Request for Applications FY2025
The University of Cincinnati Cancer Center (UCCC)
American Cancer Society (ACS) Institutional Research Grant (IRG)
Pilot Project Award Program

IMPORTANT DEADLINES
For the FY2025 cycle:
- Applications will be accepted until **October 15, 2024 at 5:00PM ET**.
- Awards will be announced and funding available in **January 2025**.

GOALS OF THE PROGRAM
The purposes of the ACS IRG program are to:
- Support the development of new investigators to conduct <u>independent</u> cancer research.
- Foster mutually beneficial relationships between UCCC investigators and the local ACS.

AMOUNT AND LENGTH OF FUNDING
Funded ACS IRG projects will each be awarded up to $80,000 for a period of 1 year.

NUMBER OF AWARDS
Up to 4 ACS IRG projects may be awarded funding in the current cycle.

ELIGIBILITY
ACS IRG pilot project awards are intended to support independent, self-directed investigators early in their careers. These individuals must be eligible to apply for independent national competitive research grants, but may not currently hold an NIH R01 or equivalent grant (>$100,000 per year direct costs for more than 3 years).

Applicants are IRG-eligible within **_6_** years of their first independent faculty appointment. The first independent faculty appointment is identified by faculty rank, direct oversight of a startup package, assignment of independent laboratory space, and a direct reporting line to the academic unit chair or director. It is strongly recommended that academic unit chairs/directors clearly identify these factors in a letter of support as detailed below in the application instructions. Applicants whose prior supervisors have appointments at UC or Cincinnati Children's are also strongly encouraged to include a letter of support from the prior supervisor affirming academic independence in terms of grant applications and manuscript authorship.

Recipients of ACS IRG pilot project awards are not required to be US citizens. However, any applicant who is not a US citizen must hold a visa that will allow them to remain in the US long enough to complete the IRG pilot project.

Finally, interested ACS IRG pilot project award applicants who are not yet members of the UCCC are strongly encouraged to apply and be approved for membership. The membership application can be completed at: https://ucwebapps.uc.edu/institutemember/Account/Login.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

ACS IRG pilot project applications **_must_** follow the template provided and include the following:

- **Biographical Information Form:**
  - First name, last name, and degree(s)
  - Academic title
  - Department/division and institution
  - Citizenship status (see above eligibility criteria)
  - Year last degree conferred
  - Year of first independent position
  - Verification of applicant eligibility by department chair (signature required)
  - Education
  - Training
  - Appointments
  - Other research support
  - Publications
  - Conflicts of interest: UC/Children's co-authors and co-investigators within the last 3 years

- **Research Proposal Pages:**
  - Project title
  - Names of any co-investigators
  - Certification requirements by Biosafety, IACUC, IRB, and/or Radiation Safety
  - Technical abstract: In up to 200 words that could be shared publicly, the proposed research is described, emphasizing the motivation for the work, the general approach that will be taken, and the likelihood for impactful outcomes from the work.
  - Lay abstract: In up to 200 words that could be shared publicly, a description of the proposed research for general audiences is presented, emphasizing the cancer site/context, the rationale and importance of the work, and the potential deliverables that would result from successful completion of the work.
  - Aims page: In 1 page, the research proposal is summarized including premise, hypothesis/objective, specific aims, and impact statement.
  - Research plan: In 4 additional pages, the full research proposal is presented. Sections describing significance, innovation, directly relevant preliminary data, full descriptions of aims, and a timeline will be included. Please follow NIH guidelines for formatting and content of these sections.
  - Citations/references: A format including full titles is preferred.
  - Appendix materials: All applicants should complete the Individual Development Plan (IDP); other sections should be completed as needed.
    - IDP for early stage faculty members is required with all applications.
    - Regulatory approvals: Active and submitted regulatory protocols will strengthen applications compared to those that have not yet initiated regulatory review.
      - Documentation of human subjects protections and IRB status (if necessary; please use NIH formatting).
      - Vertebrate animals plan and IACUC status (if necessary; please use NIH formatting).

- Letters of support (1 page per letter):
  - Department/division chair: It is strongly recommended that academic unit heads verify the academic rank, award of a startup package, assignment of independent laboratory/office space, and direct line of reporting to the department/division chair. Reviewers will evaluate the information to establish independence and eligibility for the IRG.
  - Prior supervisors from UC or Cincinnati Children's: Applicants are strongly encouraged to include letters that describe the applicant's planned co-authorship and co-investigator applications of manuscripts and grants for evaluation by the review committee.
  - Collaborators: Letters should include information on specific contributions to the proposed work.
- Description of previous interactions with ACS.
- Additional appendix materials are not permitted unless previously arranged and approved by the IRG co-PIs.

- **Budget Form:**
  - Limited to $80,000 for 1 year.
  - Please list line items related to:
    - Personnel
    - Permanent equipment
    - Supplies
    - Miscellaneous
  - Budget justification: A separate section from the budget to itemize and explain all items.
  - ***Allowable*** expenses include:
    - Research supplies and animal maintenance
    - Technical assistance
    - Domestic travel when necessary to carry out the proposed research
    - Publication costs, including reprints
    - Costs of computer time
    - Special fees (pathology, photography, etc.)
    - Stipends for graduate students and postdoctoral assistants if their role is to promote and sustain the project presented by the junior faculty members
    - Equipment costing less than $2,000 (special justification is necessary for items exceeding this amount)
    - Registration fees at scientific meetings
  - ***Unallowable*** expenses include:
    - Foreign travel (special consideration for scientific meetings in Canada or Mexico)
    - Secretarial or administrative salaries; Membership dues
    - Study tuition and fees (graduate or undergraduate)
    - Books and periodicals
    - Office and laboratory furniture
    - Office equipment and supplies
    - Rental of office or laboratory space
    - Construction, renovation, or maintenance of buildings or laboratories

- Recruiting and relocation expenses
- Non-medical services to patients (travel to a clinical site or patient incentives are allowable expenses)
- Salary of principal investigator
- Honoraria and travel expenses for visiting lecturers
- Indirect costs

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS
Please submit all materials by email ***as a single PDF document*** to UCCCgrants@uc.edu.

REVIEW PROCESS AND EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS
The UCCC ACS IRG Pilot Project Award Review Committee will be comprised of academic investigators representing a broad range of research disciplines, from all ranks, who focus on cancer investigations across the spectrum of scientific discovery, translation, clinical and population science research. In addition, an ACS representative and 1–2 community stakeholders will be included on the Committee. Upon receipt, each abstract will be evaluated and reviewed by IRG Review Committee members whose research interests are likely to be informative to the application. Ad hoc reviewers will be recruited to address needs for specific expertise and/or manage conflicts of interest. If internal reviewers with relevant expertise are not available, ad hoc reviewers will be recruited from regional or national peer institutions.

Applications will be assigned to at least 2 scientific and 1 stakeholder reviewers. Conflicts of interest will be managed by excluding potential reviewers from the same department or division as the applicant, requesting reviewers to self-identify potential conflicts, and referencing the applicant's self-reported list of conflicts of interest. Reviewers will evaluate each application using the ACS review template and scoring system (scores ranging from 1.0 – Exceptional to 5.0 – Noncompetitive). Each criterion score will be supported by bullet point notes of strengths and drawbacks, and the recommendations to the applicant will be available to specifically communicate anonymous reviewer suggestions for improvement of the application. Reviewers will be anonymous throughout the process.

ACS Scoring System:

1.0	Exceptional	1.6	Excellent	2.1	Very Good	2.6 – 3.0	Good
1.1	Exceptional	1.7	Excellent	2.2	Very Good	3.1 – 4.0	Fair
1.2	Exceptional	1.8	Excellent	2.3	Very Good	4.1 – 5.0	Noncompetitive
1.3	Outstanding	1.9	Excellent	2.4	Very Good		
1.4	Outstanding	2.0	Excellent	2.5	Very Good		
1.5	Outstanding						

UCCC will determine average scores from the written reviews, selecting the strongest scored applications for IRG Committee discussion. Reviewers from the same department/division as an applicant will be absent during application discussion. The committee will vote on a final score and a recommendation of applications to be funded. A resume and summary of discussion will be distributed to applicants whose applications were discussed.

PROGRESS REPORTING AND EXPECTATIONS
All applicants are strongly encouraged to complete the ethics, grant-writing, and career development activities described in submitted IDPs, as part of the ACS IRG program's mission to foster career development across the cancer research community.

Funded ACS IRG investigators will be asked to submit an annual progress report for their award. ***Pilot project recipients from Cincinnati Children's must also submit invoices for expensing at minimum every 6 months as part of their progress reporting***. All awardees are expected to comply with any future requests from UCCC administration or leadership for longitudinal, follow-up information related to pilot projects for at least a minimum 7 years after the award period. Presentations(s) to the ACS, UCCC scientific leadership, and/or other groups may be requested of awardees; this includes, but is not limited to, presentations at Research Program meetings, Cancer Research Seminar Series, annual retreats, and additional events hosted by the ACS and/or UCCC. The progress reporting template will be provided by UCCC administration. Progress reports should summarize the work accomplished under the grant and results achieved, including the relevance of the work to cancer, as well as:

- Published or in-press peer-reviewed publications <u>resulting from this support</u> *(first or senior author publications only)*; a copy of the publications cover page(s), including the abstract and acknowledgement of ACS funding, is required for each relevant publication.
- Abstracts, book chapters, and other publications (published or in-press only) during or after this support.
- National competitive grants obtained <u>as a result of this support</u> *(PI or mPI only)*.
- Other grants obtained after this support *(PI or mPI only)*
- Patents granted or applied for.
- Interactions with the local and national ACS.

Please note that any resulting presentations, abstracts, publications, grant submissions, etc. should acknowledge the UCCC ACS IRG Pilot Project Award Program and, as applicable, the appropriate donors or foundations providing matching funds for the project. These details will be outlined in the recipients' award letters.

In addition to progress reporting, ACS IRG awardees will be expected to complete quarterly surveys to demonstrate their participation in mentorship activities. These surveys will be distributed through the Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap) system. Additional information will be provided by UCCC administration.

An individual may apply for a 1-year <u>competitive</u> renewal of a previously funded pilot project grant. The IRG Review Committee will require and review the project's progress report when considering the application for continuing funding.

Finally, awardees will be expected to serve as new members of the UCCC ACS IRG Pilot Project Award Review Committee during future grant cycles.

DISCONTINUATION OF FUNDING
UCCC reserves the right to discontinue funding if the PI leaves their respective institution, no substantive progress has been made within 12 months of the project, or the PI does not provide requested progress reports or is non-responsive to other time-sensitive requests from UCCC administration or scientific leadership. Reviews and decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. If discontinued, funds will be reinvested into the UCCC ACS IRG Pilot Project Award Program.

QUESTIONS?
Please email UCCCgrants@uc.edu.