# University of CINCINNATI CANCER CENTER

University of Cincinnati · UC Health · Cincinnati Children's

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

## IMPORTANT DEADLINES

For the Spring 2025 cycle:

- Applications accepted **March 3, 2025 through March 13, 2025 at 5:00PM ET**.
- Awards will be announced and funding available in **May 2025**.

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

*Reminder:* **Ride Cincinnati participation is required to be eligible for the Fall 2024, Cancer Survivorship, and Spring 2025 Pilot Project Award Program cycles.** Please see details of this requirement in the section below regarding ELIGIBILITY.

## 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 to foster innovative research and facilitate novel approaches.
- 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 pilot 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, there is also unrestricted funding available for all disease sites.

## AMOUNT AND LENGTH OF FUNDING

Funded projects will each 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://ucwebapps.uc.edu/institutemember/Account/Login.

_**New: 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 multi-PI pilot project award in the same cycle.

**Further, Ride Cincinnati participation is required to be eligible for the Fall 2024, Cancer Survivorship, and Spring 2025 Pilot Project Award Program cycles.** Participation is defined as being registered for Ride Cincinnati as an in-person rider or making a minimum donation of $50 as a virtual rider.

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. This condition does not apply to medical residents.

## APPLICATIONS

Please submit your application using the criteria on page 4. 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 and should be submitted in the online Research Electronic Data (REDCap) system using the following link***: https://redcap.research.cchmc.org/surveys/?s=JFR8WC34YTWCRDAP.

## EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

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 movement towards new scientific directions that align with the strategic initiatives of the UCCC.
- Assessing scientific merit of proposed research.
- Programmatic priorities.
- Scientific opportunities of the UCCC.
- 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 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 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.

Opportunities to request no-cost extensions 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 2 no-cost extensions (12 months per extension, resulting in a maximum of 2 years 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.

**PILOT PROJECT APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

Applicants may save their progress and return their applications to complete and submit at a later time. Text can be entered directly or copied and pasted where indicated. Supportive documents, tables, and figures will be uploaded as detailed below. Please note that all of 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:** Please enter name, degree(s), position, institution, and contact information.
  - o **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**.

- **Plan to use pilot project data for future National Cancer Institute (NCI), cancer-relevant NIH, or NCI-approved, peer-reviewed submissions ([see link for list of approved organizations](#)):** Enter or copy and paste text. The role of the proposed project in leading toward successful extramural funding should be addressed. State if this application has been recently submitted and if you received a score and feedback. If this pilot application is needed to receive seed funding for a peer reviewed grant submission, provide rational for the use of pilot funds to assist with obtaining grant funding (500 words).

- **Ride Cincinnati Participation Status:** Please provide documentation of the current status of your Ride Cincinnati participation. If you have not yet registered as an in-person rider or made a minimum donation of $50 as a virtual rider, you will be redirected to Ride Cincinnati's website ([https://ridecincinnati.org/](https://ridecincinnati.org/)) to complete your registration or donation.

- **Current or Pending Funding:** Please 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.

- **Project Team:** Please enter the names and roles of any co-investigators (up to 3) and/or collaborators/consultants (up to 3) who will be contributing to your project. A co-investigator 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-investigators, but not for collaborators or consultants. Letters of support are required for collaborators and consultants, but not for co-investigators.

- **Research Proposal:**
  - o **Research Information:** Please complete the requested fields regarding your research.
  - o **Project Title:** Please enter a title for your proposed research project.
  - o **Abstract:** Copy and paste text. Please summarize the proposed project and explain why this work is important (not to exceed 250 words).
  - o **Background:** Copy and paste text. Please 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).
  - o **Hypothesis and Specific Aims:** Copy and paste text. Please 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).
  - o **Experimental Design and Timeline:** Copy and paste text. Questions to consider for this section include: Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success

presented? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility? (1,500 words).

- o **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).
- o **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.
- o **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.
  - o ***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.
  - o Reviewers will consider whether the budget and requested period of support are fully justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed research.
  - o 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.
  - o 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.
  - o Salaries and benefits of post-doctoral fellows or research staff relative to the effort on the project may be included.
  - o 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 (applicant required, limit of 3 co-investigators):** Upload. Biosketches of the PI and all co-investigators should be provided in current PHS 398 format: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm.
- **Other Support (applicant required, limit of 3 co-investigators):** Upload. All investigators' active and pending sources of research support should be 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 early stage investigator (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-investigators.


**QUESTIONS?**
Please email UCCCgrants@uc.edu.