



American Cancer Society Institutional Research Grant (ACS-IRG)

2023 Pilot Project Program Request for Applications (RFA)

The UI Cancer Center is the recipient of the American Cancer Society's Institutional Research Grant (ACS IRG). The ACS IRGs are awarded to institutions as block grants and provide seed money for newly independent investigators to initiate cancer research projects. The intent is to support junior faculty in initiating cancer research projects so they can obtain preliminary results that will enable them to compete successfully for national research grants.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

- Support the development of new investigators to conduct independent cancer research.
- Foster direct relationships between funded institutions and the local American Cancer Society chapter.
- Support research by newly independent investigators in areas of special interest to the Society

The Cancer Center will fund three ACS IRG pilots in 2023 for up to \$50,000 awarded for a one-year project period. One of the three pilots will be awarded to a cancer prevention and control project that addresses social/economic/clinical barriers, or behavioral or biological determinants of health

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

The deadline for submitting a Letter of Intent is **November 15th, 2022.**

The deadline for submitting a Full Application is **December 1st, 2022.**

The earliest start date for UICC Pilot Projects will be **January 1st, 2023.** Projects are awarded for a one-year period.

ELIGIBILITY

- Applicants must be within six years of their first independent research or faculty appointment.
- Applicants may not currently hold an NIH R01 or equivalent grant. Individuals with previously funded peer-reviewed research project (e.g., R01) that was not renewed are still eligible to apply for the ACS IRG, as long as they (a) are still at the level of Assistant Professor (b) are within the first six years of their independent faculty appointment, (c) are no more than 12 years from their last degree, and (d) have not received funds from the ACS IRG before.
- Recipients of IRG pilot project grants are not required to be United States (U.S.) citizens. However, any applicant for IRG pilot project funding who is not a U.S. citizen must hold a visa that will allow him or her to remain in the U.S. long enough to complete the IRG pilot project and provide SCC with the appropriate documentation at the time of submission.

FUNDING LIMITS

ACS IRG 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 and animal maintenance
- Domestic travel when necessary to carry out the proposed research program
- Publication costs, including reprints
- Costs of computer time
- Equipment costing less than \$2,000

- Special fees (pathology, photography, etc.)
- UICC and RRC Shared resource expenses
- Technical or laboratory staff salaries (including fringe benefits)
- Stipends (including fringe benefits where applicable) for graduate and postdoctoral assistants
- Registration fees at scientific meetings
- Patient care costs and stipends
- Research related contractual agreements
- Software (prior approval required)

Non-Allowable expenses include the following:

- Indirect Costs
- 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
- Honoraria and travel expenses for visiting lectures
- 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
- Non-medical services to patients
- Foreign Travel

SUBMISSION PROCESS AND 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. Full Application are due by the December 1, 2022 due date.

STEP 1 - Letter of Intent (LOI):

Applicants will be required to submit a letter of intent before the full applications are due to: 1) determine if any ad hoc review committee members are needed, 2) pre-identify any potential conflicts of interest with the ACS IRG Review Committee members, and 3) identify any ineligible applicants.

The letter should include the following:

- A preliminary title
- Verification of eligibility
- List of anticipated collaborators

STEP 2 - Full Application

This funding is meant to support 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.

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

Pease compile the following sections in one PDF and email to Sarah Olender at: solend2@uic.edu. The subject line should state: ACS IRG Pilot Application

1. Title Page – Provide information and Lay language (non-technical) abstract of the proposed project - The departmental signatures represent a written commitment to support faculty effort on the project. <https://cancer.uillinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Pilot-RFA-Face-Page-Form-edited.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.
3. Specific Aims – (1-page maximum) State concisely the hypothesis to be tested and the specific aim(s) to be achieved during the one year.
4. Research Plan - (*not to exceed 4 pages, excluding references*). Narrative should include Background, Objective/Hypothesis, Specific Aim(s), Study Design, and Cancer Relevance). Provide sufficient detail for reviewers to judge the potential of the project. Concisely present the experimental design and the methods to be used to accomplish the specific aims. Indicate how the results will be interpreted and how they will support future research. Well-documented experimental methods and standard procedures may be described very briefly or referenced, but novel experimental approaches should be described in more detail. Discuss the role and individual responsibilities of each of the project investigators and specific plans for applying for and obtaining future support as a result of this project. Applicants are encouraged to incorporate UICC shared resources into their research plan.
5. Budget (*use PHS 398 Form Page 4*) - Submit a 12-month budget and brief justification. The total budget should not exceed \$50,000. (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>)
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>

AWARD & POST AWARD REQUIREMENTS

- 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.
- Awardees are expected to seek prior approval for any changes in the budget.
- Any extension requests require prior approval from the Cancer Center
- A 15-minute presentation 9 months after the start date and a written progress report within 30 days after the project end date will be expected.
- 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 ACS-IRG pilot funds for at least 5 years.
- **Competitive Renewal:** in some cases, awardees may be eligible for a second year of funding by submitting a competitive renewal application. This application will be scored with the new applications for that funding cycle. In particular, progress on the goals of the original proposal and a plan for subsequent grant submission will be a key aspect of determining whether a second year of funding is to be awarded. New projects unrelated to the first year of funding will not be considered, per ACS guidelines for IRG grants.

- The awardees' names, photos, institutional appointments, project titles, and project summaries will be posted on the UICC website and shared with the regional ACS division for inclusion in its communications.
- Any resulting publication must contain the following acknowledgment: This publication was made possible by support from the UI Cancer Center through funding provided by the ACS IRG grant IRG-22-149-01-IRG.

SCORING CRITERIA OVERALL IMPACT:

Reviewers will provide an overall impact score which reflects the potential of the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on cancer research and cancer health equity. The written reviewer critiques will be organized according to the NIH criteria and reviewers will be asked to note strengths and weaknesses within each.

1) Significance. Does the project address an important cancer problem, including cancer disparities or a critical barrier to progress in the cancer field? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved? How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?

2) Approach. Are the conceptual or clinical framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, well-reasoned, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?

3) Innovation. Is the project original and innovative? For example: Does the project challenge existing paradigms regarding cancer health equity in clinical practice or population health? Does the project address an innovative hypothesis or critical barrier to progress in the field? Does the project develop or employ novel concepts, approaches, methodologies, tools, or technologies for this area?

4) Investigator. Is the investigator appropriately trained and well suited to carry out this work? Is the work proposed appropriate to the experience level of the investigator? Is the investigator likely to continue cancer research? Will the investigator have the appropriate time to commit to this project?

5) Extramural Grant Potential: If this project is successful, would it likely lead to external peer-reviewed funding? This is an important criterion in determining whether a project will be funded.

For questions, please contact:

Sarah Olender

Research Specialist

University of Illinois Cancer Center

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