



Irish Cancer Society Research

Public and Patient Involvement in Research

Award 2026

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 'PPI in Research Award 2026' aims to support excellent **cancer researchers in all disciplines**, to develop their PPI activities. Up to a maximum of **€5,000** will be 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.

1.2. Indicative Timelines

Milestone	Date*
Grant Call opens	Thursday 9 th July 2026
Full Application Deadline	3pm, Wednesday 26th August, 2026
Review	August – September
Awardees Announced	Early October

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

1.3. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this award is to provide the funding required for applicants to foster and develop PPI activities associated with their area of cancer research. The award seeks to further embed meaningful public and patient partnerships and involvement within the broader cancer research landscape in Ireland.

1.4. Funding and Duration

Applicants can apply for funding up to a maximum of **€5,000** for a grant period duration of **at least 6 months**. All funding requests must be appropriately justified based on the proposed PPI activities. Applications requesting lower amounts are also welcome and eligible for this award. Each lead applicant may only submit one application.

Please note: Proposed PPI activities must begin by Q2 2027.

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. Corresponding financial reports will also be requested from the nominated host institution at the end of the award and at regular intervals throughout the grant duration, in line with written reports.

2. Eligibility

2.1. Applicant Eligibility

Applications from individuals that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be considered.

This award is open to cancer researchers of all backgrounds. This includes academic and clinical researchers (post undergraduate level), medical doctors, and professionals of social sciences, nursing, and allied health, working with those affected by cancer. Further eligibility requirements are listed below.

The research team can include:

- A lead applicant (mandatory)
- An academic mentor (mandatory for lead applicants with <5 years of post-doctoral research experience or not employed at an approved host institution)
- 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 to guide applications, we recognise that some researchers are at the start of their PPI journey and require funding to initiate PPI relationships and activities.

Lead Applicant:

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

- Have **obtained** an undergraduate degree at minimum.
- Have a demonstrated track-record in cancer research or be currently involved in cancer research.
- Be based at, or have nominated a mentor who will hold a post at, a HRB-approved host institution in the Republic of Ireland (See **Section 2.2** Institution Eligibility) for the entire duration of the grant period.
- Have a strong interest in and commitment to initiation/progression of PPI activities in cancer research.

Academic Mentor:

Applicants with fewer than 5 years of post-doctoral research experience are required to nominate an academic mentor. Clinical applicants also require a mentor if they have fewer than 5 years post-doctoral research experience or do not possess a contract at an approved host institution.

The academic mentor 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**, mentors must meet the following criteria:

- Possess a PhD or equivalent* in an academic field appropriate to the proposed project.
- Have a demonstrated track-record in cancer research and grant management.
- Hold a post (permanent or on a contract basis) for the entire duration of the grant period at a HRB-approved host institution in the Republic of Ireland (See **Section 2.2** Institution Eligibility).
- Confirm their support and intention to mentor the lead applicant by providing a letter of support (template provided).

* PhD equivalence is defined as at least three or more senior (first, joint-first, or last) author publications in peer-reviewed academic journals (in addition to minimum authorship requirements above) OR 4 years' full-time research experience post-primary degree. In such instances, candidates should contact grants@irishcancer.ie before applying.

PPI Mentor(s):

PPI can be involved at any stage of a research project. The Irish Cancer Society encourages **early** PPI mentorship from individuals or organisations who are considered experts through their lived experiences. More than one PPI mentor may be added to an application.

If applicants have already identified a PPI collaborator(s), they may be included as an **official PPI mentor** in the application. For this award, PPI mentors are defined as individuals or organisations that provide focused help and mentorship to lead applicants on aspects of the application or proposed research plan/activities.

Example: A nominated PPI mentor may be a person who has been involved in developing a recruitment strategy, prior to the commencement of the research plan or other PPI activities outlined in the application.

It is important to include relevant charities, communities, societal partner organisations, and/or PPI networks in proposed activities- ensuring that the research plan is appropriately guided by different perspectives. We also advise applicants to consult with the PPI Ignite Network at their host institution, who will be able to provide further guidance.

It is strongly recommended that applicants read **Appendix 1 ‘Public and Patient Partnership (PPP) in Research’** guidelines prior to beginning work on an application.

PPI Mentors must:

- Provide a letter of support (template provided), confirming their support and intention to collaborate with the lead applicant throughout the course of the grant.

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 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

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.

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

2.3. Eligible Proposals

Eligible Applications must not:

- Propose PPI activities for which funding from another charity/organisation is already available, e.g., using funding to ‘top up’ a previously awarded grant.
- Include generalised, vague engagement, dissemination, or participation activities. Applications must propose a plan for true public and patient involvement and partnership.
- Use the funding to simply carry out research. Funding may only be used to cover ‘PPI in Research’ i.e., activities pertaining to the partnership/involvement of people affected by cancer in the research plan.

3. Application Procedure

3.1. Application Overview

This is a one-stage application process. Once your application has been submitted, a ‘lived experience’ expert review panel comprised of PPI/PPP reviewers will evaluate the application submissions. Applications should be written in plain, accessible language throughout. Reviewer feedback will be made available to all applicants on request.

It is strongly recommended that applicants read **Appendix 1 ‘Public and Patient Partnership (PPP) in Research’** guidelines prior to starting their application-avoiding ‘tokenistic’ PPI plans and ensuring ‘true involvement’ through proposed activities.

3.2. How to Apply

Please note: We recommend that you use a **non-HSE email address** when creating this application to avoid any security issues when receiving correspondence from the online grant management system.

Applications must be completed and submitted through the Irish Cancer Society's **new** online grant management system. To submit an online application, you are required to register at the following address:
<https://irishcancersociety.optimytool.com/en>.

When registering, you will receive a verification email from noreply@optimytool.com within five minutes (please check your spam).

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

1. Manage personal data
2. Change email address
3. Change password
4. Delete your account

You should then select 'Submit a new application' at the top of the homepage, then 'PPI in Research Award'.

4. Application Form

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

- a) [Application Outline](#)
- b) [Lead Applicant Details](#)
- c) [Mentor Details](#)
- d) [Research Summary](#)
- e) [PPI Plan](#)
- f) [Impact Plan](#)
- g) [Organisational Support](#)
- h) [Budget](#)
- i) [Validation Summary](#)

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.

Further details on each section of the application form

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:

- Proposed title
- Proposed start date (must begin by Q2 2027)
- Funding Period/Grant Duration (must be at least 6 months)
- Lead applicant(s) personal details
- Proposed host institution
- Research Classification and Themes

b) Lead Applicant Details

In this section you will be asked to provide greater detail on the lead applicant (**400 words max**).

Please describe the lead applicant's suitability to carry out proposed activities, their short/long term careers goals, and how this funding will contribute to their professional/personal development. Consider the following:

- Detail any previous experiences with PPI in research, or reasons why you have been motivated to include an extensive PPI plan within the proposed research.
- What PPI-related skills will be obtained and how this will contribute to future research approaches.

- Next steps following the completion of the proposed research activities, including plans for follow-up PPI partnerships, dissemination, and/or funding body/bodies to which a future proposal(s) might be submitted.
- How this award would be transformative to the applicant's career and establish them as a leader in the involvement of patient and public partners in research.
- Plans to build on existing or establish new PPI networks in Ireland that are relevant to your research area.

c) Mentor Details

To add an academic mentor* or peer mentor(s), insert their details into the provided boxes in the application.

Academic Mentor:

Applicants with fewer than 5 years of post-doctoral research experience or that do not possess a contract at an approved host institution (See [Section 2.2](#) Institution Eligibility) are **required to nominate an academic mentor**. The following information should be provided in this section:

- Please detail why you have chosen your academic mentor and how they will support you over the period of the award. If your academic mentor has any experience with PPI in research, please detail that here (**300 words max**).
- **Academic Mentor Letter of Support:** In this section you are required to upload the letter of support from your nominated academic mentor, completed using the Letter of Support template. This template is available to download from this section of the online application. Click 'BROWSE FILES' or drag the file to the dotted box. This must be in pdf format and should be no more than one A4 page in length.

PPI Mentor:

Each application may include up to 5 PPI mentors. PPI mentors are defined as individuals or organisations that provide focused help and mentorship to lead applicants on aspects of the application or proposed research plan/activities. The following information should be provided in this section:

- Please describe the role that each PPI mentor will play in the project (**200 words max**).
- **Peer Mentor Letter of Support:** In this section you are required to upload the letter of support from named PPI mentor(s), completed using the template provided. The letter should outline the role the PPI Mentor will have in the project, must confirm their intention to collaborate throughout. This template is available to download from this section of the online application. Click 'BROWSE FILES' or drag the file to the dotted box. This must be in pdf format and should be no more than one A4 page in length.

d) Research Summary

Please provide a detailed and structured plain language summary of the proposed research; detailing the following (**500 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).
- If relevant, 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.

Research Images: You may optionally upload up to three relevant and accessible research images. All uploads must be in PDF format. Please ensure that wording within images is legible when uploading. Illegible figures may be difficult for the PPI review panel to assess and could detract from your application.

e) PPI Plan

In this section, please provide a detailed plan for integrating clearly identifiable public & patient partnership/involvement (PPP/PPI) within your proposed research. An expert PPI Panel will review the application. As such, please use plain, accessible language and if technical terms are used, they must be explained.

It is strongly recommended that applicants read **Appendix 1 'Public and Patient Partnership (PPP) in Research'** Guidelines prior to beginning work on this section.

- i. Please describe the intended benefits of incorporating PPI contributors within your research- what do you hope to achieve? (e.g., optimise the relevance of the research, benefit a particular cohort of patients)
- ii. Using plain, accessible language, please detail your plans for the incorporation of patient and public representatives within your research. You should include details such as: the focus of your research or initiative; the phases of the research cycle or initiative in which you hope to involve PPI; the approaches you are considering using to facilitate their involvement; If you have already included a role description for a PPI Mentor, please refer reviewers to that section of application for additional details.
- iii. Using the list provided, please select which stage your proposed research plan is currently at: planning; funding secured but not yet started; project has recently started; project is well underway; other.
- iv. Has ethical approval been granted for the proposed research plan and/or PPI activities?

- v. Please provide an estimation of the time commitment that will be required of PPI Contributors. What is the anticipated length of each proposed PPI activity and the general timeframe of overall PPI involvement?
- vi. Where will the proposed PPI activities take place? Please state the general location(s) (e.g., St James Hospital, Newgrange Community Centre, University of Limerick). If PPI Contributors can participate at home/online, please detail how this will be facilitated.
- vii. How many PPI Contributors are you seeking and why?
- viii. Are there certain characteristics or lived experiences which would make prospective PPI Contributors more suited to your particular research project? (e.g., knowledge of a particular cancer type, be a patient themselves or care for someone affected by cancer, currently undergoing treatment, receiving palliative care). How will you ensure equality, diversity and inclusion within your PPI panel?
- ix. How will you support PPI Contributors to participate in the proposed research? (e.g., will training or role descriptions be provided, will you be offering payment, will expenses be covered). 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).
- x. Please describe how any potential risks will be managed (e.g., potential distress having shared lived experiences).
- xi. Please outline your plan for sharing findings/outcomes from the proposed research with PPI Contributors throughout the grant period (e.g., printed or electronic documentation, events, social media). How will PPI Contributors be acknowledged for their contribution to the proposed research in dissemination materials? How will PPI Contributors be facilitated to provide honest and meaningful feedback on their experience of the entire process?
- xii. How will potential PPI Contributors be approached to get involved, and how will interested parties apply/get in touch with the lead applicant and/or research team? Will there be an eligibility process, and how will prospective PPI representatives be informed of the outcome?

f) Impact Plan

Please consult the **Research Impact Framework (RIF) (Appendix 3)** when completing this section.

Creating impact from the research that we fund has always been of great importance to the Irish Cancer Society. The purpose of including an impact plan at the application stage is to focus all projects on working towards achieving impact from the outset in line with the Irish Cancer Society's Strategic Objectives.

In this section, you will be asked to provide an impact plan, detailing how the input of ‘PPI in Research’ funding will ultimately result in meaningful impact for people who are affected by cancer. Therefore, it is the impact of the research beyond academia, i.e. the real-life benefit of the research and how this may improve the lives of people who are affected by cancer.

It is important that you are realistic; there is no need to overstate the impact of your research. Impact can be direct and indirect, and it may happen slowly over time. The Irish Cancer Society is aware of this and understands every project is different.

For the Irish Cancer Society, research impact is defined as **‘research being used to bring about a positive change to the lives of people affected by cancer’**.

Therefore, thinking about the tangible impact of your research will provide you with a strong foundation when a grant gets underway. As such, plans should be as comprehensive and considered as possible.

Please consider the following:

- How will you measure the success of your PPI activities?
- What key performance indicators (KPIs) will you use to ensure that your PPI activities have had an impact?
- Describe the next steps involved in actioning the outcomes of this grant, such as follow-up PPI partnerships, funding bodies identified for future proposal(s), enacting change through policy/legislation reform.

g) Organisational Support

A letter of support template can be downloaded from the online Grant Tracker system, within the application form.

To upload completed letters of support, click ‘Attach’, ‘Choose File’, then click ‘Attach’. This must be in pdf format, using the Irish Cancer Society Letter of Support template.

- **Host Institution Support:** Please upload a letter of support from the Head of Department at your HRB-approved host institution (See [Section 2.2](#) Institution Eligibility). The Head of Department should indicate that they support your application. On awarding of the funding, a contract will be made between the Irish Cancer Society and the institution at which you, the awardee, or your academic mentor works. The declaration of support should indicate that the Head of Department will facilitate this process.
- **Employer Support:** All hospital-based applicants who are not affiliated with a HRB host institution (See [Section 2.2](#) Institution Eligibility) are also required to upload a declaration of support from their manager demonstrating the organisation’s support for the applicant to fulfil the requirements of the award.

h) Budget

All applications should include a detailed budget, with detailed breakdowns of costs and justification for all costs. The Irish Cancer Society does not cover indirect costs or overheads. **Please consult the Irish Cancer Society Budget Spending and Expenses Guidelines when developing your grant budget (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. We therefore strongly recommend you get support from the research office in your chosen host institution when preparing this budget.

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.

Please Note- At a minimum, the Irish Cancer Society strongly encourages applicants to provide a fee for PPI contributors, to cover 'out-of-pocket' expenses (including travel, food, childcare etc.) associated with their involvement in a project. Aside from monetary contributions, please consider additional ways to value your PPI partners. This could be through recognition as co-applicants/collaborators on applications or relevant dissemination activities, such as publications or presentations.

Direct costs can be requested for the following budget categories:

Budget Item	Details/ Examples
Running Costs (directly associated with PPI activities)	- Finding contributors/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 - Additional support for people with impairments

i) Validation Summary

The validation summary page will notify you of any incomplete sections. 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 if a nominated academic mentor has 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 mentor), if applicable. The application will not be received by the Society until all signatories have approved.

All signatories must approve the application **before** the application deadline [**3pm, Wednesday 26th August 2026**]. 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.
- ✓ Letter of Support – Academic Mentor (if applicable).
- ✓ Letter of Support – PPI Mentor(s) (if applicable).
- ✓ Proof of ethical approval and PIL (if applicable).
- ✓ Organisational Declarations of Support

6. Application Assessment

The Irish Cancer Society bases its funding decisions on the recommendations of an expert 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 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 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 proposed activities will benefit the applicant's research, professional development, and the wider cancer research landscape in the Republic of Ireland.
- How the proposed activities will support and build PPI networks within the application research team and host institution.
- Clear demonstration of the benefits and importance of public and patient involvement 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. Applicants can expect to be informed of the outcome in October 2026. Reviewer feedback will be available to all applicants on request.

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.

Application Deadline- 3pm, Wednesday 26th August 2026