Request for Applications for UT Austin/MD Anderson Cancer Center Collaborative Pilot Project Grants

Deadline for Submission: November 10, 2021, 5:00 p.m. CT

To apply, visit the [Collaborative Pilot Project Submission Portal](#)

Program Overview:
The University of Texas at Austin and MD Anderson Cancer Center are pleased to announce the creation of a collaborative pilot project grant program to foster cross-disciplinary research collaborations, bringing together investigators from these institutions to co-develop transformative research projects with the expectation of attracting future extramural funding.

The collaborative pilot project grant program will provide up to **$50,000** to support one-year research projects. This funding is expected to generate preliminary data that investigators can use to apply for extramural, multi-investigator, inter-institutional awards. The number of projects awarded per funding cycle and the distribution of awards among thematic areas of interest will vary depending upon the number of applications received and the quality of applications.

Interested investigators are encouraged to apply. Teams whose applications are not selected may resubmit in subsequent grant cycles.

Important Dates:
Applications are accepted on a rolling basis, with three submission dates per year. If the proposal deadline falls on a weekend, the deadline is automatically extended to the following Monday (next business day):

	Funding Cycle 1	**Funding Cycle 2**	**Funding Cycle 3**
Application Deadline	March 10	July 10	November 10
Review	March – April	July – August	November – December
Notification of Award	April	August	December
Anticipated Project Start Date	May 1	September 1	January 1

We will make every effort to adhere to the above schedule. It is, however, subject to change.

Thematic Research Areas of Interest:
UT Austin/MD Anderson Cancer Center Collaborative Pilot Project Grants are meant to catalyze research in the following thematic areas. Both institutions worked together to identify research themes of mutual interest to both institutions, **however investigators may propose other research areas not outlined below**. Proposals are solicited for basic, translational, clinical and/or epidemiologic studies focused on fundamental biological processes, translational or clinical investigations and public health effects.

Research Area: Early-Onset Colorectal Cancer (EOCRC)
Applications may be responsive to any topic related to EOCRC and may include the key areas below or may address another provocative area at the discretion of the investigator team:

- Early Detection/Prevention (to include screening, epidemiologic and geo-mapping studies, microbiome, and nutrition)
- Health Disparities
- Epigenetics and Genomics
- Radiomics

Research Area: Frontiers of Neuroscience
Improvements in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of these disorders will require a deeper understanding of the basic mechanisms of neural function and how these processes are altered during aging and disease, which in turn will enable translational research into biomarkers, objective measures, and therapies. Applications should be responsive to these topics:

- Neurodegeneration
- Brain Tumors and Metastasis
- Addiction

Research Area: Population Health
Applications should be responsive to the topics below:

- Social drivers of health
- Health communication, message design, and place-based interventions to build trust and engagement among populations
- Cancer risk factors, including nutrition, obesity, and tobacco use

Eligibility Guidelines:
Each application must include at least two principal investigators (PIs):

- One PI with a primary appointment at UT Austin that is a permanent research staff or faculty (any track) with Principal Investigator status and
- One PI with a primary appointment at MD Anderson Cancer Center that holds the rank of instructor, assistant professor, or higher (any track).

Additional PIs from either institution and/or external collaborators are permitted; however, funds can only be disbursed to UT Austin or MD Anderson Cancer Center. Funds may be split between the two institutions at the discretion of the PIs. Please note, award recipients will be asked to serve as reviewers for future funding cycles.

Teams may submit more than one pilot application to a given funding cycle. Previous applicants/awardees may apply again; however, funds cannot be used as a supplement for an existing project or collaboration.

Investigators will be required to present the results obtained under this funding mechanism to the IAB after 6 months and after 1 year at an annual symposium.

It is our policy to provide equal opportunity without regard to race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability, protected veteran status, genetic information, or any other basis protected by institutional policy or be federal,

state, or local laws unless such distinction is required by law. All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply. Applicants at the level of instructor are encouraged to include a more senior faculty member to improve the competitiveness of their application.

Application Review Process and Evaluation Criteria:
Applications will be reviewed by a committee comprised of reviewers from both institutions who possess expertise in the given areas of study. Awards will be announced approximately 5 weeks after each funding cycle deadline, and funds will be disbursed approximately 6 weeks after each deadline. Evaluation criteria include:

Significance:
- Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the thematic research area?
- If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved?
- How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?

Investigators:
- Demonstrated commitment by the investigator team to establish a new interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise; are their leadership approach, governance, and organizational structure appropriate for the project?

Feasibility:
- To what extent does the application describe what objectives the project team intends to achieve, how the project team intends to reach them, and the anticipated implications of the project's findings?

Leveraging Funding:
- To what extent does the proposed collaboration enhance competitiveness in securing external funding?
- To what extent does the application describe plans for pursuing external funding, including providing details about the targeted funders and programs? How will research findings from this project feed into external funding proposals to one or more programs or agencies and make such proposals competitive?

Application Process:
To respond, proposers must complete an online application form and submit all required documents specified below through the online application system as one (1) complete, text-searchable PDF.

Submit all required documentation here: Collaborative Pilot Project Submission Portal

Required Document Checklist:
A. Cover Page
B. Brief Project Abstract
C. Biosketches of Key Personnel
D. Project Proposal

E. Budget
F. Budget Justification
G. Additional Materials

A. Cover Page:
Provide a one-page cover page that includes the project title and names, email, and affiliation of all investigators.

B. Brief Project Abstract (150 words or less):
Please write this as if you are describing it for a non-technical audience. Focus on research goals, expectations, what makes the project compelling, and how you plan to use the funds (i.e., to support x, buy x equipment, test x, etc.)

C. Biosketches of Key Personnel:
NIH-format biosketches of the Principal Investigators (current 5-page format, PHS 398).

D. Project Proposal (4 pages or less):
Outline the project's specific research aims, providing rationale for proposed project and highlighting innovation and potential impact. Background and preliminary data should be included, if available. Also describe the experimental strategy and provide a brief timeline, identifying at least one specific extramural award that will be sought after seed funding. The body of the proposal should not exceed four pages (12-point Times New Roman, Arial, or Helvetica single spaced) inclusive of figures and tables. References should be provided, but do not count toward the four-page limit.

Applications involving human subject research, clinical research, or clinical trial research should include a brief description of study population characteristics, protection, and monitoring plan. Note that applications proposing studies with human participants or with live, vertebrate animals must obtain IRB/IACUC approval before funds are distributed.

E. Budget:
Please create an itemized budget of up to $50,000 for up to one year, to be shared by both institutions. Indirect costs (overhead) should be excluded from the budget. For UT Austin personnel expenses, fringe benefits should be excluded– these are covered internally. Please specify the total amounts going to UT Austin and MD Anderson separately.

F. Budget justification (up to one page):
Provide a description of the items requested in the budget and how those costs will support the project's objectives.

G. Additional Materials:
MD Anderson applicants: If a PI is currently at the rank of Instructor, a letter from the PI's chair is required to accompany the application and should include assurances of departmental support and expected longevity of the instructor appointment within the department.

Allowable Costs:

- Research staff salaries, including graduate research assistants and postdocs
- Research-associated travel (for grant holder only)
- Research supplies and materials

- Research equipment
- Software may be purchased only if it is highly specialized research software fully justified by the scholarly demands of the proposed work. General purpose software is not allowable.
- Faculty salaries

Unallowable Costs:

- Any expenditure prohibited from an indirect cost account
- Student tuition, fellowships, scholarships, or stipends
- Any pre-publication manuscript preparation expenses: copyediting, photos for publication, etc.
- Books, CDs, DVDs, or videos
- Indexing
- Travel or registration expenses for attending professional meetings or symposia.
- General-purpose software
- Computer time, computer hardware or peripherals.
- Conference registration or travel expenses
- Any research costs incurred prior to the start date of the award.

Contact information:

UT Austin PIs may send programmatic questions to Daniel Arriaga, Senior Special Projects Coordinator in the UT Austin Office of the Vice President for Research, at daniel.arriaga@austin.utexas.edu. MD Anderson Cancer Center PIs may send programmatic questions to Laura Adame, Administrative Manager in the Moon Shots Operations department, at lladame@mdanderson.org. Please send InfoReady related questions to VPRcompetitions@austin.utexas.edu.