with researchers who are looking for an advocate to collaborate on their grant submissions?

Yes___

No___

MRF CONFLICT OF INTEREST & CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

As a reviewer for the Melanoma Research Foundation, please read the following policies on Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality and indicate your acceptance. Our desire is to ensure fairness and integrity for the process used to evaluate applications, encourage honest and candid evaluations of grant applications, and award grants.

POLICY ON CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Melanoma Research Foundation (MRF), acting through its Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and Board of Directors, evaluates applications for, and makes decisions with respect to, research grants in the melanoma area of study. The MRF wishes to ensure that its evaluation process is as objective as possible and free from conflicts of interest. The MRF recognizes that individuals involved in the evaluation and granting process are involved in a variety of organizations and projects, and may hold financial investments or other significant interests, which might create actual or potential conflicts of interest or the appearance of a conflict.

Each covered person bears the personal responsibility for initially determining if a conflict of interest exists with respect to such covered person. Reviewers are prohibited from participating in the review of projects where they have a special interest in the subject or the person submitting the application which is not generally shared by the other members or reviewers. If this special interest results in a clear and significant conflict of interest, it will disqualify the reviewer from participation in consideration of the grant in which they have the special interest. Any unique or special interest in a project or grant applicant must be reported to the MRF for recording and resolution.

POLICY ON CONFIDENTIALITY

In the course of reviewing applications for research grant awards, individuals involved in the reviewing and granting process may receive, and be given access to, confidential information concerning an applicant. Each covered person agrees not to disclose to any person outside the MRF any confidential information furnished by an applicant. Each covered person agrees that he/she will utilize the confidential information only for the purpose of evaluating the application for a research grant from the MRF and for no other purpose. A covered person may disclose the confidential information to employees, professional advisors and other covered persons asked to review the application. Each covered person shall use the same degree of care, but not less than a reasonable degree of care, that he/she uses to protect the MRF's own most highly confidential information to prevent any unauthorized or inadvertent disclosure of confidential information. Reviewers must destroy all documents pertaining to the review once the review is completed.

Read and Understood:

_____ _____

Advocate Reviewer **Date**

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the qualifications to become a MRF advocate?
If you would like to become an advocate in the MRF grant review process, you must:

1. Possess good verbal and written communication skills with the English language
2. Express interest in and fundamental knowledge of the medical research process
3. Provide a copy of a current resume or NIH biosketch.
4. Become a Certified Melanoma Educator (CME) and provide a copy of your completed certificate upon completion. The course is available on the MRF's Education Institute.
5. Have science-based training. This training requirement shall be considered fulfilled if the Patient Advocate has completed at least one of the items below (and can provide documentation of this training).
    A. Attended a science-based training program.
    B. Participated in at least one full cycle of grant review.
    C. Completed the MRF's Friends of Cancer Research Training Program.
6. Sign the MRF Conflict of Interest & Confidentiality Statement
7. If selected, participate in a MRF pre-grant conference call.

What orientation is provided to MRF advocates?
To become a MRF advocate, an applicant must be a Certified Melanoma Educator and possess experience with medical research either by attending a science-based training program, participating in a grant review, or by completing the MRF's Friends of Cancer Research (FOCR) Training Program online. Although this ensures that the MRF advocates possess some familiarity with melanoma research, if selected, advocates will also participate in a pre-grant orientation session (either a webinar or conference call) to discuss the MRF program and grant review process.

What is the time commitment required to be a MRF advocate?
Although application review time varies among advocates, it takes approximately 10-15 hours of pre-meeting preparation over a 4-week period. The pre-meeting preparation includes: a pre-grant orientation session, the review of assigned applications and the preparation of written comments for those applications.

How many advocates participate in each grant review panel?
The MRF would like to incorporate a minimum of five advocates per each grant review panel (depending on the number of applications).

Are advocate comments taken into consideration during the funding discussions?
Yes, comments provided by advocates will be presented by an advocate designee on the final review conference call. This designee will have full voting rights.

Are advocates compensated?
No, neither advocates nor scientific reviewers will be financially compensated for participating in the MRF grant review process.

How will the advocates be chosen?
The main factor in selecting the advocates will be the number of applications received in response to the MRF RFP.

Who should I contact with any additional questions/concerns?
Please visit www.melanoma.org for additional information on the MRF and to learn more about our research program. Specific questions/concerns can be directed to the Grant Program Manager at research@melanoma.org or by calling 800-673-1290.