

University of Cincinnati Cancer Center (UCCC) Pilot Project Award Program
Request for Applications Fall 2025
Single-Principal Investigator (PI) Funding Opportunity

IMPORTANT DEADLINES for the Fall 2025 cycle:

- Applications accepted **August 25, 2025 through September 8, 2025 at 5:00PM ET.**
- Awards will be announced and funding available in **November 2025.**

Reminder: PIs may only hold 1 active award at a time from any UCCC pilot funding mechanism.

GOALS OF THE PROGRAM To support faculty investigators with interest in cancer research, the UCCC is requesting applications for its Pilot Project Award Program, which seeks to:

- Increase collaborative interactions and foster innovative research.
- Facilitate novel approaches in cancer research.
- Encourage entry of new investigators into cancer research.
- Translate laboratory findings into clinical interventions.
- Generate preliminary data that will lead to peer-reviewed, cancer-relevant extramural funding, conference presentations, and publications.

PROPOSALS OF PRIORITY INTEREST All types of cancer-relevant research proposals are encouraged and will be reviewed and scored using the process described below in **REVIEW PROCESS**. While there are specific donor gift funds to support research focused on cancers of the breast, lung, and pancreas this cycle, unrestricted funding is available for other disease sites.

AMOUNT AND LENGTH OF FUNDING Each funded project will be awarded \$50,000 for a period of 1 year. Awards will be matched to an appropriate funding source by UCCC administration and scientific leadership.

ELIGIBILITY All full-time UC faculty (including faculty at Cincinnati Children's) are eligible to apply for UCCC membership, and subsequently, pilot project funding. Interested pilot applicants who are not yet UCCC members **must** first apply and be approved for membership. The membership application can be completed at: <https://redcap.research.cchmc.org/surveys/?s=EMYK74CR9XHTD7PJ>.

Reminder: PIs may only hold 1 active award at a time from any UCCC pilot funding mechanism. Please note that awards continuing under a no-cost extension are still considered active. In addition, the proposed research should not be part of other active, externally funded grants. If some or all of the project is under consideration for an external mechanism, and the funding is realized, any remaining funds for the UCCC project (if awarded) are required to be returned and reinvested into the UCCC Pilot Project Award Program.

Eligible applicants are limited to 1 submission per grant cycle as PI. PIs are also only permitted to have 1 pending application at a time to a UCCC pilot funding mechanism. For example, an investigator **cannot** apply as a PI for this opportunity and a survivorship pilot project award in the same cycle.

Clinical and post-doctoral research fellows, instructors, and research assistants, associates, and scientists are eligible to serve as co-investigators or collaborators on applications in which their faculty advisor/mentor acts as official PI.

APPLICATIONS Submit your application using the criteria below. Proposals will undergo rigorous peer review by the UCCC Pilot Project Award Review Committee and approval by UCCC scientific leadership. Reviews will be scored in accordance with the guidelines established by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Applications will only be accepted electronically via the online Research Electronic Data (REDCap) application located here: <https://redcap.research.cchmc.org/surveys/?s=JFR8WC34YTWCRDAP>.

Applicants may save their progress and return later to complete the application. Text can be entered directly or copied and pasted where indicated (ctrlC/ctrlV). Supportive documents, tables, and figures will be uploaded as

detailed below. Please note that all the following fields are required unless stated otherwise and will be marked as such in the REDCap system. All required fields must be submitted for an application to be considered complete.

- **Applicant Information:** Enter name, degree(s), position, institution, and contact information.
 - **Early-Stage Investigator Status:** Read the description of an early-stage investigator (ESI) and indicate whether the PI is an ESI by answering the provided question. An ESI is an investigator who has completed their terminal research degree or end of post-graduate clinical training, whichever date is later, within the past 10 years and who has not previously competed successfully as PI for a substantial NIH independent research award. ESI applicants will be asked to enter the names of the individuals currently serving on their mentorship committee. A letter of support from the ESI's primary mentor, senior faculty advisor, or department/division chair will also be a required component of the application, as described below in **Letter of Support from Mentor**.
- **Current/Pending Funding:** Indicate whether you currently hold an active pilot project award from a UCCC mechanism in addition to any pending external funding related to the proposed research.
- **Resubmission:** Indicate if this is a resubmission of a past UCCC pilot project application. Include the reviewer comments and how they were addressed.
- **Project Team:** Enter the names and project roles of any co-investigators (Co-Is) (up to 3) and/or collaborators/consultants (up to 3) who will be contributing to your project. A Co-I is someone who will be significantly involved in the scientific development and/or execution of the proposed research (i.e., senior/key personnel). Collaborators and consultants will play a less active role on the project. Biosketches and Other Support documents are required for Co-I's, but not for collaborators or consultants. Letters of support are required for collaborators and consultants, but not for Co-Is.
- **Research Proposal:**
 - **Research Information:** Complete the requested fields regarding your research.
 - **Project Title:** Enter a title for your proposed research project.
 - **Abstract:** Copy and paste text. Summarize the proposed project and explain why this work is important (not to exceed 250 words).
 - **Background:** Copy and paste text. Provide the goals of the project, timeline, and enough information to provide a context of common knowledge for the reviewers, who might not be experts in the field (700 words).
 - **Hypothesis and Specific Aims:** Copy and paste text. Outline the steps to fulfill objectives and address the critical need that the project is designed to address. Aims should be clear, achievable, and directly related to the content provided in the preceding sections (600 words).
 - **Experimental Design and Timeline:** Copy and paste text. Questions to consider for this section include: 1) Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? 2) Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? 3) If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility? (1,500 words).
 - **Preliminary Data (if available):** Copy and paste text. Preliminary data related to the proposed research should be included if it is available. However, please note that for investigators moving into new, innovative areas of work, the absence of preliminary data will not preclude funding (500 words).
 - **Plan to use generated data from the pilot project for future National Cancer Institute (NCI), cancer-relevant NIH, or NCI-approved, peer-reviewed submissions ([see link for list of approved organizations](#)):** Copy and paste text. The role of the proposed project in leading toward successful extramural funding should be addressed (200 words).
 - **References:** Copy and paste text. NIH guidance on suggested formatting of citations can be found here: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/format-attachments.htm>.
 - **Tables and Figures (limit of 4):** Upload. Must be in .jpg, .tiff, or .png format.

- **Budget:** Upload. An itemized and detailed budget must be submitted with each application and should include only items directly related to the research project.
 - **Budgets are limited to a maximum of \$50,000 for 1 year** and should be in PHS 398 format: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/fp4.pdf>.
 - Reviewers will consider whether the budget and requested period of support are fully justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed research.
 - PI's salary, cellular devices, capital equipment, indirect costs, or administrative services **should not be included**. Exceptions may be made if a proven need exists.
 - Any purchase of electronics (e.g., computers, laptops, tablets, etc.) belong to the University and must be relinquished to UCCC administration at the closing of the grant or expiration of funding.
 - Salaries and benefits of post-doctoral fellows or research staff relative to the effort on the project may be included.
 - Travel-related expenses **should not be included** on the initial project budget. Every effort should be made to utilize the funding in support of carrying out the proposed research. If funds remain upon completion of the project, the use of these funds for travel will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Travel must be associated with a presentation of significant findings directly related to the pilot project. Awardees must request the use of pilot project funds for travel in writing to UCCCGrants@uc.edu prior to the end of the grant period.
- **Budget Justification:** Copy and paste text. The budget justification is a separate section from the budget and must itemize and explain all items directly related to the research project.
- **Biographical Sketches (PI required, limit of 3 Co-Is):** Upload. Biosketches of the PI and all Co-I's in the current PHS 398 format: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>.
- **Other Support (PI required, limit of 3 Co-Is):** Upload. All investigators' active and pending sources of research support reported in current PHS 398 format: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/othersupport.htm>.
- **Letter of Support from Mentor (limit of 1, for ESI applicants only):** Upload. A letter of support is required from a primary mentor, senior faculty advisor, or department/division chair if the applicant is an ESI. This letter should confirm that the ESI applicant is qualified to conduct the proposed research and has adequate space, facilities, mentorship, etc. available to them to ensure that their project will be successful.
- **Letters of Support from Collaborators/Consultants (limit of 3):** Upload. Letters of support from project collaborators and/or consultants should be provided to clearly define the roles of these individuals and how they will contribute to the proposed research. Letters are not required from Co-Is.

EVALUATION Proposals will be evaluated in relation to their projected effectiveness in using pilot funding to address the following areas:

- Research priorities, as determined by UCCC scientific leadership.
- Innovation and progress toward new scientific directions that align with the strategic goals of the UCCC.
- Scientific merit of proposed research.
- Programmatic priorities.
- Growth in the Center's planning and evaluation activities.
- Potential to obtain future NCI, cancer-relevant NIH, or NCI-approved, peer-reviewed submission(s).

REVIEW PROCESS Each proposal will be reviewed by the UCCC Pilot Project Award Review Committee based on scientific impact and scored using current NIH peer-review guidelines. The Committee will be chaired by UCCC scientific leadership. Standing members will be assigned reviews, and ad hoc members will be invited based on areas of expertise, depending upon applications submitted. Proposals will be assigned 1 primary and 2 secondary reviewers and receive an overall score from all members of the Committee, except in cases of conflicts of interest. Avoidance of conflicts of interest will be communicated. While applicants may not serve on the Committee, Committee members may be listed as project co-investigators, collaborators, or consultants, but will be recused during discussions of their grant and cannot vote on their application. Final scoring will occur

following discussion. Redacted critiques of each proposal, including proposals not selected for funding, will be sent to all applicants via email. Any required revisions (e.g., budget) will be noted in this correspondence as well.

PROGRESS REPORTING AND EXPECTATIONS Funded investigators will be asked to submit progress reports every 6 months for the duration of funding, with a final progress report at the end of the active funding period.

Pilot project recipients from Cincinnati Children's must also submit invoices for expensing at minimum every 6 months as part of their progress reporting. In addition, 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 of 5 years after the end of the award period. Presentation(s) to UCCC scientific leadership and/or other groups may be requested as well; this includes, but is not limited to, presentations at Research Program meetings, Cancer Research Seminar Series, annual retreats, and other events hosted by UCCC. The progress reporting template will be provided by UCCC administration. Progress reports should detail the return on investment, such as:

- Presentations, abstracts, publications, etc. resulting from projects benefiting from pilot funds.
- External, peer-reviewed funding received using pilot project data and findings.
- Commercialization, such as royalties received, number of licenses, and start-up companies.
- Patent applications and approved patents.
- Trials developed, with the number of patients recruited or status of trial provided.

Please note that any resulting presentations, abstracts, publications, grant submissions, etc. should acknowledge the UCCC Pilot Project Award Program and, as applicable, the appropriate donors or foundations providing source funding, as outlined in recipients' award letters.

The opportunity to request a no-cost extension for funded projects will be communicated by UCCC administration and submitted via the progress report. ***Each pilot project will be limited to no more than 1 no-cost extension (12 months maximum extension, resulting in a maximum of 1 year beyond the initial 1-year award period).*** Any funds remaining after the extended project period will be reinvested into the UCCC Pilot Project Award Program.

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

DISCONTINUATION OF FUNDING UCCC reserves the right to discontinue pilot funding if the PI leaves their respective institution, receives external funding to support research being conducted as part of the UCCC pilot project, has not made substantive progress within 12 months of the project, 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 Pilot Project Award Program.

QUESTIONS? Please email UCCCgrants@uc.edu.