

All Ireland NCI Cancer Consortium (AICC) Research & Innovation Grant Scheme 2024

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



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1 General

a) How do I apply for the AICC 2024 Grant Call?

All applications must be made using the HRB online Grant Electronic Management System (GEMS) via <https://grants.hrb.ie>.

Applicants are strongly advised to carefully read the Guidance Notes prior to starting an application. In order to commence an application, the Lead Applicant (LA) must satisfy the conditions outlined on the eligibility check list, that they will be asked to complete. (Please refer to Appendix I, page 15 of the Guidance Notes).

2 Lead Applicant/Eligibility

a) Can a Lead Applicant submit more than one application for this call?

Applicants may apply to one, or both tiers depending on their specific proposal.

- **Tier 1** is for pilot projects or mapping activities with funding available up to €100,000 exclusive of overheads, over a maximum duration of 24 months.
- **Tier 2** is for specific projects or training initiatives with funding available up to €330,000 exclusive of overheads, over a maximum duration of 36 months.

There are no limits to the number of different proposals that an applicant may submit, once they meet all eligibility requirements outlined in the Guidance Notes for the call scheme including having a cross-border co-Applicant and NCI collaborator on each application.

b) What are the requirements for eligibility as a Lead Applicant?

The Lead Applicant **must**:

- Hold a post (permanent or a contracted that covers the duration of the award) in a HRB recognised Host Institution within the island of Ireland as an independent investigator. For clinicians, an adjunct position in a HRB recognised Host Institution is acceptable.

OR

- Be an individual who will be recognised by a HRB recognised Host Institution within the island of Ireland upon receipt of an award as an independent investigator who will have a dedicated office and research space for the duration of award, for which they will be fully responsible. The Lead Applicant does not necessarily need to be employed by the Host Institution at the time of the application submission.

They **must** show evidence of achievement as an independent researcher in their chosen research field by:

- a) Demonstrating a record of research output, with at least **three** publications of original research in peer reviewed journals. Where appropriate, they should also

provide evidence of other outputs (e.g., published book chapters, reports to government, research data and datasets, research materials, databases, audio/video products, national and/or international reports, patents, models and protocols, software production, evidence of influence on health policy and practice, outreach and/or knowledge translation activities, media coverage or other relevant activities) and/or any other relevant outputs that have resulted in a significant impact in their field.

- b) Demonstrating record of independence by showing that they have secured at least **one** peer-reviewed research grant for a research project/s, as either the Lead Applicant or a Co-Applicant. Funding received for travel to seminars/conferences and/or small personal bursaries **will not** be considered in this regard.
- c) Show evidence that they possess the capability and authority to manage and supervise the research team.

3 Applicant Team

a) Who should the Applicant Team consist of?

Applications should be submitted by a Lead Applicant on behalf of an Applicant Team consisting of researchers, knowledge users and Public/Patient Involvement (PPI) contributors. The Applicant Team should consist of Co-Applicants and Collaborators as outlined below:

- Co-Applicants (maximum of 8):

At minimum **one cross-border Co-Applicant**.

Co-Applicants can be Researchers, Knowledge Users and PPI Contributors. They should have a well-defined, critical and substantial role in the conduct and steering of the proposed research.

- Collaborators (Maximum of 10):

At minimum **one NCI Collaborator**.

Collaborators should play an integral and discrete role in the proposed research. Each collaborator must complete a Collaboration Agreement Form.

b) Can a members of the Applicant Team be from outside Ireland?

Yes, it is expected that all applications at minimum have a **cross-border Co-Applicant** e.g. Lead Applicants from Northern Ireland require a Co-Applicant from Ireland and vice versa.

Additionally, a **NCI Collaborator** is required to meet minimum eligibility to apply.

Proposals focused solely on improving and strengthening North-South cancer collaborations and research innovation may apply with sufficient justification for NCI exclusion. However, the aim of the call is to increase cross-border and trans-Atlantic collaboration hence this would require specific validation and reasoning for non-inclusion of trans-Atlantic support. The expectation is that this would only apply in limited circumstances.

Additional collaborators from outside of the island of Ireland are welcome, where the nature of the research proposal makes this necessary.

c) Can the grant budget be used for travel costs by the Applicant Team?

Yes, where justified travel costs may be included in the application budget under running costs.

d) Does the Transatlantic Collaborator need to be from NCI?

Yes, this is a requirement of the call.

e) What are the requirements to be deemed an eligible NCI Collaborator?

The NCI collaborator may be an intramural or extramural researcher depending on the specific proposal. Any NCI Collaborator proposed as part of the Applicant Team, would be expected to be involved and well-connected with and part of the wider NCI community actively engaged within NCI structures, committees, working groups, frameworks, networks, designated cancer centres etc. in order to meet eligibility expectations.

If the NCI collaborator proposed is part of a NCI designated cancer centre and connected/participating within the wider NCI networks this meets eligibility expectations. The aim is to increase trans-Atlantic NCI and cross-border collaborations.

Solely, being a current or previous grant holder from NCI without ability to further demonstrate connectivity within the wider NCI community and structures would not meet eligibility requirements.

f) Will the HRB conduct outreach and support in linking cross-border and trans-Atlantic collaborators with Lead Applicants?

No, the onus is on the Lead Applicant and Applicant Team to engage with cross-border colleagues and NCI members to collaborate, either through pre-existing contacts and relationships, further building upon these, or alternatively engaging colleagues to foster new collaboration relationships in advance of the call.

g) Is a Collaborator agreement form needed?

A **Collaborator Agreement Form** must be submitted for each named Collaborator at the Expression of Interest, Pre-application Stage 1.

Collaborator Agreement Forms, should be signed however supporting evidence such as an email/letter of support may be accepted in lieu of a signature with advance agreement by the HRB and justification. However, the Collaborator Agreement Form must be then signed upon invitation to Full Application Stage 2.

h) Can I add additional members to the Applicant Team at full application stage?

Yes, however the totals should not exceed 8 Co-Applicants and 10 Collaborators at either application stage.

A cross-border Co-Applicant and NCI Collaborator must be identified at Stage 1, Expression of Interest, Pre-application to meet eligibility for the scheme. You can add additional members to your application if invited to Stage 2 to submit a Full Application however applications are permitted to have a maximum of 8 Co-Applicants and 10 collaborators in total at either stage of application.

i) Can a Collaborator receive payment for their role in the project?

Collaborators are eligible to receive funding from the award for justified running/travel costs only, when properly detailed in the application. The HRB does not pay the salary of collaborators.

j) Can the cross-border Co-Applicant and the NCI Collaborator be the same person?

Yes, they can be if the cross-border Co-Applicant meets eligibility requirements for NCI collaborator, once justified and explained. However, the aim of the scheme is to increase cross-border and trans-Atlantic collaboration hence it would be encouraged to separate these roles amongst different members of the Applicant Team to highlight strength and collaborations across the team, which is a key assessment criteria of the scheme.

4 Scope

a) I'm not sure if my application fits with the scope of the call.

The AICC scheme is intended as a dedicated pilot funding stream to enhance, extend and strengthen research and innovation capability, across the island of Ireland supported via trans-Atlantic partnerships. Applications involving collaborative scientific research proposals including mapping activities and pilot projects, specific projects and/or exchanges and training initiatives, aligned to the HRB's strategic remit, will be supported.

The research proposal must fall under one of three priority themes as identified by the AICC:

1. Cancer Care Delivery and Survivorship

2. **Clinical Research and Trials**
3. **Genomic and Precision Medicine**

Further guidance and details of the research areas covered can be found in page 6-7 of the AICC 2024 Pre-application Guidance Notes.

If after reading this, you are still unsure please contact the HRB for further guidance (Dr Chiara Mizzoni - cmizzoni@hrb.ie).

5 Funding and duration

a) What is the duration of the award?

The AICC 2024 grant scheme is opened to two tiers.

Tier 1 provides funding for mapping activities or pilot projects up to a maximum duration of two years.

Tier 2 provides funding for specific projects or training initiatives up to a maximum duration of three years.

b) How much can I apply for?

Tier 1 of the scheme is designed to allow for smaller scale applications which involve pilot projects or mapping activities, funding, exclusive of overheads is available up to a maximum of €100,000.

Tier two is for specific, targeted projects or potential training initiatives, funding exclusive of overheads, is available up to a maximum of €330,000.

The AICC 2024 award will provide support for research-related costs including salary for research staff, running costs, FAIR data management costs, equipment and dissemination costs, and overheads contributions. The HRB will calculate overheads during contracting.

Note: The AICC 2024 Award will not fund the salary and related costs of tenured academic staff within research institutions (including buy-out from teaching time etc.).

6 Supporting Documents

What documents should be uploaded with my pre-application form?

You must upload the following documents:

Mandatory documents:

- Expression of Interest Letter in PDF form
- Collaboration Agreement Form

7 Assessment Process

a) Stage 1 Shortlisting Panel

In May, all Expressions of Interest submitted in Stage 1 Pre-Application will be reviewed by the HRB, Northern Ireland Health and Social Care, Research and Development Division +/- NCI for review of eligibility and shortlisting for invitation to Stage 2, Full Application.

All applicants will receive outcome letters and feedback in May. Applicants invited to Stage 2 will also be informed prior to Full Application process opening in June.

b) Full Application Panel

Full Applications will be assessed against the criteria outlined in the Guidance Notes by an International Panel convened by the HRB in September. Recommendations will be brought to the HRB Board and Applicants will receive outcome letters and feedback following this.

c) Will the two tiers be assessed together or in isolation?

Ideally, we would like to see applications submitted across all three priority research areas and across both tiers. The scheme has been designed to prime cancer research activity and collaboration and there is no restriction to the number of applications that can be submitted to either or both tiers.

Applications in both tiers submitted via Expression of Interest and Full Applications will be assessed at the same time. There is funding available to support both tiers, but the split of funding across those tiers will depend on number and quality of applications received. Applicants are expected to score highly across all assessment criteria as outlined in the Guidance Notes.

8 Submission

a) What is the GEMS submission process?

Prior to final submission to the HRB, all applications must first be reviewed and approved within GEMS by the signatory approver at the research office (or equivalent) at the Host Institute (HI). It is critical therefore that Lead Applicant leave sufficient time in the process for the Research Office (or equivalent) in their nominated HI to review, seek clarifications and approve applications prior to the final submission date and time. This may involve being aware of and complying with any internal HI deadlines for review and approval, distinct from the HRB deadline.

b) What is the closing date for submission of applications?

All Stage 1 Expressions of Interest, Pre-applications must be submitted to the HRB using HRB GEMS by **26 April 2024 at 13:00**.

c) How will I know that my application has been successfully submitted?

Once the HI endorses your application it will be sent automatically to the HRB to be considered for funding. A grant application number will be assigned to the application, and you will receive a confirmation email.

d) I have submitted my application but have just realised I have amendments to make; can I amend the application?

No, once you have submitted your application, you cannot edit or un-submit it.