AACR NextGen Grants for Transformative Cancer Research

2016 Program Guidelines and Competitive Letter of Intent Instructions
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PROGRAM GUIDELINES

PROGRAM SUMMARY
The AACR NextGen Grants for Transformative Cancer Research represent a new AACR funding initiative to stimulate highly innovative research from young investigators. This grant mechanism is intended to promote and support creative, paradigm-shifting cancer research that, because of its very nature, may not otherwise be funded through existing channels. It is anticipated that the projects funded through this mechanism will have the potential to lead to major breakthroughs in the field. Eligibility is limited to junior faculty who, at the start of the grant term, have held a full-time, tenure-track appointment as an assistant professor for no more than three years. It is expected that these grants will catalyze significant scientific discoveries and help talented young investigators gain scientific independence.

The grants provide $450,000 over three years ($150,000 per year) for expenses related to the research project, which may include salary and benefits of the grant recipient, postdoctoral or clinical research fellows, graduate students and/or research assistants, research/laboratory supplies, equipment, travel applicable to the research project, publication charges for manuscripts that pertain directly to the funded project, other research expenses, and indirect costs.

LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE
August 10, 2015, at noon U.S. Eastern Time

APPLICANTS NOTIFIED OF DECISION STATUS OF LETTER OF INTENT
September 2015

APPLICATION DEADLINE (for those invited to apply based on the Letter of Intent)
November 23, 2015, at noon U.S. Eastern Time

DECISION DATE
February 2016

ANNUAL GRANTS RECEPTION AND DINNER AT AACR ANNUAL MEETING 2016
April 19, 2016 - Grant recipient must attend the Grants Reception and Dinner and formally accept the grant. Grant funds may be used to support the grantee’s registration and attendance at this Annual Meeting.

START OF GRANT TERM
July 1, 2016

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
Applicants must have a doctoral degree (including PhD, MD, DO, DC, ND, DDS, DVM, ScD, DNS, PharmD, or equivalent doctoral degree) in a related field and not currently be a candidate for a further doctoral or professional degree.

At the start of the grant term on July 1, 2016, applicants must:

- Hold a full-time, tenure-track appointment at the rank of assistant professor (appointments such as research assistant professor, adjunct assistant professor, assistant professor research track, visiting professor, or instructor are not eligible)
  - For applicants employed at an Institution that does not have a tenure system, additional documentation will be required. These applicants should contact AACR
before submitting a Letter of Intent to request this documentation and verify their eligibility.

- In order for applicants to be considered eligible, any pending full-time, tenure-track appointment CANNOT be contingent upon receiving this grant.

- Have held a full-time, tenure-track assistant professor appointment for no more than three years (i.e., cannot have held a full-time, tenure-track appointment as an assistant professor prior to July 1, 2013).

- Work at an academic, medical, or research institution anywhere in the world. (There are no citizenship or geographic requirements. However, by submitting a Letter of Intent for this grant, an applicant applying from an institution located in a country in which he/she is not a citizen or a permanent resident assures that the visa status will provide sufficient time to complete the project and grant term at the institution from which he/she applied.)

An exception to the three year window may be granted for parental leave or other well justified leave from research for pressing personal or family situations of generally less than 12 months duration. Applicants whose faculty position exceeds the maximum of three years but who believe they are eligible (e.g., maternity/family leave) should contact AACR before submitting a Letter of Intent to verify their eligibility.

Employees or subcontractors of a U.S. government entity or for-profit private industry are not eligible.

AACR membership is required. Nonmembers interested in this grant opportunity must submit a satisfactory application for AACR Active membership by Monday, August 10, 2015. The application will be applied to 2015 membership dues. Applications may be submitted using the Official AACR Membership Application online or downloaded as a PDF and submitted to the AACR office with the required documents.

Investigators may submit only one Letter of Intent for the AACR NextGen Grants for Transformative Cancer Research but may concurrently apply for other AACR grants.

Postdoctoral or clinical research fellows or the equivalent who are working under the auspices of a scientific mentor are not eligible to apply. Qualified fellows are invited to apply for an AACR Fellowship.

All applicants with questions about eligibility should contact AACR at grants@aacr.org before submitting a Letter of Intent.

RESEARCH PROJECT CRITERIA

The proposed research must represent a highly innovative approach to a major contemporary challenge in cancer research. The funded projects must have the potential to lead to groundbreaking discoveries in the field, and transform our understanding of the tumorigenesis process and/or our ability to treat, detect, or prevent cancer. The research can be in any area of basic, translational, or clinical science.

COMPETITIVE LETTER OF INTENT DESCRIPTION

An AACR Competitive Letter of Intent is an application tool designed to identify the projects with the greatest scientific potential and alignment with the Program Guidelines without requiring applicants to first submit a full application. A Letter of Intent is not written as correspondence to the Scientific Review Committee, but instead follows a prescribed template which gathers information summarizing the proposed research project. Letters of Intent have also been called "pre-applications," "concept papers," or "letters of inquiry" by other funders.
Letters of Intent are peer-reviewed by the Scientific Review Committee. A limited number of applicants whose Letters of Intent are deemed most meritorious will be invited by the committee to submit full applications.

The Letter of Intent for the AACR NextGen Grants for Transformative Cancer Research is limited to two pages and must describe the proposed cancer research project, including the Specific Aims; Rationale, Preliminary Data, Methodology, and Approach; Statistical Analysis Plan; and Significance and Statement of Relevance. Relevant references must be attached and are limited to two pages.

The Letter of Intent must be accompanied by:

- Scientific abstract, limited to 3,000 characters including spaces, which provides a clear, concise, and comprehensive overview of the proposed cancer research project
- Applicant’s biographical sketch

EVALUATION OF COMPETITIVE LETTERS OF INTENT AND INVITED APPLICATIONS

The Scientific Review Committee that will peer-review the Letters of Intent and invited applications is comprised of senior researchers and physician-scientists respected for their own accomplishments in cancer research and viewed as leaders in the field. The President of AACR will appoint the members of the Scientific Review Committee.

The Committee will consider the following criteria when reviewing Letters of Intent and invited full applications:

- **Innovation and Significance.** Does the project propose creative, paradigm-shifting cancer research? Is the scientific and technical merit of the proposed project of great significance? Is the proposed project of high quality, and what potential does it have to provide groundbreaking and innovative advances in cancer research? How will successful completion of the aims challenge and/or enhance the current concepts, methods, or technologies used in the field of cancer research? Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel to the field of cancer research?

- **Investigator.** What training and experience does the applicant have to ensure successful implementation of the proposed project? Does the applicant have demonstrated capacity to carry out independent research? Is there evidence that the applicant is developing a successful track record in cancer research or that they could make a career commitment to this field of research?

- **Approach.** Are the overall strategy, design, and methodology well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project within the grant term? Are potential problems, alternative strategies and benchmarks for success presented? Is there an appropriate statistical analysis plan in place to rigorously assess the impact of the data? Is the budget fully justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed project? *(The budget-related question will be used to evaluate the full applications for the AACR NextGen Grants.)*

- **Institutional Environment.** What evidence is provided of institutional commitment for the scientific development of the applicant? What support, equipment and resources will be available to the applicant and are they adequate to successfully complete the proposed project? *(This criterion will be used to evaluate the full applications for the AACR NextGen Grants.)*
TOBACCO INDUSTRY FUNDING AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST STATEMENT
Scientific investigators or health professionals who are funded by the tobacco industry for any research project are not eligible for any AACR grant. Grantees who accept funding from the tobacco industry for any research project during the term of an AACR grant must inform AACR of such funding, whereupon the AACR grant will immediately be terminated.

Tobacco industry funding is defined for purposes of AACR grant applicants and recipients as money provided or used for all or any of the costs of any research project, including personnel, consumables, equipment, buildings, travel, meetings and conferences, and operating costs for laboratories and offices. It is not defined as money provided or used for meetings or conferences that don’t relate to any particular research projects.

Tobacco industry funding includes: funds from a company that is engaged in or has affiliates engaged in the manufacture of tobacco produced for human use; funds in the name of a tobacco brand, whether or not the brand name is used solely for tobacco products; funds from a body set up by the tobacco industry or by one or more companies engaged in the manufacture of tobacco products.

The following do not constitute tobacco industry funding for the purposes of this policy:

- Legacies from tobacco industry investments (unless the names of a tobacco company or cigarette brand are associated with them)
- Funding from a trust or foundation established with assets related to the tobacco industry but no longer having any connection with the tobacco industry even though it may bear a name that (for historical reasons) is associated with the tobacco industry
LETTER OF INTENT INSTRUCTIONS

LETTER OF INTENT PROCEDURES

In order to submit a complete Letter of Intent, applicants need to directly input information (i.e. sections 1 and 4-6 below) into the online submission platform as well as upload a number of documents. The following instructions provide details about information that needs to be inputted and the materials that need to be uploaded. The section numbering corresponds with the section number of the Letter of Intent Instructions and the online proposalCENTRAL submission platform.

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GETTING STARTED IN proposalCENTRAL
If you are a new user of proposalCENTRAL, follow the “REGISTER” link and complete the registration process. After you register, complete your Professional Profile (green tab, second tab from the left) before starting the Letter of Intent submission process.

If you are already registered with proposalCENTRAL, access the site and log in with your Username and Password. If you have forgotten your password, click on the “Forgot your password?” link. Supply your User ID or e-mail address in the space provided; your password will be sent to you by e-mail.

To start a Letter of Intent, select the “Grant Opportunities” tab (gray tab furthest to the right). A list of grant opportunities will be displayed. The list of applications can be filtered for just this organization by selecting “American Association for Cancer Research” in the drop down menu at the top and clicking “Filter List by GrantMaker.” Find the “AACR NextGen Grants for Transformative Cancer Research” and click the “Apply Now” link (second to last column).
Complete all sections of the online Letter of Intent and the template that is provided. Upload all requested documents in portable document format (PDF). See the proposalCENTRAL FAQ section, https://proposalcentral.altum.com/FAQ/FrequentlyAskedQuestions.asp, for more information.

If you have any difficulties registering, logging in, or creating your Letter of Intent, contact proposalCENTRAL Customer Support immediately:

Phone: 1-800-875-2562 or 703-964-5840  E-mail: pcsupport@altum.com

LETTER OF INTENT FORMAT
The following information is required to submit a complete Letter of Intent. Numbers correspond to the sections found on the left side of the proposalCENTRAL website.

1. TITLE PAGE. Enter the title of the research project directly into proposalCENTRAL system. The title is limited to no more than 75 characters in length (including spaces). Do not use abbreviations. A project title must be entered and saved before additional sections may be accessed.

2. DOWNLOAD TEMPLATES & INSTRUCTIONS. The Program Guidelines and Competitive Letter of Intent Instructions document, the Grant Agreement document, and the Letter of Intent template can be downloaded from this page. Applicants are required to use the Letter of Intent template.

   To download and complete the Letter of Intent template:
   - Click the “Download” link to save the Letter of Intent template to your computer.
   - Use your word processing software (e.g., MS Word, WordPerfect) to complete the template on your computer and then convert templates to PDF format. You do not need to be connected to the internet or proposalCENTRAL while working on the template.
   - Upload the completed template file to your online Letter of Intent.

   See Section 7 of the Letter of Intent Instructions for how to complete and upload the template. This Letter of Intent also requires an additional attachment for which a template is not provided (applicant’s biographical sketch).

3. ENABLE OTHER USERS TO ACCESS THIS PROPOSAL. Optional.

4. APPLICANT. Enter information for the applicant directly into proposalCENTRAL system. Applicants must include their contact information, including e-mail address, phone number and mailing address. Applicants must also respond to the question regarding tenure-track status.

5. INSTITUTION & CONTACTS. Enter information regarding the applicant’s institution, the nominator, the endorser (if necessary), and signing official directly into proposalCENTRAL system. A nominator must be the applicant’s department chair, division head, or dean. If the nominator is not an active, emeritus, or honorary member of AACR, information for an endorser who is an active, emeritus, or honorary member of AACR must also be provided. NOTE: For those invited to submit a full application, the application process will require a Letter of Reference from this nominator and endorser (if necessary).

6. SCIENTIFIC ABSTRACT. Enter the abstract directly into the proposalCENTRAL system. The abstract is limited to 3,000 characters (including spaces) and must provide a clear, concise and comprehensive overview of the proposed work, including the background; objective or hypothesis and its supporting rationale; specific aims of the study; study design; and innovation and significance of the proposed work to stimulate important advances in cancer research.

   NOTE: The proposalCENTRAL system does not lock the scientific abstract field after 3,000 characters.
have been entered. You may erroneously enter more than the maximum allowed. Excessive spacing in your scientific abstract (e.g., line breaks or spaces between paragraphs) also affects the character limit. To ensure that your abstract submission is not too long, before proceeding to the next section, click the red “Save” button at the top or bottom of the screen. If your scientific abstract is too long, you will receive an error message at the top of the page.

• From the list provided, select the research areas that are most applicable to this project. Select no more than two areas.
• From the list provided, please respond regarding how you found out about this grant opportunity.
• From the list provided, select the tumor site that is most applicable to this project. Select only one tumor site.

7. LETTER OF INTENT DOCUMENTS.

Formatting Instructions. Applicants must adhere to the following instructions in completing the templates. Failure to observe type size specifications and/or page limits may result in the return of the Letter of Intent without review.

• Type size. Must use 12-point Times New Roman for the text, and no smaller than 9-point type for figures, legends, and tables.
• Single-spaced text. Single-spacing is acceptable, and space between paragraphs is recommended.
• Margins. The page margins must be no less than 0.75 inches on each side.
• Page numbering. The Narrative must be numbered consecutively; do not use section designations such as "3A" or "3B."

• Tips and techniques for inserting images in documents.
  o Reduce the file size of documents with images by “inserting” the image (as opposed to “cutting” and “pasting”). Save graphical images as JPG or GIF files. Insert the image into the document by selecting “Insert – Picture – From File” from the MS Word menu.
  o Insert only GIF or JPG graphic files as images in your Word document. Other graphical file formats are either very large or difficult to manipulate in the document.
  o Do not insert Quick Time or TIFF objects into your document.
  o Anchor the images you embed in your document.
  o Once you have anchored the inserted image, you can format text to wrap around the image.
  o Do not edit your images in Word. Use a graphics program.
  o Do not embed your images in tables, text boxes, and other form elements.
  o Do not add annotations over the images in Word. Add annotations to the images in a graphics program.

When a template is provided, the template MUST be used. Prepare and upload the following documents into your application in portable document format (PDF):

A. Letter of Intent. Applicants are required to use the Letter of Intent template available from the proposalCENTRAL website. (Refer to Section 2 of the Letter of Intent Instructions for details.) The information must be presented in this order:
I. **Letter of Intent Narrative.** Limited to two pages, including figures and tables. The References section does not count against this page limit. Must describe the proposed innovative cancer research project and include the Specific Aims; Rationale, Preliminary Data, Methodology, and Approach; Statistical Analysis Plan; and Significance and Statement of Relevance.

II. **References.** Limited to two pages. AACR reference style follows that of the *Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals*. Note that the *Uniform Requirements* specify that, for articles with more than six authors, the names of the first six authors must be listed, followed by "et al." For articles with six or fewer authors, all authors should be listed.

Reference examples:

**Journal article**

**Book chapter**

**Article in press**
Articles in press may be listed among the references provided a journal name and tentative year of publication can be verified.

B. **Applicant's Biographical Sketch.** The biographical sketch must be in English. The NIH Biographical Sketch Forms [PHS 398/2590 (Rev. 06/09)] and [OMB No. 0925-0001/0002 (Rev. 08/12)] are both acceptable. However, the applicant must adhere to the page limits and requirements specific to the biographical sketch format used (four pages for the Rev. 06/09 format, five pages for the Rev. 08/12 format).

C. **Grant Agreement Document.** In order to ensure that the applicant is informed of the terms and conditions of the grant should he/she be selected as a recipient, a copy of the Grant Agreement must be downloaded from the proposalCENTRAL site. Applicants must remove the final page of the Grant Agreement document and sign and date it, indicating that they have reviewed the document. The terms and conditions of this grant may be modified or amended by AACR prior to execution of the Grant Agreement. *A scanned copy of the signed final page must be uploaded* to your online Letter of Intent in the section for attaching files.

D. **Signed Signature Page.** In order to ensure that the applicant, the nominator, and institution have approved the Letter of Intent, applicants must print the signature pages, as described in Section 10 below, and obtain all required signatures. The signed signature page [with original signatures from the applicant, the nominator, and institution’s signing official] must then be scanned and uploaded into the online Letter of Intent in the Letter of Intent Documents section. These signatures transmitted by electronic means shall have the same force and effect as original signatures.

**Uploading the attachments into your submission.** Once you have converted your attachments to PDF files, the next step is to upload the files to your online Letter of Intent.
• Make certain that the converted PDF files are closed on your computer.
• Open your online Letter of Intent and go to the section for attaching files.
• Enter your own description of the file in the "Describe Attachment" field.
• Select the appropriate type of attachment from the drop-down list. *NOTE: After selecting attachment type, the screen will show the file types (e.g., PDF, .doc) that are allowed for that type of attachment. Only PDF attachments are permitted for this Letter of Intent submission.*
• Click on the "Browse" button to select the file from your computer.
  o A "choose file" dialog box opens for you to search for the template file on your computer’s hard disk or local area network.
  o Select the file and click "Open."
  o The file location and name will display in the window adjacent to the "Browse" button.
• Click on the “Upload Attachment” button. You will get a confirmation message on your screen that the file was uploaded successfully. You will also see that your file is now listed in the “Uploaded Attachment” section of the screen. Two links are available in each row of an uploaded attachment: DEL and SHOW. "DEL" allows you to delete the file, if necessary, and "SHOW" opens the uploaded file. **Open and review your uploaded files.**

In the section for attachments, all the required attachments are listed in the middle of the screen, just below where you upload your files. This list of required attachments helps you track completion and uploading of your required attachments. Once you upload a required attachment, that attachment type will be removed from the required list and will be displayed in the "Current list of uploaded attachments."

If you wish to modify the attached file, make the revisions to your original file on your computer (off-line), convert the file to PDF, and use the same process above to attach the newly revised file. **Delete any previously submitted versions of the file before submitting your Letter of Intent.**

**SUBMITTING COMPLETE LETTER OF INTENT**

8. **PI DATA SHEET.** This is an automatically populated data sheet based on the applicant’s proposalCENTRAL profile. Information for gender, race, and ethnicity must be provided to AACR. If fields are not populated, go to Section 4, Applicant, and select the “Edit Professional Profile” tab in the center of the screen. The applicant must then go to the column on the left side of the screen, select “4) Personal Data for Application,” and enter his or her gender, race, and ethnicity. The Scientific Review Committee does not receive this information.

9. **VALIDATE.** Validate the Letter of Intent on proposalCENTRAL. This is an essential step. A submission that has not been validated cannot be submitted. “Validate” checks for required data and required attachments. You will not be able to submit if all the required data and attachments have not been provided.

10. **SIGNATURE PAGE(S).** After completing sections 1 and 4-6 of the online Letter of Intent submission (these sections also correspond to the sections of the Letter of Intent Instructions); you may print the signature pages. Use the “Print Signature Pages” button to print the signature pages for signature.

**NOTE:** Data that you entered in the sections 1 and 4-6 of the online Letter of Intent submission are automatically included in the signature pages. The following signature page fields will remain blank until the full application process: Dates of Proposed Project, Proposed Budget, Human Subjects,
Vertebrate Animals, Recombinant DNA, and Biohazards. If information is missing in the signature pages, it could be because you have not entered the information in one of the online sections OR the information is not required for this grant program. If the institution’s Employer Identification Number (EIN) is not completed on the signature page, please request your institution to provide that information in their proposalCENTRAL profile.

While the print option “Print Signature Pages” prints the Signature Page, Application Contacts, and Scientific Abstract; the AACR strongly encourages applicants to also utilize the “Print Signature Pages and Attached PDF Files” option. This option can be used if your institution wishes to review the full Letter of Intent but also should be utilized by the applicant to ensure that the Scientific Abstract does not cut-off in this view and that your attachments loaded properly. The following application materials will not be present when utilizing this option: Terms and Conditions Signature Page and the Signature page containing the required signatures. Absence of these materials should not be considered an error. If your institution requires all components of the Letter of Intent submission to review, the above documents need to be printed individually by the applicant and added.

Excessive spacing in your Scientific Abstract (e.g., line breaks between paragraphs) can cause the abstract to not fully appear in the Signature Page view, even if under the 3,000 character limit. You may want to further edit your Scientific Abstract prior to submission if it does not fully appear. In addition, errors may occur when the uploaded PDF files are assembled by the system. Please check to ensure that all pages of every document included appear in the “Print Signature Pages and Attached PDF Files” option. If you are having any issues with this print option, please contact proposalCENTRAL customer support at 703-964-5840, or toll free at 1-800-875-2562, or by e-mail to pcsupport@altum.com.

Obtain required signatures and upload the signed signature page into the online Letter of Intent submission in the Letter of Intent Documents section. These signatures transmitted by electronic means shall have the same force and effect as original signatures. Do not upload the Application Contacts or Scientific Abstract pages with the Signature Page.

If you are not a current AACR Active Member, you must apply for membership using the Official Application for Membership online or downloaded as a PDF. The application must be submitted to the AACR office with the required documents before Monday, August 10, 2015, the Letter of Intent submission deadline. Should you be deemed ineligible for AACR Active Membership, which is required to apply for this grant opportunity, your Letter of Intent will be withdrawn from consideration.

11. SUBMIT. After successfully passing the validate check, click the ‘Submit’ link. An e-mail will be sent to you confirming your submission.

Once your Letter of Intent is submitted you may view it by accessing the ‘Submitted’ link under the Manage Proposals tab. The status column will show “Submitted” and the date submitted. You may need to refresh your browser screen after submitting the Letter of Intent to see the updated status.
CHANGES TO YOUR LETTER OF INTENT

Withdrawal of Letter of Intent. Please advise AACR promptly, in writing, should you decide to withdraw your Letter of Intent for any reason. Your email (or letter) should include your name, the grant opportunity to which you applied, the project title, and the reason for withdrawal.

Change of Address. Notify AACR of any changes of address, e-mail or phone number, following the submission of a Letter of Intent. Include your name and the proposalCENTRAL identification number. The e-mail address provided with your Letter of Intent will be used for all official communication about your submission including the recipient selection results. This e-mail address must be kept up to date.

Change of Institution or Position. If you change your institution or professional position, contact AACR to determine whether your Letter of Intent is still eligible for review.

INQUIRIES

Inquiries or technical issues regarding proposalCENTRAL and the online submission process should be directed to customer support at: 703-964-5840, or toll free at 1-800-875-2562, or by e-mail to pcsupport@altum.com.

Inquiries about the program guidelines, eligibility requirements, and Letter of Intent materials can be directed to Ms. Ashley S. Jones at AACR at 215-446-7280, or by e-mail at grants@aacr.org.
MORE ABOUT THE AACR

Founded in 1907, the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) is the world’s oldest and largest professional organization dedicated to advancing cancer research and its mission to prevent and cure cancer. AACR membership includes more than 35,000 laboratory, translational, and clinical researchers; population scientists; other health care professionals; and cancer advocates residing in 101 countries. The AACR marshals the full spectrum of expertise of the cancer community to accelerate progress in the prevention, biology, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer by annually convening more than 25 conferences and educational workshops, the largest of which is the AACR Annual Meeting with over 18,500 attendees. In addition, the AACR publishes eight prestigious, peer-reviewed scientific journals and a magazine for cancer survivors, patients, and their caregivers. The AACR funds meritorious research directly as well as in cooperation with numerous cancer organizations. As the Scientific Partner of Stand Up To Cancer, the AACR provides expert peer review, grants administration, and scientific oversight of team science and individual investigator grants in cancer research that have the potential for near-term patient benefit. The AACR actively communicates with legislators and other policymakers about the value of cancer research and related biomedical science in saving lives from cancer. For more information about the AACR, visit www.AACR.org.