**SPARK Grant: Supporting Pediatric Neurology Advances through Research in K-Awards**

For early-stage investigators who are re-applying for NIH K08 or K23 Career Development Awards or the CNCDP-K12 Career Development Program

**OVERVIEW**

The Pediatric Epilepsy Research Foundation**®** (PERF**®**) is committed to advancing pediatric neurology research by supporting the next generation of investigators. In recognition of the increasingly competitive and uncertain funding landscape, PERF is pleased to announce a new bridge grant program designed to support Early-Stage Investigators (ESIs) who are initiating their research careers in pediatric neurology.

This pilot program for 2025 provides critical financial support to bridge the gap between initial career development (K-award) application submission and successful resubmission, enabling investigators to strengthen their proposals and continue their career trajectory in child neurology research.

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

**Applicants must meet ALL of the following requirements:**

* Be an Early-Stage Investigator (ESI) as defined by NIH guidelines\*.
* Have submitted a K08, K23, or CNCDP-K12 application that was not selected for funding.
* Demonstrate intent to resubmit the application within one (1) year of PERF SPARK award notification.
* Have a research focus in pediatric neurology.
* Hold a faculty position at the instructor or assistant professor level at an accredited institution in the USA.
* Be an active or junior member of the Child Neurology Society or demonstrate that the membership application is in process.

*\*NIH ESI Definition: A Principal Investigator who has completed their terminal research degree or end of post-graduate clinical training, whichever date is later, within the past 10 years and who has not previously competed successfully as PI for a substantial NIH independent research award.*

**SPARK AWARD DETAILS**

**Funding Amount:**

* **Maximum award:** $50,000 (Facilities and administrative fees, i.e., indirect costs or institutional overhead are not permitted).
* **Award period:** 12 months (No-cost extensions are not allowed).

**Allowable Expenses:**

* Personnel (ESI salary support, including fringe benefits, cannot be more than $25,000)
* Research staff salary support
* Research supplies and materials
* Travel to scientific meetings
* Publication costs
* Statistical consultation
* Pilot study costs
* **Not allowed:** Administrative costs, indirect costs, or institutional overhead

**APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

All applicants must submit the following documents (compiled into a single PDF in this order):

1. **Completed PERF Application Form**
2. **Grant Strengthening Plan** (up to 2 pages, 0.5 inch margins, Arial 11 pt font) – detailed explanation of how PERF funds will be used to strengthen your career development grant resubmission; must include the timeline for resubmission
3. **Personal statement** (up to 250 words) – tell the reviewers about your experiences so far and how yours is a compelling case for bridge funding
4. **Copy of unfunded K grant application** – *only* include the Science and Career Development sections
5. **Study Section Critiques** – the complete critiques from the initial (unfunded) submission
6. **NIH Biosketch** of the ESI
7. **NIH format Other Support page** for the ESI
8. **Letter of Support from Primary Mentor** (1 page)
9. **Letter of Support from Department Chair/Division Chief** (1 page)
10. **Budget Justification**

**EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Applications will be evaluated based on:

1. **Scientific Merit**
   * Innovation and significance of proposed research
   * Feasibility of proposed studies
   * Relevance to pediatric neurology
2. **Response to Critiques**
   * Demonstrated understanding of, and responsiveness to, reviewer concerns
   * Clarity and feasibility of plans to address weaknesses
   * Realistic timeline for improvements to the application
3. **Career Development Potential**
   * Quality of career development plan
   * Strength of mentoring environment
   * Likelihood of achieving an impactful research career in child neurology
   * Institutional support of the applicant (including mentorship and evidence of financial and/or in-kind support)

**APPLICATION DEADLINES**

* **Application Deadlines:**
  + K08 or K23: August 7, 2025 by 5pm CDT
  + CNCDP-K12, K08, or K23: November 13, 2025 by 5pm CST
* **Award Notification:** September, 2025; December, 2025
* **Funding Date:** As soon as grant agreement is signed

**SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

Submit complete applications electronically to: perf2004@gmail.com

Subject Line: "SPARK Application - [Last Name]"

**PERF SPARK GRANT APPLICATION FORM**

**SECTION A: APPLICANT INFORMATION**

**1. Principal Investigator Information:**

* Name and degree(s):
* Institution:
* Department/Division:
* Address:
* Cell Phone (for award notice):
* Email:
* ORCID ID:

**2. Education and Training:**

* Medical Degree: Institution Year
* Residency: Specialty Institution Years
* Fellowship: Specialty Institution Years
* Other Relevant Training:

**3. Current Position:**

* Faculty Rank:
* Appointment Date:
* % Effort Currently Dedicated to Research:
  + Department/Division-funded:
  + Grant funded:
* Current clinical responsibilities:
  + Half days of clinic per week:
  + Weeks on service:
  + Other (specify):

**SECTION B: K GRANT INFORMATION**

**4. Original K Grant Details:**

* Grant Type: [ ] K08 [ ] K23 [ ] K12
* Title:
* Original Submission Date:
* Original Submission Score (if applicable):

**5. Target Re-Submission Date:**

**SECTION C: RESEARCH PLAN INFORMATION**

**6. Research Focus** (no more than 10 words per item below)**:**

* Primary Disease/Condition:
* Research Methodology:
* Patient Population:

**7. Institutional Resources:**

* Primary Mentor (name and degrees):
* Co-mentor(s) (name and degrees):
* Available Research Infrastructure (no more than 20 words):

**SECTION D: PERF GRANT REQUEST**

**8. Total Funding Requested:** $ (Maximum $50,000)

**9. Budget Summary:**

| **Category** | **Amount** | **& Brief Justification** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ESI Salary Support (max $25,000) | $ |  |
| Personnel | $ |  |
| Supplies | $ |  |
| Equipment | $ |  |
| Travel | $ |  |
| Other (specify) | $ |  |
| **TOTAL** | **$** |  |

**10. Planned Grant Strengthening Activities** (check all that apply):

[ ] Pilot data collection

[ ] Preliminary studies

[ ] Statistical consultation

[ ] Additional training/courses

[ ] Equipment acquisition

[ ] Manuscript preparation

[ ] Conference presentation

[ ] Other (please specify):

**SECTION E: DECLARATIONS**

**11. Certifications:**

[ ] I certify that I meet all eligibility requirements for my target K-award resubmission

[ ] I commit to resubmitting my K application within one year

[ ] I will acknowledge PERF support in all resulting publications

[ ] I will provide annual progress reports about my career development if funded

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS CHECKLIST (compile as a PDF in this order)**

☐ Application form

☐ Grant Strengthening Plan (1-2 pages)

☐ Personal statement (up to 250 words)

☐ Copy of unfunded K grant (Science and Career Development sections *only*)

☐ Complete study section critiques (summary statement)

☐ NIH Biosketch

☐ NIH format Other Support page

☐ Primary mentor support letter (1 page maximum)

☐ Department chair/division chief support letter (1 page maximum)

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Pediatric Epilepsy Research Foundation**

Email: perf2004@gmail.com

Website: www.PediatricEpilepsyResearchFoundation.org

*PERF® is an equal opportunity funding organization committed to supporting diversity in pediatric neurology research.*