Simons Collaboration on the Origins of Life
2015 Investigator Award Request for Applications

Overview
The origins of life are among the great unsolved scientific problems of our age. To advance our knowledge of the processes that led to the emergence of life, the Simons Foundation established the Simons Collaboration on the Origins of Life (SCOL). The Collaboration supports creative, innovative research on topics such as the astrophysical and planetary context of the origins of life, the development of prebiotic chemistry, the assembly of the first cells, the advent of Darwinian evolution and the earliest signs of life on the young Earth.

In the past decade, a small number of researchers have developed a 'systems' approach to origins-of-life research that connects disciplines, technologies and institutions in new collaborations. It is likely that answers to important scientific questions may come in the next decade, making this a significant moment in the changeover that results from an influx of new talent, new instrumentation and a growing global community of researchers.

Opportunity
The Collaboration is now inviting applications for investigator awards to support independent research on topics related to the origins of life at one or more laboratories or research institutions in any country. For more information on the Simons Collaboration on the Origins of Life, please click here.

The Collaboration seeks to engage the ideas and creativity of researchers around the world and will provide many opportunities for investigators to interact with their colleagues in different disciplines and programs. Simons Investigators will be expected to participate fully in SCOL events both online and in person (e.g., webinars, workshops, quarterly meetings and annual symposia). These opportunities will both strengthen the Collaboration and provide the most fruitful mechanism for bringing a growing origins-of-life community together. Applications from all origins-related disciplines are encouraged.
Eligibility
All applicants and key collaborators must hold a Ph.D., M.D. or equivalent degree and have a faculty position or equivalent at a college, university, medical school or other research facility. Applications may be submitted by scientists in domestic and foreign nonprofit organizations; public and private institutions, such as colleges, universities, hospitals, laboratories, units of state and local government; and eligible agencies of the federal government. There are no citizenship or country requirements. We encourage applications from women, minorities and early career scientists.

Funding
Awards will be in the range of $100,000 to $400,000 USD annually, including indirect costs at 20 percent, for a nominal period of five years, subject to annual reviews and contingent upon continued work on origins questions. Awards to junior faculty or to investigators newly entering the field will begin at the lower end of the scale, but may increase over the five-year period if justified by significant progress. Senior investigators with a history of sustained contributions to the field will be eligible for larger awards, for which the expectation of significant advances will be correspondingly higher. Funding will commence Wednesday, April 1, 2015.

Instructions for Submission
The application process is in two phases. In the first phase, applicants submit a first-stage proposal via proposalCENTRAL. In the second phase, the SCOL Steering Committee will invite a selection of applicants to submit a full proposal. Scientific productivity, creativity and risk in the design of experiments, and a commitment to collaborative origins research will be important factors in the selection process.

The submission deadline for first-stage proposals is Friday, September 12, 2014, 5:00 PM Eastern Time. All proposals must be completed electronically and submitted using forms provided at proposalCENTRAL. To submit your first-stage proposal:
• Log in as an Applicant at proposalCENTRAL, using your username and password. If you are a new user, click on the “REGISTER” button under “First Time Users.” Your registered email also works as your username. If you forgot your login information, you can retrieve your username and password from proposalCENTRAL by clicking the “Forgot Your Username/Password?” link under “Applicant Login.”
• Select the grey “Grant Opportunities” tab on the right side of the page and scroll down to the Simons Foundation section. Then click on “Apply Now” in the “Life Sciences-Simons Collaboration on the Origins of Life Investigator Award” row. For assistance with proposalCENTRAL, please call 800-875-2562 or email pcsupport@altum.com.

Review Schedule
September 12, 2014 – First-stage proposal due
October 20, 2014 – Invitation to submit full proposal
December 1, 2014 – Full proposal due (invitees only)
January 30, 2015 – Intent to fund sent
April 1, 2015 – Funding commences

First-Stage Proposal
The submission deadline for first-stage proposals submission is Friday, September 12, 2014, 5:00 PM Eastern Time. No extensions will be given.

Prospective applicants must submit proposals using the template via proposalCENTRAL (for more details, see the Instructions document, available for download in the Download Templates and Instructions section of proposalCENTRAL).

Proposals must include:

• Proposal Narrative, not exceeding two (2) pages (excluding references and figures), describing proposed origins-of-life research activities related to the questions of interest to this collaboration, which can be found here.
• Abstract (technical)
Review of First-Stage Proposals
The SCOL Steering Committee will review all proposals and forward recommendations to the Simons Foundation science staff for their review. Successful applicants will be notified by the foundation on Monday, October 20, 2014, and will be invited to submit a full proposal online via proposalCENTRAL.

Full Proposal
The deadline for full proposal submission is Monday, December 1, 2014, 5:00 PM Eastern Time.

Full proposals should include the following (for more details, see the Instructions document, which is available for download in the Proposal Attachments section of proposalCENTRAL):

- Proposal Narrative: Please resubmit your original first-stage proposal
- Abstracts: One technical and one for a lay audience
- Biographical Sketches of Key Personnel (including Principal Investigator)
- Budget (five years)
- Budget Justification
- Subcontract Budget, if applicable
- Research Environment and Resources
- Renewable Reagents and Data-Sharing Plan
- Current and Pending Support
- Signed Grant Application Page

Review of Full Proposals
The SCOL steering committee will review full proposals and make recommendations to the Simons Foundation science staff. Applications will be judged on the excellence of science, relevance to the origins of life and appropriateness of budget. We encourage applications from women, minorities and early career scientists.
Contacts:

Program inquires: origins@simonsfoundation.org | 617-495-7607
Administrative inquires: lifegrants@simonsfoundation.org | 646-654-0066
Technical assistance: pcsupport@altum.com | 800-875-2562