

PEDIATRIC BLOOD CANCER RESEARCH INNOVATION GRANT PROGRAM Guidelines and Instructions

Effective November 1, 2025 – October 31, 2026

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Key Points

- It is highly recommended to access the LLSC grants portal, Proposal Central, at <https://proposalcentral.com/GrantOpportunities> to begin the application process well in advance of any deadlines.
- The deadlines stated in the Key Dates section are strictly enforced. No exceptions are made to this policy.
- All components of the letter of intent and full application must be completed in order to submit.
- All formatting must adhere to the policies stated in this document.
- Contact paul.oconnell@lls.org with any questions.

Program Description

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada (LLSC) is Canada's largest non-profit health organization dedicated to funding blood cancer research, education, advocacy, and patient support and services. The mission of LLSC is to cure all forms of blood cancer and improve the quality of life of patients and their families. Since its founding in 1955, LLSC has invested millions of dollars in research specifically targeting blood cancers and continues to fund innovative research to advance more breakthrough therapies.

LLSC supports research through the **Pediatric Blood Cancer Research Innovation Grant** program

LLSC will provide funding up to a maximum of \$100,000 per year for two years (up to a maximum total of \$200,000 for the two years). Grant funding will be made in two annual payments.

The Pediatric Blood Cancer Research Innovation Grant competition is designed to challenge the current pediatric blood cancer landscape by providing funding for projects that will **address unmet needs for pediatric blood cancers**.

In the current era of targeted and immuno-oncology drugs being developed in adults, very few successful examples have been successful for childhood blood cancer treatment. Clear advances have occurred, but cure rates remain low for certain blood cancer types, along with considerable long-term effects. For the benefit of children, a better understanding of tumor biology and further progress in drug development is needed.

We invite applications for funding in **pediatric blood cancers**, including rarer subtypes. This initiative aims to advance foundational scientific knowledge that can lead to future breakthroughs in understanding disease mechanisms and identifying novel therapeutic targets.

Collaborative proposals are welcome, especially those that integrate multidisciplinary approaches.

Funds for competitive applications will be awarded on the basis of scientific merit, using a priority rating, and will include evaluation of ethical research. The Scientific Review Panel (SRP) will review all applications.

Eligibility

Researchers in any field are encouraged to apply, **but the proposal must directly address blood cancer**.

Early-career investigators are encouraged to apply.

Who can apply

The Application will require one Principal Investigator (PI) who is responsible for preparing and submitting the proposal, including:

1. The budget
2. The conduct of the research programs
3. Adherence with all stipulations made by LLSC, the LLSC Policies & Procedures document, and the Grant Agreement (if funded).

Definition of Principal Investigator (PI)

1. The PI must be based in, or formally affiliated with, a Canadian non-profit sponsoring institution at the time that funding commences and for the duration of the award.
2. The PI must hold a primary appointment that permits them to do independent research, supervise students, and publish their findings who:
 - Has dedicated laboratory space
 - Directly hires and supervises laboratory personnel (technicians, graduate students, postdocs and staff scientists)
 - Makes all decisions concerning research activities and use of the grant funds
3. The PI should hold a Ph.D., M.D., D.V.M. or equivalent degree.
4. The PI must demonstrate that their research environment is equipped and suitable for the proposed study, including demonstrated access to patient materials where applicable.

Definition of Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI)

1. The Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) is in charge of specific administrative and scientific aspects of the research project, whether or not that researcher has a formal relationship with the sponsoring institution.
2. The Co-PI may be an adjunct professor or hold a status-only appointment, although those individuals are not eligible to receive grant-funded salary support.
3. The Co-PI may not be a graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, research associate, technical support employee, or an investigator working outside of Canada.

Restrictions in the role of Principal Investigator (PI) and/or Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI)

1. May not submit more than **ONE** application per funding cycle, neither as PI nor as a co-PI on another application.
2. May not be a trainee or hold a subordinate position (i.e. directed or supervised by another) with respect to the subject matter of the proposed research/activities.
3. May not be technical support personnel, postdoctoral fellows, research associates, Adjunct Professors, Status-Only Appointments, and investigators working outside of Canada.
4. May not work at a non-academic facility.
5. A PI who does not hold an eligible position may apply if they have a firm offer of an academic position at an eligible sponsoring institution, and the appointment is not dependent on the outcome of a pending application. The academic position must start by the grant's start date. In these situations, a letter from an authorized representative of the sponsoring institution is required, outlining the precise nature of the appointment (including the position title and main tasks), as well as the anticipated start date and duration of the appointment.

Definition of a Co-Investigator/Collaborator

1. A Co-Investigator/Collaborator is an individual who will make substantial intellectual contributions to the research project, or has contributed to the drafting of the application itself.
2. A Co-Investigator/Collaborator may be a student, postdoctoral fellow, research associate, lay contributor (including patient partners) or an investigator based outside of Canada. Students, post-doctoral fellows and research associates may receive salary support from a grant.
3. A Co-Investigator/Collaborator may be a Community Partner
4. A Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-PI on one application may serve as a Co-Investigator/Collaborator on another application in the same funding cycle, without limit on the number of applications.
5. A Co-Investigator/Collaborator can be named on more than one application in a funding cycle, without limit on the number of applications.

Definition of a Community Partner

1. Defined as a patient, survivor or caregiver/family member of someone with lived experience with the disease or intervention being studied, but who are not participants in the study.
2. This may include anyone who is at high risk of cancer, has been diagnosed with cancer, or provides physical and emotional care to someone with cancer but not in a professional or vocational capacity.
3. Community partners and caregivers can act as “collaborators” or “co-investigators” depending on responsibilities and impact of contribution to the proposed project

For any questions of eligibility or unusual circumstances not described above, please contact LLSC’s Research Program Director, Paul O’Connell at: paul.oconnell@lls.org.

Application Process

The application process will occur in **two** phases:

- Phase I: Submission and consideration of a Letter of Intent (LOI).
- Phase II: The invitation for and submission of a Full Application.

All application processes, including both the LOI and Full Application submissions, must be made electronically through the LLSC Research Portal, Proposal Central (<https://proposalcentral.com/GrantOpportunities.asp?GMID=59>)

Contact paul.oconnell@lls.org with any questions.

Applications will be reviewed via a peer review process by a diverse group of external experts covering the scientific and medical aspects of the review. Final funding recommendations are approved by our independent Medical and Scientific Advisory Committee and Board of Directors.

Only complete applications received by the submission deadline will be considered.

Key Dates

Phase	Date
Call for Proposals	October 30, 2025
Letter of Intent (LOI) due	December 4, 2025, 4:00 pm (EST)
Notification of Full Application Invite	December 2025
Full application deadline	February 11, 2026, 4:00 pm EST
Review Panel Meeting	May 2026
Notification of Awards	Fall 2026
Award Start Date	November 2026

The submission deadlines will be strictly enforced through Proposal Central, which automatically shuts down submissions after the deadline has passed.

It is highly recommended that submissions are done well before the deadline, as internet traffic may be slow near the deadline, which may result in difficulties in submission. In addition, LLSC's response time to questions may be delayed by the high volume received near the deadline.

Letter of Intent (LOI) Instructions

Letters of Intent are due **December 4, 2025 at 4PM EST** via Proposal Central (<https://proposalcentral.com/GrantOpportunities.asp?GMID=59>).

The Applicant should carefully craft the information requested in the LOI as this information will be automatically populated into the Full Application, if approved.

The following components comprise the LOI:

- Project Title
- Category: New, or resubmission
- Principal Applicant Information: The Principal Investigator (or PI) is the Applicant
- Principal Applicant Demographics
- Institution and Contacts: Please provide the necessary contact information
- Lay summary (see details below)
- Keywords

The lay summary should provide a brief description of how the goals and/or approaches are novel and innovative, and what impact the research may have on blood cancer, organized in the following sections with a total character limit of 4000, including spaces:

1. Background and Scientific Rationale
2. Goals and Objectives
3. Expected Outcomes and Scientific Significance
4. Statement on Community Partnership and DEIB considerations.

All LOIs will be reviewed, and those judged to be the most promising, competitive, and responsive to the goals of the program will be invited to submit a Full Application.

The Applicant will be notified via e-mail as to whether they have been invited to submit a Full Application. If invited for Full Application submission, the Applicant will immediately have access to the Full Application submission capability in Proposal Central.

Full Application General Information

The deadline to submit all Full Applications is **February 11, 2026 at 4 PM EST**. Full Applications will only be accepted via (<https://proposalcentral.com/GrantOpportunities.asp?GMID=59>). The submission deadlines will be strictly enforced.

Full Applications will be reviewed after the **February 11, 2026** submission deadline by a peer review committee composed of a diverse group of external experts (including community partner representatives). **An application that does not meet the program goals, scope or guidelines will be administratively disqualified.**

Applications will be assigned an initial score by the primary and secondary reviewers. Only applications that initially rank above a scoring level determined by program staff and the committee chair will be discussed in detail for final ranking by the entire committee. Applications will be evaluated for potential significance, novelty, innovation and feasibility. Once ranked by the peer review panel, the highest scoring proposals will be reviewed by the LLSC Scientific Review Panel (SRP). The SRP will identify those proposals to be funded based on scientific merit, responsiveness to programmatic goals and budget availability. Final approval of funding will be made by the appropriate governing boards of the LLSC.

Any Applicant selected for funding will be notified in **Fall 2026** of the funding decision. Please do not call or email LLSC to determine whether the Application has been received, when it will be reviewed or the results of the review. Funding decisions are relayed by email only.

All priority ranking scores are confidential in that they are available to LLSC's Medical & Scientific Advisory Committee and LLSC's Board of Directors only. Feedback may only be provided for Applications discussed by the full review committee. Written critiques of the Application are not formally provided to Applicants.

Evaluation Criteria

To support the objectives of this funding opportunity, the following evaluation criteria will be used:

Applicant

- Qualifications of the applicant, including prior research training, experience and independence (relative to career stage).
- Expertise of the applicant in the proposed area of research and with the proposed methodology.

Research Approach

- Direct relevance of proposed research to blood cancer
- Clarity of the research question.
- Completeness of the literature review and relevance to study design/research plan.
- Clarity of rationale for the research approach and methodology.
- Appropriateness of the research design.
- Appropriateness of the research methods.
- Feasibility of the research approach (including recruitment of subjects, project timeline, preliminary data where appropriate, etc.).

- Anticipation of difficulties that may be encountered in the research and mitigation plans for management.
- Inclusion of sex and gender in research design where appropriate.

Originality of the Proposal

- Potential for the creation of new knowledge.
- Originality of the proposed research, in terms of the hypotheses/research questions addressed, novel technology/methodology, and/or novel applications of current technology/methodology.

Impact of the Research

- Research proposed addresses a significant need or gap in the understanding, diagnosis, and/or treatment of blood cancer in Canada.
- Potential for a significant contribution to the improvement of the health of Canadians and/or to the development of more effective health services and products.
- Appropriateness and adequacy of the proposed plan for knowledge dissemination and exchange.

Research Environment

- Suitability of the environment (mentor[s], milieu, and project) to support the applicant.
- Availability and accessibility of personnel, facilities and infrastructure required to conduct the research.
- Suitability of the environment for the training of personnel.

Community (Patient) Partnership

- Is community partnership integrated into the project?
- Indication of how community partnership is integrated into the project in a meaningful way
- Indication of how community partners are recognized and included as members of the project team

DEIB considerations

- Is sex, as a biological variable, taken into account in the research design, methods, analysis and interpretation, and/or dissemination of findings?
- Is gender, as a socio-cultural factor, taken into account in the research design, methods, analysis and interpretation, and/or dissemination of findings?
- Are diversity considerations (e.g. conditions, expressions and experiences of different groups identified by age, education, sexual orientation, parental status/responsibility, immigration status, Indigenous status, religion, disability,

language, race, place of origin, ethnicity, culture, and other attributes) taken into account in the research design, methods, analysis and interpretation, and/or dissemination of findings?

- Have social determinants of health been taken into account in the research design methods, analysis and interpretation, and or dissemination of findings? These may include income and social protection, education, unemployment and job insecurity, working life conditions, food insecurity, housing, basic amenities and the environment, early childhood development, social inclusion and non-discrimination, structural conflict

Full Application Submission Instructions

Full application is due February 11, 2026 at 4pm EST.

Please follow character limits and page lengths carefully. Failure to adhere to these instructions will result in administrative disqualification of your application. All application processes must be completed using our grants management website (<https://proposalcentral.com/GrantOpportunities.asp?GMID=59>).

Contact paul.oconnell@lls.org with any questions.

Attachments must be submitted with:

- Font no smaller than size 12 font
- Single spacing
- One-inch margins

The following components comprise the Full Application:

Project Title

Principal Applicant Information

Principal Applicant Demographics

Institution and contacts:**Key personnel (If applicable):****Project Description**

- Impact Statement (in lay terms, 1500 characters maximum, including spaces).
- Scientific abstract of the proposed research (4500 characters maximum, including spaces).
- Keywords

Budget Period Details (See Proposal Central for specific details):

- On these pages, there should be a full listing of funds required, for both year one and year two of funding. The maximum annual total cost cannot exceed \$100,000.00/year. The aggregate cost over 2 years cannot exceed \$200,000.00.
- **Permissible direct costs** include the following:
 - Personnel Expenses including salary, wage, or stipend. **Grants cannot be used to subsidize the salary of the principal investigator(s).** In total, no more than fifty percent (50%) of the direct costs may be requested for the salary of professional staff with a post-graduate degree (i.e. M.D., Ph.D., D.V.M.) regardless of function or role, including fringe benefits. This restriction does not apply to technical staff (i.e. lab assistants, nurses, etc.).
 - Supplies & Materials requests should be itemized by category.
 - Equipment purchase requests must identify each item of equipment with an acquisition cost of more than \$500.
 - Payment to community partners with LLSC funds is considered an eligible expense. Please refer to the Policies and Procedures document for more details if the work performed by the community partner contributes toward the direct costs of the research/activities.
- **Publication Costs:** LLSC permits publication costs as part of the Operating Grant, up to a maximum of \$1500 per year or \$3000 total including applicable taxes.
- Attach quotations on equipment and services when appropriate.

- **Impermissible Costs** include patent-related expenses, travel, membership dues, tuition, books and journals.
- **Indirect Costs:** It is the policy of the LLSC not to fund indirect costs of research. Indirect costs (often referred to as Institutional overhead, IDC, M&A, G&A or pooled costs) are those costs incurred for common or joint objectives that cannot be readily identified with a particular project (general maintenance, utilities, library, etc.).

Budget Summary and Justifications (See Proposal Central for specific details):

- Attach detailed justification of budget items, including personnel, expendables, equipment, and services (2000 characters maximum for each category).

Organizational Assurances

- Please indicate whether the work involves biohazardous materials, animal experiments or human subjects. Appropriate forms may either be appended to the application or provided once notice of funding is given; the applicant will have 45 days to provide the appropriate documents once funding has been approved.

Research Proposal

- Description of previous related research in 1 page
- Description of proposed research in 5 pages (does not include references, figures, or tables). Any relevant figures, references, and tables can be attached as an appendix. The last paragraph of the application should have the heading “**Significance to pediatric hematologic malignancy**”. In this section, the applicant should clearly state how the proposed work addresses the challenges of pediatric hematologic malignancies
- Projected timeline (6, 12, 18, 24 months) – 1 page
 - A brief description of the expected progress of the project at the indicated time points.

Community (Patient) Partnership Plan

- Maximum 1 page.
- Provide a community partnership plan that outlines how the study will embed Community Partners as part of the research to ensure the research is aligned with patient partnership principles. Describe how Community Partners will be engaged at the various stages of the project. This should include:

- The Community Partner(s) and/or their communities who will be engaged (e.g., individual Community Partners, patient advocacy organizations, etc.).
- Roles and responsibilities of the Community Partners. (Activities could include protocol design, review of patient-facing materials, clinical trial execution, identification of barriers and opportunities, and knowledge translation.)
- Inclusion of a community partner onboarding process and development of Terms of Reference (especially for longer term research programs)
- Suggested references:
 - Canadian Cancer Clinical Trials Network (<https://3ctn.ca/for-researchers/patient-public-involvement/>)
 - Clinical Trials Transformation Initiative (<https://www.ctti-clinicaltrials.org/>)
 - Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (<https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/45851.html>)
 - Clinical Trials Ontario (<https://www.ctontario.ca/patients-public/resources-for-engaging-patients/>)

DEIB considerations

- Maximum 1 pg
- Recognizing the variable impacts of cancer on different populations and demographics, LLSC expects that sex, gender and diversity dimensions (plus other intersectionalities, such as LGBTQ+) will be considered into research proposal, analysis and dissemination of results.
- Please provide a response to each question below. We urge the inclusion of these dimensions into your proposal, when applicable.
 - Is sex, as a biological variable, taken into account in the research design, methods, analysis and interpretation, and/or dissemination of findings?
 - Is gender, as a socio-cultural factor, taken into account in the research design, methods, analysis and interpretation, and/or dissemination of findings?
 - Are diversity considerations taken into account in the research design, methods, analysis and interpretation, and/or dissemination of findings. These may include conditions, expressions and experiences of different groups identified by age, education, sexual orientation, parental status/responsibility, immigration status, Indigenous status, religion, disability, language, race, place of origin, ethnicity, culture, and other attributes.
 - Have social determinants of health been taken into account in the research design methods, analysis and interpretation, and or dissemination of findings? These may include income and social protection, education, unemployment and job insecurity, working life conditions, food insecurity, housing, basic amenities

and the environment, early childhood development, social inclusion and non-discrimination, structural conflict

- Suggested resources:
 - The Principal Investigator is encouraged to complete one of the sex- and gender- based analysis online training modules through the CIHR Institute of Gender and Health. Please select and complete the training module most applicable to your research project.
 - For additional information on sex, gender and health research, applicants are encouraged to review the “How to integrate sex and gender in research” section on the CIHR website.

Publications

- Selected list of relevant peer reviewed publications in the past 5 years (excluding abstracts), with total number of peer reviewed publications. Indicate publications where LLSC support has been acknowledged (if any).

Research Funding History

- List other research funds currently held and/or applied for (template provided on Proposal Central). Also, list other funds obtained from LLSC in the last 5 years. Please describe degree of overlap with current application

Collaboration/support letters (optional)

- When there are significant collaborations, letters of support are helpful. This is particularly important when access to patient samples, animal models, or specialized equipment outside of the Applicant’s laboratory or department is necessary for the proposed research.
 - If a company asset is required and is not commercially available from scientific supply companies, such as proprietary drugs, a letter from the company supplying this asset should accompany the application.
 - The collaboration/support letters must be signed by an appropriate authority and be on institutional/company letterhead.

Attachments

- Research Proposal
- Relevant Figures
- Publications
- Community Partnership Plan

- DEIB consideration letter
- Curriculum Vitae (CIHR biosketch format, Principal Applicant and Co-Principal Investigator(s))
- Letter(s) of Collaboration (optional)
- Research Funding History
- Appropriate forms for Human and Animal Ethics and Biohazards.
- Signature Page (Once all of the mandatory fields are complete, the signature page is available for **e-signing** on Proposal Central and can be **e-signed** by the appropriate person(s)):
 - Signatures of **Principal** and **Co-Principal Investigators**.
 - Name and signature of head of the department or appropriate academic officer (e.g., Dean or Associate Dean Research).
 - Name of signature of the financial officer.

Customer Support

Please contact:

PROPOSAL CENTRAL Customer Support

By e-mail: pcsupport@altum.com

By phone: +1 800 875 2562 (Toll-free U.S. and Canada) or
+1 703 964 5840 (Direct Dial International)

Normal Business Hours: 8:30am - 5:00pm Eastern Time
(Available Monday through Friday)