



Application Guidelines for the 2026 Accelerating Impact for Hard-to-Treat Cancers Award

Applications focused on Ewing sarcoma are especially encouraged, highlighting an area of special interest for the 2026 grant cycle. Applications addressing other eligible hard-to-treat cancer types are also welcome. All applications will be evaluated equally and fairly through our rigorous peer review process.

Please note that Children's Cancer Research Fund permits investigators to submit only one Letter of Intent as Principal Investigator per calendar year. Applicants are encouraged to review all available grant mechanisms before applying.

Further details on our Research Grant Policies can be found below. We encourage applicants to contact CCRF staff with questions regarding eligibility requirements. Questions should be directed to grants@childrenscancer.org.

Letter of Intent Due: March 2, 2026 (by 8:00 p.m. Eastern)
Full Application Due: June 8, 2026 (by 8:00 p.m. Eastern)



About Children's Cancer Research Fund

In 1979, 13-year-old Katie Hageboeck was nearing the end of her 16-month battle with leukemia. Before she died, Katie asked that her savings for a new 10-speed bike be given to Children's Cancer Research Fund, a little-known fund at the University of Minnesota. Since 1981, Katie's parents, Diana and Norm, have made it their mission to support groundbreaking research.

Today, Children's Cancer Research Fund (CCRF) is a national nonprofit focused on funding transformational research to bring better treatments and cures to children with 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 children deserve safer, less toxic treatments, and we're committed to funding groundbreaking research and services that enhance healing and care.

Accelerating Impact for Hard-to-Treat Cancers Award Description

Treatment success against hard-to-treat cancers has remained out of reach. This grant mechanism supports basic and translational studies. Projects may include pilot and feasibility studies; secondary analysis of existing data; small, self-contained research projects; development of research methodology; and development of new research technology. With this award, we intend to support projects that enable the prevention, early detection, treatment, and improvements of outcomes for pediatric cancers that remain hard-to-treat. Only pre-clinical research is eligible. Clinical trials focused on hard-to-treat cancers are eligible via a separate funding mechanism.

For this funding opportunity, hard-to-treat is defined as a 5-year survival less than 70% in an individual cancer (e.g. osteosarcoma, AML, DIPG), in a cancer with unfavorable behavior (e.g. relapse or metastasis), or in a molecularly 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, provided a biologic hypothesis is being pursued.

Applicants must demonstrate that the cancer(s) they propose to study are consistent with this definition of hard-to-treat and with scientific literature.

Letter of Intent & Application Timeline

LETTER OF INTENT DUE	MARCH 2, 2026, BY 8:00 P.M. ET
INVITATION TO SUBMIT FULL PROPOSAL	APRIL 29, 2026
FULL PROPOSAL DUE	JUNE 8, 2026, BY 8:00 P.M. ET
NOTIFICATION	DECEMBER 2026
AWARD STARTS	NO LATER THAN JUNE 30, 2027



Award Information

Application Types

We will accept applications that are new or from a previous pilot study. We will also accept applications (R03, R21) that have been reviewed but not funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We will also consider proposals that were awarded, but later cancelled, by the NIH as long as they correspond to the requirements of this funding mechanism. (See Resubmission of NIH Funded Applications below for additional information).

Number of Awards

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

Award Period

Maximum project period is 24 months.

Award Budget

A budget for total costs up to \$125,000 per year may be requested. This includes indirect costs of up to 10% of direct costs.

Clarifications:

- Allowable direct costs include salaries, fringe benefits, supplies, sub-contracts, publication costs, equipment & travel expenses.
- CCRF adheres to the NIH salary cap for Principal Investigators.
- Project-related travel is allowed as needed and must be fully justified. Up to \$2,000 per year for conference travel.
- All sub-contracts and collaborations must be described and well-justified.
- If utilizing a subcontract, the PI's institution is responsible for disbursing subcontract funds.
- Any equipment to be purchased with grant funds must be well-justified.
- Indirect costs of 10% of direct costs are allowed.

Applicant Eligibility & Requirements

- Applicants must be eligible to serve as a Principal Investigator at their sponsoring institution.
- Applicant institutions must be based in the United States.
- Applicants are not required to be United States citizens.
- Awarded PIs are required to commit at least 10 percent of their research efforts each year to activities supported by this award.
- Submission of a Letter of Intent (LOI) is required.
- Co-Investigators and/or collaborators are permitted, but the award must be made to a single institution which will act as the grant administrator.
- Applicants' organizations may submit more than one application, provided each application is scientifically distinct. However, CCRF will only accept one LOI from a PI each calendar year.
- Applicants should review all necessary materials and use the appropriate templates and forms. Failure to comply with the instructions provided may result in programmatic or administrative rejection of your Letter of Intent (LOI) or full application.



Letter of Intent (LOI) Instructions

All applicants are required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI). LOIs will undergo peer review to ensure the proposed research is within the scope of the hard-to-treat award. If approved, invited applications must be substantially similar in focus to the project described in the LOI. Submission of an LOI that does not follow the guidelines provided below will result in administrative rejection by CCRF. The LOI must be submitted via Proposal Central. The LOI should be 2 pages long, not including the bio sketch and citations. The following components should be provided:

1. Describe Principal Investigator's current position and background.
2. Provide a summary of the research topic, written for a lay audience.
3. Provide an abstract of the research proposal, including the significance, objective, hypothesis, specific aims, and methods to be employed.
4. Applicants should describe how the proposal will address hard-to-treat cancers as defined on page 1 of this RFA.
5. Briefly describe the plan for translation of this research.
6. Applicants should briefly justify their budget request.
7. If a full application for this project has been reviewed by CCRF and not funded, please describe what has changed in response to prior critique. Skip this section if not applicable.
8. Attach appropriate bio sketches using the NIH 5-page bio sketch form.

Applicants will be notified if their LOI will advance to the full proposal stage. Application materials will be made accessible through ProposalCentral.

Citations and bio sketches are required and are not included in the two-page limit. Up to 1 page of citations may be submitted.

LOI Format Instructions

- Page Header: Principal Investigator's name, institution, and project title must appear at the top of the page.
- Format: CCRF adheres to NIH format guidelines: Arial, Helvetica, Palatino, Linotype, or Georgia fonts with a size 11 points or larger with a minimum of ½ inch margins.
- Order & Length: The order of the LOI should be followed and should not exceed 2 pages, excluding any bio sketches and citations.

Resubmission of NIH Unfunded Applications

An original grant application submitted to NIH in 2022-2025 as an R03 (small grant) or R21 (exploratory/developmental research) is eligible to be considered under this funding announcement.

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. Applicants should also submit the notice of cancellation, if possible.



Children's Cancer Research Fund Grant Policies

Updated January 2026

Eligible Individuals (Principal Investigator)

Applicants must be eligible to serve as a Principal Investigator at their sponsoring institution. Applicants do not need to be United States citizens; however, they must have a paid appointment at an academic, medical, or research institution located in the United States.

Restrictions:

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, for example as co-investigator.

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 United States is eligible to apply. An applicant institution should have the 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 IRB or IACUC).
- Human subjects or IACUC approval is required as a condition of grant funding.

To signify agreement with grant policies, an application 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 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 provided instructions 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.



Data Sharing

Children's Cancer Research Fund is dedicated to data sharing and interoperability. Full proposals must include a description of the data generated by your research, how it will be FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable), and your plan for sharing and dissemination. See Full Application Instructions for more details.

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.

Scientific Merit Score

CCRF uses the scientific merit categories and rating scale similar to the NIH. 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.

Progress Reports and Final Reports

Scientific progress reports should be submitted 12, 18, and 24 months after the grant is awarded. All reports must be received 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. All reporting questions are available in Proposal Central.

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

Financial reports including expenditures must be submitted with the 12-month and 24-month reports. The final 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.

Expenditures and Indirect Costs

Our 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 budgeted funds may be carried over from year to year in a multi-year grant. CCRF may elect to partially fund or hold new funds if carryover is in excess of 25% without prior approval. Any funds to be



used after the original grant term must be approved via 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 within 60 days following the full grant term.

NIH Salary Cap

Budgets created for CCRF funding should adhere to the NIH salary cap.

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. Grant recipients 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 based on the funded project should acknowledge Children's Cancer Research Fund.

Publications and Presentations

CCRF requests that grantees inform us as soon as possible 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. Both publications and presentations of CCRF-funded research should be reported in progress/final reports. Publications can be sent to grants@childrenscancer.org.

No Cost Extension (NCE)

A no-cost extension (NCE) allows a research project to continue beyond its original end date with no additional funding provided.

Grantees must submit an NCE request using the CCRF-provided template at least 2 months before the project's original end date. Only one NCE may be requested, and the maximum extension period is 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. NCE requests should be emailed to grants@childrenscancer.org

Use of Embryonic Stem Cells & Fetal Tissue

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



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.
- 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.



Submission Instructions (LOI + Full Application)

1. To start a submission, navigate to [Proposal Central](#) and select “applicant or awardee.”
2. After you’ve logged into Proposal Central, navigate to the Grant Opportunities tab and search for Children’s Cancer Research Fund in the search bar to find our active grant opportunities. Click the “apply now” button to start a submission.
3. In section 2, you will be able to download templates and instructions.
4. Complete each section and upload applicable templates. You may save your application to finish later by clicking “save”.
 - a. When you return to Proposal Central, click the “proposals” tab at the top to navigate to your applications. You can filter your application based on Proposal Status in the upper right-hand corner. Click “in-progress” to return to your existing applications.
5. Once completed, click “submit”. You will receive a confirmation email from Proposal Central. If the deadline has not passed, you may unsubmit your application to make changes by clicking “unsubmit” on the “proposals” tab.
6. If you have any questions or issues with your Proposal Central account, please contact pcsupport@altum.com

Full Application Instructions (by invitation only)

Children’s Cancer Research Fund uses Proposal Central for electronic submission of all LOIs and full applications. Fax, email, or hard copy submissions will not be accepted. Please see submission instructions above.

Section Descriptions

1. **Title Page:** Enter a title for your project and press save. Project title cannot exceed 81 characters with spaces.
2. **Templates and Instructions:** This section contains all applicable templates and instructions.
3. **Access Permissions:** Use this section to grant access to others involved in the application. Signatories will need “edit” access. Proposal Central automatically grants access when a contact is added to the application. If access issues arise, verify the users’ access level in Proposal Central. If issues persist, please contact pcsupport@altum.com
4. **Principal Investigator Information:** The individual who creates the proposal is automatically listed as the Principal Investigator. Please complete the following:
 - a. First & last name
 - b. Institution
 - c. Highest degree
 - d. Position & title



- e. Division
- f. Department
- g. Work/lab address.
- h. Email address
- i. Phone number

Confirm that the PI will commit at least 10% effort to this project.

5. **Organization/Institution Information:** The applicant's institution is pre-loaded as the contact institution. To make changes, search for the appropriate registered institution in Proposal Central and click "save."

Please provide email address for the signing official and grants administrator.

6. **Abstracts & Keywords:**

- a. **Lay abstract (2,000 character maximum including spaces):** Provide an abstract written for a general audience. Use language the average adult can understand. This abstract will be made public if the proposal is selected for funding.
- b. **Scientific Abstract (2,000 character maximum including spaces):** Provide an abstract written for a technical/scientific audience.
- c. **Keywords:** Selected keywords from the list provided that best represent your research focus as it relates to childhood cancer.

7. **Budget Period Detail:** Enter costs for each requested budget period (a budget period is 12 months). Indirect costs are allowed up to 10% of direct costs.

- a. **Personnel Costs:** Include all relevant personnel costs in this section.
 - i. Name
 - ii. Role
 - iii. Appointment type
 - iv. Appointment months
 - v. Effort
 - vi. Base salary
 - vii. Requested salary
 - viii. Requested fringe
- b. **Non-Personnel Costs:** This section is intended for non-personnel costs. Actual personnel costs of academic staff/faculty should be included under the personnel section of the application. Non-personnel expenses include:
 - i. Consultant Expenses
 - ii. Equipment Expenses
 - iii. Supply Expenses
 - iv. Travel Expenses
 - iv. Contract Services
 - v. Indirect Costs



8. Budget Summary: Please include a summary of the following:

- a. Proposed request amount for each budget period.
- b. Personnel costs
- c. Non-personnel costs
- d. Indirect costs

Budget Justification (2,000 characters maximum for each category): Provide a justification for the budget requested under each category below. If no budget is requested for a category, insert “not applicable.” Budget justification is requested for:

- a. Personnel costs
- b. Supplies and other operating costs
- c. Travel and meetings
- d. Equipment
- e. Other expenses

9. Organization Assurances

- a. Human Subjects: Indicate whether the project involves human subjects. If yes, please provide status of IRB approval and approval date if applicable.
- b. Vertebrate Animals: Indicate whether the project involved vertebrate animals. If yes, please provide IACUC approval status and approval date if applicable.

10. Attachments

a. Data-sharing (no max page limit)

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). Or 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.

b. Facilities, Other Resources, Equipment (no max page limit)

Facilities, Other Resources, and Equipment section should summarize the overall scientific environment, institutional resources, and commitments relevant to the effective implementation of a project. Applicants should describe how the proposed project will use the facilities and resources available to them. Applicants should also document how the study as a whole will benefit from laboratories, patient populations, and collaborations.



c. **NIH Bio Sketch for PI**

Use the NIH bio sketch template to detail the PI's qualifications and relevant experience.

d. **Other Support Documents**

Provide a comprehensive overview of all current and pending support that the PI and key personnel are receiving from other sources, whether through grants, contracts, or institutional funding.

e. **References**

Include citations for all sources referenced in your proposal to support your rationale, methods, and scientific claims.

f. **Research Plan with Timeline**

The research plan should clearly describe the significance, innovation, and approach of your proposed research. The page limit for the research plan is six (6) pages.

- **Significance:** State the significance and importance of your proposed project with respect to childhood cancer research. Relate the specific aims to the goals and long-term objectives. Include potential scientific or clinical impact for children fighting cancer.
- **Innovation:** Describe novel concepts, methods, or approaches and how they advance the field of pediatric cancer research.
- **Approach:** Detail your study design, methods, and analysis. Address feasibility, preliminary data, challenges, alternatives, and collaboration plans.

The timeline should explain how you will organize project activities over time, track progress, and ensure feasibility. The page limit for the timeline is one (1) page.

The research plan and timeline should be combined and uploaded to Proposal Central together.

g. **Specific Aims**

Clearly describe what you aim to accomplish, why your research is important, how you will achieve your goals, and the expected outcomes and potential impact.

h. **Key Personnel Bio Sketch (if applicable)**

Required for any individuals listed in the budget.

i. **Letters of Support**

Letters of support are optional and can be uploaded under “letters of support.”

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this grant opportunity, please contact Amanda Pofert by email at grants@childrenscancer.org