

HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme 2024

Irish Cancer Society Call Information

Research Call: Translational Biomedical Research - Areas of Unmet Need in
Cancer

Application Deadline: 3pm, Thursday 19th October 2023

Call document last updated: 25/08/2023

Key dates:

Call Open	Thursday 24 th August 2023
Intention to submit Deadline	Thursday 21st September 2023
Deadline for applications	3pm, Thursday 19th October 2023
Irish Cancer Society external peer review	Late October 2023 to Mid-January 2024
Applicant response	Mid-January 2023
Charity Selection Committee	February 2023
HRB Application Deadline	Late March 2024
Joint Funding Committee Meeting	Late May 2024
HRB Board Meeting	June 2024
Applicant Notification	July 2024
Contracts Issued	From September/October 2024
Research Project Start Date	From October 2024

These dates are for guidance purposes only, as such, they are subject to change, at the discretion of the Irish Cancer Society.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of Call

This document provides guidance on specific aspects/requirements of the Irish Cancer Society funding call as part of the HRCI/HRB Joint Funding Scheme 2024. All other aspects of the call are covered in the 'Guidance Notes for Applicants' document provided by the HRB (available on the Irish Cancer Society [website](#)).

Information in this document that is *additional* to or *different* from the 'Guidance Notes for Applicants' document provided by the HRB include:

- Theme of the call
- Addressing Strategic Aims
- Project Eligibility
- Lead Applicant Eligibility
- Co-Applicant(s) Eligibility
- Collaborator(s) Eligibility
- Host Institution
- Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) in application

It is very important that both this document and the HRB ['Guidance Notes for Applicants'](#) document are read carefully.

The Irish Cancer Society is a member of the [Health Research Charities Ireland - HRCI](#) (formerly Medical Research Charities Group), which was founded in 1998 with the aim of supporting charities in Ireland to increase both the quality and quantity of healthcare research being done in Ireland. The HRCI represents the joint interests of charities specialising in restoring health through medical research, diagnosis and treatment and, where possible, the prevention of disease.

Since 2006, the work of the HRCI has been supported by the Department of Health through annual funding to the Health Research Board (HRB) for the co-funding of research projects with medical research charities. The HRB is the lead agency in Ireland supporting research linked to health and social care. Together the HRCI and the HRB operate an innovative joint funding scheme that allows members of the HRCI to support research of particular interest to specific patient populations, where they might otherwise not be in a position to finance the full cost of that research.

HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme aims to fund researchers and research teams to conduct internationally competitive and innovative research in areas of strategic relevance to each individual charity. HRCI-HRB awards are up to a maximum total award value of **€300,000 for projects from 12 up to 36 months.**

The Irish Cancer Society will run our own call as part of the HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme based on our own organisational strategic priorities. The standard application guidance and forms provided by the HRB must be utilised.

****Please note: only one application per Lead Applicant to this scheme will be considered. Therefore researchers can only apply to one charity as Lead Applicant.** There is an option to be a Lead Applicant on one application and a co-applicant on another, provided the researcher can justify the time spent on each project should both reach final HRB panel discussions. The same project cannot be submitted to more than one charity in this scheme**

1.2 Application Procedure

A brief overview of the process is outlined in Figure 1 and below:

The **Irish Cancer Society** manages:

1) Applications Open

- The Irish Cancer Society defines aspects specific to their call as part of the HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme.
 - Applicants are required to email the Irish Cancer Society (grants@irishcancer.ie) by **Thursday 21st September** notifying of their '**Intention to Submit**'. Please complete the 'intention to submit' form (available from the Irish Cancer Society [website](#)). Please note the Intention to submit form will not be peer-reviewed, or used in the decision making process for this award, but is to allow us to anticipate the number of full applications we will receive, and aid us in selecting the most appropriate peer reviewers for your application.
 - Applicants complete the standard application form and documents provided by the HRB (available from the Irish Cancer Society [website](#)).
- 2) **Submission** - Completed application documents are submitted to the Irish Cancer Society (by 3pm Thursday 19th October).
 - 3) **Peer review** - Eligible submitted applications are internationally peer reviewed by the Irish Cancer Society peer review process. Applications will be reviewed by both an international scientific panel, and a panel of experts by experience (PPI panel). Please ensure you read the HRB '[Guidance Notes for Applicants](#)' document for further information about the reviewing process.
 - 4) **Applicant response stage** - Applicants have the opportunity to respond to any peer-reviewers' comments.
 - 5) **Shortlisting** - the top two applications are shortlisted by the Society to be submitted to the HRB for review by the jointly-appointed HRCI-HRB Panel.

The **HRB** manages:

- 6) Review the two shortlisted applications put forward by the Irish Cancer Society will be considered by a jointly-appointed HRCI-HRB Peer Review and PPI Panel.
- 7) Selection- Applications will be selected for funding by a jointly-appointed HRCI-HRB Peer Review and PPI Panel.

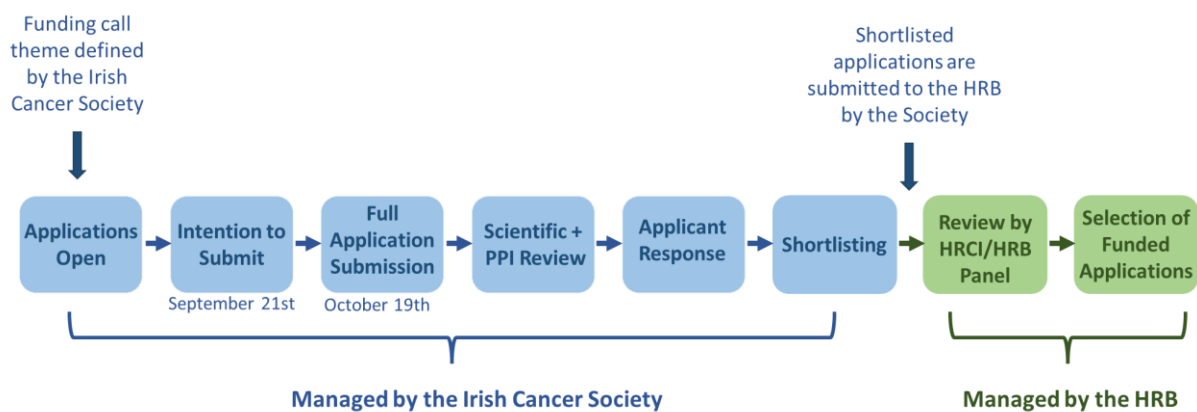


Figure 1- Overview of the process

1.3. Addressing Strategic Aims

It is imperative that applicants clearly articulate the relevance of their application in addressing the aims of the **Irish Cancer Society Strategy 2021 – 2025**, as this will be part of the core criteria evaluated as part of the initial selection process.

Information regarding the strategic aims and mission of the Irish Cancer Society can be found below:

Mission: The Irish Cancer Society is a community of patients, survivors, volunteers, supporters, health and social care professionals and researchers. Together, we are working to save lives and improve the lives of people affected by cancer in Ireland.

Vision: By 2025, 3 out of 4 Irish cancer patients will survive their diagnosis and everyone affected by the disease will have access to world-class treatment, care and support. In future, no one in Ireland will die from cancer.

One of the ways in which we will set out to achieve this ambitious vision will be to **increase our investment in world-class cancer research**. We will do this by funding research all along the cancer research continuum, including a focus on translational biomedical cancer research. In particular, we aim to target areas of unmet need and gaps in the current research landscape, to meet the needs of people affected by cancer which would not otherwise be addressed. We aim to support this by leveraging our funding to achieve more for the same, through increased partnership and collaboration.

While all cancers have inherent challenges for those who are affected by them, for this award the key priority will be to fund translational biomedical research projects which focus on cancers with significant challenges and unmet needs; this includes: paediatric cancers, rare cancers, metastatic disease, poor response or poor outcome cancers, and cancer within

underserved communities. In addition, innovative research that seeks to develop new tools, technology or methodologies to aid in improving cancer outcome is strongly encouraged. This may include for example: immuno-oncology, liquid biopsy, next generation sequencing etc.

For details of the Irish Cancer Society's strategy (2020-2025), please see: **[Irish Cancer Society Strategy 2020-2025 | Irish Cancer Society](#)**

For details of the Irish Cancer Society Research Roadmap (2020–2025), please see the Irish Cancer Society **[website](#)**.

2. Eligibility

2.1 Project Eligibility

Theme of the call: Translational Research – Areas of Unmet Need in Cancer

For this award, the Irish Cancer Society will only accept **translational** research projects.

Translational research can be defined as “bench to bedside” or patient-focused research. The aim of translational research is to translate existing knowledge about cancer biology into techniques and tools that will accelerate progress towards patient benefit. Translational research improves the translational potential of basic biomedical discoveries through pre-clinical testing. Discovery/basic research projects will not be eligible for this award.

Please refer to the HRB '[Guidance Notes for Applicants](#)' document for additional project eligibility criteria.

The theme of this call is translational biomedical research, focusing specifically on areas of unmet need in cancer, as called out in our Irish Cancer Society Strategy and Roadmap. These four strategic aims, addressing unmet needs in cancer include:

- i. Prioritising those cancers in which there are significant challenges in terms of **outcome** i.e. metastatic cancers, rare cancers, poor response or poor outcome cancers;
- ii. Translational biomedical research focused on addressing the unmet needs of **children, adolescents and young adults** affected by cancer;

- iii. **Novel and innovative approaches** centred on improving early detection or the development of new treatment modalities. For example, research projects across key emerging areas in translational biomedical research such as immunology, next generation sequencing and liquid biopsies.
- iv. Research which seeks to improve outcomes from **traditionally underserved communities**

i. Metastatic, Rare Cancers and Poor Response or Poor Outcome Cancers

Advances in prevention, detection and treatment have revolutionised cancer medicine and survival. Outcome has significantly improved in Ireland in the last 30 years with 6 in 10 cancer patients now surviving at least 5 years after their diagnosis. However, the pace of progress has not been the same for every cancer. Globally and nationally survival has not dramatically increased in some cancer groups such as **metastatic disease, rare cancers and cancers with poor response or outcomes**. These cancers continue to have unmet needs in terms of lack of effective treatment options and/or lack of research capacity within the area, both of which contributes to inferior survival and outcome.

A key priority for the Irish Cancer Society is to ensure that all patients in our community benefit from world class cancer research and expertise, and that the gap in survival between different cancer groups is closed.

In line with this commitment the Irish Cancer Society as part of the HRCI-HRB Joint Funding scheme 2024, is inviting applications to support translational biomedical research in metastatic cancers, rare cancers and cancers with poor response or outcomes. Your proposal should address key questions in these areas, and must be translational biomedical research in nature.

*Please also ensure that your application falls within the scope of the call as outlined in Section 3 of the HRB [‘Guidance Notes for Applicants’](#) document.

ii. Unmet needs of children, adolescents and young adults affected by cancer

Similarly, there are unmet needs associated with **cancers affecting children and young adults (aged 0 – 24 years)**. These cancers continue to have unmet needs in terms of lack of effective treatment options and/or lack of research capacity within the area, both of which contributes to inferior survival and outcome.

In line with this commitment the Irish Cancer Society as part of the HRCI-HRB Joint Funding scheme 2024, is inviting applications to support translational biomedical research in the area of childhood, adolescent and young adult (CAYA) cancer (aged 0 – 24 years). Your proposal

should address key questions in this area, and must be translational biomedical research in nature i.e. directly focussed on improving outcomes for children or young adults affected by cancer.

*Please also ensure that your application falls within the scope of the call as outlined in Section 3 of the HRB [‘Guidance Notes for Applicants’](#) document.

iii. Development of novel and innovative translational research tools to improve cancer outcome

To achieve the Irish Cancer Society’s vision, improving treatments in cancer care have the potential to save thousands of lives in the years ahead. In recent decades, treatments have become more targeted, while new drugs have radically improved outcomes for some cancers. Immunotherapy, empowering the patient’s own immune system to find and kill cancer cells, also offers greater hope for the future.

In support of this, the Irish Cancer Society will accept applications focused on the **development of novel and innovative translational research tools, with the aim of improving cancer outcomes**. Examples would include (but are not limited to) projects focused on immuno-oncology, next-gen sequencing and liquid biopsies. Your proposal should address unmet needs in cancer, and must be translational research in nature.

*Please also ensure that your application falls within the scope of the call as outlined in Section 3 of the HRB [‘Guidance Notes for Applicants’](#) document. As per this document, your application cannot be solely ‘technology development’.

iv. Research which seeks to improve outcomes from traditionally underserved communities

The Irish Cancer Society is committed to improving access and outcomes for everyone affected by cancer. Globally, it is evident that there is a disparity in access to cancer diagnosis, as well as an inequity in care across population groups and communities, and thus there are significant gaps in cancer outcomes across different groups. Therefore, a key priority of the Society is to identify ways in which we can overcome barriers affecting socially excluded individuals and communities, to ensure equity of outcome, as well as access to cancer care and services.

To address this, the Irish Cancer Society will accept applications focused on improving outcomes of individuals from traditionally underserved communities. For example, this could be a research project which looks to understand the differences in biological mechanisms across specific marginalised populations, which may be more likely to contribute to cancer. Your application must address unmet needs in cancer, and must be a translational research project.

*Please ensure your application also falls within the scope of the call as outlined in Section 3 of the HRB [‘Guidance Notes for Applicants’](#) document.

2.2. Lead Applicant Eligibility

The lead applicant **will serve as the primary point of contact during the review process and during the award.** The Lead Applicant will be responsible for the scientific and technical direction of the research programme and **has primary fiduciary responsibility and accountability for carrying out the research within the funding limits awarded and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contract governing the award.**

The lead applicant must:

- Hold a post that covers the duration of the award in a [HRB-approved research institution](#) in the Republic of Ireland as an independent investigator, or
- Be a contract researcher recognised by said Research Institution as an independent investigator who will have a dedicated office and research space for the duration of award, for which he/she will be fully responsible, or
- Be an individual who will be recognised by said Research Institution upon receipt of the HRCI-HRB award as a contract researcher as defined above. The Principal Investigator does not necessarily need to be employed by said Research Institution at the time of the application submission

The lead applicant must demonstrate that they have the skills, knowledge and supports necessary to direct the proposed research and to be actively engaged in carrying the research through to completion. Generally, this means that the lead applicant will:

- Show appropriate evidence of expertise matched to the nature and context of the project;
- Show evidence of achievement as an independent researcher in their chosen field by:
 - Demonstrating a record of research output, with at least three publications of original research in peer reviewed journals. Where appropriate, they should also provide evidence of other outputs such as published book chapters, reports to government and/or any other relevant outputs that have resulted in a significant impact in their field.
 - Demonstrating a record of independence by showing that they have secured at least one peer-reviewed research grant for a research project(s), as either the lead applicant or a co-applicant. Funding received for travel to seminars/conferences and/or small personal bursaries will not be considered in this regard.

- Show evidence that they possess the capability and authority to mentor, manage and supervise less experienced researchers and to manage relationships with co-applicants, collaborators and the host institution.

Where an applicant fails to meet the eligibility criteria, the application will be deemed ineligible and will not be accepted for review. The HRCI-HRB will contact the lead applicant in the event that this situation arises.

****Please note: only one application per Lead Applicant to this scheme will be considered. Therefore researchers can only apply to one charity as Lead Applicant. There is an option to be a Lead Applicant on one application and a co-applicant on another, provided the researcher can justify the time spent on each project should both reach final HRB panel discussions. The same project cannot be submitted to more than one charity in this scheme****

Please refer to Section 5.1.1 in the HRB [‘Guidance Notes for Applicants’](#) document for additional project eligibility criteria.

2.3. Co-Applicant(s) Eligibility

The eligibility criteria for co-applicants is outlined in Section 5.1.2 of [‘Guidance Notes for Applicants’](#).

For the Irish Cancer Society call, if a co-applicant is receiving funding then they must be based in the Republic of Ireland.

2.4. Collaborator(s) Eligibility

The eligibility criteria for collaborators is outlined in Section 5.1.3 of [‘Guidance Notes for Applicants’](#).

For the Irish Cancer Society call, if a co-applicant is receiving funding then they must be based in the Republic of Ireland.

2.5. Host Institution

Information on the Host Institute can be found in Section 6 of the [‘Guidance Notes for Applicants’](#).

For the Irish Cancer Society call, the Host Institution must be located in the Republic of Ireland.

3. Public and Patient Involvement (PPI)

The Irish Cancer Society is dedicated to putting patients, families, carers, survivors, supporters, and the public at the very heart of what we do. Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) in the research process ensures that research is meaningful and of benefit to those affected by cancer.

In line with this commitment, it is **mandatory** that all applicants include PPI in their application to the Irish Cancer Society.

PPI should be involved at all stages of a research project, from development and design to interpretation and dissemination. It is expected that applicants will integrate PPI into all aspects of their projects, as early as possible. Public and Patient Involvement at application stage is strongly encouraged. PPI members can be included in the application as co-applicants or as collaborators, depending on their role; a separate CV template is available for PPI members.

As part of the Irish Cancer Society review process, all applications will be reviewed by both scientific and PPI expert panels. As such, please ensure that each section of the application form is written in an appropriate manner for the relevant review panels.

To assist with the PPI element of your application, please email grants@irishcancer.ie and we can provide case studies of strong examples of PPI in applications. To further support the PPI aspect of applications we will be holding a PPI webinar/Q&A session in late September, open to those applicants who email grants@irishcancer.ie with their 'intention to submit'. The Irish Cancer Society will provide specific help and advice on PPI to applicants when requested, where we have capacity.

Further guidance on involving PPI in research can be found in the Irish Cancer Society 'PPI in Research' document, found on our [website](#). If you require further information or guidance on including PPI in the application please contact grants@irishcancer.ie.

4. Application Process

All applicants must email grants@irishcancer.ie with the completed 'Intention to Submit', form by Thursday 21st September 2023.

****Please note, the purpose of the intention to submit form is to allow us to anticipate the number of full applications that we will receive and to aid the Society in selecting the most appropriate peer reviewers for your applications. It will **not be peer reviewed** or used in the**

decision-making process for this award. Everyone who submits an intention to submit form is entitled to also submit a full application.

All full applications must be submitted by email to grants@irishcancer.ie by 3pm Thursday 19th October 2023.

It is the responsibility of the Lead Applicant to ensure that applications are completed in full, in line with the HRB '[Guidance Notes for Applicants](#)', and Irish Cancer Society Guidance documents, and that all the necessary documentation is received by the Irish Cancer Society on, or before the closing dates indicated. Once you have submitted your application, you cannot edit or re-submit it.

5. Checklist for submission

For all applications (Thursday 21st September):

Intention to Submit form	
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For all applications (3pm, Thursday 19th October):

Part B1 Application form	
Part B2 Gantt chart	
Part B3 Figures supporting project description (1 document)	
Part D1 Lead Applicant Signature Page	
Part D2 Host Institution Signature Page	

Where applicable:

Part C1 Collaboration Agreement Form	
Part C2 Infrastructure Agreement Form	
Part C3 Letter(s) of support regarding contract status	
Part D1 Signature pages for co-applicants	

5. Contact Details

All enquiries & correspondence relating to this scheme should be addressed to:

Dr Croí Buckley, Translational Research Coordinator, Irish Cancer Society

Email: grants@irishcancer.ie