Irish Cancer Society Research

Sonya Lynch Public and Patient Involvement Award 2024

Guidelines for Applicants

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

As the largest voluntary funder of cancer research in Ireland, the Irish Cancer Society is committed 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 directly and indirectly affected by cancer. PPI can be involved at any stage of a research project, from development and design, to interpretation and dissemination.

In line with this commitment, the Irish Cancer Society's Public and Patient Involvement Sonya Lynch Award 2024 aims to support excellent cancer researchers working in **metastatic breast cancer**, to foster and grow their PPI activities.

This award is in memory of Sonya Lynch. Sonya was a PPI contributor on numerous Irish Cancer Society grants, bringing her passion and expertise to each. Sonya ensured the patient voice was at the heart of each project, resulting in impactful, patient-centred research. Sonya was the first recipient of our PPI Champion Award in 2022.

Applications can request up to a maximum €5,000, awarded to researchers based in the Republic of Ireland to cover costs associated with PPI activities. The Irish Cancer Society strongly encourages initiatives which promote involvement and the equity of access for individuals and groups from hard to reach and under-represented populations, ensuring diverse representation of the population.

The award will cover expenses associated directly with the PPI activities; more details will be provided in Section 4.

Please note: Expenses must be in line with the Irish Cancer Society budget and expenses guidelines (Appendix 2); final approval of the budget is at the discretion of the Irish Cancer Society.

1.2. Indicative Timelines

Milestone	Dates
Grant Call opens	Friday 23rd February 2024
Full Application Deadline	**3pm, Thursday 25th April, 2024**
Review	May
Awardees Announced	June

Please note: The above dates are provisional, and subject to change at the discretion of the Irish Cancer Society.

1.3. Purpose of this Award

The purpose of this award is to provide the funding required for applicants to foster and develop PPI activities in metastatic breast cancer research.

1.4. Funding and Duration

Applicants can apply for funding of a maximum €5,000, however this must be appropriately justified based on the PPI activities proposed. Applications requesting lower amounts are also welcome and eligible for this award. Each applicant may only submit one application.

Please note: The proposed PPI activities must begin in 2024.

1.5. Reporting

Recipients of this grant will be expected to provide a written report to the Irish Cancer Society at the end of the award and at regular intervals throughout the grant duration.

2. Eligibility

2.1. Applicant Eligibility

Applications from individuals that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be assessed. This award is open to cancer researchers, at all post-undergraduate career stages (i.e., lead applicants must have an Undergraduate degree at minimum).

The research team can include:

- A lead applicant (mandatory)

- An academic supervisor (mandatory for lead applicants with fewer than 4 years' post-graduate research experience or equivalent)

- PPI mentor(s) (optional)

Please note: The addition of a PPI mentor(s) is not mandatory for this award. While the Irish Cancer Society encourages PPI mentorship in research, in recognition that some researchers are still at the start of their PPI journey and require funding to kick-start this experience, this is not a mandatory requirement.

1. Minimum Eligibility Criteria

Lead Applicant:

At a **minimum**, the lead applicant must meet the following criteria:

- Have a demonstrated track-record in cancer research or be currently undertaking cancer research.

- Be based at a HRB-approved host institution in the Republic of Ireland.

- Have a strong interest in and commitment to initiation/progression of PPI activities in cancer research.

Academic Supervisor:

Applicants who have less than 4 years' post-graduate research experience must include an academic supervisor. The academic supervisor will lead on the practicalities of managing a research grant, including providing oversight and governance of the research project and research funding.

At a **minimum**, the academic supervisor must meet the following criteria:

- Have a demonstrated track-record in cancer research and grant management.

- Be based at a HRB-approved host institution in the Republic of Ireland.

- Confirm their support and intention to supervise the lead applicant, by providing a letter of support.

PPI Mentor(s):

For this award, PPI mentors are defined as individuals or organisations that provide focused help and mentorship on certain aspects of the plan, in which they have experience. For example, a PPI mentor may be a PPI contributor who developed the recruitment strategy prior to commencing the planned PPI activities. The Irish Cancer Society encourages mentorship in PPI. More than one PPI mentor may be added to the application.

It is strongly encouraged to involve people affected by cancer at as early-stage as possible in your research project. If you have already identified a PPI collaborator(s), they may be included as an official PPI mentor in your application. They must provide a letter of support, confirming their support and intention to collaborate with the lead applicant throughout the course of the project plans.

It is also very important to include the relevant charities, communities and societal partner organisations and PPI networks in your activities, ensuring that you are

provided with different perspectives. We strongly advise that you consult with the PPI Ignite Network Ireland or your host institution, who will be able to provide guidance for including PPI in research.

Eligible Applications must not:
- Use the funding for PPI activities for which funding from another charity/organisation is already available, i.e., using funding to 'top up' a previously awarded grant.

- Include engagement activities or participation activities; applications must plan for true public and patient involvement and partnership.

- Use the funding to carry out research (i.e., this funding should only be used to partner with people affected by cancer and involve PPI in cancer research).

2.2. Institution Eligibility

The host institution is the organisation that receives and administers grant funding and is responsible for compliance with all general and specific terms and conditions of awards. In order to be eligible to apply for funding, a proposed host institution must be based in the Republic of Ireland and must be listed as an approved host institution on the Health Research Board's website: https://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/before-you-apply/all-grant-policies/hrb-policy-on-approval-of-host-institutions

Applicants conducting research out of non-approved sites (e.g., a hospital) must nominate an approved host institution, and all finances must be managed by this institution.

3. Application Procedure

3.1. How to Apply

Applications must be completed and submitted through the Irish Cancer Society online grant management system. In order to submit an online application, you are required to register at the following address: https://grants.cancer.ie.

When you enter your login details, you will be directed to the portal homepage. From here, you can:

- Update your basic information (please make sure all fields are completed).

- Make a new grant application.

- Access previous grant applications.

- Manage any active grants.

When you have entered your basic details, you will be able to create a new application from the portal homepage. Alternatively, select 'New Application' from the

'My Applications' tab. Next, click 'Apply' for the Grant Type detailed as 'Public and Patient Involvement Award 2024'.

4. Application Form

Prior to completing your application form, please consult **Appendix 1: Public and Patient Involvement in Research**, ensuring that your proposed PPI plans are plans for true 'Involvement'.

Please note: This application form will be assessed by a panel of PPI reviewers with a lived experience of cancer. It should therefore be written in accessible English throughout.

There are 9 main sections outlined on the left-hand side of the page:

a. Proposal Outline

b. Academic Supervisor

c. PPI Mentor(s)

d. Project Summary

e. PPI Plan

f. Impact Plan

g. Budget

h. Declaration of Support – Head of Department

i. Validation Summary

Saving your progress regularly is strongly recommended by clicking 'Save' or 'Save and Close' as you go through the application form. Mandatory sections are marked with a red circle icon. You will not be able to submit the application if these sections are incomplete.

Further details on each section of the application form:

a. Proposal Outline

In this section, you will be asked to provide basic information about your application. Input and save the information as required under the following headings:

- Proposed project title.
- Proposed start date for PPI activities (must start in 2024).
- Duration (minimum 6 months).
- Lead applicant details.
- Proposed host institution (in Ireland).
- Cancer type.
- Research type.
- Discipline.

- Keywords (maximum 5).
- If the application has been submitted elsewhere.

b. Academic Supervisor

An academic supervisor is mandatory for all applicants with less than 4 years of post-graduate research experience.

Academic Supervisor

Your Academic Supervisor will have to confirm participation in the application and approve the application before it is finally submitted to the Society.

To add your Academic Supervisor, you can search for them by entering their email address. If the Supervisor has already created an account, then they will appear on the list. To add them as your Academic Supervisor, click 'Select'. Please note that on saving, the contact will be added to the Application as a Supervisor and they will receive a notification of this via email.

If your Academic Supervisor does not already have an account you can click 'Add a New Contact,' and enter their name and email address. Please note that on saving, the contact will be added to the Application as an Academic Supervisor. They will receive a notification of this via email.

Role of Academic Supervisor

Please detail why you have chosen your supervisor and any role they will have in the project. If your academic supervisor has any experience in including PPI in research, please detail that here (**300 words maximum**).

Declaration of Support – Academic Supervisor

If an academic supervisor is required, please upload a declaration of support from your supervisor.

The Declaration of Support Template is downloadable from this section on the online system or on the website. This must be completed on headed paper. Each declaration of support can be **one A4 page maximum**.

c. PPI Mentor(s)

PPI Mentor(s)

Please indicate if you are including PPI mentor(s). If so, please list each of these Mentor(s), why you have chosen your PPI Mentor(s) and any role(s) they will have in the project.

Declaration of Support – PPI Mentor(s)

If PPI Mentor(s) are included, please upload a declaration of support from the Mentor(s). This Declaration of Support should outline the role the PPI Mentor will have in the project, must confirm their intention to collaborate throughout the award, and confirm that they have reviewed and approved the application.

The Declaration of Support Template is downloadable from this section on the online system or on the website. Each declaration of support can be **one A4 page maximum.** The Declaration of Support should outline the role the PPI Mentor will have in the project. PPI Mentor(s) must confirm their participation in the project, confirm that they have reviewed and approved the application.

Please note: If you are including multiple PPI Mentors, a declaration of support is required from each of them.

d. Project Summary

Please provide a summary of your research project, ensuring that this is written in plain English. Further guidance on accessible language can be found in Appendix 1. (**300 words max**).

e. Public and Patient Involvement Plan

Please provide a detailed description of your plan for involving people affected by cancer in your research project.

Please complete the following sections using the guidelines where relevant:

- Please tell us what you hope to achieve by involving PPI contributors, e.g., will it help to ensure relevance of your research to a particular patient group, or benefit people in some other way? **(200 words max)**.

- Tell us in plain English about your plans for PPI. You should include details on the focus of your research or initiative, the phases of the research cycle or initiative in which you hope to involve PPI contributors and the approaches you are considering using to facilitate this involvement. If you have already developed a role description for PPI contributors, please attach it. We encourage you to involve patients/the public from the earliest phases of your research planning but will not penalise you for not having done so. **(500 words max)**.

- At what stage is your research project or initiative?

- Has ethical approval been granted for this research? If ethical approval has been granted for the research you will undertake, please attach the participant information sheet. If ethical approval has not been granted, please state why. Please note: Ethical approval is not required for PPI activities (unless there are particular ethical concerns for the contributors).

- How much time do you estimate will be required of PPI contributors, and what is the timeframe involved? Please also state how long individual PPI activities will take. **(200 words max)**.

- Where will the activities take place? Just state the location(s) or, if PPI contributors can be involved from home, state how this will be done. **(200 words max)**.

- How many PPI contributors are you seeking and how did you come up with this figure? **(100 words max)**.

- Are there particular characteristics required in the people you wish to involve, e.g., should they have a particular subtype of a condition, should they be patients themselves or carers, should they be past or current patients? How will you ensure equality, diversity and inclusion on your PPI panel? **(200 words max)**.

- How will you support PPI contributors to participate in your activities, e.g., will training or role descriptions be provided, will you be offering payment, and will their expenses be covered? We strongly encourage that you cover all costs for your PPI contributors, at a minimum. If necessary, what measures do you have in place to ensure sufficient accessibility for PPI contributors (e.g., suitable reading materials, appropriate location access, provision of interpreters etc.)? **(250 words max)**.

- Tell us a little about how you will manage any risks. Are there any risks that you are aware of, to PPI contributors participating in the involvement activity e.g. potential for distress? If so, how will you address them? **(250 words max)**.

- How will you share the outcomes of the research with the PPI contributors over time? How will you acknowledge their contribution to the work? Will you encourage the PPI contributors to feedback their views of the process? **(250 words max)**.

- How will potential PPI contributors apply/get in touch with you and how will you let them know if they have been accepted? **(250 words max)**.

f. Impact Plan

Creating impact from the grants that we fund has always been of great importance to the Irish Cancer Society. The purpose of considering the potential impact at the application stage is to focus all projects on working towards achieving meaningful impact from the outset. Therefore, it is the impact of the research beyond academic outputs, i.e., the real-life benefit of the research, aided by the inclusion of public and patient involvement, and how this may improve the lives of people who are affected by cancer.

How will you measure the success of your PPI activities? For example, what key performance indicators (KPIs) will you use to ensure that your PPI activities have had an impact? (**300 words maximum**).

g. Budget

All applications should include a detailed budget. Indirect costs/overheads are not eligible costs for Irish Cancer Society awards. Please consult the Irish Cancer Society budget spending and expenses guidelines when developing your grant budget (Appendix 2).

Please note: At a minimum, the Irish Cancer Society would expect the applicant to provide a fee for each PPI contributor to cover expenses including travel, food, childcare etc. associated with involvement in this project. Aside from monetary contributions, please consider additional ways to value your PPI partners. This can be through recognising them as co-applicants or collaborators on grants, including them on papers or publications, and many other ways of showing your appreciation.

Approval of all budget items is at the discretion of the Irish Cancer Society. Any budgeted costs that do not adhere to spending guidelines risk rejection.

All costs should directly contribute to the purpose of the PPI activities detailed in this application. Please provide details of any external funding. A maximum of €5,000 may be requested.

Direct costs can be requested for the following budget categories:

Budget Item	Details
Running Costs (directly associated with PPI activities)	- Finding people/advertising - Training and learning costs - Venues and catering - Small equipment and printing - Access to university facilities (venue hire) - Fee for PPI contributors - Costs of travel, sustenance, childcare etc. for PPI contributors
Other Costs	- Language translation and interpretation costs - Support for people with impairments

h. Declaration of Support – Head of Department

Please upload a declaration of support from the head of department of the lead applicant. The declaration of support template is downloadable from this section on the online system or on the website. This must be completed on headed paper.

The declaration of support required from the head of department is simply a standard letter stating that they are aware of and support the application.

i. Validation Summary

The validation summary page will notify you of any incomplete sections that are required. You will not be able to submit the application until all required fields are complete.

5. Submission of the Application

The application is ready for submission once the form has been validated on the validation summary page. This will also highlight any collaborators who have yet to confirm their participation. Once the application has been validated, it may be submitted by the **lead applicant**.

The application will then be routed to any required signatories (academic supervisor), if applicable. The application will not be received by the Society until all signatories have approved it. All signatories must approve the application **before** the application deadline. It is the responsibility of the lead applicant to ensure that signatories are given sufficient time to approve the application before the deadline.

Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted for review.

Application Checklist

- ✓ Completed application form.
- ✓ Proof of ethical approval (if applicable).
- ✓ Declaration of Support – Academic Supervisor (if applicable).
- ✓ Declaration of Support – PPI Mentor(s) (if applicable).
- ✓ Declaration of support – Head of Department.

6. Application Assessment

The Irish Cancer Society bases its funding decisions on the recommendations of an Irish Cancer Society PPI review panel. However, the Society withholds the right to reject any funding application at its own discretion.

Incomplete, ineligible, or late applications will be rejected by the Society and may not proceed to external review.

6.1. Conflicts of Interest

The Society endeavours to ensure that external reviewers are free of any conflicts of interest that might unduly bias the decision-making process.

6.2. Assessment Procedure

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of Irish Cancer Society PPI reviewers. The panel will consist of experts by experience in the area of PPI. The panel will assess all sections of the application.

The review panel will be asked to provide feedback on the budget, which the Society will take into consideration. The approval of all grant budget items is at the discretion of the Irish Cancer Society.

The panel will score applications based on:

- Feasibility of the planned PPI activities.

- How the initiative will benefit the applicant's research/Irish cancer research.

- How the initiative will support and build the PPI networks in this research team and institution.

- The clear demonstration of the importance of PPI as an integral part of the overall research project.

6.3. Assessment Outcome

Review scores and comments will be collated and all applications will be discussed at a review panel meeting. The review panel will select which applications should be funded.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome by email. Reviewer feedback will be available to all applicants.

7. Contact

If you require assistance with the online grant management system or have any questions about the grant call, please contact us at grants@irishcancer.ie.