Sparkathon 2.0 Accelerator Application Process

Participants apply by completing an electronic application. **Applications are due by Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. PST**. A dedicated review committee will select participants on a competitive basis. The selection process aims to obtain a balanced class with diverse representation across institutions.

Program goals/outcomes:
- **Leadership.** Development of leadership skills.
- **Communication.** Enhancement of writing and presentation skills.
- **Mentorship.** Establishment of continued mentorship from world-renowned faculty.
- **Science.** Design and implementation of innovative projects that solve tangible problems in the applicant's field.
- **Job search.** Preparation for an academic job search.
- **Job.** Better understanding of the challenges and responsibilities that new faculty face.
- **Collaboration.** Opportunity to form organic collaborations with peers and work cross-institutionally to efficiently create outcomes to enhance the field.
- **Network.** A dynamic network of cancer immunotherapy professionals – formed to further individual professional development and foster collaborations across institutions and work settings. SITC Sparkathon participants and alumni will develop affinity amongst their peers and the broader society.
- **Engagement.** Emerging leaders may receive new, more visible leadership opportunities within the society.

Eligibility Requirements
1. Participants must be a SITC student member or regular member in good standing who plan to transition from their mentored position to a full time independent role in industry or academia <u>within the next 1-2 years</u>. It is desirable for applicants to have had some involvement with SITC, for example applicants can have: received a SITC award or fellowship; submitted an abstract; attended a SITC educational event such as the SITC Annual Meeting, interim workshop or collaborative program; created or updated their profile on the SITC Connect website, posted on a discussion board on the SITC CONNECT website; utilized SITC's online resources; provided feedback to SITC in some way such as responding to a survey; etc.
2. Participants must complete and submit an application by **5:00 p.m. PST on Wednesday, March 2, 2022.** Complete applications will consist of: a. a cover letter; b. research statement; c. letter of recommendation from mentor; d. institutional letter of support; and e. a one-page NIH-formatted Specific Aims Page OR a research summary, f. the applicant's NIH biosketch, and g. the applicant's CV or resume.
    - *Applicants should exhibit dedication and research related to the 2022 Sparkathon 2.0 Accelerator topic, "Optimizing combination therapy based on immunological mechanisms."*

- *Please review the complete application requirements and review criteria at the end of this document.*

3. Participants must be available to attend the two-and-a-half-day in-person retreat from June 13-15, 2022 in New York City. Participants will also meet again at the 2022 SITC Annual Meeting & Pre-Conference Programs to participate in a one-day in-person program on November 7, 2022 in Boston, MA.
    - *Accepted applicants will participate for free in the Sparkathon 2.0 Accelerator program and receive travel and lodging reimbursement for the program.*
    - *Accepted applicants will also receive travel and lodging reimbursement for attending the one-day program before the 2022 SITC Annual Meeting & Pre-Conference Programs.*

4. Priority will be given to applicants who reside in and are employed at an institution located in the United States. However, international applicants may be selected based on merit.

Professional Ethics

Professional, responsible, ethical behavior is expected from participants throughout the Sparkathon 2.0 Accelerator program. With regard to the Sparkathon 2.0 Accelerator program, this includes active participation, meeting submission deadlines, being respectful and supportive of fellow members and adhering to a general code of ethics. Failure to adhere to the highest of ethical standards and other program requirements can result in possible termination from the project.

SITC Sparkathon Alumni Network

After participation in the Sparkathon 2.0 Accelerator program, emerging leaders will come together to create an alumni network to further their project, make new and strengthen existing connections, and serve as a resource for subsequent classes. This network will facilitate collaborations among members and, as demonstrated leaders, members may be considered for future society leadership opportunities, including high profile committee and Board service.

Application Requirements and Review Criteria

All components below must be uploaded to the electronic application system.

I. **Cover Letter**
    i. This document should state briefly:
        - Your interest in participating in the Sparkathon 2.0 Accelerator program
        - Your involvement with SITC and/or the field of cancer immunotherapy (such as through a committee; receipt of a Presidential Travel Award

or the Presidential Award; awardee of a SITC fellowship; submission of an abstract; attending a SITC educational event such as an Annual Meeting, interim workshop or collaborative program; creating or updating your profile on the SITC CONNECT website; posting on a discussion board on the SITC website; using SITC's online resources; providing feedback to SITC in some way such as responding to a survey; etc.)

II. Letters of Support

i. Mentor's Statement of Support: This letter should be from individual acting as a fellowship mentor to the applicant. It must clearly present:

- The applicant's role and academic appointment(s)

- The sponsor's role in the proposed research, including plans to provide support as necessary

- Plans and potential for the applicant to develop into an independently funded investigator

ii. Letter of Support from outside your institute:

- The relationship with the applicant

- The sponsor's role in the proposed research, including plans to provide support as necessary

- Plans and potential for the applicant to develop into an independently funded investigator

III. Applicant's Research Statement (one page)

This statement should specify:

- Interest/passion for immunotherapy

- How you stay current on trends in the field

- Your qualifications

- Career objectives and plan to obtain a faculty position in the next two years

- What makes you a creative problem solver and innovator

- Any additional information that will enhance your application and/or address the review committee's selected review criteria outlined in section

- Description of current and future research
- A description of current or proposed research in the area of optimizing combination therapy based on immunological mechanisms

IV. Research Summary

This should detail your future work in the area of optimizing combination therapy based on immunological mechanisms.

OR

V. One page NIH-formatted Specific Aims page on your future work in the area of optimizing combination therapy based on immunological mechanisms

VI. Candidate's NIH biosketch
The biosketch must include a history of applicant's training, publications and full disclosure of all grants or awards currently received or pending.

VII. CV or Resume

Review Criteria
i. The review committee will assess the following items for each candidate but will consider all other strengths and experiences emphasized in the applications. Items are listed by order of importance.

- Likelihood of securing an independent position in the next 1-2 years
- Dedication and research related to the 2022 Sparkathon topic; "optimizing combination therapy based on immunological mechanisms "
- Collaboration/team player (for example through co-authoring a paper)
- Communication
- Knowledge of and experience in cancer immunotherapy
- Publications
- Appointments/varied experience so far in career
- Grants/awards received
- Presentations given

All application materials due by Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. PST.

Applicants will be notified if they are accepted in mid-April.