



## **BEAT Cancer Research Initiative Request for Proposals**

### **DATES AND DEADLINES**

- Proposal Due Date June 25, 2024
- Award Notification August 7, 2024
- Earliest Start Date August 26, 2024

### **PROGRAM GOALS**

The Cancer Center at Illinois (CCIL) and OSF HealthCare Cancer Institute (OSF) are soliciting interdisciplinary team research proposals to initiate new collaborations and enhance existing translational research collaborations among University of Illinois faculty and OSF clinicians. The aims of this initiative are to enable teams to:

1. Develop technologies, including device design and drug discovery, which can be rapidly translated to improve patient care
2. Enhance collaboration between CCIL members and OSF clinicians
3. Focus on one of the 6 areas of interest of OSF (See below for more information)

Of note, the BEAT Cancer Research Initiative is intended to launch research projects that are expected to be catalytic. Requests to provide interim or incremental support for existing research programs or projects will not be considered. We also encourage the use of CCIL Shared Resources as part of the project.

Proposals must consist of collaborations between CCIL researchers and OSF clinicians and are strongly encouraged to have anticipated near-term translatability to address clinical needs identified by OSF clinical partners. It is essential that proposals include substantive contributions from both scientific and clinical partners, and proposed study objectives be aligned with the focus areas identified as OSF priorities (see below).

### **RESEARCH TEAM ELIGIBILITY**

Proposals must reflect shared stakeholder involvement of investigators from the CCIL scientific team members and OSF clinician(s). Projects should demonstrate substantive collaboration between CCIL scientists and OSF clinicians and must specifically address OSF identified clinical interest areas. Proposals should include a description of the innovative nature of the research, how the research can be translated towards clinical impact, and the team's capabilities, where the contribution of each collaborator's expertise is evident.

The CCIL and OSF are particularly interested in proposals that focus on one of the below areas of interest:

- Deploy risk identification strategies for the earliest detection of cancer, and the development of interventions and care models to manage high risk patients
- Optimize therapy selection for complex cancers with sequencing, analysis, and interpretation
- Develop surveillance and care models to monitor cancer recurrence
- Develop rapid histology tools that can be implemented in the clinical setting, i.e. intraoperative
- Measure the underlying impact of proton / flash therapies on biologic tissues using multiple disciplines and technologies



- Consider ways these therapies (proton/flash) can be staged / combined with other companion therapies to maximize impact in adults and children.

### **PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR ELIGIBILITY**

Each project requires one Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) who is a current CCIL member and one Co-PI who is an OSF clinician. The Co-PIs will assume the organizational and scientific leadership for the project. A faculty member or clinician may only be PI on one submitted project. However, there is no limit to being a co-investigator on other projects. Priority will be given to projects for which PIs are existing CCIL members and active practicing OSF clinicians.

### **FUNDING EXPECTATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS**

This RFP encompasses a flexible funding opportunity to support diverse projects at different stages of development. Rapid translational research projects with anticipated tangible outcomes within a 1- to 2-year timeframe are prioritized, with a particular interest in large-scale projects with significant potential clinical impact, such as those that may lead to future phase 1 clinical trials or those demonstrating a rapid and tangible improvement in patient care outcomes.

Funding provided by the BEAT Cancer Research Initiative to launch research projects is expected to be catalytic. Projects will be expected to achieve milestones and progress reports will be required at key time points, which may affect continual funding. For multi-year proposals, designated yearly funds will be released only upon the successful completion of the stated goals and metrics outlined in proposal milestones.

Each research team must submit a proposal detailing the project timeline, including milestones, and a detailed budget breakdown by year that will support the research project (budget template available for use on the CCIL website). Project costs may include CCIL supplies, staff time, and research facility use fees. Costs incurred by OSF for projects will require a monthly itemized invoice in alignment with the provided budget for each project. Costs may include supplies, staff time, and research facility use fees. Funds cannot be used for any part of tenure track faculty salaries.

### **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

Funded projects should be prepared to provide annual progress update meetings to the CCIL and OSF leadership/administration and scientific committees. Annual written reports are required based on the proposed timeline submitted. Each should highlight the collaborative nature of the research and address progress made toward the specific goals, milestones, and metrics. Each project PI is required to present at appropriate meetings from each organization.

### **PROPOSAL PREPARATION**

**Format:** Proposals should not exceed ten (10) pages (single space, 0.5-inch margins, Arial 11-point font, including figures and tables). Guidelines and the maximum number of pages for each section are below. Supplemental attachments are not permitted.

**Coversheet/Title Page:** This page must include the project title, the names of the research team members and their primary affiliations (indicate the lead PI), their contact information, and the funding amount requested. (1 page)



**Proposal Content:**

*Section 1. Project Abstract (1 page)*

- Limit length to 30 lines or less of text
- Include the project's broad, long-term objectives and specific aims
- Include a description of the research design and methods for achieving the stated goals
- Write in plain language, so even a non-scientist can understand the importance of the project

*Section 2. Project Narrative (6 pages)*

- Describe the research project and its cancer relevance, including its potential for broad impact. Please note the review criteria listed below
- Discuss how the proposed activities will leverage existing strengths across CCIL programs and themes and OSF clinical activities
- Include a statement of the potential clinical application of the research being proposed for improving cancer treatment and/or outcomes for human cancer patients
- Describe the role and qualifications of the PI, co-investigators, and other members of the team for whom funding is requested

*Section 3. Project Milestones (1 page)*

- Provide a list of scientific and organizational milestones throughout the entire project
- Identify the specific goals and metrics for each of the study objectives and expected timeline for completion
- Evidence of substantive collaboration (including periodic joint meetings, workshops, and publications) must be prominent in the proposal and details presented in the annual written progress reports

*Section 4. References cited (1 page; include titles of papers)*

*Section 5. Budget and Budget Justification (1 page)*

Provide a budget estimate, with narrative justification, for your proposed project duration. Researchers should divide estimates into major expense categories (e.g., personnel, equipment/use fees, supplies, support). PIs should also specify the anticipated utilization and costs of CCIL Shared Resources and OSF medical equipment. Expenses for use of external shared resources in lieu of campus facilities must be specifically identified, justified, and approved. You may submit your own budget including all above specified criteria or use the budget template available on the CCIL website.

Indirect costs and salaries for tenure track faculty are not permissible.

**REVIEW CRITERIA**

Reviewers will evaluate each criterion on a scale of 1-9, consistent with the standard practice for NIH applications.

**Significance:** Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field? Is there a strong scientific premise for the project? If the project aims are achieved, how will scientific knowledge or technical capabilities be enhanced? How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods,



technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive the field of cancer research? How will this project support and advance the goals of the CCIL? How will this project support and advance the goals of OSF?

**Investigator(s)/Research Team:** Are the PIs, collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project? If the PI is an early-stage investigator or in the early stages of their independent career, do they have appropriate experience and training? For this collaborative project, do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise that spans the themes of the CCIL programs and clinical needs identified by OSF clinical partners?

**Innovation:** Does the proposal seek to shift current cancer research paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions?

**Approach:** Are the overall strategies, methodologies, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the project's specific aims? Have the investigators presented strategies to ensure a rigorous and unbiased approach, as appropriate for the work proposed? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented?

**Milestones:** Are milestones provided that ensure a high likelihood of progress? How likely is the collaboration to lead to near-term translational impact that guides the clinical management of cancer patients?

#### **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?**

Refer to the *Frequently Asked Questions* on the BEAT Cancer Research Initiative webpage.