

**American Cancer Society Institutional Research Grant (ACS-IRG)**

**2023 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Pilot Project Program Request for Applications (RFA)**

The University of Illinois 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. **This ACS IRG request for applications is only intended for investigators from an underrepresented minority group (described below). The next regular RFA will be issued in September 2023.**

**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 one DEI ACS IRG pilot in 2023 for up to $50,000 awarded for a one-year project period.

**SUBMISSION DEADLINES**

The deadline for submitting a Full Application is Monday, **February 20th, 2023.**

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

**ELIGIBILITY**

* Applicant must identify with groups that qualify as underrepresented minorities (URM) in science including:
  + Individuals with disabilities, who are defined as those with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, as described in the [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/titles-i-and-v-americans-disabilities-act-1990-ada)
  + Certain racial and ethnic groups (African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, or American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander Group)
  + First generation college graduate
  + From socio-economically disadvantaged background ([link to criteria](https://www.training.nih.gov/new_nih_definition_of_socioeconomic_disadvantage))
* 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 DEI 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.)
* Cancer Center 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**

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](mailto:solend2@uic.edu). The subject line should state: ACS IRG DEI Pilot Application

1. Title Page– Provide information and Lay language (non-technical) abstract of the proposed project *–* Please include a sentence or two about how you qualify as a URM candidate. The departmental signatures represent a written commitment to support faculty effort on the project, and a verification of eligibility of the applicant. [Link to the RFA Face Page](https://cancer.uillinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Pilot-RFA-Face-Page-highlighted.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 Cancer Center 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 bio sketches 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 rare 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 Cancer Center website and shared with the regional ACS division for inclusion in its communications.
* Any resulting publication, including published studies, media communications and Internet based communications must contain the following acknowledgment: This publication was made possible by support from the 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, MS, RDN, LDN**

Research Specialist

University of Illinois Cancer Center

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