



Irish Cancer Society Research

Clinician Research Leadership Award

Applicant Guidelines: 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

A key priority for the Irish Cancer Society is ensuring that Irish patients benefit from world-class cancer research and expertise. Central to this focus is fostering and cultivating research talent. This is to ensure that Ireland is in a position to attract and retain world-class cancer research leaders who will drive evidence-based improvements in patient care.

As called out in the [National Cancer Strategy](#), the Irish Cancer Society recognises that cancer clinicians who have gained experience in leading international research centres require support and protected time to drive world-class cancer research in Ireland. The absence of protected time for healthcare professionals' involvement in research is recognised as a significant impediment to the sustained evolution of high-quality Irish cancer research.

The Irish Cancer Society is therefore now inviting applications to the **Clinician Research Leadership Award 2025** process. This year, in recognition for the need to build more research capacity in oncology specialities, we are inviting applications from outstanding consultants who are working in the oncology-related specialist field, and have returned to work in Ireland in the last 5 years.

The successful applicant of this award will be supported with **€150,000** funding to enable them to develop their position as a leader of oncology research in Ireland. This is intended to be a transformative investment for a consultant who has already demonstrated that they are capable of leading active, patient-focused research.

1.2. Indicative Timelines

Milestone	Date
Deadline for Applications	3pm, Monday 6 th October
External Review Process	October/November
Interviews	Thursday 13 th / Friday 14 th November

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

1.3. Programme Requirements

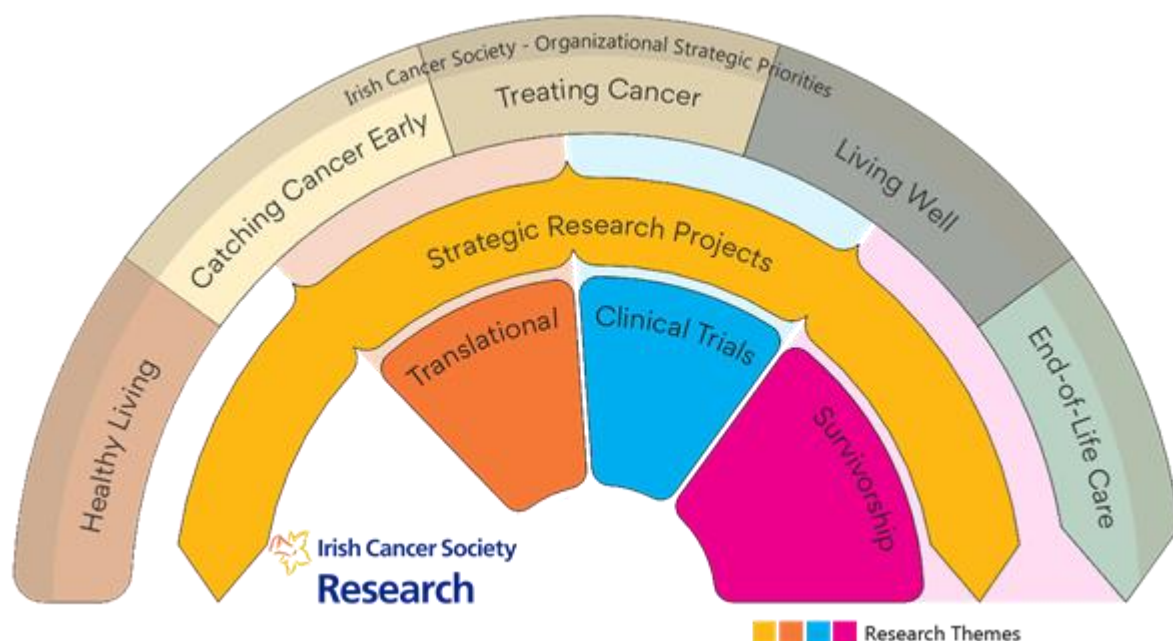
All proposals must be aligned with the [Irish Cancer Society's Strategy \(2020-2025\)](#) and the Irish Cancer Society's Research Roadmap. Proposed projects can be in any of the following areas: a) translational biomedical research, b) clinical trials, c) survivorship, or d) strategic priorities. These areas are described below in greater detail.

- a. **Translational biomedical research** can be defined as 'bench to bedside' or patient-focused biomedical research, the aim of which is to translate existing knowledge about cancer biology into techniques and tools that will accelerate progress towards patient treatment. Research in this area will build upon basic biological discoveries and improves their translational potential through pre-clinical studies. Much of the outputs of translational research naturally merge into trials, the next area of focus.

Please note, applications in drug design, SAR (structure–activity relationship) analysis, drug screening or basic biomedical research will not be considered at this time.

- b. **Clinical trials** are organised investigations in people to examine the benefits of new approaches to treatment and care. For example, looking to see if a new medicine can improve survival for a particular form of cancer. As well as funding these drug-based trials (so called IMP trials), the Irish Cancer Society is also interested in funding non-drug based trials (non-IMP trials) in areas such as diagnostics, technology, radiotherapy, surgery, psycho-oncology, exercise, nutrition, and combinations of these.
- c. **Survivorship** covers the period from diagnosis to treatment outcome (including palliative and end-of-life care). Survivorship research seeks to improve the care and outcomes experienced by people living with and beyond cancer. It includes prevention and early detection of recurrent cancer; long term effects of cancer and its treatment; quality and experience of treatment and care; psycho-social effects of cancer and its treatment; self-management; health information and literacy; genetic risk and counselling; physical and practical needs e.g. financial, employment, mobility... etc.

- d. **Strategic priorities** is a crosscutting theme, which seeks to specifically foster and grow research into areas of high unmet need in cancer. For example, cancers which have not benefited from the huge strides in outcome seen in some malignancies (metastatic disease, rare cancers and cancers with poor response or outcomes); the unmet needs of children, adolescents, and young adults affected by cancer; tackling misinformation and disinformation in cancer; addressing the needs of under-represented groups of people (e.g. Travelling community, ethnic and language minority communities, migrant communities, communities with socio-economic or mental health challenges, or any other socially excluded group).



1.5. Funding and Duration

The purpose of this award is to fund a career award for an excellent oncology-based consultant, working in a role that interacts with people affected by cancer. There is one award in 2025.

Each applicant may only be listed as a lead applicant on one application for this award. Applicants can apply for funding up to a maximum of **€150,000** for a project 24-36 months in duration.

The Irish Cancer Society appreciates that buy-out time/protected research time alone may not be sufficient to support the scope of work carried out within the remit of this award. As such, we welcome applications that approach this with flexibility, and will accept the hiring of dedicated research staff (e.g., Research Assistant). This will only be allowed where the lead applicant possesses:

- ✿ Significant practical research experience
- ✿ Significant research management experience
- ✿ Experience of supervising research staff

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 consultants who are working in any oncology-related specialist field. The Irish Cancer Society recognises the need for additional support for certain specialties, and so we particularly welcome applications from surgery, radiation, paediatrics and pathology.

Please note, consultants must hold the requisite qualifications necessary for a consultant-level appointment in their chosen field. Eligible candidates will only be considered from specialties that spend the vast majority, if not all of their time focussing on cancer care. For example, applications from candidates holding a senior clinical psychologist appointment, or in general practice (GP) will be eligible, once their research and clinical practice to date is focused on cancer.

This is an award aimed at providing the bandwidth for an individual to develop research leadership opportunities, it is not intended to support development of general service approaches in cancer care.

For any queries on applicant eligibility, please contact grants@irishcancer.ie with details.

Lead Applicant:

Suitability

Applicants may not have the most extensive research track record, but the experience they have will display their passion for research and the potential for them to utilise dedicated time to undertake new research aimed at having a positive impact on people affected by cancer. The ideal candidate will have previously demonstrated that they can build successful national (outside their own hospital) and international networks with others in the cancer research space, not only those within their own environment but with people and networks from different disciplines.

Minimum Eligibility Criteria

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

- Have returned to work in Ireland within the past 5 years*

- Currently be resident and hold a consultant appointment in a public hospital in the Republic of Ireland
- Be affiliated with an approved higher education institution in the Republic of Ireland (See Section 2.2 below)
- Demonstrate a clear and unambiguous high level of support from their host education institution, hospital, department and peers to be able to make use of this award
- Have a minimum of 3 first or senior authorships in cancer-related, peer-reviewed publications
- Have a promising track record in cancer research exemplified by, for example, clinical trials, national/international research partnerships, etc.

***Extended Leave:** The Society recognises that applicants may have taken extended leave from their careers for a number of reasons (e.g., carers, maternity, paternity, adoptive, parental, medical leave).

Assessment of applicants will take into consideration any extended leave taken. This is in recognition of the fact that activities undertaken during a period of time may be justifiably less than that of peers due to extended leave in that time. Please contact grants@irishcancer.ie with any questions around extended leave, as you may be eligible to extend the maximum period of eligibility beyond the 5 year maximum.

Please indicate if you have taken extended leave since returning to Ireland, and please detail the amount of time taken. You are not required to disclose the nature of this leave.

Career Mentor:

As part of the application, the applicant must identify a career mentor. The role of the mentor is to provide guidance and support in terms of the clinical and academic aspects of the award such as clinical practicalities, grant administration, laboratory, technical or other healthcare expertise that may be required by the applicant during the award. The mentor may also assist in establishing further clinical and research networks nationally and internationally.

The career mentor should be an established senior clinician with a proven academic track record for clinical research and mentorship. A letter of support from the career mentor will be required. In the application form, applicants will be asked to describe arrangements that are and will be in place to support them as a mentee.

Official Collaborators:

Official collaborators may also be included in the award. Official collaborators must have a significant, distinct, and clearly definable role and add value integral to the proposed research. A maximum of ten official collaborators may be included in the application. Collaborators may include individuals, from an academic or clinical background, committees, working groups etc.

2.2. Institution Eligibility

The host institution is the academic organisation in the Republic of Ireland, which the applicant must be affiliated with for the entire duration of the research project.

The host institution 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 named in the HRB-approved host institution list below* ** :

- Atlantic Technological University
- Dublin City University
- Munster Technological University
- National University of Ireland, Maynooth (Maynooth University)
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
- South-East Technological University
- Technological University Dublin
- Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
- The University of Dublin (Trinity College Dublin)
- University College Cork
- University College Dublin
- University of Galway
- University of Limerick

*Research can be conducted out of non HRB-approved sites (e.g., hospital) but lead applicants must nominate an approved host institution (i.e., academic), and all finances must be managed by this host institution.

**Please contact the Society with any queries regarding institutional eligibility (grants@irishcancer.ie).

2.3 Patient and Stakeholder Involvement

The Irish Cancer Society is dedicated to putting patients, families, survivors, supporters, and the public at the very heart of what we do. Public and Patient Partnership (PPP) in the research process ensures that research is meaningful and of benefit to those affected by cancer. PPP, which also encompasses the term Public and Patient Involvement (PPI), can be involved at any stage of a research project, from development and design to interpretation and dissemination.

In line with this commitment, it is expected that all applicants include a detailed PPP plan (and the associated minimum €1,500 budget allocation) within their application. **It is strongly recommended that applicants read Appendix 1 ‘Public and Patient Partnership (PPP) in Research’ prior to beginning work on an application.**

3. Application Procedure

3.1. Application Overview

There are two stages to the application process:

- i. Full application stage
- ii. Interviews

The structure of the application and review process is designed to allow for an iterative development and improvement of applications to maximise their potential.

Stage	Description
Stage 1: Full Application	<p>The full application allows applicants to present an initial description of their proposal.</p> <p>The review panel will evaluate the full application submissions. Applications will be evaluated based on their quality and how clear the impact of the funding will have for the applicant’s career.</p> <p>Applications that are of the highest quality will be shortlisted to the next stage i.e., interviews. Reviewer feedback will be made available to all applicants.</p>
Stage 2: Interviews	<p>Interviews are conducted between shortlisted applicants and the review panel. Feedback from the full application stage should be used to further improve the application in advance of the interviews.</p>

3.2. How to Apply

Applications must be completed and submitted through the Irish Cancer Society online grant management system.

To submit an online application, you are required to register at the following address: <https://grants.cancer.ie>. When registering, please fill out all the fields on the registration form.

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

1. Update your basic information (please make sure all fields are completed). **Please note, it is advisable to use a non-HSE email address when applying to this award, to avoid notifications on application status going to spam.**
2. Make a new grant application
3. Access previous grant applications
4. Manage any active grants

When you have entered your basic details, you will be able to create a new application from the portal home page. Alternatively, select 'New Application' from the 'My Applications' tab. Next, click 'Apply' for the Grant Type detailed as 'Clinician Research Leadership Award 2025'

Please note: The successful applicant will be required to complete a Research Impact section and Sharing of Research Findings plan. This will be required to progress to contract stage. More information on this will be provided to the successful candidate.

4. Application Form

There are 6 sections to be completed as part of this application:

- a) Application outline and applicant details
- b) Career mentor (200 words max)
- c) Plans for the award (700 words max)
- d) PPP plan (500 words max)
- e) Protected research time and organisational support (300 words max)
- f) Budget

Saving your progress regularly is strongly recommended by clicking 'Save' as you go through the application form. Alternatively, the information will be saved when you click 'Save and Close'. By clicking 'Previous' you will be brought to the previous section and by clicking 'Next' you will be brought to the next section. Mandatory sections are marked

with a red circle icon. You will not be able to submit the application if these sections are incomplete.

a) Application 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:

1. Proposed start date (must be by July 2026)
2. Proposed title
3. Duration (24-36 months)
4. Host institution
5. Hospital details
6. Oncology specialist field
7. Lead applicant CV
8. Cancer type(s)
9. Research type(s)
10. Discipline(s)
11. Keywords

b) Career Mentor

As part of the application, the applicant must identify a career mentor. The role of the mentor is to provide guidance and support in terms of the academic aspects of the research, such as grant administration, laboratory, technical or other healthcare expertise required by the applicant during the award.

Please note your career mentor will have to confirm participation in the application using the online system. To add your mentor, you can search for them by entering their email. If the mentor has already created an account, then they will appear on the list. To add them as your career mentor, click 'Select'. Please note that on saving, the contact will be added to the application as a career mentor, and they will receive a notification of this via email.

If your mentor 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 a career mentor. They will receive a notification of this via email. The mentor will be directed via the email to log on to the system and confirm their participation.

You will be asked to detail why you have chosen your career mentor and how they will support you over the period of the award (**200 words max**). You are also required to upload a **letter of support** from your career mentor, alongside their **CV**. Templates for these can be found in the relevant sections of the application form.

c) Plans for the Award

In this section, you will detail your motivation for applying for this award and how this award could be transformative to you and your career (**700 words max**). Please include why you are the best candidate for the award, highlighting your research experience to date in an oncology-related specialist field. Place special emphasis on collaborative research success, which may include clinical trials, outlining your role in the management and/or coordination of such research.

In this section, you will also outline current and planned research projects and collaborations, and how the time and resources afforded to you by this award will allow you to develop these. Please include details of what organisations and individuals you will need to engage with and how you will engage with them, alongside the plan for supervision of staff, if applicable.

When completing this section, please keep in mind that the award is aimed at investing in an excellent up-and-coming oncology leader who will develop a diverse clinical cancer research portfolio. It is not focused on funding one distinct research project. As such, you should utilise this section to articulate the diverse range of activities that you will undertake during the lifetime of this award.

d) PPP Summary

In this section, please provide an accessible summary of the proposed study and your plan for co-developing and integrating clearly identifiable PPP. A trained PPP Panel will review this section. As such, please use plain accessible language and if technical terms are used, they must be explained. Patient involvement and partnership is a fundamental aspect of the application. Please consult Appendix 1 before completing these sections.

Project Summary: Please provide a detailed and structured plain English abstract, considering the following (**200 words max**):

- Briefly outline the background of your research proposal, i.e., how and why your proposal came about and the context in which your proposal will take place
- Describe the specific problem, issue, or question that you are asking in your research proposal and describe how you are addressing it (including the variables being measured and why you have chosen these specific variables)
- Outline who will **participate** in your research, how you intend to recruit them into your study, and what they will be expected to do if they take part
- Detail how the proposed research is relevant and important to people affected by cancer

Involvement Plan: The involvement plan should detail how people affected by cancer and any other relevant stakeholder will be **involved** in the study as partners. It should be well thought-out, as detailed as possible, and given as much consideration as the scientific sections in the form. When completing this section, consider the following (**300 words max**):

- What is the overall goal of your PPP plan?
- What are the aims and objectives of your PPP plan?
- At what stage of the research programme will PPP Contributors be involved (e.g., planning, design, implementation, management, evaluation, dissemination)?
- What will be expected of the PPP Contributors who become involved? What is the burden of involvement and how will people's time and expenses be compensated?
- Please describe any PPP that has occurred to date in the development of the proposal.
- How will the planned PPP activities influence the research and how will you ensure that these are not tokenistic?
- What key PPP Contributors and stakeholders will be involved, how many will be recruited, and from where will they be identified?
- Articulate the challenges that might arise from involving PPP Contributors in your research and how any issues will be prevented or overcome
- What, if any, supports or training will be available to those involved?
- What PPP supports are available to you locally or nationally and how will these supports be utilised?

Please note: While patient participation and engagement activities are encouraged as part of an application and can be detailed as part of this plan, the Society will only fund applications that predominately include **involvement** or **partnership** activities. Please see Appendix 1 for further details and examples.

e) Protected Research Time and Organisational Support

In this section, you are required to give an overview of how you will manage your protected research time (**400 words max**). The plan should include details on who will cover your academic and clinical activities during any protected time that is requested and what days of the week you plan on using for this time. Cancer treatment services are busy, and manpower is limited. Therefore, it is very important that the hospital is aware of the application and that there is clear evidence that the broader team/institutional

environment of the applicant's clinic is fully supporting this application in any and all ways possible and that the award may be leveraged by additional local supports.

The Irish Cancer Society appreciates that protected research time alone may not be sufficient to support the scope of work carried out within the remit of this award. As such, we welcome applications that approach this with flexibility, and will accept the hiring of dedicated research staff (e.g., Research Assistant) instead. This will only be allowed where the lead applicant possesses:

- ✿ Significant practical research experience
- ✿ Significant research management experience
- ✿ Experience of supervising research staff

Organisational Letters of Support

An unequivocal and strong letter of support is required from both the host institute and the hospital.

The letter of support must make clear that the organisation is aware of the application and fully commit to supporting processing the award should the applicant be successful

It must also be clear in both letters of support that the host institute and hospital have communicated on the application and agree to support the application.

The 'Letter of Support' template must be used (downloadable in this section on the online application form).

f) 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 (see Appendix 2).

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.

Direct costs that can be requested for the following budget categories:

Budget Item	Details
Personnel costs	Salary costs should be calculated using the most up-to-date HSE or IUA salary scales, as appropriate, and include employer PRSI and pension contributions. Applicable annual increments (e.g., 2.5%) per annum are allowed. A breakdown of each salary cost is required, detailing and justifying a) the point, level, and scale used, b) the employer PRSI contribution, c) the employer pension contribution, d) any

	<p>annual increments, and e) the FTE (full time equivalent) of each post.</p> <p>Scales:</p> <p>HSE: https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/benefitservices/pay</p> <p>IUA: https://www.iua.ie/for-researchers/researcher-salary-scales-career-framework/</p>
Running costs	Running costs are costs associated with conducting the principal research activities, e.g., materials and consumables, survey costs, travel for participants, transcription costs... etc.
Equipment	<p>The Irish Cancer Society will allow researchers to purchase small equipment items up to a maximum value of €3,000. A strong justification must be provided for each equipment item, and a rationale must be given as to why this item is not already available to the researcher at their host institution. Only equipment items that are specific to the research project will be allowed. All costs must be inclusive of VAT, where applicable.</p> <p>Requests for large pieces of equipment will not be funded. The purchase of computer equipment will not be considered eligible for this award.</p>
Training & Education costs	Education and training for members of the research team may be budgeted. This may include attending courses, workshops, professional development training... etc. Include any training-related travel and accommodation costs here.
Travel and Dissemination costs	Costs associated with research dissemination may be budgeted, e.g., poster printing, open-access publication costs, engagement events, conference attendance, etc. Include any dissemination-related travel and accommodation costs here.
PPP costs	Costs associated with involvement activities should be budgeted (a minimum of €1,500 should be budgeted for involvement activities). Research participation costs (e.g., participant travel) should not be included here. Please see Public and Patient Partnership (PPP) in Research Guidelines on developing a PPP budget.

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 if the career mentor has yet to confirm their participation. Once the application has been validated, it may be submitted by the **lead applicant**. Applications must be received by the Society prior to the deadline. **Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.**

Application Checklist

- ✓ CV: Lead Applicant
- ✓ Letter of Support: Career Mentor
- ✓ CV: Career Mentor
- ✓ Letter of Support: Host Institute
- ✓ Letter of Support: Hospital

6. Application Assessment

The Irish Cancer Society bases its funding decisions on the recommendations of an external review panel. However, the Society withholds the right to reject any 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 are reviewed by a panel of international academic/clinical experts (scientific panel) **and** a panel of experts by experience (PPP panel).

It is vital that the sections pertaining to PPP are written in plain accessible English. Failure to do this may result in the PPP representatives being unable to accurately score and provide feedback on these sections of your 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.

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

7. Next Stage: Interview

Applications shortlisted at the paper review will be invited to interview by email. The interview panel will be made up of scientific and PPP reviewers, in addition to an Irish Cancer Society representative.

Applicants will be asked to present a summary of their project, including a response to the review panel's comments. This will be followed by a question-and-answer session. The final funding decision will be co-decided by the scientific and PPI reviewers.

8. Contact

If you require assistance with the online grant management system or have any questions about the grant call, please contact the Irish Cancer Society Research Department: grants@irishcancer.ie, FAO Dr Croí Buckley.