



2026 Funding Opportunity Announcement

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Accelerating Hope: Clinical Trials for Hard-to-Treat Cancers

Children's Cancer Research Fund (CCRF) is a national nonprofit committed to finding safer, more effective therapies for kids battling cancer. Thanks to donors and partners around the country, we have contributed more than \$235 million to research, education and awareness, and quality-of-life programs for childhood cancer families. We believe kids deserve safer, less toxic treatments, and we're committed to funding groundbreaking research and services that enhance long-term healing and care for all.

This grant mechanism is limited to support for clinical trials focused on hard-to-treat cancers. For this funding opportunity, hard-to-treat cancer is defined as 5-year survival less than 70% in an individual childhood cancer (e.g. osteosarcoma, AML, DIPG), in a childhood cancer with unfavorable behavior (e.g. relapse or metastasis), or in a molecular defined subtype (e.g. MLL rearranged leukemia, PAX3-FOXO1 rearranged RMS). Cancers with survival <70% in demographic groups defined by age, sex, or race/ethnicity may also qualify if a biologic hypothesis is being pursued. Applicants must demonstrate that the cancer(s) they propose to study is consistent with this definition of "hard-to-treat" and with the scientific literature.

For this grant mechanism, CCRF prioritizes support for Phase 0 – Phase 2 clinical trials.

Key Dates

This funding opportunity will use the following schedule (subject to change):

LOI Submission Open	October 13, 2025
LOI Submission Deadline	November 10, 2025, Noon EST
LOI Applicants Notified	Late December 2025
Due Date for Applications	February 6, 2026, Noon EST
Applicants Notified on a rolling basis pending the availability of funds	May/June 2026
Awards Start (subject to change)	Q4 2026

All applicants should review all necessary materials using the appropriate templates and forms. Failure to comply with the instructions provided may result in administrative rejection of the application.

Award Information

Number of Awards

Funding of awards will be dependent on the availability of funds.

Award Period

Maximum project period is 36 months.

Award Budget

Total costs of up to \$1,000,000 may be requested. The budget total includes indirect costs of up to 10% of direct costs.

Allowable direct costs include: Salaries, fringe benefits, supplies, sub-contracts, equipment, publication costs, and travel expenses.

- Salary Cap: Budgets created for CCRF funding should adopt the NIH salary cap (currently \$225,700). A salary cap is defined as a maximum annual rate of salary for a full-time effort that can be charged to an award.
- Travel: project-related travel allowed as needed (must be fully justified); up to \$2,000 per year for conference travel.
- All sub-contracts and collaborations must be described and well-justified.
- Any equipment to be purchased with grant funds must be well-justified

Award Requirements

- Applicants must be PI-eligible at their sponsoring institution.
- Applicant U.S. citizenship is not a requirement.
- Applications will be accepted only from U.S.-based institutions.
- Awarded PIs are required to commit at least 10 percent of their research effort each year to activities supported by this award.
- Co-Investigators and/or collaborators are permitted, but the award must be made to a single institution which will act as the grant administrator.

Application Requirements

Letter of Intent (LOI):

All applicants are required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI). The LOI may be up to 3 pages in length, not including the bio sketch and citations. LOIs will undergo peer review to assess alignment with the funding announcement. If approved, invited applications must be substantially similar in focus to the project described in the LOI. LOIs and applications must be submitted electronically using ProposalCentral.

The following components should be provided in up to 3 pages of the LOI (excluding the bio sketch and citations):

- Principal Investigator's current position and background.
- Study title and brief summary, written for lay audience.
- Cancer type and subtype, if applicable, under study.
- Overall survival rate for pediatric/adolescent patients with cancer being studied.
- Number of children and/or adolescents diagnosed with this specific type of cancer annually. If the study focuses on relapse, provide percentage of pediatric patients who typically relapse.
- Abstract of the research proposal, including brief overview of:
 - Objective
 - Hypotheses
 - Specific aims
 - Endpoint
 - Methods to be employed
 - Significance and Innovation
- Proposed trial start date.
- Describe how the trial will address hard-to-treat cancers as defined on page 1 of this RFA.
- Brief justification of budget request.

Citations and bio sketch(es) are required and are not included in the three-page limit. Up to 1 page of citations may be submitted.

Applicants will be notified if their LOI is approved, and the application materials will be made accessible through ProposalCentral.

Please follow all instructions and submit all required forms to avoid administrative rejection. Applications may be rejected based on either programmatic or administrative review.

We encourage applicants to contact CCRF staff with questions regarding eligibility requirements before submitting an LOI or application. Questions should be submitted to: grants@childrenscancer.org.

Resubmission of NIH Unfunded Applications or Cancelled Grants

An application not funded by the NIH is eligible if the following conditions apply: an issued summary statement from a previous review, scored 20th percentile or better, or an impact score of 3 or better. CCRF will also consider applications for projects that were reviewed and funded by the NIH, but later cancelled, as long as they comply with the requirements of this RFA. In this case, applicants must submit the original reviews as well as the notice of cancellation, if possible. **All eligible applicants must register in ProposalCentral and submit an LOI.**

Data Sharing

Children's Cancer Research Fund is dedicated to data sharing and interoperability. Please describe the data generated by your research, how it will be FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable), and your plan for sharing and dissemination. Data includes any information generated through research, including clinical data, sequencing data, real-world evidence, etc. As appropriate, please indicate what data standards will be used, and if none are available, how this will be addressed.

Please describe how the data will be shared both during and after the award. Awardees are encouraged to place data into a publicly accessible repository (e.g., dbGaP for genomics). As applicable, please describe your organization/campus data sharing policy.

Discuss any intellectual property considerations and how they will be addressed. For any algorithms or tools developed, please discuss what software license will be leveraged and why. Finally, please describe your plan to share your research findings with the wider scientific community.

Font (size, color, type density) and Line Spacing

Children's Cancer Research Fund follows the NIH guidelines regarding font and line spacing.

Text in your attachments must follow these minimum requirements:

- Font: Recommended fonts are Arial, Georgia, or Helvetica. There is no specific font requirement if the font you use is legible and meets the requirements listed below.
- Font size: Must be 11 points or larger. Small text in figures, graphs, diagrams, and charts is acceptable if it is legible when the page is viewed at 100%.
 - Some PDF conversion software reduces font size. It is important to confirm that the final PDF document complies with the font requirements.
- Type density: Must be no more than 15 characters per linear inch (including characters and spaces).
- Margins: Must be at least .5 inch on standard letter paper size (8.5" x 11").
- Line spacing: Must be no more than six lines per vertical inch.
- Text color: No restriction. Though not required, black or other high-contrast text colors are recommended since they print well and are legible to the largest audience.

Review Process

Peer Review of Applications

All LOIs and invited full proposals will be reviewed and scored by peer reviewers. Each peer review committee includes leaders who are appropriate scientific experts. Reviewers will conduct an independent and confidential review. The Research Advisory Committee at CCRF will then evaluate the highest-scoring applications, considering their relative merit, the available funding, and CCRF's objectives, and will provide recommendations. CCRF leaders will use these recommendations to make final decisions on funding.

Scientific Merit Score

CCRF uses the scientific merit categories and rating scale similar to the NIH. Reviewers assign scientific merit scores based on their evaluation of applications against specific grant criteria.

Reviewers assign whole-number scores based on their analysis of the proposed research, considering the review criteria. They are instructed to use the full range of scores. Applications are evaluated individually, not compared to one another, with each assessed for its potential to advance knowledge in its field.

Reporting

Scientific progress reports should be submitted 12, 24 and 36 months after the grant is awarded. All reports are due within 30 days of the due date. Grantees should submit reports in a timely fashion or request an exception. Non-compliance may result in withholding of payments or ineligibility for future awards.

Each interim progress report should focus on the activity from the previous report. All reports must include a section written for the lay public summarizing the progress to date.

Financial reports including expenditures must be submitted with the 12-month and 24-month progress reports. The final project report should include details of all financial expenditures and a scientific report for the full grant period, as well as a lay summary.

All narrative and financial reports should be submitted through ProposalCentral.

CCRF may reach out to grant recipients in subsequent years after the conclusion of a grant to gather additional information about how the grant helped shape future work and findings.

Publications

CCRF requests that grantees inform us as soon as possible (email: grants@childrenscancer.org) about the acceptance of upcoming publications concerning the research funded by the grant. When a paper has been published, please forward a copy or link to CCRF, both during and after the grant period. Publications and presentations of CCRF-funded research should be reported in progress and/or final reports.

Research Grant Policies

Updated May 2025

Eligible Individuals (Principal Investigator)

Any individual(s) with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research as the Principal Investigator (PI(s)) is invited to work with their organization to develop an application for support. Applicants must be PI-eligible at their sponsoring institution. Applicants need not be U.S. citizens; however, they must have a paid appointment at an academic, medical, or research institution in the United States. Co-Investigators and/or collaborators on a single project are permitted, but the award must be made to a single institution which will act as the grant administrator.

Anyone serving on the Children's Cancer Research Fund Research Advisory Committee is not eligible to apply for funding or to receive research support from a CCRF grant.

Number of Applications

Applicant **organizations** may submit more than one application, provided each application is scientifically distinct. However, CCRF will only accept one Letter of Intent from an individual PI each calendar year.

Multiple Grants and Grant Renewals

- A PI may only hold one active grant from CCRF at a time. However, it is acceptable for a PI to serve as a co-investigator or collaborator on one or more other CCRF grant(s).
- A PI may apply to CCRF for new funding in the final year of a current grant. CCRF must receive the final report on the existing grant before a new award may begin.

Eligible Institutions and Responsibilities

Any nonprofit research institution based in the U.S. is eligible to apply. An applicant institution should have appropriate resources and infrastructure to support the proposed research, including:

- Adequate facilities and services to manage the award.
- Fiscal and grants management infrastructure to support policies including protection for human and animal subjects (e.g., a sponsored projects office or contract with an IRB or IACUC).
- Human subjects or IACUC approval is required as a condition of grant funding.

To signify agreement with grant policies, the full proposal must be signed by an authorizing official of the institution. The institution is responsible for verifying that all documentation related to the application and grant is correct, including all representations made by any named researcher (e.g., position or title).

The institution is responsible for immediately reporting to CCRF any action including recertification, loss of certification, breach of contract, misconduct, or change in employment

status for a named researcher with the institution. This includes PI administrative leave, which may occur during the term of any award pertinent to the work described in the grant application.

Applicants must carefully review the funding announcement instructions and complete all required materials using the specified templates and forms. Non-compliance with the instructions provided may lead to administrative rejection of the application. Additionally, failure to adhere to these terms or any other CCRF policies or procedures may result in the suspension or cancellation of the grant, at CCRF's sole discretion.

No Cost Extension (NCE)

A no-cost extension (NCE) extends a research project beyond the original end date. Grantees must submit NCE requests, using a template provided by CCRF, at least two (2) months prior to the original end date. NCE requests should be emailed to grants@childrenscancer.org.

An NCE is permitted for up to 12 months. If there are extraordinary circumstances that necessitate additional time to complete the funded project, they must be fully justified and approved by CCRF at least 2 months prior to the end date of the initial NCE.

Budget

Expenditures and Indirect Costs

CCRF's research grants are not intended to cover the total costs of the proposed research. The institution is expected to provide facilities and administrative support. **We allow indirect costs to be calculated as 10% of total direct costs.**

Budget Adjustments and Unused Funds

Up to 25% of granted funds may be carried over for one year from the time of receipt within a multi-year grant. CCRF may elect to partially fund or hold new funds if carryover is more than 25% annually without the prior approval of CCRF.

Any funds to be used after the original grant term must be approved in writing via a no-cost extension request.

At the conclusion of the approved grant term (including any approved NCE's), unused and remaining funds of \$500 or more must be returned to CCRF within 30 days following the full grant term.

Grant Transfer

If a grantee transfers to another institution during the term of the grant, a request for grant transfer must be submitted in writing to CCRF (email: grants@childrenscancer.org). Continuation of funding at the new institution is contingent on approval by CCRF and completion of an amended contract.

Recognition of CCRF

CCRF will work with grant recipients to coordinate a joint press release announcing the grant. Recipient organizations are encouraged to give recognition to the Children's Cancer Research Fund where funders are listed on the institution's website, annual report and/or other printed or electronic publications.

All publications or presentations featuring the results of the funded project should acknowledge Children's Cancer Research Fund.

Use of Embryonic Stem Cells & Fetal Tissue

CCRF does not fund research utilizing human embryonic stem cells or fetal tissue.