Breast Cancer Research Foundation-AACR Career Development Awards

2027 Program Guidelines and Competitive Letter of Intent Instructions

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PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Breast Cancer Research Foundation-AACR Career Development Awards represent a joint effort to support early-career investigators to conduct basic, translational, clinical, or population-based research with direct applicability and relevance to **breast cancer**.

FUNDING INFORMATION

The grants provide $375,000 over three years for expenses related to the research project, which may include salary and benefits of the grant recipient and any collaborator, postdoctoral or clinical research fellows, graduate students (including tuition costs associated with graduate students' education and training), research assistants; research/laboratory supplies; equipment; publication charges for manuscripts that pertain directly to the funded project; and other research expenses.

IMPORTANT DATES

Letter of Intent Deadline	December 15, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time*
Applicants Notified of Letter of Intent Decision	February 2027
Full Application Deadline	April 1, 2027 at 1:00 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time*
Award Notification	June 2027
Start of Grant Term	July 1, 2027

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

RESEARCH PROJECT CRITERIA

Proposed project may be in basic, translational, clinical, epidemiological, population health, and/or community-based cancer related research and designed to accelerate the discovery, development, and application of new agents to treat **breast cancer**. Research that aims to advance the science of understanding cancer health disparities in racial and ethnic minorities with relevance to breast cancer will also be considered.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All applicants with questions about eligibility should contact the AACR's Research and Grants Administration at grants@aacr.org ***before*** *submitting a Letter of Intent.*

By the Letter of Intent submission deadline, applicants **must** be AACR members in the Active Membership category 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 Letter of Intent submission deadline* will be considered ineligible.**

At the start of the grant term (July 1, 2027), applicants **must**:

- Have a doctoral degree (PhD, MD, MD/PhD, or equivalent) in a related field.
- Hold a faculty position with the title of assistant professor, instructor, research assistant professor, or the 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. Applicants are advised to contact the AACR's Research and Grants Administration (RGA) at *grants@aacr.org* **before** submitting their Letter of Intent to confirm they will hold an eligible position.
- Have started their first independent faculty position **within the past 6 years** from the start of the grant term (i.e., employment start date of July 1, 2021, or later, as indicated on the employment offer letter). Exceptions to the 6-year window may be granted for up to 12 months of parental or justified personal/family leave. Applicants exceeding the 6-year limit who believe they are eligible must contact the AACR's RGA **before** submitting their Letter of Intent.
- Have independent laboratory space as confirmed by their institution.
- 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, applicants applying from an institution in a country where they are not a citizen or permanent resident confirm that their work status will allow them to complete the project and grant term.*

At the start of the grant term (July 1, 2027), 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. They may serve as collaborators, but no grant funds may be directed toward these individuals.
- Concurrently hold another AACR grant.
  - *Current AACR grantees may apply only if their current grant ends before the start of the grant term for this funding opportunity (i.e., July 1, 2027). Also, the terms of their current grant must stipulate that the final progress reports be approved by the AACR before July 1, 2027.*
- Be, or have been, a Principal Investigator on a substantial independent research award (e.g., an NIH R01 award, DP2 award, DP5 award, MIRA award, or the equivalent). These individuals are invited to apply for AACR grants for independent investigators.
  - For the purposes of this grant, a substantial independent research award is defined as a grant that offers at least $250,000 (direct) per year for more than three years and must have undergone a peer-review process by active researchers and physician-scientists.

Investigators may submit only one Letter of Intent for this funding opportunity 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.

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

Grant recipient must attend the **Annual Grantee Recognition Event** held during the AACR Annual Meeting 2028 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.

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

COMPETITIVE LETTER OF INTENT

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 2027 Breast Cancer Research Foundation-AACR Career Development Award 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:

- Lay and Scientific Abstracts (limited to 3,000 characters each, including spaces, which should provide clear, concise, and comprehensive overviews of the proposed research project)
- Applicant's Biographical Sketch
- Applicant Eligibility Checklist

EVALUATION OF COMPETITIVE LETTERS OF INTENT AND INVITED APPLICATIONS

Letters of Intent and full applications will be peer-reviewed by a Scientific Review Committee comprised of researchers and physician-scientists respected for their own accomplishments in breast 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 Letter of Intent and invited full applications:

- ***Investigator***. Does the applicant have the necessary training and experience? Have they demonstrated the capacity for independent research? Is there evidence of a successful track record in cancer research or career commitment to this field?
- ***Project***.
  - ***Scientific Merit***: Is the project grounded in sound scientific principles and theories? Does it address a significant question or problem in the field?
  - ***Originality and Innovation:*** Does the project offer new insights or approaches? Does it challenge existing paradigms or develop new methodologies?
  - ***Objectives and Hypothesis:*** Are the research objectives clear and well-defined?
  - ***Approach:*** Are the research methods and experimental design appropriate? Is there a clear plan for data collection and analysis?
  - ***Feasibility:*** Is the project achievable within the proposed timeframe and budget (the budget will be evaluated for those invited to submit a full application)?
  - ***Impact:*** Does the project have the potential to make a significant impact in the field?
- ***Institutional Environment (to be considered for invited full applications)***. 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?

The Committee will consider each year's applicants independent of previously funded proposals and the institutions of previous grantees.

LETTER OF REFERENCE (*required only for those invited to submit full applications*)
Each applicant must have a letter of reference from a nominator accompanying the application. A nominator must be the applicant's department chair, division head, or dean. The letter of reference must be on institutional letterhead and must be uploaded directly by the nominator to ProposalCentral.

If the nominator 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 at the full application stage that the applicant adheres to accepted ethical scientific standards and has or will make long-term contributions to cancer.

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. An applicant 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

LETTER OF INTENT INSTRUCTIONS

The AACR requires applicants to submit an online Letter of Intent by **1:00 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on Tuesday, December 15, 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:

- Letter of Intent
- Applicant's Biographical Sketch
- Applicant Eligibility Checklist

Failure to use the provided templates and/or adhere to the formatting guidelines and instructions will result in your Letter of Intent being rejected without review. See Section 8 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 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?".

To start a Letter of Intent, 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 **"AACR Breast Cancer Research Foundation-AACR Career Development Awards"** and click "Apply Now" to create your Letter of Intent.

If you have any difficulties registering, logging in, creating your Letter of Intent, 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.

LETTER OF INTENT SECTIONS

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

1. **TITLE PAGE.**
   - Enter the **Research Project Title**. The title is limited to no more than 130 characters (including spaces). Do not use abbreviations. The title must match the title in the Letter of Intent Narrative document.
   - 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 Competitive Letter of Intent Instructions, Terms and Conditions, a sample Biographical Sketch, and all required templates can be downloaded from this page.

   See Item 8 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 Letter of Intent.

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

6. **ABSTRACTS.** If funded, these abstracts will become public information; therefore, do not include proprietary or confidential information.
   - **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. Do not use abbreviations unless absolutely necessary.
   - **Scientific Abstract.** The abstract is limited to 3,000 characters (including spaces) and must provide a brief summary of the proposed project.

   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, and indicate how you found out about this grant opportunity.

7. **SPECIFIC AIMS.** Enter Specific Aims exactly as written in the Letter of Intent Narrative. Each Specific Aim should be no longer than 400 characters, including spaces. Be sure to click the 'Save' button after each Specific Aim entry.

8. **LETTER OF INTENT DOCUMENTS. ANY alterations made to the provided templates will result in disqualification of your Letter of Intent.** Upload completed templates into your ProposalCentral application in portable document format (PDF).

   A. **Letter of Intent.** 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 Letter of Intent being rejected without review.***
      - Font:
        - Use a standard, readable font such as Times New Roman or Arial. A single font must be used consistently throughout the document.
        - Main text must be 12-point font.
        - Text for figures, legends, and tables must be legible when viewed at 100% zoom in PDF format; we *strongly recommend* no smaller than 9-point Times New Roman for this purpose.
      - Margins: The page margins must be no less than 0.75 inches on each side.

- Header/footer: Complete the header. The title is limited to no more than 130 characters (including spaces) Do not remove the header or footer.

I. Letter of Intent Narrative.

- Headings and subheadings: Do not alter the headings (e.g., "I. Letter of Intent Narrative") or subheadings (e.g., "A. Specific Aims"). **Alterations to the headings and/or subheadings will result in the Letter of Intent being rejected without review.** The Letter of Intent must be presented in the following order:
    I. Letter of Intent Narrative
        A. Specific Aims
        B. Rationale, Preliminary Data, Methodology, and Approach
        C. Statistical Analysis Plan
        D. Significance and Statement of Relevance
    II. References
- Page limit: **Limited to two pages**, including figures and tables. The References section does not count against this page limit.

II. References. Limited to two pages. AACR reference style can be found here: https://aacrjournals.org/pages/article-style-and-format#references. Note that 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.

B. Applicant's Biographical Sketch. ***Applicants are required to use the template available from the ProposalCentral website.*** This template as well as a sample are available for download from the ProposalCentral platform. All sections of the biographical sketch must be completed in English. Biographical sketches submitted using NIH or other formats will not be accepted.

- 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:
    1. Personal Statement
    2. Positions, Scientific Appointments, and Honors
    3. Contributions to Research/Science

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 Biographical Sketch(es) of these collaborators at the full application stage.

C. Applicant Eligibility 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 effects as original signatures.

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

Uploading the Letter of Intent documents. Once you have converted your Letter of Intent documents to PDF files, upload the files as attachments 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 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 Letter of Intent and will not be provided to the Scientific Review Committee.

10. **SIGNATURE PAGE(S).** In order to ensure that all parties have approved the Letter of Intent, electronic signatures are required from the Applicant/PI and Signing Official. Any user whose signature is required will have automatic access to this Letter of Intent. 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

download. If information is missing, it could be because you have not entered the information in one of the online Letter of Intent 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 Letter of Intent but also should be used by the applicant to ensure that your attachments loaded properly.

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.

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"** link. 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 LETTER OF INTENT

Withdrawal of Letter of Intent. Please advise the AACR promptly, in writing, should you decide to withdraw your Letter of Intent 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 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 the AACR to determine whether your Letter of Intent 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

The Breast Cancer Research Foundation® (BCRF) is a nonprofit organization committed to achieving prevention and a cure for breast cancer. Founded by Evelyn H. Lauder in 1993, BCRF-funded investigators have been deeply involved in every major breakthrough in breast cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment and survivorship.

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 65,000 laboratory, translational, and clinical researchers; population scientists; other health care professionals; and patient advocates residing in 143 countries and territories around the world. Presently, 33% of members live outside the United States and 24% of AACR's international members are located in countries building cancer research capacity. The AACR marshals the full spectrum of expertise of the cancer community to accelerate progress in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer by annually convening more than 30 conferences and educational workshops, the largest of which is the AACR Annual Meeting. The AACR publishes 10 prestigious, peer-reviewed scientific journals. Other AACR publications include Cancer Today, a magazine for cancer patients and caregivers; the annual AACR Cancer Progress Report; AACR Cancer Disparities Progress Report; AACR Annual Impact Report; Leading Discoveries, the AACR's awareness and donor magazine; and the blog, Cancer Research Catalyst. In addition, 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.