



FELLOWS OF THE AACR ACADEMY CANCER RESEARCH IMPACT GRANTS

2026 Program Guidelines and Application Instructions

American Association for Cancer Research
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PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Fellows of the AACR Academy Cancer Research Impact Grants are intended to support promising early-career investigators who are nearing completion of their postdoctoral or clinical research fellowship training programs and are at a critical stage in their transition toward laboratory independence. This program is designed to provide financial support to sustain research momentum and enable talented early-career investigators to complete their academic training in cancer research during an often vulnerable period in professional development.

In addition to research support, grant recipients will be invited to participate in a structured mentee-mentor relationship with a Fellow of the AACR Academy. The AACR Academy Fellow will be charged with supporting the grant recipient's professional development and transition to independence through consistent mentoring. Each grant recipient is anticipated to be paired with a Fellow of the AACR Academy mentor, with each pair engaging in quarterly virtual mentoring sessions. During these sessions, it is anticipated that the AACR Academy Fellow mentor will provide guidance on ongoing research endeavors, career planning, and advancement within the cancer research community.

FUNDING INFORMATION

This grant provides \$75,000 over 1 year.

IMPORTANT DATES

Submission Deadline	June 30, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time*
Award Notification	September 2026
Start of Grant Term	October 1, 2026

* Please confirm the time in your local time zone using a time zone converter.

RESEARCH PROJECT CRITERIA

Applicants must be actively conducting basic, translational, clinical, or population sciences-focused cancer research in the United States. Ongoing and future research aims must align with AACR's mission to prevent and cure all cancers through research, education, communication, and collaboration.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All applicants with questions about eligibility should contact the AACR's Research and Grants Administration at grants@aacr.org before submitting an application.

By the submission deadline, applicants **must** be AACR members in good standing (dues paid for the current year):

- Information on AACR membership, including membership categories, due rates, and steps for lapsed or nonmembers, can be accessed on our [membership website](#).
- Assistance with membership can be requested by submitting a myAACR [help form](#) or by contacting our Membership Department at membership@aacr.org
- **Applicants whose membership is not in good standing or nonmembers who do not apply for membership by the submission deadline will be considered ineligible.**

At the start of the grant term (October 1, 2026), applicants **must**:

- Have a doctoral degree (PhD, MD, MD/PhD, or equivalent) in a related field.

- Have held a mentored research position with the title of postdoctoral fellow for at least 3 years or clinical research fellow for at least 2 years, placing them near the anticipated completion of such programs.
- Have completed their most recent doctoral degree **within the past five years** (i.e., degree cannot have been conferred before October 1, 2021; the formal date of receipt of the degree is the date the degree was conferred, as indicated on your diploma and/or transcript). Exceptions to the 5-year window may be granted for up to 12 months of parental or justified personal/family leave. Applicants exceeding the 5-year limit who believe they are eligible must contact the AACR's RGA before submitting their application.
 - Applicants with a medical degree must have completed their most recent doctoral degree or medical residency – **whichever date is later** – within the past five years.
- Work **under the auspices of a mentor** at an academic, medical, or research institution **in the United States**

At the start of the grant term (October 1, 2026), applicants **cannot**:

- Be a candidate for a further doctoral degree.
- Be an employee or subcontractor of a U.S. federal government entity or for-profit private industry.
- Be, or have been, at the rank of instructor, adjunct professor, assistant professor, research assistant professor, the equivalent, or higher. Qualified researchers are invited to apply for an AACR Career Development Award.
 - **Exception:** If you are an MD who is considered a postdoctoral fellow but hold the title of instructor so that you can see patients, you may be eligible. Potential applicants possessing an MD are encouraged to contact AACR's RGA before submitting an application to verify your eligibility.

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

TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS

Grant recipient must attend the **Annual Grantee Recognition Event** held during the AACR Annual Meeting 2027 to formally accept their grant. Grant funds may be used to support the grantee's registration and travel to this event.

Grant recipient is expected to attend one **AACR Grantee Summit** during the grant term, as participation provides valuable opportunities that enhance the grant experience. If scheduling conflicts arise, AACR will work with you to find a suitable solution. Grant funds may be used to support the grantee's attendance to this event.

See item 7 of the Application Instructions for details on travel funds. *In the event of unforeseen scheduling changes, the Grantee will be contacted regarding alternative arrangements.*

EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be peer-reviewed by a Scientific Review Committee comprised of researchers and physician-scientists respected for their own accomplishments in cancer research and viewed as leaders in the field. The President of the AACR will appoint the members of the Scientific Review Committee.

The Committee will consider the following criteria when reviewing applications:

- **Applicant.**
 - **Scientific Excellence and Research Momentum:** To what extent do the applicant's prior research accomplishments demonstrate quality, originality, and impact in cancer research? To what extent is there evidence of sustained productivity and research momentum (e.g., peer-reviewed publications, preprints where appropriate, and scientific presentations) that this award would help maintain during the transition period?
 - **Future Potential and Readiness for Independence:** To what extent has the applicant demonstrated potential to make sustained, high-impact contributions to cancer research? How well positioned is the applicant to complete mentored training and advance toward career independence within the 1-year grant term, including effective use of the structured AACR Fellow of the Academy mentor engagement?
 - **Need for Transitional Support:** To what extent would a current gap in funding jeopardize (1) continuity and completion of ongoing cancer research, (2) maintenance of research momentum during this vulnerable career transition period, and/or (3) the applicant's career progression and retention in academic cancer research?
- **Institutional Support.** How strong is the mentorship and training environment, and how well will it support the applicant's transition toward independence during the grant period? What evidence demonstrates institutional commitment to the applicant's career progression (e.g., protected research time, access to facilities/resources, and support for participation in the structured AACR Academy mentoring relationship)?

TOBACCO INDUSTRY FUNDING AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Scientists and health professionals funded by the tobacco industry for any research project are not eligible for any AACR grant. A grantee who accepts 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 be immediately 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 do not relate to a particular research project.

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

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The AACR requires applicants to submit an online application by **1:00 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on Tuesday, June 30, 2026**, using the ProposalCentral website at <https://proposalcentral.com>.

Applicants need to enter information directly into the online application platform as well as use the templates provided for the following attachments:

- Applicant Statement and Transition Plan
- Applicant's Biographical Sketch
- Mentor's Biographical Sketch

Failure to use the provided templates and/or adhere to the formatting guidelines and instructions will result in your application being rejected without review. See Section 10 below for how to complete and upload the completed templates.

GETTING STARTED IN ProposalCentral

If you are a new user of ProposalCentral, click the "Need an account?" and complete the registration process. After logging in, select the Professional Profile tab and complete your profile before starting an application.

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?".

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 the AACR by clicking "Filter by Grant Maker" and selecting "American Association for Cancer Research" in the drop-down menu. Find "**Fellows of the AACR Academy Cancer Research Impact Grants**" and click "Apply Now" to create your application.

If you have any difficulties registering, logging in, creating your application, or any technical issues regarding ProposalCentral, contact their customer support at: 800-875-2562 (Toll-free U.S. and Canada), +1-703-964-5840 (Direct Dial International), or by email at pcsupport@altum.com. See the ProposalCentral [FAQ](#) for additional information.

APPLICATION SECTIONS

Numbers correspond to the application sections found on the left side of the ProposalCentral website.

1. TITLE PAGE.

- Enter the Applicant Name (First, Last) as the Title in this section.
- Acknowledge that you have read **AACR's Terms and Conditions** and have shared them with your institution by typing in your name and date.

2. DOWNLOAD TEMPLATES & INSTRUCTIONS. These Program Guidelines and Application Instructions, Terms and Conditions, a sample Biographical Sketch, and all required templates can be downloaded from this page.

The Applicant Eligibility and Compliance Guide can also be found in this section. Applicants are

strongly encouraged to review this guide to ensure their submission meets all eligibility and compliance requirements. This document does not need to be uploaded with your application materials.

See Item 10 below for how to complete and upload the completed templates.

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 strongly encouraged to have an ORCID iD and include this identifier with their application.
5. **INSTITUTION & CONTACTS.** Enter information regarding the applicant's institution, mentor, endorser (if applicable, see item 6 below), and signing official.
6. **MENTOR LETTER OF REFERENCE.** Each applicant must have a letter of reference from their mentor accompanying the application. The letter of reference must be uploaded directly by the mentor to ProposalCentral. If the applicant is being co-mentored, the mentors must provide a co-signed letter providing the mentorship details described in the e-mail instructions as they pertain to each member of the mentorship team. The co-signed letter must be uploaded only by the primary mentor. **NOTE: Due to the mentorship component of this grant, significant weight will be given to the letter of reference in the evaluation of the application.**

If the mentor or co-mentor (if applicable) is **not** an active, emeritus, or honorary member of the AACR, the applicant **must** be endorsed by an active, emeritus, or honorary member of the AACR. As an AACR member, the endorser is asked to sign an acknowledgment in Section 12 that the applicant adheres to accepted ethical scientific standards and has or will make long-term contributions to cancer.

Enter the e-mail address of the individual submitting a letter of reference. Enter the e-mail address again to confirm and click the add icon. If their e-mail address is in the ProposalCentral system, you will be prompted to "Send E-mail" to them. **The e-mail will contain instructions and a link to upload the letter of reference directly to the application.** If the e-mail address of the individual submitting the letter of reference is not in the ProposalCentral system, you will be prompted for their first and last name before being prompted to "Send E-mail."


Applications cannot be submitted without a letter of reference. Applicants can view letter submission status in Section 6 of the online application.


7. **BUDGET PERIOD DETAIL.** Applicants should submit a budget in the amount of \$75,000. As these fellowships are intended to support the salary and benefits of the fellow, applicants must dedicate at least 50% effort to research. The percentage of salary requested may not exceed the percent effort of the applicant. Up to 50% of the total budget may be allocated for non-personnel direct research expenses, such as research/laboratory supplies, equipment, publication charges for manuscripts that pertain directly to the funded project, and other research expenses. See terms and conditions of the Grant for information on publishing in AACR journals. Budget requests for

equipment that exceed 10% of the total budget must be accompanied by a detailed justification. *Annual Grantee Recognition Event.* The grantee **must** attend the Annual Grantee Recognition Event at the AACR Annual Meeting 2027 to formally accept the grant. Up to \$2000 may be allocated from the grant to offset attendance costs for the Grantee Recognition Event.

AACR Grantee Summit. Up to \$1,000 may also be allocated from the grant to offset attendance costs to the AACR Grantee Summit.


OTHER SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS. Up to \$2,000 may be used for registration, housing, travel, poster preparation fees, and subsistence expenses related to attendance at any scientific meetings or conferences.

**To enter a personnel cost line item, click the add button  and enter the necessary values. Please note that the start and end dates are pre-populated.*

**To enter non-personnel cost line items, click the add button  and be sure to save regularly to prevent loss of data.*

A detailed budget justification explaining the allocation of the grant funds must accompany the application. See item 8 below.

8. BUDGET SUMMARY AND JUSTIFICATION. The budget details entered in the previous section will be summarized on this page. Scroll to the bottom of the page to enter personnel and non-personnel cost justifications.

9. PENDING AND OTHER SUPPORT. Use the add button  to add Pending and Other Support. If you have Other Support saved in your professional profile, you may select from the available list and save. To add a new Other Support entry, click 'Create New Other Support'. Enter the required information, then click 'Save and Close' on each page to add the Other Support to your application.

NOTE: If at any time prior to selection and notification an applicant is awarded any funding that may overlap with the 2026 Fellows of the AACR Academy Cancer Research Impact Grants, the applicant must notify the AACR immediately.

**If you have no Pending and Other Support to report, select the corresponding checkbox:*

No Other Support to report

10. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS. **ANY alterations made to the provided templates will result in disqualification of your application.** Upload completed templates into your ProposalCentral application in portable document format (PDF).

A. Applicant Statement and Transition Plan. Applicants are required to use the template available from ProposalCentral. **Failure to use the provided templates and/or adhere to the formatting guidelines and instructions will result in the application being rejected without review.**

- Page Limit: Limited to two pages.

- Font:
 - Must use 12-point Times New Roman for the main text.
- Margins:
 - The page margins must be no less than 0.75 inches on each side.
- Header/footer:
 - Complete the header. Do not remove the header or footer.
- Headings. Do not alter headings (e.g., “Training Background”). **Alterations to the headings will result in the application being rejected without review.** *Additional sections beyond what is requested in the template will be redacted.*
- The Applicant Statement must be written as a narrative document and include the following components in the order listed below:
 - I. **Training Background.** May briefly expand upon, but not repeat, information in the biosketch
 - One paragraph describing graduate training
 - One paragraph describing postdoctoral or clinical research fellowship training
 - II. **Research Accomplishments.**
 - Summary of past research accomplishments and current research activities, with emphasis on how these efforts have prepared the applicant for independence in cancer research
 - III. **Near-Term Research Plan.**
 - Description of research planned during the grant period, including how grant support will sustain research momentum and enable completion of training. Applicants should briefly describe expected outcomes or research progress anticipated during the grant period, recognizing that plans may evolve as training is completed.
 - IV. **Future Research Direction.**
 - Anticipated future research plans as an independent investigator
 - V. **Statement of Need and Transition to Independence.**
 - Description of current funding limitations and how gaps affect research continuity and career progression
 - Explanation of how grant support and mentoring will facilitate the applicant’s transition to independence
- I. **Applicant's Biographical Sketch.** **Applicants are required to use the template available from the ProposalCentral website.** This template as well as an example are available for download from the ProposalCentral platform. All sections of the biographical sketch must be completed in English.
 - Page Limit: **Limited to five pages.**
 - Headings: Do not alter the section headings. *Additional sections beyond what is*

requested in the template will be redacted. The information must be presented in the following order:

- A. Personal Statement
- B. Positions, Scientific Appointments, and Honors
- C. Contributions to Science

J. Mentor’s Biographical Sketch. *Mentors are required to use the template available from the ProposalCentral website.* This template as well as an example are available for download from the ProposalCentral platform. All sections of the biographical sketch must be completed in English. If a co-signed letter of reference is provided, a biographical sketch must be provided for each member of the mentorship team signing the letter.

- Page Limit: **Limited to five pages.**
- Headings: Do not alter the section headings. *Additional sections beyond what is requested in the template will be redacted.* The information must be presented in the following order:
 - A. Personal Statement
 - B. Positions, Scientific Appointments, and Honors
 - C. Contributions to Science

K. Letter of Recommendation. Each applicant must upload one letter of recommendation from an individual other than the applicant’s mentor or co-mentor (if applicable). The letter must be presented on institutional letterhead and must be distinct from the mentor’s confidential Letter of Reference and from the Letter of Institutional Support. The letter of recommendation should provide an independent assessment of the applicant’s research contributions and trajectory (e.g., originality, impact, and productivity), readiness for career independence, and potential for sustained, long-term contributions to the cancer research field. The letter should not repeat details of the mentor’s training plan, mentor-applicant relationship, or institutional space/resources/financial commitments, which are addressed elsewhere in the application.

L. Letter of Institutional Commitment. Each applicant must have a letter of institutional commitment accompanying the application. The letter must be presented on institutional letterhead, written by the department head, dean, or other senior member of the institution on behalf of the applicant and addressed to the Scientific Review Committee. It should explain the applicant’s relationship with the institution, and the nature and extent of support for the applicant’s research available from the institution, including laboratory space and financial and other resources. The letter must also confirm that, if funding is awarded, the institution will provide the additional support necessary to sustain the applicant for one additional year.

Uploading the application documents. Once you have converted your application documents to PDF

files, upload the files as attachments to your online application. *Only PDF attachments are permitted for this application submission.*

- Open your online application 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 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 application.**

SUBMITTING COMPLETE APPLICATION

- 11. 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 Review Committee.
- 12. SIGNATURE PAGE(S).** In order to ensure that all parties have approved the application, electronic signatures are required from the Applicant/PI, Signing Official, Mentor, and Endorser (if applicable). 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.

If applicable, **Endorsers are only required to sign the Signature Page.** A letter of reference or biographical sketch is not needed from an individual serving solely as an Endorser; *if provided, these documents will be removed from the application.*

To sign, enter your name then click the sign button



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

NOTE: Data entered in the online application are automatically included in the application download. If information is missing, it could be because you have not entered the information in one of the online application 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 also use the "Download Application" option. This option can be used if your institution wishes to review the full application but also should be used by the applicant to ensure that your attachments loaded properly. **The following application materials may not be present when using this option: Pending & Other Support.** If applicable, the blinded letter of reference will not be present when downloading the full application. Absence of these materials should **not** be considered an error. If your institution requires all components of the application to review, the above documents need to be added individually by the applicant.

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 Application" option. If you are having any issues with this option, please contact ProposalCentral 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.

- 13. VALIDATE.** Validate the application on ProposalCentral. This is an essential step. An application 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.
- 14. SUBMIT.** After successfully passing the validate check, click the "**Submit**" link. An e-mail will be sent to you confirming your submission.

Once your application 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 application to see the updated status.

CHANGES TO YOUR APPLICATION

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

Change of Address. Notify the AACR of any changes of address, e-mail, or phone number, following the submission of an application. Include your name and the ProposalCentral identification number. The e-mail address provided with your application 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 the AACR to determine whether your application is still eligible for review.

INQUIRIES

Questions regarding this program can be directed to the AACR's RGA department at grants@aacr.org.

MORE ABOUT THE PARTNERS



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 61,000 laboratory, translational, and clinical researchers; population scientists; other health care professionals; and patient advocates residing in 143 countries and territories around the world. Presently, 34% of members live outside the United States and 20% of AACR's international members are located in countries building cancer research capacity. 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.