



Team Science Award Request for Applications

Purpose and Overview

The purpose of the Team Science Award is to stimulate the development of high-quality, multi-investigator (minimum of three) program project grants that will move forward to extramurally funded grant awards. Projects with translational potential are encouraged, but not mandatory. Inter-programmatic and inter-institutional teams are also highly encouraged.

Priority Areas of Funding for the Current Funding Cycle

Cancer-relevant research from all areas of science are invited to apply to this RFA. **Collaborations between researchers who propose to study topics related to understanding or addressing cancer health disparities, breast cancer or prostate cancer, will be prioritized, though proposals involving all cancer types are eligible.** Proposals that utilize MCW Cancer Center (MCWCC) Shared Resources are encouraged.

Eligibility & Evaluation Criteria

Eligibility

- Proposed research must be cancer-relevant.
- Each application submitted in response to this RFA must consist of at least three research projects and an Administrative Core. The projects must share a common central theme, focus, and/or overall objective.
- Each team must comprise at least three investigators, and each investigator must serve as a PI on one of the component research projects. PIs from outside institutions leading one project are permitted; however, funds must be spent at MCW. The external PIs are encouraged to obtain pilot funding from their home institution/cancer center to support their award.
- MCW faculty members are eligible to apply (includes Versiti BRI [VBRI] investigators).
- Future external funding proposals leveraging the data from a Team Science pilot award must be submitted through MCW.
- As a general rule, research can take place and expenditures incurred only at MCW, Children's Wisconsin, Children's Research Institute, Froedtert Hospital, VBRI, or the Zablocki VAMC.
- The overall PI(s) must have a strong track record of peer-reviewed funding (active R01 grant or equivalent).

Evaluation

Each full application will be assigned to internal and external reviewers who have substantial expertise in cancer research and in reviewing programmatic, center-level grants.

Review criteria include

- Standard NIH criteria (additional information available [HERE](#))
 - Factor 1: Importance of the Research
 - Significance, Innovation
 - Scored 1 - 9
 - Factor 2: Rigor and Feasibility
 - Approach (also includes Inclusion and Clinical Trial [CT] Study Timeline)
 - Scored 1 - 9
 - Factor 3: Expertise and Resources
 - Investigators, Environment

- Evaluated as appropriate or gaps identified; gaps require explanation
- Considered in overall impact; no individual score
- Likelihood that preliminary results will lead to external peer-reviewed funding;
 - Application must include a well thought out “Future Funding Plan” (see instructions) describing how funds will provide data that is critical to future extramural grant application(s);
- Program project integration (see Approach instruction; synergy, leadership, strength of the investigators, joint productivity, potential impact of the proposed research);
- Participation in CC programs (e.g., attend program meetings, participate in grant review panels, participate in recurring seminars or symposia);
- When appropriate, describe how the research may ultimately produce IP (intellectual property, like patents).

Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult a biostatistician when developing the research design and methods of their proposals. Learn more on the [Biostatistics Shared Resource web page](#).

Budget: \$150,000 per year for up to two years

Letter of Intent (LOI) Requirements

The LOI must be **no more than one page** and contain the following information:

- Applicant Names
- Names of other key personnel
- Title of the proposed the overall project and 3 sub-projects
- Brief description of proposed projects and their integration
- Relevance of the proposed project to the mission of MCWCC
- Brief rationale for the proposed project
- Anticipated outcomes of the project

The LOI is required for the invitation to submit a full application.

Application Instructions

(Please see the [MCW Cancer Center website](#) for additional information and forms.)

- **Application Format:** Use standard 11-point font, single space, and half-inch margins throughout the application. Consecutively number all pages.
- **Cover letter:** To initiate, please visit the [Faculty Collaboration Database](#) website and sign in so that certain fields can be auto-populated. Include project title, investigators and affiliations. Combine (concatenate) the cover page produced with the remainder of your application in a PDF file for submission (see below).
- **Scientific Abstract:** Provide a summary of the overall proposal, followed by summaries of each individual project. The summary of the overall proposal and the individual projects should each be 250 words or less.
- **Lay Abstract:** Provide a brief summary of the proposed research project in terms that people who do not have prior knowledge about the subject can understand. If funded, this abstract will be distributed to the funding source and can be used in written correspondence with donors and interested parties. The application should include a lay abstract for the overall proposal as well as each individual project (200-word limit per abstract).
- **Response to Reviewers** (if applicable; for overall program): For previously submitted proposals, please include reviewer comments and describe key changes that have been made in response. (1-page limit for overall project).
- **Overall Program Goals and Specific Aims:** Summarize the proposed research program including Specific Aims for the program project as a whole. If inter-institutional, explain why collaboration between the collaborating institution and MCW is important to achieve program goals and how it increases the likelihood of future extramural funding. (2-page limit)

- **Program-Related Publications:** List relevant publications by team members, bolding all member names in the author lists. (does not count against page limits)
- **For Each Project:**
 - **Response to Reviewers** (if applicable): For previously submitted proposals, please include reviewer comments and describe key changes that have been made in response. (1-page limit)
 - **Project Goals and Specific Aims:** State concisely the hypothesis to be tested and the specific aim(s) to be achieved during the two-year project period. (1-page limit)
 - **Research Strategy** (4-page limit):
 - a. Background-Significance-Innovation (1-page limit)
 - b. Approach (3-page limit). Include preliminary data. Include a statement about program integration: how the project relates to, feeds into, or relies on the other projects (and cores, if applicable).
 - **Future Funding Plans (Mandatory):** Awardees are required to submit a timeline for a NCI P01, U54 or equivalent cancer-relevant, center-level grant submission. State how preliminary data from this project will be used to support an application for extramural funding. State the funding agencies, mechanisms and timing of planned future grant applications that will utilize the preliminary data produced under this Team Science Award. (200-word limit)
 - **Literature Cited:** List only references pertinent to the proposed research. References do not count against the page limit.
- **Description of Cores:** If one or more cores are proposed, each core must support two or more projects. Include a description of how each core will support projects. (1-page limit for each core)
- **Budget:** Use PHS 398 form page 4 located on the [Application for a Public Health Service Grant](#) web page followed by a Budget Justification. There must be an individual budget for each project. The budget cap is \$150,000 direct costs per year for the **entire proposal**. No indirect costs are allowed. No faculty salaries, student tuition and fees, or equipment should be included. Faculty effort related to this award must be listed and cost shared. Salary or stipend support for laboratory personnel, RAs, postdoctoral fellows, study coordinators, *etc.* may be included. Lab supplies and biostatistical services may be included. Travel expenses will only be allowed when necessary to carry out the proposed research project. Every budgeted item must be classified into a category (*e.g.*, personnel, supplies, patient care costs).
 - **You are required to obtain a quote for Biostatistical services via [iLab](#) and reference the iLab quote # in the budget justification.**

Any no-cost extensions will require review of the progress report and prior approval by CC Leadership.
- **Potential External Advisory Board (EAB) Members:** Include a list of member names. (An EAB is a group of experts in the field of the application who can guide the team as they execute this pilot award (and possibly be retained as members of the EAB for an externally funded future program project), providing advice and recommendations as to strategy and specific experiments and data that will maximize the likelihood of future center-level grant funding).
- **Timeline (overall)**
- **NIH-format Biosketches:** Biosketches for all faculty team members must be included. Personal statements must include the specific role of the team member. Include information on any faculty investigator clinical trials. In addition to the standard NIH-format biosketch sections, include a section on Current and Pending Research Support. Provide the expected notification date for each pending application and describe any overlap or relationship between each pending application and this application.
- **Form D Return on Investment:** Previous CC Pilot Grant recipients must complete this form.
- **Letters of Support:** Letters of support from the appropriate individuals/organizations, such as MCW Centers or Institutes, which may include CC Research Program Leaders, Disease Oriented Team Leader, collaborator(s), pharma partner, and/or mentor (if pertinent).

- **Regulatory Approvals:** Awarded PIs are expected to obtain regulatory approvals [e.g., IACUC, IRB] within three months of award notification. Release of funds will be contingent upon IRB/IACUC approval, and all applicable human and animal subject protocols having been sent to <mailto:MCWCCResearchPrograms@mcw.edu>.

Timeline

RFA release: 01/15/2026. An LOI indicating your intent to submit and briefly describing your proposal and team members (1-page limit) is due on or before 02/15/2026. **Applicants are highly encouraged to present their Specific Aims at the Cancer Research Forum on Thursday, 2/26/2026.** Full applications are **due by 11:59 p.m. on 04/01/2026.** Please email one PDF file of the application to MCWCCResearchPrograms@mcw.edu. Notifications of award will be made after peer review and Board approval, near the beginning of June 2026. The start date will be on or after 07/01/2026, dependent on the status of any required human and animal studies protocol approvals, with the understanding that obtaining approvals will not take longer than three months post award notice. Please contact MCWCCResearchPrograms@mcw.edu with any questions. **Applicants who intend to apply for a Team Science Award off the funding cycle are encouraged to discuss with the chairs of this pilot award program for potential submission communicating through MCWCC ResearchPrograms.**

Program Expectations

- Publication or presentation of results in a national forum
- Submission of a PPG or equivalent center-level grant application within 18 months of project completion
- Year 2 funding is contingent on submission of an annual progress report (month 11) showing satisfactory progress toward project goals.
- Final report is required upon project completion, including an outline of project results and progress toward PPG application.
- Project leaders of awarded Team Science programs may be required to serve on pilot study sections for three years.
- Contact PI, MPIs, and Co-Is must participate annually in the Audacity bicycle fundraiser as a rider and/or fundraiser for any of the distances available.