



# **UICC Pilot Project Program Request For Applications**

## ***Area of Focus: Obesity and Cancer***

UI Cancer Center Pilot Project Program offers funding for projects proposed by its members to encourage new collaborative cancer research projects. The purpose of these pilot project grants is to stimulate NEW inter-programmatic research initiatives that lead to competitive grant applications to external peer reviewed funding organizations.

### **Special Emphasis for this RFA:**

For this funding cycle, the UI Cancer Center is only seeking projects that focus on topics related to “**obesity and cancer**”. According to the NCI, people who are obese may have an increased risk of several types of cancer, including cancers of the liver (HCC), breast (in women who have been through menopause), colon, rectum, endometrium (lining of the uterus), esophagus, kidney, pancreas, and gallbladder. Obesity can influence prevention efforts, treatment options, and is changing the course of cancer progression. Conversely, eating a healthy diet, being physically active, and keeping a healthy weight may help reduce risk of some cancers. <https://www.cancer.gov/research/annual-plan/scientific-topics/obesity>

The pilot project submitted for consideration for this RFA should support preparation of an obesity related grant submission to NCI in response to one of the funding announcements below. If the targeted funding announcement is not in this list, please include a link to it in your application.

- <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/rfa-ca-20-027.html>
- <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-18-854.html>
- <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-CA-20-051.html>
- <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-20-276.html>
- <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-20-180.html>
- <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-20-179.html>
- <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-20-133.html>
- <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-20-088.html>
- <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-19-309.html>
- <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-18-893.html>
- <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-18-856.html>

### **Investigator Eligibility**

- The project must involve two or more independent principal investigators (PIs), each of whom substantively contribute to the research. PIs should be full or associate members of the cancer center and belong to two different cancer center programs (Cancer Prevention and Control, Cancer Biology, Translational Oncology). Projects involving a PI from the Cancer Prevention and Control (CPC) program will be given preference.
- An investigator can be PI on only one project during a funding cycle. Other scientific or clinical advisory roles are allowed on more than one application.



- Applications from investigators with active pilot projects will be administratively disqualified unless the active projects are ending before awards are issued for the new round. (Anticipated award date is June 1, 2021)
- Projects with UICC leaders (Associate Directors and Program Leaders) as PIs will be accepted, but, if eligible, only one project can be awarded with a UICC leader as a PI.

### Research Project Eligibility

It is essential that proposed projects have a strong cancer focus and address the topic of “obesity and cancer”. UICC pilot funding is meant to support the pursuit of specific experiments needed as preliminary data for extramural funding applications to NIH or similar peer review bodies. Reviewers are NOT looking for broad multiyear projects that read like a complete 5 year grant, or a condensed form of an already submitted NIH grant. The most successful applications are those that explain the concept of the research, give the preliminary data available to date, explain where the project is going in broad terms, and then explain the specific experiments needed to support the hypotheses to an NIH/peer review body. Projects seeking pilot data for resubmission applications to NIH should discuss how the project would address peer review critique received from the NIH.

The initial submission of an application will be through a Letter of Intent, providing a brief description of the concept and submitting investigators. These initial concepts will be screened administratively for suitability to the pilot project mechanism. The following criteria will be used in this screening:

- If the proposed project is not obviously addressing the theme “obesity and cancer”, please include an explanation of how the project is related to the obesity and cancer theme, or the application will be disqualified.
- Pilot project funds are not meant to be bridge funding nor to extend the funding available for an established study.
- Proposed projects must not fall within the specific aims of a currently funded project of any of the collaborating investigators.

### Submission Process & Guidelines

All interested investigators are required to follow a 2-step process and submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) prior to submission of the Full Application. Applications that fit the purpose of this program will be invited to submit a Full Application by the due date.

**STEP 1 - Letter of Intent (LOI) Due Thursday, March 25, 2021**: The LOI should have 0.5” margins and no smaller than Arial 11-point font. The following information should be included:

- Page 1 -Preliminary title and complete listing of the investigative team, academic titles, primary departments, and their roles on the project. Please describe the contribution of each key person
- Page 2 -1-page brief outline of the study plan (goal, hypothesis, specific aims, study methods to be utilized.
- Biosketches and Other Support documentation for Principal Investigators and key personnel.
- LOI should be submitted via email to Farah Mirza at [fmirza@uic.edu](mailto:fmirza@uic.edu). Please submit one PDF file with all requested information. Put “UICC Pilot Project LOI” in the subject line.
- Successful receipt of LOI will be acknowledged via email.
- Notifications inviting full applications will be sent within 2 weeks of the LOI due date.

**STEP 2 - Full Application (by invitation) Due Monday, May 3, 2021**: The full application should include a detailed description of your proposed project in *a single PDF file, following the correct order and format listed below*.



1. Title Page – Provide information and Lay language abstract of the proposed project - In the event of funding, the abstract will be provided to donors to demonstrate the use of funds. The departmental signatures represent a written commitment to support faculty effort on the project. (<https://cancer.uillinois.edu/RFA-Face-Page.pdf>)
2. Introduction (if applicable, 1 page maximum) - If the project was previously submitted for pilot funding but was not awarded, provide a *one page* overview of how it has been revised to address the reviewers' critique. In the case where investigators have previously received UICC pilot project support, include a brief summary of the publications and externally funded projects that resulted from previous pilot funding.
3. Budget (*use PHS 398 Form Page 4*) - Submit a 12-month budget and brief justification. The total budget should not exceed \$50,000. Smaller budgets are also acceptable. (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>)
4. Specific Aims – (1 page maximum) State concisely the hypothesis to be tested and the specific aim(s) to be achieved during the one year.
5. Research Plan - (*not to exceed 4 pages, excluding references*) Provide sufficient detail for reviewers to judge the potential of the project. To ensure appropriate consideration of your application, you should address in your research plan the role and specific, individual responsibilities of each of the project investigators, how this project differs from any similar ongoing, funded research of the investigators, including grants on which they may be co-investigators, and specific plans for applying for and obtaining future support as a result of this project. Include a link to the NCI RFA(s) you plan to target. Applicants are encouraged to incorporate UICC cores into their research plan. Applicants are strongly encouraged to include a statement about how their project is relevant to the UICC catchment area.
6. Biographical Sketch (use PHS 398 suggested format) - Submit biosketches for all project investigators. <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>
7. Other Support - Document other support for each project investigator, using NIH format, including a statement of the specific aims for all funded projects. <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/othersupport.htm>

## Review Criteria

Ranking will be by peer review, based on novelty and scientific merit. A major criterion will be the perceived probability that the pilot project will lead to the submission of a fundable cancer focused research grant application in obesity and cancer. **An ideal pilot project will be designed to conduct preliminary studies needed before submitting a full grant application to a peer reviewed sponsor.** Other factors considered in the review will be areas of expertise of the collaborating investigators, synergism between and among the collaborating investigators, and value of the project to the cancer research priorities of the UI Cancer Center.

Reviewers are instructed to look for:

- innovation and novelty, first and foremost
- two or more investigators on a project, each of whom substantively contributes to the research
- interactive projects that bridge disciplines and/or expertise
- R01 readiness - projects that ARE going to result in cancer focused grant applications



- projects that are likely to be funded when submitted to peer reviewed organizations after (and because of) the utilization of the pilot project funds
- projects that are relevant to the UICC catchment area (Cook County and can extend state wide)

\*All applicants will receive reviewers' comments at the end of the review process regardless of whether they receive funding.

### **Funding Limits**

UICC Pilot Project awards are for any amount up to \$50,000 for a one year project period.

Allowable expenses include the following:

- Research/laboratory supplies
- UICC and RRC Shared resource expenses
- Technical or laboratory staff salaries (including fringe benefits)
- Stipends (including fringe benefits where applicable)
- Animal costs
- Patient care costs and stipends
- Research related contractual agreements
- Software (prior approval required)

Non-Allowable expenses include the following:

- Faculty salaries
- Equipment (including computers)
- Equipment maintenance and service contracts
- Secretarial/administrative salaries
- Graduate and undergraduate student tuition and student fees
- Textbooks/course books and periodicals
- Subscriptions to periodicals
- Membership dues
- Rental of office or laboratory space
- Recruiting and relocation expenses
- Construction, renovation, or maintenance of buildings/laboratories
- Food costs associated with meetings or conferences held by investigative team
- Travel

### **Award**

- Awards will be issued for a 12 month period.
- Awardees are expected to obtain IACUC and/or IRB approval before undertaking any animal and/or human subjects research and before funding is released.
- A 15 minute presentation is required 6 months after the start date of the project to provide an update to the senior leadership of the cancer center.
- Awardees are expected to seek prior approval for any changes in the budget.
- Any extension requests require prior approval from the Cancer Center
- A final 15-minute presentation and a written progress report is required within 30 days after the project end date.



- After termination of the project, awardees will be asked to provide annual updates regarding publications and extramural grant applications that result from work supported by the pilot funds for at least 5 years.
- **Any resulting publication must cite the UICC support.**

### **Submission Deadlines**

The deadline for submitting a completed Letter of Intent is **Thursday, March 25, 2021**.

The deadline for those submitting a Full Application is **Monday, May 3, 2021**.

The earliest start date for UICC Pilot Projects will be **June 1, 2021**. Projects are awarded for a one year period.

\* For more information, please contact Farah Mirza at [fmirza@uic.edu](mailto:fmirza@uic.edu)