

# Colorectal Cancer Alliance

## PROJECT CURE CRC

2025 Request for Proposals

**The Colorectal Cancer Alliance (the Alliance) is pleased to announce a Request for Proposals (RFP) for preclinical, translational and clinical research with the potential for high impact on treatment and survivorship of colorectal cancer. Project Cure CRC will prioritize proposals that embrace moving colorectal cancer research to a curative science ASAP. Submitted proposals should focus on projects that are High-Risk/High-Reward and accelerate new therapies and technologies from bench to bedside. Projects that utilize collaborations and/or public-private partnerships are **STRONGLY** encouraged. Proposals will be accepted for Early-Career Investigator Awards, Senior Investigator Awards, Pilot Awards, Team Science Awards, and Opportunistic Awards from academic and industry researchers. The Alliance plans to award tens of millions in 2025 for new research and infrastructure needs arising from this RFP.**

## Introduction

### About the Alliance

Founded in 1999, the Colorectal Cancer Alliance (the Alliance) is the leading nonprofit dedicated to colorectal cancer (CRC). In 2010, the Alliance established the Chris4Life Research Program in honor of the late Christine Sapienza and for all the families who are affected by colorectal cancer. The research program was a critical driving force in the mission to end colorectal cancer in our lifetime. The Alliance has already invested nearly \$10 million in colorectal cancer research, including nearly \$3 million as early-stage grants to innovative researchers. Please visit [www.colorectalcaner.org](http://www.colorectalcaner.org) for more information about the Alliance.

## Research Objectives

**Based on the Alliance's Research Strategy and priorities identified at the Cure CRC Summit, Project Cure CRC welcomes proposals in the following areas:**

- New strategies and technologies in immunotherapy and cellular therapy beyond MSI-H.
- Utilizing ctDNA and other liquid biopsies to improve MRD patient outcomes.
- Accelerating the development of antibody-drug conjugates therapies for CRC.
- Developing vaccine therapies for prevention of CRC recurrence, the effective utility to treat minimal residual disease, and as adjuvant therapies irrespective of tumor mutational status.
- Leveraging AI using existing large datasets and developing new datasets (molecular and clinical data) to advance precision medicine encompassing diagnostics, development of new treatments, treatment decisions, and longitudinal disease monitoring.

- Targeted therapies targeting cell signaling pathways towards a cure. Leveraging new target and treatment strategies in local and metastatic CRC.
- Developing effective cellular therapies for treatment of mCRC.
- Development of novel chemotherapeutic agents and combination therapies with increased efficacy and durable response while minimizing off-target effects.

## Special Emphasis Area

The Alliance seeks proposals that accelerate existing preclinical and clinical research that increases therapeutic options, improves adjuvant therapies, delivers novel therapies focused on driver mutations (BRAF, TP53, KRAS, BRCA1, as examples) and investigate strategies to influence the tumor microenvironment (TME) to expand the use of immunotherapy.

## Timeline

**There are no application deadlines.** Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis starting on January 25<sup>th</sup>. A response regarding your proposal submission will be provided within two months of submission.

## Applicant Eligibility

### General eligibility requirements:

- Applications will be accepted from non-profit, for-profit, and academic organizations, and from investigators who hold MD, PhD, or other professional degrees.

If there are any questions about eligibility, please contact David Fenstermacher at [dfenstermacher@ccalliance.org](mailto:dfenstermacher@ccalliance.org) or Cara Schmitt at [cschmitt@ccalliance.org](mailto:cschmitt@ccalliance.org) before submitting an application.

## Types of Awards

### Young Investigator Accelerator Award (Academic and Non-profit Applicants Only)

**Description:** Young Investigator Accelerator Awards aim to attract early career faculty with original ideas into the field of colorectal cancer research, thereby recruiting and supporting the next generation of CRC research leaders. Awardees will be provided funding to accomplish innovative and original, preclinical, translational, and/or early clinical research projects.

**Term:** Two years

**Amount:** Up to \$100,000 per year for two years (up to \$200,000 total)

### Eligibility Requirements:

- Applicants must be within the first five years of their first independent, full-time academic or non-profit faculty appointment.

### Senior Investigator Accelerator Award (Academic and Non-profit Applicants Only)

**Description:** Senior Investigator Accelerator Awards will fund potentially transformative ideas that will accelerate the translation of new therapies and technologies to the bedside by the end of the proposed research. Collaborations are highly encouraged.

**Term:** Two years

**Amount:** Up to \$250,000 per year for two years (up to \$500,000 total)

#### Eligibility Requirements:

- Principal Investigator must be a senior researcher, past the initial five years of their first academic or non-profit faculty appointment.
- Key collaborators are not required to qualify as a senior researcher

### Pilot Accelerator Award (Academic, Non-profit or Industry Applicants)

**Description:** Pilot Accelerator Awards support investigators who propose potentially transformative ideas without extensive preliminary data but articulate a clear hypothesis and translational goals. Resources for such "high-risk, high-reward" projects are important to establish proof-of-concept, which may then leverage additional funding through more traditional avenues.

**Term:** Two years

**Amount:** Up to \$100,000 per year for two years (up to \$200,000 total)

#### Eligibility Requirements:

- Applicants must have an academic non-profit or industrial research appointment and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### Team Science Accelerator Award (Academic, Non-profit and/or Industry)

**Description:** The Team Science Accelerator Award will support team science, including public-private partnerships, that will accelerate CRC research to curative science. Research proposals will be considered that accelerate new therapeutic and technology innovations from bench to bedside and address unmet clinical needs.

**Term:** Two years

**Amount:** Up to \$250,000 per year for two years (up to \$500,000 total)

#### Eligibility Requirements:

- Principal Investigator of a Team Accelerator Award proposal must be a senior investigator with more than five years of active research in colorectal cancer.
- Research teams may be from a single institution or multiple institutions.
- Research teams may include both academic, non-profit and industry (biotech/pharma) researchers

### Opportunistic Award (Small Startup Companies)

**Description:** The Opportunistic Award are seed grants to fund novel research from small startup companies that will accelerate CRC research towards a curative science.

**Term:** One year

**Amount:** Up to \$500,000 per year for one year (up to \$500,000 total)

#### Eligibility Requirements:

- Small startup companies are defined as one or less rounds of fundraising.

## Application Format and Instructions (all awards)

Please apply online via **ProposalCENTRAL** using the requirements therein. **All Applications, Letters of Intent and Full Proposals must be submitted in PDF or Word format using Font: Arial, and Size: 11 or larger.**

### **Applications: Letter of Intent**

Letter of Intent should include the following components:

1. **Young Investigator Accelerator Awards, Senior Investigator Accelerator Awards, Pilot Accelerator Awards, Team Accelerator Awards, and Opportunistic Awards:**
  - a. 1-page description of research proposal that should include information about the Principal Investigator (name, title, contact info) and institution, a brief overview of the project with specific aims, the impact to CRC research, timeline, and overall cost of the project.

All Letters of Intent must be submitted to [ProposalCENTRAL](#). Upon submission, proposals will be reviewed to determine if the proposal has adhered to Project Cure CRC RFP instructions. Proposals submitted that have not adhered to RFP instructions will be rejected and not reviewed further. Proposals that have adhered to RFP instructions will be reviewed by the Project Cure CRC scientific review panel that is comprised of CRC scientists and patient advocates within 2 months after submission. The review panel will have the option to invite the Principal Investigator and research team to submit a Full Proposal, as described below.

**Principal Investigators of selected proposals should submit the following for review by the Project Cure CRC scientific review committee (review timeline is dependent on submission of Full Proposal and will be no longer than 2 months).**

**Please submit the following sections for a complete grant application (please use forms on submission page to complete parts of application and to upload Full Proposal):**

1. Institution/Organization **(Please use Form 3 “Lead Organization” on submission page)**
2. Project Name **(Please use Form 1 “Title Page” on submission page)**
3. Project Period **(Please use Form 6 “Budget Period Detail” on submission page)**
4. Total Amount of Funding Requested **(Please use Form 6 “Budget Period Detail” on submission page)**
5. Term of Funding Request **(Please use Form 6 “Budget Period Detail” on submission page)**
6. Principal Investigator **(Please use Form 2 “Applicant/PI” on submission page)**
7. Key Personnel **(Please use Form 4 “Key Personnel” on submission page)**
8. Project Lay Summary (Briefly describe the overall project and its expected impact on patients. This summary will be used by the CCA in donor materials, newsletters, on the website and in press releases.) **(Please use Form 5 “Abstracts” on submission page)**
9. Technical Abstract (An executive summary for a scientific audience.) **(Please use Form 5 “Abstracts” on submission page)**
10. Needs Assessment (Provide a brief description of the study’s rationale. Part of 5-page full proposal)
11. Summary of Goals & Objectives (State the specific goal(s) of the project and list the objectives and milestones necessary to achieve those goals.) Part of 5-page full proposal.
12. Project Plan (Describe a step-by-step plan, with a timeline, for achieving the stated objectives and milestones.) Part of 5-page full proposal.

13. Evaluation Plan (Explain the metrics you will use to measure the project’s success.) \_Part of 5-page full proposal.
14. Budget and Line-Item Justification Narrative (Project Cure CRC grants can be used to support direct research costs. Include a budget of direct research expenses by line item, including amounts. Provide an item-by-item narrative of each expense for the entire project. The Alliance allows for shared costs with institutions to increase funding for research proposals and considered on a case-by-case basis. CCA funds may be used to support indirect costs of 5% or less on a case-by-case basis.) **(Please use Forms 6 and 7 “Budget Period Detail” and “Budget Summary and Justification” on submission page)**
15. **Additional Funding (An award from the CCA may not be the only funding source for the proposed project. Please provide information about 1. Needed additional funding; 2. Sources of other funding, secured or pending; 3. Plans for securing other needed funding; and 4. How will you perform this project if the CCA is unable to provide full funding?)** Part of 5-page full proposal.
16. A completed NIH-formatted biosketch or Biosketch for PI form available on “Upload Attachments” is required for the Principal Investigator (not counted towards page limits) **(Please use Form 9 “Upload Attachments” on submission page)**

**Page Limits**

The following page limits may not be exceeded to uploaded documents:

- Early-Career Investigator Award – 5 pages total (references/citations not to exceed ½ page)
- Senior Investigator Award – 5 pages total (references/citations not to exceed ½ page)
- Pilot Award – 5 pages total (references/citations not to exceed ½ page)
- Team Award – 10 pages total (references/citations not to exceed 1 page)
- Opportunistic Award – 5 pages total (references/citations not to exceed ½ page)

**Review Mechanism**

All proposals undergo a rigorous review process by members of a distinguished Scientific Review Panel comprising experts in diverse fields. The review panel operates under clear objective guidelines. All proposals will be scored according to Alliance review and selection criteria. All awards are contingent upon ratification by the Alliance Board of Directors.

**Weighting of each criterion in the review**

	Overall Scientific Merit & Clinical Importance	Rigor and Feasibility	Investigator and Environment	Budget is Reasonable for the Proposed Research Project
Grant Awards	1/4 of score	1/4 of score	1/4 of score	1/4 of score

## Award Administration

### Award Letter

Upon acceptance of the award, the PI and his/her employing Institution will be required to sign an Award Letter indicating acceptance of the Alliance's Award Terms and Conditions within 30 days, which can be found on the Alliance website <https://colorectalcancer.org/research>. The Alliance Terms and Conditions are non-negotiable. The Alliance must be notified in advance and approve any significant changes in research objectives, key personnel (including transfer to another employee), or budget.

### Approvals

The Alliance requires certification through ProposalCENTRAL of compliance with Human Subjects and Animal Care Assurance as applicable. In cases where ethical/regulatory approval is required to perform the work, such approvals will be required before initial payments are made. This includes local IRB approvals of clinical trials supported by Alliance funding. For clinical trials, a timeline and milestones must be included in the application package. Failure to meet these milestones within a reasonable time frame may result in termination of the award.

### Multi-Institutional Projects

For projects including key personnel at other institutions, the PI must verify in advance that funds can be transferred from their institution to the collaborating institution. This requirement can be easily met by attaching a letter from the PI's sponsored programs office stating a commitment to comply with this requirement (letter does not count towards page limits). Sub-award agreements between collaborating institutions must be executed within 60 days of the Alliance's execution of the award agreement with the applicant institution.

### Funding

For all proposals, the level and duration of funding may be adjusted by the Alliance as appropriate for the scope of the proposal and the funds available. Partial funding will also be considered to obtain proof-of-principle data. **Awards may support indirect costs, overhead costs, or other similar institutional charges up to 5% and will be decided on a case-by-case basis**; fringe benefits for personnel salaries are allowable. **Full-term funding will be contingent upon review of periodic (at least every 6 months) progress reports, submission of the final progress report and other oversight activities conducted by the Alliance** in support of innovative ideas with transformative potential. Multi-year support is not automatic for any Alliance award and is conditioned on submission of complete and accurate progress reports, financial reports, and demonstrated progress on the funded proposal.

### Alliance Events

PIs may be invited to attend an annual event for the scientific community. PIs are expected to attend and may be asked to present research findings.

## Additional Information and Contacts

Email questions about this RFP, eligibility, or other issues about the Alliance or its awards to Cara Schmitt, Research Project Manager, [cschmitt@ccalliance.org](mailto:cschmitt@ccalliance.org), David Fenstermacher, PhD, Senior Director of Research and Medical Affairs, [dfenstermacher@ccalliance.org](mailto:dfenstermacher@ccalliance.org).

Technical questions about the ProposalCENTRAL submission system should be directed to their customer support at 800-875-2562 (Toll-free U.S. and Canada), +1 703-964-5840 (Direct Dial International) or by email at [pcsupport@altum.com](mailto:pcsupport@altum.com). Support is available from 8:30am-5pm Eastern Time, Monday through Friday