



Catalyst Pilot Awards Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)

For MCC investigators who apply to the NCI and receive a promising score but miss funding pay line; mechanism is key strategy to continuing to grow the cancer focus within the VCU community of scientists

A. Purpose

- Provide pilot funding for new concepts in cancer-related research, including but not limited to: discovery, diagnosis, treatment, prevention and control, and survivorship.
- Address the most immediate cancer needs of MCC's catchment area (central and eastern Virginia) including the cause or reversal of cancer disparities.
- Catalyze discoveries by fostering transdisciplinary and translational collaborations among researchers and clinicians.
- Produce preliminary data to provide a basis for future applications to the NCI, other NIH institutes, or other peer-reviewing agencies or foundations.

B. 2022-2023 Massey Cancer Center Priorities

- Projects that genuinely demonstrate transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or translational approaches to addressing cancer-related research question(s).
- Proposals that represent collaborative, team science approaches, particularly those that involve investigators from more than one MCC research program in meaningful ways.
- Research that reveals insight or will directly impact the distinct cancer burden within the MCC catchment area.
- Research that directly examines the cause or potential reversal of cancer disparities.
- Research that promotes collaborations between biologists and organic/medicinal chemists to generate novel anticancer drugs.
- Research that promotes collaborations between tumor immunologists and immunotherapists to generate novel biologics to treat cancer.
- Projects that directly engage the community in the design, implementation, and/or evaluation of the proposed research. Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement to discuss the incorporation of Massey Community Champions into their projects.
- Projects that utilize MCC-supported shared resources, especially those applicants who have collaborated with one or more MCC-supported shared resource directors to optimize the full capabilities or innovative capabilities of a shared resource.

C. Eligibility

- Both single and Multiple Principal Investigators (PI or MPIs) may apply. For MPIs, at least one PI must have a full-time faculty appointment at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and is required to be an NCI Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG)-eligible member (verify with MCC Administration before applying by contacting Alex Haynes, haynesa4@vcu.edu). The contact PI submitting the application must be an NCI CCSG-eligible MCC member.
- Effort between MPIs from different institutions must be comparable, and both MPIs must contribute to the overall project in similar magnitude.
- An individual may submit only one application as PI or MPI per year. An individual is allowed to be a co-investigator, consultant, or mentor on multiple submissions. A faculty member currently funded in the role of PI or MPI by an MCC pilot research award is not eligible to submit unless their current award will end by the scheduled start date.

D. Award Information

- Total awards are dependent upon available funding. The number of awards and the award amount may increase or decrease each year dependent upon the MCC budget and philanthropic funding available in any given year.
- The number of awards and the award amount may increase or decrease each year dependent upon scientific merit of the projects submitted for review and the priorities established for any released FOA.
- Projects are expected to be completed within the specific budget period. No cost extensions will only be granted in highly exceptional circumstances. Projects will be monitored quarterly for scientific progress and expenditures, and the PI will be expected to account for any inactivity in any given quarter.
- Projects must have compliance approvals (e.g., IRB, IACUC) in place within 90 days of receipt of the Notice of Award or funding may be rescinded. The official start date of the award and the release of funding will begin once the compliance approvals have been submitted.

E. Award Eligibility

NCI CATALYST AWARD (Rolling Call)

1. This award is for MCC investigators who apply to the NCI which receives a promising score but not recommended for funding. These applications have a high probability for funding in an A1 submission. Criteria for funding includes:



- **NCI R01 Renewal (Type 2)** Applications with a percentile of 25 and lower will be considered for funding up to \$50,000 based on the strength of the plan to address the critiques.
- **NCI R01 New applications (Type I)** Applications with a percentile of 25 and lower or a score of 30 or lower for special study sections will be considered for funding up to \$50,000 based on the strength of the plan to address the critiques.
- **Multiple Project NCI P or U series applications:** Applications with a percentile of 30 or lower or a score of 40 or lower for special study sections will be considered for funding up to \$100,000 based on the strength of the plan to address the critiques.

All submissions for the NCI Catalyst Award will be reviewed on a rolling call by the MCC Executive Committee.

F. Submission Guidelines

Pre-submission Guidelines for NCI Catalyst Award:

NCI Catalyst applications do not require a Letter of Intent and can be submitted directly and award notifications will be made within a month.

Formatting:

- Use Arial 11pt. font for text and half inch margins.

Required Application Components:

1. **Massey Cancer Center Cover Sheet**
2. **NIH Biosketch for Principal Investigator(s) and all key personnel**
3. **Letter(s) of Support** - A letter from the PI outlining the strategies to address the prior NCI critique.
4. **NCI Summary Statement**
5. **Specific Aims and Research Strategy of Original Application**
 - **Specific Aims** (1-page maximum)
 - State concisely the goals of the proposed research and summarize the expected outcome(s), including the impact that results from the proposed research will exert on the research field(s) involved. List succinctly the specific objectives of the research proposed, e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop new technology.
 - **Research Strategy**
 - **Innovation:** 6 pages maximum
 - **Statewide Collaboration:** 12 pages maximum
 - **Team Science:**
 - 3-page overview maximum, 6 pages maximum per project for which funding is requested and 3 pages maximum per core for which funding is requested.

Budget Guidelines:

Expenditures Allowed:

- Salary support for research staff
- Research supplies
- Per diem charges for patients if part of a clinical study, not reimbursable by standard payment terms
- Technical assistance
- Graduate student/postdoctoral stipends if relevant to the project with a detailed justification
- Domestic/foreign travel necessary to carry out proposed project based on institutional travel policies
- Computational services
- Other expenses such as laboratory and shared resource fees, pathology, imaging, etc.
- Consultant costs
- Equipment/technology with the intent to design, test, or facilitate a new device and non-office equipment necessary to carry out the proposed project. Requests over \$5,000 must include a detailed justification.
- Publications costs not to exceed \$2,000 across the total project period
- EAB expense for Team Science Award

Expenditures NOT Allowed:

- PI or other faculty salary expenses
- Secretarial/administrative personnel salary support
- Office equipment and supplies
- Computer and equipment maintenance fees
- Tuition
- Travel and/or registration/related fees for conferences
- Travel not essential to carrying out the proposed research
- Purchasing and binding of periodicals and books
- Dues and membership fees in scientific societies
- Faculty recruiting and relocation expenses
- Administrative or institutional charges for services normally considered overhead (e.g. space rental, utilities, building maintenance)
- Non-medical or personnel services to patients
- Sub-contracts to institutions not affiliated with Massey Cancer Center
- Pre-award costs

G. Terms of the Award

- Acceptance of funds implies a firm commitment to provide a brief verbal/email check in progress report quarterly (financial and scientific) by the deadline outlined in the NOA and subsequently, an annual update for a five-year follow-up period. Second year funding is contingent on submission of a written progress report by the stated deadline. Awardees who do not reply to five-year follow up requests will jeopardize future MCC awards.
- Massey expects that the grantee will completely utilize the full amount of funding during the term of the award. No-cost extensions are highly discouraged and will only be considered under exceptional circumstances. All unspent funds at the end of the grant period will be returned to the MCC.
- All awards must have appropriate institutional compliance approvals (e.g., IRB, IACUC) within 90 days of receipt of the Notice of Award and before funds will be allocated. The award will not receive a start date until the institutional approvals have been given. No aspect of the project can begin (including non-human subject research components) without documentation of all required approvals.
- Projects must start within 90 days of receipt of the Notice of Award or funding may be rescinded.
- All awards, publications, and presentations must acknowledge Massey Cancer Center as specified in the NOA.
- Acceptance of funds implies a firm commitment to provide the MCC leaders access to meet the team, give talks to the public, and tours of your facilities. Access to your laboratory will be facilitated by MCC Administration.

H. Review Process

The NCI Catalyst Award is designed to support projects which will generate key preliminary data for future NCI grant applications. How well each application addresses the following objectives will factor into the reviewers' overall impact scores.

Applications will be evaluated and scored according to:

- Scientific merit using NIH guidelines for scoring. Please note that the MCC review is run similar to an NIH study section and while its score drivers are similar, there is an important distinction: the MCC exists to support projects that need vital data to become competitive for an R01 or similar award. For this reason, an IMPORTANT score driver in the MCC review is the potential for future funding. It is the PI's job to lay out how the MCC funds will ensure a competitive future application. One page is dedicated to this purpose and that page is carefully evaluated during the Study Section meeting and by MCC Senior Leadership when making funding decisions.

- Potential for achieving high-impact results on an accelerated timeline when compared to the traditional pace of cancer research.
- Alignment with MCC priorities outlined in each year's FOA.

I. Questions

For any questions, please contact:

Alex Haynes

Senior Program Coordinator, Massey Cancer Center

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