

STARR CANCER CONSORTIUM



Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center



Weill Cornell
Medicine

15th Grant Competition Request for Applications

Key Dates

RFA issue date:	February 9, 2021
Letter of Intent deadline:	May 6, 2021
Application deadline:	August 10, 2021, 5pm
Expected award start date:	January 1, 2022

Overview

Through a generous gift from the Starr Foundation, five institutions in New York and Boston formed the Starr Cancer Consortium, a collaborative framework to advance research in new ways that will have an impact on the understanding, diagnosis, prevention or treatment of cancer.

The Starr Foundation renewed its commitment to the Starr Cancer Consortium with a renewal grant of \$50 million over five years starting in 2019; \$40 million (\$8 million per year) for grant competitions through this annual RFA mechanism and \$10 million (\$2 million per year) for the Starr Technology Commercialization Fund.

The five participating institutions in the Starr Cancer Consortium are the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, The Rockefeller University, and Weill Cornell Medicine.

The Starr Cancer Consortium is intended largely to support critical mass, collaborative projects with the potential for transforming impact on the understanding and treatment of cancer, through the development and systematic application of molecular technologies, by investigating cancer biology or addressing important clinical problems. It is aimed at encouraging meaningful and ambitious collaborations between the participating institutions to develop and apply innovative approaches to transform cancer research and ultimately diagnostic and therapeutic strategies.

All projects supported by the Consortium must be collaborative, involving investigators from two or more of the five participating institutions.

New for this competition:

Lead PI must be 4 to 10 years from their first independent faculty position

This RFA is for the fifteenth grant competition. Ten applications were selected for funding from the 14th grant competition; information on the awards from previous competitions is available at www.starrcancer.org.

Objectives

The objective of this RFA is to solicit proposals for transformative collaborative research across institutions. Note – the collaborations must be real and new and each collaborating laboratory must be essential to the project.

The research areas include but are not limited to Technology Development, Disease Applications and Basic Biology.

- 1) **Technology Development.** To drive the development of technology for molecular characterization of cancer through collaborative research among the participating institutions of the Starr Cancer Consortium.
- 2) **Disease Applications.** To apply new molecular technologies in collaborative projects directed at diverse cancers, in the process gaining a deeper understanding of the molecular basis of these cancers and defining new paradigms for cancer research, diagnosis and treatment.
- 3) **Basic Biology.** To accelerate collaborative research of the basic biological mechanisms underlying the development of cancers. The focus must be on critical issues in cancer.

Funds Available

The Starr Foundation renewal gift for research awards through this RFA mechanism is \$8M per year for 5 years. Starr Cancer Consortium (SCC) awards are intended as seed grants to provide data for proposals to other entities. SCC funds should be considered as starter money for ambitious, novel projects, such that after 1 or 2 years of work they will be poised to get funding from other sources.

The total funding for this RFA will be determined by the scientific quality of the proposals, and their fit with the RFA key criteria. A 20% indirect cost allocation will be allowed from the allocated funds.

Applicants may request a project period of 1 or 2 years. Competing project renewals for one additional year of funding will be considered, but it is expected that the majority of Starr Cancer Consortium funding will be directed towards supporting new projects. Only exceptional competing project renewals will be funded.

Applications at one funding level will be considered:

\$100,000-\$400,000 per year in direct costs. Intended to support catalytic projects exploring new areas or approaches, or undertaking pilot studies.

Key Criteria

- 1) **Innovative research.** Truly novel approaches to significant challenges in cancer research.
- 2) **Collaboration.** Meaningful and synergistic collaboration between investigators from at least two institutions who are critical to achieving project aims. Each collaborating laboratory must be essential to the project.
- 3) **Transforming science.** Potential for transforming impact on the understanding of cancer, and ultimately diagnosis, prevention, or treatment of cancer.
- 4) **Scientific excellence.** Scientific merit as determined by peer review.
- 5) **Application to cancer.** All proposals must have clearly-defined application to cancer.

Eligibility

The PI and Co-PI(s) must have a primary appointment with one of the five participating institutions.

New for this competition:

- *For new applications to this competition: the PI must be 4 to 10 years* from their first independent faculty position*
- *The PI's mentor cannot serve as a Co-PI*

* More than 3 years and less than 11 years since the appointment as independent investigator on the day of the start of the award, i.e. January 1, 2022

Proposals must involve collaboration between investigators from at least two of the five participating institutions. In order to be the sole investigator from a participating institution on an SCC award, a core facility director must provide intellectual input to the project. Junior faculty, female faculty, and underrepresented minority faculty are encouraged to apply.

Proposed projects may involve further collaborations with investigators at institutions outside the SCC, but funding is restricted to those activities occurring within the participating institutions. PIs who received awards in previous grant competitions are eligible to submit applications to this competition, but their proposals must be very different from the funded research.

Participation Limitation

Investigators can serve as the PI on only one application and can participate in a maximum of two applications. The options are:

- One application as PI, or
- One application as PI and one application as Co-PI, or
- Two applications as Co-PI

Data & Resource Sharing

The Starr Cancer Consortium is strongly committed to the public sharing of reagents and data generated through SCC funded research. The SCC requires compliance with NIH policy and rules on reagent and data sharing, including the [Genomic Data Sharing Policy](#). Investigators are expected to include their plans for following data sharing guidelines in Section 13 of the SCC application: Data and Resource Sharing Plan.

Application Process

Applicants should submit a letter of intent (LOI) prior to submission of proposals. A confirmation of eligibility to submit an application is sent following administrative review of the LOI.

Letter of Intent

Applicants must use the Starr Cancer Consortium LOI template. The LOI template is at <http://www.starrcancer.org/funding>. LOIs should be sent as pdf documents to SCC@mskcc.org.

The LOI has the following components:

- Type: **New** Application, a **Revised** Application, or a **Renewal** Application
- Project Title
- PI Name, Rank, Affiliation and Contact Information, Date of first independent faculty position
- Co-PI(s) Name, Position Title, Affiliation and Contact Information
- Collaborator(s) Name and Affiliation
- Brief Statement of Topic and Scope (one page maximum)

Application

Applicants must use Starr Cancer Consortium application templates (*note*, the templates include detailed instructions for each section of the application). Application templates and submission instructions are at <http://www.starrcancer.org/funding>. *Note*: changes cannot be made to applications after submission.

The application template for new and revised applications has the following components.

- Project Title
- Name and Institution of PI, Co-PI(s) and Collaborator(s)
- Abstract (Up to 250 words)
- Rationale & Significance (Up to 250 words)
- Specific Aims (Up to 250 words)
- Project Description (Up to 3000 words, up to 5 figures or tables).

- Statement of How the Proposed Research is Transformative (Up to 250 words)
- Collaboration Description (Up to 500 words)
- Timetable and Milestones
- Statement of What Can Be Accomplished (Up to 250 words)
- References
- Budget: Modular budget (\$25K increments up to \$400K annual direct costs)
- Budget Justification
- Biographical Sketches of Investigators and Key Collaborators
- Other Support for PI and Co-PI(s)
- Data and Resource Sharing Plan (Up to 500 words)
- Letters of Collaboration
- Statement explaining and justifying participation in two applications (Up to 250 words)
- Certification of Proposal/Conflict of Interest

The application template for competing project renewals includes:

- Project Title
- Name and Institution of PI, Co-PI(s) and Collaborator(s)
- Abstract, Rationale & Significance, Specific Aims from the original application
- Progress Report and Justification (Up to 1000 words)
- Project Description for Renewal Year (Up to 2000 words)
- Collaboration Description (Up to 500 words)
- References
- Budget for Renewal Year
- Budget Justification
- Biographical Sketches of Investigators and Key Collaborators
- Other Support for PI and Co-PI(s)
- Statement explaining and justifying participation in two applications (Up to 250 words)

Appendices are not allowed.

Applicants should contact the Sponsored Programs Office at their institutions (see below) prior to submitting an application. This will facilitate the post-award approval process for those applications selected for funding.

Broad Institute:	Kathryn Link, sponsoredresearch@broadinstitute.org
Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory:	Walter Goldschmidts, goldschm@csHL.edu
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center:	Annmarie Pacchia, sponsorp@mskcc.org
The Rockefeller University:	Collette L. Ryder, nihngas@rockefeller.edu
Weill Cornell Medicine:	Aleta Gunsul, grantsandcontracts@med.cornell.edu

Review Mechanism

Applications will be reviewed by a Scientific Review Board (SRB) made up of peers from institutions not participating in the Starr Cancer Consortium. New and revised applications will be reviewed with respect to the Key Criteria described above. Competing project renewals will be reviewed with respect to progress and justification.

The SRB will provide recommendations to the Starr Cancer Consortium Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will make all final funding decisions. There will be one deadline for application to this RFA.

Award Administration

Written reviews and funding decisions will be provided to applicants. For each funded proposal, a Research Agreement will be executed by the Starr Cancer Consortium institutions participating in the project, and each institution will ensure regulatory compliance prior to commencement of funding.

Reporting Requirements

All projects are required to:

- Provide a written scientific progress report for year 1; disbursement of year 2 funds is contingent on review of the progress report.
- Present at the annual SCC retreat.

Each project's PI and Co-PI(s) are required to attend and present at the annual Starr Cancer Consortium retreat.

Further Information

Any questions concerning this RFA should be addressed to:

Sylvie Le Blancq, PhD
Executive Director
Starr Cancer Consortium
Tel: 646-888-3773
Email: leblancs@mskcc.org