AACR-MPM Oncology Charitable Foundation
Transformative Cancer Research Grants

2024 Program Guidelines and Competitive Letter of Intent
Instructions

American Association for Cancer Research
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www.aacr.org/funding
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Last Updated: April 30, 2024
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PROGRAM GUIDELINES

PROGRAM SUMMARY
The AACR-MPM Oncology Charitable Foundation Transformative Cancer Research Grants represent a joint effort to stimulate “high-risk, high-reward” research from early- to mid-career investigators. This grant mechanism is intended to promote and support creative, paradigm-shifting cancer research that might not be funded through conventional channels. It is expected that these grants will catalyze significant scientific discoveries that will advance our understanding of cancer and have a potentially transformative impact on future clinical practice.

The grants provide $400,000 over a two-year period for expenses related to the research project, which may include salary and benefits of the grant recipient and any collaborators (grant recipient/collaborator salaries limited to 25% of the total grant), postdoctoral or clinical research fellows, graduate students (including tuition costs), and research assistants, research/laboratory supplies, equipment, travel applicable to the research project, publication charges for manuscripts that pertain directly to the funded project, and other research expenses. Indirect costs are not allowable expenses.

LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE
June 11, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time

We recommend confirming this time in your respective time zone. To do so, please use a time zone converter.

APPLICANTS NOTIFIED OF DECISION STATUS OF LETTER OF INTENT
August 2024

FULL APPLICATION DEADLINE (for those invited to apply based on the Letter of Intent)
October 1, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time

NOTIFICATION OF AWARD
November 2024

ANNUAL GRANTEE RECOGNITION EVENT
Grant recipient must attend the Annual Grantee Recognition Event during the AACR Annual Meeting or a similar recognition event to accept their grant. Grant funds may be used to support the grantee’s registration and travel to this Event.

In the event of unforeseen scheduling changes, the grantee will be contacted regarding alternative arrangements.

START OF GRANT TERM
December 1, 2024
APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must have a doctoral degree (including PhD, MD, MD/PhD, or equivalent) in a related field and not currently be a candidate for a further doctoral degree.

At the start of the grant term on December 1, 2024, applicants must:

- Hold an appointment at the rank of assistant or associate professor or equivalent.
  - If eligibility is based on a future position, the position must be confirmed at the time of submission and CANNOT be contingent upon receiving this grant.
  - If the future position is at a different institution than the applicant’s current institution, the applicant must contact the AACR’s Research and Grants Administration Department (the AACR’s RGA) at grants@aacr.org before submitting their Letter of Intent for information on additional verification materials/signatures that may be required.
- Work at an academic, medical, or research institution anywhere in the world. There are no citizenship or geographic requirements. However, by submitting an application for this grant, an applicant applying from an institution located in a country in which they are 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 they applied.

AACR is obligated to comply with U.S. laws and regulations regarding research and related transactions in countries subject to U.S. Government enforcement of economic and trade sanctions for particular foreign policy and national security reasons. If your proposed project involves U.S. Government sanctioned countries subject to restrictions, please contact AACR’s RGA at grants@aacr.org.

Applicants must be AACR Active members in good standing (dues paid for the current year). Please be informed that AACR offers reduced membership due rates for applicants from countries with emerging economies based on the World Bank listing. Nonmembers interested in this grant opportunity must submit a satisfactory application for AACR membership by the Letter of Intent (LOI) deadline. Nonmembers can apply for membership online. Please review the Membership Categories for the category that best fits your qualifications. Nonmembers must obtain a statement of support from a nominator who is an Active AACR member in good standing (dues paid for the current year). Nonmembers requiring assistance with finding a nominator may email membership@aacr.org and include your geographical location to receive a list of members in your area to contact for nominations. For more information check the membership FAQ. Members can renew their membership through myAACR. You will need your logon (email address) and password to access the member portal. If you require assistance logging in, please submit a help form. Lapsed members must be members in good standing by the LOI deadline and should contact the Membership Department at membership@aacr.org for assistance.

Investigators may submit only one application for the AACR-MPM Oncology Charitable Foundation Transformative Cancer Research Grants but may concurrently apply for other AACR grants. However, applicants are expected to accept the first grant they are awarded. Individuals may accept and hold only one AACR grant at a time.

Any individual who currently holds an active AACR-MPM Oncology Charitable Foundation Transformative Cancer Research Grant is not eligible.
Employees or subcontractors of a U.S. government entity or for-profit private industry are not eligible. Employees or subcontractors of a U.S. government entity or for-profit private industry may serve as Collaborators, but no grant funds may be directed towards these individuals.

Current AACR grantees may apply only if their current grant ends before the start of the grant term of this funding opportunity (i.e., December 1, 2024). Also, the terms of their current grant must require that the final progress reports be approved by the AACR before December 1, 2024.

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.

Members of the AACR-MPM Oncology Charitable Foundation Scientific Advisory Board are not eligible to apply for an AACR-MPM Oncology Charitable Foundation Transformative Cancer Research Grants.

All applicants with questions about eligibility should contact AACR’s RGA at grants@aacr.org before submitting an application.

RESEARCH PROJECT CRITERIA
The proposed research must represent a highly innovative approach to a major problem or challenge in cancer research. The funded projects are expected to catalyze important advances in cancer research and should have a potentially transformative impact on future clinical practice. The research can be in any area of basic, translational, or clinical research.

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 Advisory Board, 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 AACR-MPM Oncology Charitable Foundation Scientific Advisory Board. A limited number of applicants whose Letters of Intent are deemed most meritorious will be invited by the Board to submit full applications.

The Letter of Intent for the AACR-MPM Oncology Charitable Foundation Transformative Cancer Research Grants is limited to one page and must provide a clear, concise, and comprehensive overview of the proposed work (references do not count against this page limit). Information regarding background, rationale, and innovation of the research idea, and potential impact should be included in the narrative. Relevant references must be attached and are limited to two pages.

The Letter of Intent must be accompanied by:

- Lay and Scientific Abstracts, limited to 3,000 characters each including spaces, which provides a clear, concise and comprehensive overview of the proposed research project
- Applicant's Biographical Sketch
- Applicant Checklist
EVALUATION OF COMPETITIVE LETTERS OF INTENT AND INVITED APPLICATIONS

Letters of Intent and full applications will be peer-reviewed by the AACR-MPM Oncology Charitable Foundation Scientific Advisory Board comprised of researchers and physician-scientists respected for their own accomplishments in cancer research and viewed as leaders in the field. Ad hoc reviewers may be added, if deemed necessary.

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

- **Innovation and Significance.** Does the project propose creative, paradigm-shifting cancer research? Is the proposed project of high scientific and technical merit? 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, and/or interventions novel to the field of cancer research?

- **Investigator.** What training and experience does the applicant possess to ensure successful implementation of the proposed project? Does the applicant have demonstrated capacity to carry out innovative research? Is there evidence that the applicant has made or might make a career commitment to this field?

- **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 the 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 justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed project? *(The budget-related question will be used to evaluate the invited full applications only.)*

- **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 invited full applications only.)*

The Board will consider each year's applicants independent of previously funded proposals or institutions of previous grantees.

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 the 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
The AACR requires applicants to submit an online Letter of Intent by 1:00 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on Tuesday, June 11, 2024, using the ProposalCentral website at https://proposalcentral.com.

In order to submit a complete Letter of Intent, applicants need to enter information directly into the online submission platform as well as upload a number of documents. Below are details about information that needs to be entered and the materials that need to be uploaded. The section numbering corresponds with the section number in the Letter of Intent Format below and the Letter of Intent on ProposalCentral.

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GETTING STARTED IN ProposalCentral
If you are a new user of ProposalCentral, click the “Need an account?” link and complete the registration process. After logging in, complete your Professional Profile before starting a Letter of Intent.

If you are already registered with ProposalCentral, access the site and log in with your Username and Password. If you have forgotten your login information, click on the “Forgot Your Password?” link.

To start an application, select the “Grant Opportunities” tab. A list of grant opportunities will be displayed. The list of applications can be filtered for just this organization by clicking “Filter by Grant Maker” at the top and selecting “American Association for Cancer Research” in the drop-down menu. Find “AACR-MPM Oncology Charitable Foundation Transformative Cancer Research Grants” and click the blue “Apply Now” button in the “Apply” column.

If you have any difficulties registering, logging in, or creating your application, contact ProposalCentral.
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. The title is limited to no more than 100 characters (including spaces). Do not use abbreviations. A project title must be entered and saved before additional sections may be accessed.

Terms and Conditions of the Grant. In order to ensure that the applicant is informed of the terms and conditions of the grant should they be selected as a recipient, applicant must acknowledge that they have read the Terms and Conditions and have shared them with their institution by typing in their name and date in the box provided.

The terms and conditions of this grant may be modified or amended by the AACR prior to execution of the Grant Agreement. In addition, the grant recipient’s institution may only request revisions to sections VII.F.; XII.; XIII.F.; and XIV.A. of the Grant Agreement prior to execution. Only in special circumstances will revisions be considered to sections other than those noted above.

2. DOWNLOAD TEMPLATES & INSTRUCTIONS. The Program Guidelines and Competitive Letter of Intent Instructions, Terms and Conditions, Applicant Checklist, and the Letter of Intent template, can be downloaded from this page.

See Section 8 of the Letter of Intent Format for how to complete and upload the templates. 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. Applicants must include their contact information, including e-mail address, phone number, mailing address, and AACR membership information.

Applicants are also strongly encouraged to have an ORCID iD and include this identifier with their application.

5. INSTITUTION & CONTACTS. Enter information regarding the applicant’s institution and signing official.

NOTE: For those invited to submit a full application, the application process will require a Letter of Reference from a nominator and a statement of support from an endorser (if necessary). 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.
6. **ABSTRACTS.**
   A. **Lay Abstract.** Limited to 3,000 characters (including spaces) which provides a clear, concise, and comprehensive overview of the proposed research project in language suitable for a non-scientific audience.

   B. **Scientific Abstract.** Limited to 3,000 characters (including spaces) and must provide a brief summary of the proposed research project.

   If funded, these Abstracts will become public information; therefore, do not include proprietary or confidential information.

   From the lists provided, select the research areas that are most applicable to this project (*select no more than two*), select the tumor site that is most applicable to this project (*select only one*), and indicate how you found out about this grant opportunity.

7. **SPECIFIC AIMS.** Please enter Specific Aims exactly as will be written in the Letter of Intent Narrative.

8. **LETTER OF INTENT DOCUMENTS.**
   
   **Formatting Instructions.** Applicants must adhere to the following instructions in completing the templates. **Failure to observe type size specifications and page limits will 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 margin must be no less than 0.75 inches on each side.
   - **Page numbering.** The Letter of Intent Narrative must be numbered consecutively; do not use section designations such as “3A” or “3B”.
   - **Tips and techniques for inserting images in documents.**
     - 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.
     - 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.
     - Do not insert Quick Time or TIFF objects into your document.
     - Anchor the images that you embed in your document.
     - Once you have anchored the inserted image, you can format text to wrap around the image.
     - Do not edit your images in Word. Use a graphics program.
     - Do not embed your images in tables, text boxes, and other form elements.
     - 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. The information must be presented in this order:

1. **Letter of Intent Narrative.** Limited to one page, including figures and tables. The References section does not count against this page limit. Please provide a clear, concise, and comprehensive overview of the proposed work. Include information regarding background, rationale, innovation of the research idea, and the potential impact. The information must be presented in this order and must include these subheadings: (A) Title; (B) Question(s) to be addressed; (C) Background and Rationale; (D) Innovation of the research idea and potential impact; (E) Study design and approach; and (F) Outcomes you hope to achieve.

2. **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 must be listed.

B. **Applicant's Biographical Sketch.** Applicants are required to use the Non-fellowship Biosketch template available to download from the NIH’s Biosketch Format Pages, Instructions and Samples. Please refer to the Instructions and Non-fellowship biosketch sample under Biographical Sketch Format Page (non-fellowship). The biographical sketch must be in English.

*Note:* For those invited to submit a full application, collaborators are allowable. However, co-Principal Investigators are NOT permitted. You will have the opportunity to provide Letter(s) of Collaboration and the Biosketch(es) of these collaborators at the full application stage.

C. **Applicant Checklist.** To ensure each applicant’s eligibility, this checklist is required for all applicants. The checklist MUST be downloaded from the ProposalCentral site, completed, and signed by all required parties.

Electronic/digital signatures are permitted. These signatures transmitted by electronic means shall have the same force and effect as original signatures. Please note that if eligibility is based on a future position, the position must be confirmed at the time of application, and CANNOT be contingent upon receiving this grant.

*The signed* Applicant Checklist must be uploaded to your online Letter of Intent in the Letter of Intent Documents section.

**Uploading the attachments into your Letter of Intent.** Once you have converted your attachments to PDF files, the next step is to upload the files to your online Letter of Intent. *Only PDF attachments are permitted for this Letter of Intent submission.*

- Open your online Letter of Intent and go to the section for attaching files. Click the blue “Attach Files” button.
- Select the appropriate type of attachment from the drop-down list.
- Enter your own description of the file in the “Describe Attachment” field.
- Click on the “click here to browse” link to select the file from your computer or drag and drop. Click on the “Upload and Continue” 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 “Current list of uploaded attachments” section of the screen. Clicking the
“Back” or “Upload and Return” button allows you to go back to the main page of this section where the uploaded documents should now be listed. **Click the download icon next to the file name to open and view your uploaded documents.** To delete the file, click on the trashcan icon to the right under the “Delete” column.

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, convert the file to PDF, and use the same process above to attach the new file. **Delete any previously submitted versions of the file before submitting your Letter of Intent.**

**SUBMITTING COMPLETE LETTER OF INTENT**

9. **PI DATA SHEET.** Please verify the applicant’s gender, race, and ethnicity. This is automatically populated based on the applicant’s Professional Profile within ProposalCentral. Changes to the selections on this screen will be reflected in your Professional Profile. The information is handled separately from the application and will not be provided to the Scientific Advisory Board.

10. **SIGNATURE PAGE(S).** In order to ensure that all parties have approved the application, electronic signatures are required from the Applicant/PI and Signing Official. Any user whose signature is required will have automatic access to this application. An email notification is sent to all signatories when a signature is provided.

   To sign, enter your name then click the sign button  

   Use the “Download Application” button to download a copy of your Letter of Intent, including attachments.

**NOTE:** Data entered in 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.

The **AACR strongly encourages** applicants to use the “Download Application” option to ensure that your attachments have loaded properly. This option can also be used if your institution wishes to review the full Letter of Intent.

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 “Download Letter of Intent” option. If you are having any issues with this option, please contact ProposalCentral customer support at: 800-
11. **VALIDATE.** Validate the Letter of Intent on ProposalCentral. This is an essential step. A Letter of Intent that has not been validated cannot be submitted. “Validate” checks for required data and attachments. You will not be able to submit if all the required data and attachments have not been provided.

12. **SUBMIT.** After successfully passing the validate check, click the “Submit” button. An e-mail will be sent to you confirming your submission.

Once your Letter of Intent is submitted you may view it by selecting “Submitted” from the “Proposal Status” drop-down menu under the ‘Proposals’ tab, then clicking the “View” button under the Edit column. 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 APPLICATION**

**Withdrawal of Letter of Intent.** Please advise AACR’s RGA promptly, in writing, should you decide to withdraw your application for any reason. Your correspondence should include your name, the grant opportunity to which you applied, the project title, and the reason for withdrawal.

**Change of Address.** Notify AACR’s RGA in writing 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. Your Professional Profile in ProposalCentral must be kept up to date.

**Change of Institution or Position.** If you change your institution or professional position, contact AACR’s RGA to determine whether your application is still eligible for review.

**INQUIRIES**

Inquiries or technical issues regarding ProposalCentral and the online application process should be directed to customer support at: 800-875-2562 (Toll-free U.S. and Canada), +1-703-964-5840 (Direct Dial International), or by e-mail to pcsupport@altum.com.

Inquiries about the program guidelines, eligibility requirements, and application materials can be directed to AACR’s RGA at grants@aacr.org.
MORE ABOUT THE PARTNERS

MPM Capital is a world-leading biotechnology investment firm with nearly three decades of experience creating and investing in companies that seek to translate scientific innovations into cures for major diseases. With its world-class team with deep experience in scientific research, clinical development, and company-building, MPM strives to power novel medical breakthroughs that transform patients’ lives.

Founded in 1907, the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) is the world’s first and largest professional organization dedicated to advancing cancer research and its mission to prevent and cure cancer. AACR membership includes more than 58,000 laboratory, translational, and clinical researchers; population scientists; other health care professionals; and patient advocates residing in 141 countries and territories around the world. Presently, 32% of members live outside the United States and 22% of AACR’s international members are located in countries with emerging economies. The AACR offers seven categories of membership to support each aspect of our members’ professional development and enhancement in cancer research. In support of the professional development of early-career researchers, no annual dues are required for Associate membership. 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 30 conferences and educational workshops, the largest of which is the AACR Annual Meeting with more than 22,500 attendees. The AACR’s Virtual 2020 Annual Meeting attracted over 74,000 attendees. In addition, the AACR publishes ten 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.