Request for Proposals (RFP)

The NCCN Foundation®
2017 Young Investigator Award (YIA) Program

The NCCN Foundation®
275 Commerce Drive
Suite 300
Fort Washington, PA 19034

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ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND
The NCCN Foundation® was established in 2009 by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network® (NCCN®), a Section 501(c)(3) public charity dedicated to improving the quality and effectiveness of cancer care provided to patients. NCCN operates as a not-for-profit alliance of 27 of the world’s leading cancer centers (“NCCN Member Institutions”). Through the leadership and expertise of clinical professionals at NCCN Member Institutions, NCCN develops resources that present valuable information to the numerous stakeholders in the health care delivery system.

The NCCN Foundation strives to continue NCCN’s mission by seeking philanthropic support to engage in activities including, but not limited to, developing a research grant program to encourage and assist physicians, scientists, nurses, and others in conducting innovative and collaborative research in clinical oncology at NCCN Member Institutions. In order to expand upon the body of knowledge available regarding the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, the NCCN Foundation focuses on funding research projects that further its charitable and educational purposes and support researchers in fields for which it is often difficult to obtain funding.

PROGRAM PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION
Through its Young Investigator Award (YIA) Program the NCCN Foundation invites proposals from young investigators with innovative ideas and an interest in improving the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of care provided to cancer patients. A primary focus of the NCCN Foundation YIA is to identify and fund top investigators in the early stages of their careers, interested in participating and contributing to cancer care research and/or elucidating how the NCCN Guidelines are implemented in practice. The NCCN Foundation also recognizes the growing need for evidence-based research in the areas of clinical treatment and management (including new diagnostics and molecular markers), health systems and delivery of care, quality of life for cancer patients, and patient education.

The awards provide two-year grants of $150,000 for research expenses to promising young investigators across a broad range of oncology specialties and areas of interest. In past years, four to six awards have been granted. The award may be used to fund salary and benefits of the grant recipient, postdoctoral or clinical research fellows and/or research assistants, data collection and entry, patient costs, analysis, computer costs, necessary purchased services, surveys, and supplies. Within the total budget of $150,000, indirect expenses will be covered to a maximum of 8%. The awards may include funds up to $3,000 for IRB review and continuing review. A separate administrative allowance for awardees, in addition to the $150,000 per award, will be provided for travel (up to $500) for lodging and registration expenses to attend the NCCN Annual Conference which is mandatory in order for the investigators to present their research results at the General Poster Session.

The award is open to physicians, scientists, nurses and others working in an oncology laboratory, clinical research or clinical setting, or cancer control program in one of NCCN’s 27 Member Institutions, who:

1) Have a first full-time appointment as an Assistant Professor, Instructor, or an equivalent level, and
2) Are MD’s, PhD’s or, for nurses and others, have an advanced degree.

Each NCCN Member Institution can nominate up to two applicants who may submit research applications.

A hallmark of NCCN's programs has been strong attention to excellent data collection, analysis and outcomes measures. Successful YIA applications will be expected to bring this same high level of rigor to their research and clinical practice programs. Successful candidates will identify and work closely with an appropriate institutional mentor and develop a timeline for their two-year YIA. Following completion of research, abstracts will be published in print and/or online in JNCCN–Journal of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network. Awardees will be expected to present their findings within their own institution through educational opportunities such as grand rounds and tumor boards.

PROGRAM TIMELINE

- NCCN Member Institution Deadline for identification and submission of up to two candidates is November 18, 2016.
- **Application Deadline is January 16, 2017 by 5:00 PM (ET).**
- NCCN Member Institution Deadline for mandatory submission of one Grant Review Committee participant is January 16, 2017.
  - Applications from Member Institutions that do not contribute a Review Committee member will not be considered for funding.
- Grant Committee Review will take place in March 1st 2017.
- Grant awardees will be announced at the NCCN Annual Conference, March 2017.
- The Award period starts **July 1, 2017 and ends on June 30, 2019.** It is anticipated that eighteen months will be used for the implementation of the scope of work (July 1, 2017 – January 31, 2019) and six months will be used to compile and finalize the study data and comply with all reporting requirements (February 1, 2019 – June 30, 2019).
- Presentation of research results at the NCCN Annual Conference will occur March 2019.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must have:

- Medical degree--MD, DO or international equivalent **OR**
- Scientific degree--PhD or international equivalent **OR**
- Nursing degree--Masters and above or international equivalent
- Primary affiliation/work site at an NCCN Member Institution **for the duration of the award period**
- First full-time appointment at an NCCN Member Institution and remain in good standing for the duration of the award period
- Mentor in the proposed research field
- Institutional commitment to support the research project
NOMINATION PROCESS
Each NCCN Member Institution may nominate two candidates per institution by November 18, 2016. Instructions for proposal submissions will be sent directly to nominees by NCCN. NCCN Member Institutions may submit the nomination of their two candidates at foundationproposals@nccnfoundation.org. The following information is required:

1) Name
2) Title
3) Telephone Number
4) Email Address

APPLICATION PROCESS
All applications must be submitted in accordance with the requirements and instructions of this Request for Proposals (RFP). Proposals will provide concise documentation of the research plan and are expected to contain sufficient information to allow the reviewers to fully assess the scientific rigor of the proposed study.

Proposals are required to be submitted electronically to the NCCN research portal. When entering applications into the online system, the following information will be needed:

Clinical Studies
A. Title/Tumor Type
B. Investigators and institutional affiliations
C. Hypothesis with primary and secondary objectives
D. Background information
E. Research design
F. Study population
   i. Stage
   ii. Major inclusions/exclusions
G. Treatment plan
H. Endpoints/Statistical analysis
I. Feasibility
   i. Estimated time of completion/monthly accrual
   ii. Previous experience with trials that had similar tumor type, phase of study or prior therapy
   iii. Collaborators’ experience, including affiliates
   iv. Competing trials - List all active, approved or in-review studies at your institution for which the same patient population is eligible
   v. Projected Accrual Dates (Month/Year)

Correlative/Pre-Clinical Studies
A. Hypothesis (include relevant background studies)
B. Preliminary data
C. Study design (include methods for obtaining samples, administering forms, or performing radiologic studies)
D. Study population
E. Methodology
F. Analytic plan
G. Feasibility
   i. Accrual
   ii. Specimen acquisition

A full protocol may also be submitted.

**Required Letters of Support from governing groups of the institution verifying:**
1) Office of Sponsored Research approval
2) Department Chair/Division approval
3) Institutional budgetary review and approval
4) Mentor’s Letter of Support
5) The priority status of the research stating if there are any competing trials. If there are competing trials, please verify that this trial will have a higher priority.
6) Documentation to support feasibility with at least one of the following:
   ▪ Letter from institution’s Feasibility Committee if applicable
   ▪ Documentation by previous studies and accrual (if available, publications and abstracts)

**Letters should be addressed to:**
Robert W. Carlson, MD, CEO
National Comprehensive Cancer Network
275 Commerce Drive, Suite 300
Fort Washington, PA 19034

**Required Ancillary Documentation:**
1) An NCI format BioSketch of the Principal Investigator and Mentor
2) An appendix of supportive literature may be provided

**BUDGET**
Applicants must submit the budget in the NCCN budget format (template attached) and are required to disclose additional sources of funding for this research and demonstrate that funding does not overlap this award. The following information is required.
   A. Breakdown by major cost categories
   B. Justification of major costs with enough detail to demonstrate how funding for major elements in the study will be allocated
   C. For combined clinical and correlative studies, separate budgets for each component should be submitted
   D. Salaries, which are capped at the current NIH salary cap
   E. No travel or publication costs will be covered unless pre-approved

**PAYMENT OF FUNDS**
The Award total of $150,000 will be disbursed as follows:
   ▪ First payment of $50,000 will be paid on or after July 1, 2017, subject to receipt by NCCN of all required items, which will be identified in the Study Start-up Letter.
- Second payment of $50,000 will be paid on or about July 1, 2018, subject to satisfactory progress at the end of the first year and the submission of a satisfactory finance and progress report.
- Final payment of $50,000 will be paid on or about June 30, 2019, subject to submission of a final study report and final expenditure report.

UNSPENT FUNDS
Any unspent portion of the grant funds must be returned to the NCCN Foundation within thirty (30) days of the expiration of grant end date.

NO-COST GRANT EXTENSIONS
Whereas the NCCN Foundation is subject to the terms and conditions of the funders’ supporting this program, under no conditions will no-cost grant extensions be granted.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS
Awardees are required to submit an annual financial report for each year of the grant funding and quarterly progress reports. The reporting schedule will be stipulated upon NCCN’s notification of the activation of the study.

GRANTS SCIENTIFIC REVIEW COMMITTEE
Each NCCN Member Institution that nominates one or two candidates to apply for YIA funding must also provide a Grants Scientific Review Committee member. Applications from young investigators from Member Institutions that do not contribute a Review Committee member will not be considered for funding. The Grants Scientific Review Committee members will have expertise in the broad spectrum of research areas for the YIAs. Their expertise will be supplemented by NCCN senior staff with background in guideline development, clinical research, and outcomes research. Individual Review Committee members will recuse themselves from reviewing/discussing applications from their own institutions.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA
The Grants Scientific Review Committee will select recipients for YIAs based on the following criteria:
- Scientific Soundness
- Study Design
- Feasibility
- Statistics
- Budget
- Timeline – work must be finalized and final reporting submitted with the 2 year grant period
AWARD ADMINISTRATION
The NCCN Foundation will support the review, selection and granting of the YIAs in consultation with the NCCN Oncology Research Program (ORP). ORP standards will be used by the YIA Grants Scientific Review Committee to review and score proposals received in response to this RFP.

RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT
During the Award period, the Investigator must not be absent from participation in the Project or from the Institution for extended periods of time during the Award Period, such as for a sabbatical leave or leave of absence, without prior written approval from the NCCN Foundation.

HELPFUL RESOURCES
- foundationproposals@nccnfoundation.org, email additional questions about this RFP, from either applicants or their institutions. Replies will be sent within 24-48 hours.
- Frequently Asked Questions (attached)
- RFP Guidance Document
NCCN Foundation – Young Investigators Awards (YIA)
Submissions Frequently Asked Questions

APPLICATION/PROPOSAL QUESTIONS:

1. **Question:** Are applications due by a certain time on the due date?
   **Answer:** Yes, applications are due on the due date by 5:00 pm ET.

2. **Question:** Does the NCCN Member Institution need to submit the name(s) of the applicant(s) in advance?
   **Answer:** Yes, the names of the nominee(s) must be submitted to the NCCN Foundation in advance of the nominee(s) applying for the YIA.

3. **Question:** If the applicant has additional mentors from other institutions, should these mentors be listed?
   **Answer:** All mentors can be included.

4. **Question:** If the applicant’s study is focused on more than one disease jointly, should they enter just one tumor type on the application or list all tumor types?
   **Answer:** All tumor types should be listed.

5. **Question:** If the study is basic research and not clinical, how should this be noted?
   **Answer:** If the study is not clinical, check “not applicable” for “Study Summary (Clinical)”. This will shade the entire section out; however, it will be required that the entire correlative section is complete. All fields are mandatory or the submission will not be accepted. If needed, put the words “not applicable” in a box but all questions must have an answer.

6. **Question:** What font size and margins should be on the written proposal?
   **Answer:** It is not required to submit a written proposal. If you choose to upload a written proposal, there are no formatting requirements.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT QUESTIONS:

7. **Question:** Can the letter of support be written by a Division Chief as opposed to the Cancer Center Director, Department Head, or Dean?
   **Answer:** Yes.

8. **Question:** Is there a page limitation for the Mentor’s letter of support?
   **Answer:** No, there is no page limitation for the Mentor’s letter of support.
9. **Question:** Where in the application should the supporting documents be uploaded?  
   **Answer:** Upload all supporting documents under the Essential Documents section.

10. **Question:** Will an Institutional Facepage that contains the signature of the institutional signing official suffice for the budgetary approval?  
    **Answer:** Only if it clearly states that the budget has been reviewed and approved. Otherwise, a separate letter is required.

11. **Question:** How is the Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) Letter of Support letter different from the Department Chair Letter of Support?  
    **Answer:** Each letter identifies a different area of institutional support. A single letter may be submitted but must clearly state that the application has support from both the Department Chair and the OSR.

12. **Question:** Is the prioritization of research document required?  
    **Answer:** Yes, documentation regarding the priority status of the research (should funding be approved) is required.

13. **Question:** Who should be named as the “Contract Personnel” in the Contact Information section?  
    **Answer:** Please provide the contact information for the institutional contract personnel that should receive and negotiate the Terms and Conditions agreement if you are awarded funding.

**BUDGET QUESTIONS:**

14. **Question:** Is it possible to budget a salary for a co-investigator, in addition to the grant recipient, postdoctoral or clinical research/fellows associates/assistants?  
    **Answer:** Yes, co-investigators involved in the study may be included in the budget; all salaries must adhere to the current NIH salary cap.

15. **Question:** If funding is already coming from another grant related to the research, but the NCCN Foundation YIA application has a different focus, is it possible to apply for the YIA?  
    **Answer:** Yes, as long as the focus of the project is different than the funding of the other grant, you may apply for the YIA. Overlapping funding is not allowed.

16. **Question:** What type of expenses fall under the “clinical budget” category and which expenses should go in the “correlative budget”?  
    **Answer:** All costs associated with running the clinical study, i.e. PI cost, IRB and pharmacy fees, patient costs and any costs that are associated with the clinical study should be on the clinical budget. For the correlative studies, there may be PI staff costs as well as research assistant costs if someone other than the PI is performing the tests. Also include cost of laboratory supplies, reagents, assays, and all costs associated with performing the correlative studies.

17. **Question:** What is considered a “non-research related expense”?  
    **Answer:** Non-research related expenses are considered indirect costs or funds that are not used directly for research. Within the total YIA budget of $150,000, non-research related expenses will be covered to a maximum of 8%.

18. **Question:** Can a standard budget worksheet be submitted with the application?  
    **Answer:** No, the NCCN Budget template is required.
19. **Question:** The budget amount listed in the MedNet Application system is for a total of $75,000. What is the total amount of the grant?
   **Answer:** The total amount of the grant is not to exceed $150,000 or $75,000 per year for 2 years.

20. **Question:** Per the RFP, travel is not an eligible expense for the project. Can mileage reimbursement for the Project Investigator to travel to the study sites be included in the budget?
   **Answer:** Yes, mileage reimbursement for the Project Investigator to travel to study sites can be included in the budget. The travel budget should not exceed $2,500.

**TECHNICAL QUESTIONS:**

21. **Question:** Should all of the fields on the “Submit a Study” page be filled in?
   **Answer:** All required fields should be completed. If a required field is not applicable to the proposed study, please write “Not Applicable” or “N/A”.

22. **Question:** Can a document be deleted once it is uploaded to the online system?
   **Answer:** No, once the document is uploaded, it cannot be deleted by the applicant. If there are documents that you want to delete, please email FoundationProposals@nccnfoundation.org.

23. **Question:** I am registered in the NCCN Research Management System (RMS), but forgot my password and/or username, how can I obtain or reset it?
   **Answer:** For technical issues with your log-in, please contact the MedNet helpdesk at (866) 258-2735.

**ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS:**

24. **Question:** At some Member Institutions staff scientists are considered to be non-member track faculty, which is considered equivalent to “Instructor at a University.” In light of this consideration, would the Foundation consider a nomination of a staff scientist?
   **Answer:** Yes, an institutional nomination of a staff scientist would be acceptable.

25. **Question:** Do faculty members who were Instructors and are now Assistant Professors qualify to apply for this program?
   **Answer:** Faculty who were Instructors and now hold a first-term Assistant Professor appointment are appropriate candidates for these awards.

26. **Question:** Would a project be considered eligible for funding if the protocol is in the beginning stages and the IND is being prepared for submission?
   **Answer:** Yes, the project will be considered for funding as long as the investigator will be able to meet the timeline required for the project.

27. **Question:** Is there a limit to the number of years a nominee can be in their first full-time appointment?
   **Answer:** If the institution considers the investigator to be early in his/her career he/she is eligible for this program.