Cancer Research Society

2025

OPERATING GRANTS

Program Description and Guidelines

In the spotlight this year:

- Grant amount has increased to **$135,000 over 2 years**
- Targeted funding opportunities: refer to **Partner Funding Opportunities** for this year's specific calls

Effective November 14, 2024 – September 1, 2025

This document was last updated November 12, 2024

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1. Program Description

Founded in 1945, the Cancer Research Society (CRS) is a Canadian not-for-profit organization whose sole mission is to fund research on all types of cancer to help prevent, detect, and treat this disease.

The Operating Grants competition is the principal means by which CRS fulfills its mission to support fundamental and early translational research on all types of cancer.

The competition is held every year and is open to researchers across Canada. Both new and established researchers are encouraged to apply. All valid proposals undergo a diligent peer-review process and are scored based on scientific merit and originality.

Operating Grants are usually awarded for a period of **two years** for a maximum amount of **$67,500** per year.

2. Eligibility Requirements

CRS Operating Grants are intended to support Canadian researchers in their pursuit to advance scientific knowledge in the following **five (5) areas**:

1) Fundamental/basic cancer research;
2) Prevention (some grants will be co-funded with CIHR);
3) Early translational cancer research, including preclinical research, cellular or animal models, biomarkers for diagnostics and prognosis, imaging and treatment;
4) Research studying the environmental causes of cancer including viruses, pollutants, work environment, lifestyle and diet;
5) In collaboration with CIHR, 'Cancer Survivorship Research'. Research to improve health outcomes for cancer survivors of all age groups, including studies to reduce risk of recurrence and to prevent or lessen adverse side effects and comorbidities from cancer therapies.

Please note - The following research areas **are not eligible** for Operating Grants:

- Clinical trials;
- Applied research for the development or improvement of tools such as instruments, medical devices, software, questionnaires, information tools, patient registries, biobanks, TMA collections, etc.;
- Psychosocial or social studies, etc. (this also applies to prevention and survivorship proposals);
- Health care economics, or any study aiming at measuring the use and costs of the health care system;
- Any other type of research not included in the main five funded areas.

Please contact us at grants@src-crs.ca should you have doubts about the eligibility of your project.

There must be only one main applicant, **Principal Investigator (PI)**, and one host institution who will be responsible for administering the grant, if awarded. All other applicants are considered co-applicants.

Applicants and co-applicants must hold an academic appointment at a Canadian university or accredited institution to be eligible to apply for a CRS Operating Grant. Applicants must have their own laboratory and the possibility of hiring students and postdoctoral fellows.

Postdoctoral fellows, research associates, staff and research scientists without an academic appointment are **not** eligible to apply.

Definitions and Rules

Principal Investigator (Main Applicant). *Individual responsible for leading all aspects of the project.*

Co-applicant. *Individual who actively participates on the project but does not hold a leadership role.*

Collaborators. *Individual(s) who contribute to the project in a specialized manner and may be from outside of Canada; however, CRS funds must not be transferred outside of the country. A collaborator will not be listed as a co-applicant, however, must provide a letter of support detailing the involvement in the project.*

Early Career Investigator. *An independent investigator who has started their career in a university or research institution within the last 5 years (i.e. after August 31, 2020).*

Mid-Career Investigator. *An independent investigator who has held an academic position in a university or research institution for 6-15 years as of September 1, 2025.*

Established Investigator. *An independent investigator who has held an academic position in a university or research institution for more than 15 years as of September 1, 2025.*

3. Application and Review process

The main applicant/PI must register at the CRS Research Portal, ProposalCentral, click HERE

The application process is comprised of two stages:

1) **Letter of Intent** (LOI) submission, and if invited,
2) **Full Proposal** submission.

All applicants must submit a LOI that will include a high-level description of their research project goals. **Refer to section 5 for LOI submission instructions**. LOIs are reviewed for conformity and quality by CRS at the time of submission. Once the LOI has been reviewed, the applicant will be notified via e-mail as to whether or not they have been invited to submit a Full Proposal.

Both LOI and Full Proposal must be submitted electronically at the CRS Research Portal, ProposalCentral click *HERE*.

Submission deadlines:

- LOIs must be submitted by **December 10, 2024, 11:59 pm (ET).**
- Full Proposals must be submitted by **February 11, 2025, 11:59 PM (ET).**

Only complete proposals submitted by the deadline will be considered. Proposals that do not adhere to the guidelines will be rejected.

Full proposals are evaluated by an expert panel of renowned Canadian and international scientists with expertise in specific areas of cancer research. Each proposal is initially reviewed and scored by two independent, impartial reviewers. The proposal is then presented, discussed, and scored by the entire panel. The average score is calculated, and to be considered for funding, a **project must receive a minimum score of 7.5 out of 10.**

Reviewers use the following criteria to evaluate a proposal:

- **Originality**
  - The potential of the project to generate new knowledge, approaches, technologies, or research directions

- **Proposal**
  - Quality of presentation (clarity in describing the project)
  - Methodology
  - Feasibility (2-year timeframe, budget, research team, and preliminary data)

- **Researcher and Research Environment**
  - PI's ability to conduct the research within their respective setting
  - Expertise in the relevant research area
  - Researcher's productivity (e.g. publications, recent and current grants over last 5 years)
  - Research team (co-applicants and/or collaborators) and added expertise or resources
  - Availability of necessary infrastructure to support the research

- **Impact**
  - Potential to contribute to scientific advancements in preventing, detecting, and treating cancer
  - Likely impact on outcomes for cancer patients
  - Capacity to address a current gap or unmet need in cancer treatments

Operating Grants are awarded to the highest-scoring proposals. All applicants, regardless of their score, will be informed of the outcome of their application in August 2025. If an applicant declines the award, CRS may offer the grant to the next most meritorious proposal on the list. All decisions by the **Cancer Research Society** are final.

4. Key Dates

Call for proposals	November 14, 2024
Letter of Intent submission deadline	**December 10, 2024, 11:59PM (ET)**
Invitation to submit Full Proposal	December 18, 2024
Full Proposal submission deadline	**February 11, 2025, 11:59PM (ET)**
Update publication list deadline	April 9, 2025
Review process completed, awards announced	August 2025
Grant start date	September 2025

The submission deadlines will be strictly enforced. Times are Eastern Time (ET).

Applicants are encouraged to submit their LOI and Full Proposal well in advance of the deadline. The CRS Research Portal, ProposalCentral, automatically shutdowns submission after the deadline has passed.

5. Letter of Intent Instructions

An LOI submission is compulsory for the 2025 CRS Operating Grants Competition and must be completed via the CRS Research Portal, ProposalCentral, by **December 10, 2024, 11:59 pm (ET).** Click HERE to access ProposalCentral.

Each applicant may submit only one new project application as the main applicant. However, this limit does not apply to renewal applications, meaning applicants may submit one new project application and one renewal application as the main applicant. Researchers may also participate as co-applicants on additional projects.

Applicants should be mindful that the information provided in the LOI will automatically populate those sections in the Full Proposal. If the LOI is approved, the applicant will be notified by an automated email from ProposalCentral stating that they may proceed to the Full Proposal phase.

The LOI should be submitted by the Principal Investigator managing the project.

Title Page: 81 characters maximum

Application Type: Specify whether the application is ***new***, ***renewal*** or ***resubmission***.

- ***Renewal:*** Applicants holding a CRS Operating Grant that ends on **August 31, 2025**, may apply for renewal. Renewals are considered a continuation of the existing grant; however, each renewal application will still undergo the standard review process to ensure it meets the current evaluation criteria.

- ***Resubmission:*** A resubmission is defined as a revised version of a proposal that was not successful in a previous Operating Grant competition. Applicants must upload the previous evaluation reports. The same project may only be resubmitted for up to two consecutive years. After three unsuccessful attempts at funding, applicants must submit a new project.

  Note: If you are unsure about your project's eligibility, please contact CRS at grants@src-crs.ca

Partner Funding Opportunities (optional): CRS may offer prioritized funding opportunities for specific cancer research areas. Refer to the *list of Partner Funding Opportunities.*

Abstract: Describe the research aims, anticipated outcomes and their potential impact for patients. Character limit of 5000.

Panel: Applicants must select their first and second choice among the five expert review panels, based on the research area and topic. The second choice must differ from the first. While CRS will make every effort to respect the applicant's first choice, it reserves the right to assign the proposal to the most appropriate panel. Please refer to Appendix A for the areas of expertise covered by each panel.

6. Full Proposal Instructions

Only applicants who have submitted a Letter of Intent (LOI) will be invited to submit a full proposal. Each applicant may submit only one new project application as the main applicant. However, this limit does not apply to renewal applications, meaning applicants may submit one new project application and one renewal application as the main applicant. Researchers may also participate as co-applicants on additional projects.

Submission Deadline: Full proposals must be submitted by **February 11, 2025, at 11:59 PM (ET).**

The clarity and conciseness of your application are critical to the evaluation process. All information required for evaluation must be submitted electronically through ProposalCentral, where applicants will upload specific documents on designated pages. Documents sent by email will not be accepted.

Applicants must adhere to instructions on page limits, document formats, and character limits within each section of ProposalCentral (responses exceeding these limits will be truncated). Non-compliance with the guidelines may result in administrative rejection of the application before scientific review.

The full proposal must be submitted by the Principal Investigator of the managing institution and must include:

Signature Page: The Principal Investigator (PI) and their Institution are now required to electronically sign directly on ProposalCentral in Section 16: Print Applications & Signatures. It is the PI's responsibility to ensure that the appropriate person signs on behalf of their institution.

The PI will be required to grant access to their institutional official for their electronic signature. The Institution Official (role) is the person who has authority to sign research agreements on behalf of the institution.

For example: The vice chair or vice dean of research, director of research, etc…

Co-Applicants & Collaborators: If applicable, the Principal Investigator is required to add co-applicants' and collaborators' information in this section.

Title Page: *(Same as LOI)*

If applicable, provide the following information:

- ***For a renewal:*** A brief progress report of the original proposal, including status of key research objectives/aims (2500 characters maximum).

- ***For a resubmission:*** The applicant must address key critiques raised in the previous Evaluation Reports (2500 characters maximum). Copies of the previous Evaluation Reports must also be uploaded in section 14 “Upload Attachments”.

Abstract: Same as submitted in the LOI.

Lay Summary: Provide a summary of the research project in lay terms that is accessible to those outside of biomedical research (for press releases and communications to donors). Character limit: 850. CRS emphasizes the importance of public outreach, and the lay summary will be reviewed internally for clarity and suitability for informing the general public. Applicants must submit a French version of the lay summary.

Description of Proposed Project: Describe the proposed research project in a document up to 5 pages (8.5” x 11”), *using Arial 11 pt. or Times New Roman 12 pt. (or a similar font), single-spaced, with minimum 2 cm margins*. Supporting figures and tables for preliminary data should be embedded within the 5-page proposal, and figure text may use a 9-pt. font if needed. Font type and size may vary, but figures, tables, graphs, and legends must be legible when printed on an 8.5” x 11” page at 100% scale. Non-compliance with these guidelines may result in administrative rejection prior to scientific review.

The project description must include:
- ***Literature Overview:*** Brief overview of recent literature with references.
- ***Proposed Aim(s)/Objectives:*** Objectives that align with the two-year grant period and budget.
- ***Methodology:*** Describe the experimental or theoretical approach, including the rationale, complexity, and connection to the budget. Outline data collection and analysis methods. If the project may appear to replicate published results, clarify the additional impact of the proposed research. **Include preliminary data if relevant.**
- ***Research Team:*** Summarize the expertise and contributions of the applicant, co-applicants, and key personnel in relation to the project.
- ***Collaborators:*** Describe the expertise and contributions of collaborators, with letters of support uploaded in Section 14, *Upload Attachments*.
- ***Impact:*** Outline the significance of the proposed research and expected outcomes.

Upload Instructions: Use the designated button at the bottom of this section to upload the 5-page detailed research proposal with embedded figures and tables. A separate list of references cited in the proposal should be uploaded in Section 14, with no page limit.

Partner Funding Opportunities: *Same as LOI*

Review Panel: *Same as LOI*

Budget Period Detail: Indicate, in Canadian dollars, the financial requirements for 2 years. This grant is limited to $67,500/year for a maximum of 2 years.

Eligible Expenses:
- Salaries of students and post-doctoral fellows;
- Salaries of research staff (research assistant, research associate, technician);
- Research supplies;
- Publication fees;
- Up to $2,500 per year for attending meetings, seminars or conferences,

registration, travel, accommodation, etc.

Non-Eligible Expenses:

- Remuneration of principal investigators, co-investigators and collaborators
- All indirect expenditures related to layout organization and reorganization; facilities leasing and maintenance, or the indirect costs covered by the host institution;
- Equipment purchase (i.e.: computer, etc.);
- Sabbatical or maternity/parental leave;
- Meetings, seminars or conferences expenses in excess of $2,500 per year;
- Living expenses;
- Clinical drug trials.

Funds must not be transferred outside Canada.

Current and Pending Support: The Principal Investigator must list all sources of research support currently held or applied for, including grants (such as any from CRS), contracts, and any start-up funding.

CRS will not award funds if overlapping or comparable support for the project has been obtained, even partially, from another agency, as each project funded by CRS must be original. Failure to provide a complete declaration may result in grant cancellation and a request for reimbursement of any disbursed funds.

Institution Contacts: Provide information the following contacts:

- *Financial Officer:* Name and address for distribution of funds.
- *Grants Officer:* Name and address for contract matters.
- *Institutional Officer:* Name and address of the institutional representative authorized to sign the Research Funding Agreement.

Organizational Assurances: Indicate whether or not certificates are required for the proposed research project. Please refer to Appendix B.

Abridged Résumé and Publications: This section must be completed by the main applicant and all co-applicants. For each applicant, create a single document that includes the following sections:

- **EDUCATION**: List all post-secondary education, including baccalaureate and post-doctoral training.
- **ACADEMIC, RESEARCH, AND INDUSTRIAL EXPERIENCE**: List your current position followed by previous positions, experiences, and honors in chronological order.
- **PUBLICATIONS**: Provide complete references in chronological order, including titles, for all publications from the past five years, as well as any earlier publications relevant to this application. Only references are needed - no descriptions or summaries. Applicants are strongly encouraged to include links to publications (e.g., PubMed, Google Scholar).
- **INTERRUPTIONS**: Explain any interruptions in scientific work (e.g., maternity leave, illness, relocations).
- **FUNDING**: List all funding received over the last five years.

Each document should have the applicant's last name followed by their first name in the top right-hand corner. Upload the document(s) in Section 14.

Upload Attachments: Every document must be clearly identified. For each document to be uploaded, the following information must appear on each page: the title of the document in the top left-hand corner, last name and first name in the top right-hand corner (of the applicant or co-applicant, as appropriate) and the page number in the bottom right-hand corner.

- Abridged Résumé and Publications (Applicants and Co-Applicants)
- Description of the proposed research. Maximum 5 pages with tables and figures embedded
- List of References (no page limit)
- Required Certificates (if available)
- Letter(s) of Collaboration (optional)
- Reviewer 1 (resubmission only)
- Reviewer 2 (resubmission only)

PI Demographics: The information is helpful to CRS when analyzing the demographics of their applicant and it will not be used as part of the review process.

7. Contact information

For questions regarding the **2025 Operating Grants Competition,** contact the Cancer Research Society at grants@src-crs.ca.

For questions regarding **ProposalCentral**, contact Customer Support Monday through Friday 8:30am - 5:00pm Eastern Time, by e-mail: pcsupport@altum.com

Appendix A: Panels

All proposals will be evaluated by a peer-review committee (panel) consisting of 14 to 17 Canadian and/or international scientists with expertise in relevant areas of cancer research.

Applicants must indicate their first and second choice of review panel based on the research area and topic. The second choice must be different from the first. While CRS will make every effort to respect the applicant's first choice, it reserves the right to assign the proposal to the most suitable panel.

PANEL DESCRIPTION
Panel A: Cell/Cell Communication and Tumour Adaptation • Signal transduction • Cell/cell communication (including metabolic coupling) • Tumour Microenvironment • Tumour hypoxia • Tumour Metabolism • Stress Responses (Plasticity) • Post-translational modifications • Cell migration, adhesion and chemotaxis • Pre-clinical models (non-mammalian)
Panel B: Cancer immunology/Pharmacology • Cancer immunology and immunotherapy • Chemotherapeutic drug development & pharmacological studies • Mechanisms of drug resistance • Cells, genes, viruses or viral genes, vaccines as anti-cancer drugs • Radiation, radiosensitizers, biomarkers • Synthetic Biology and Tissue Engineering
Panel C: Tumour suppressor genes, oncogenes and DNA repair • Transcriptional and translational regulation • Tumour suppressor genes and oncogenes • Tumour initiation • DNA replication (including cell cycle), damage and repair • DNA integrity and genomic instability • Epigenetic mechanisms • Computational analysis of -omics data • Stem cells (tumor-initiating cells and cancer stem cells)

Panel D: Tumor progression and metastasis

- Cell cultures and animal models
- Identification and validation of novel therapeutic targets
- Tumor angiogenesis
- Metastasis, plasticity and tumor progression models
- Drug and genomic high throughput phenotypic (HTP) screening
- Computational biology, bioinformatics, systems biology, AI

Panel E: Early translational research and epidemiology

- Tumour imaging
- Biomarkers discovery and validation
- Diagnostics and prognostic assays
- Epidemiology

Appendix B: Organizational Assurances

Mandatory Certificates for Cancer Research Society-Funded Projects
The following certificates are mandatory for all research projects funded by the Cancer Research Society (CRS). These certifications ensure compliance with safety, ethical, and quality standards in research involving biohazardous materials, live animals, human samples, and biospecimens.

Biosafety Certificate
Projects involving potentially biohazardous materials must obtain a biosafety certificate. This includes work with:

1. Cell lines of all origins
2. Live animals
3. Human samples
4. Potentially pathogenic nucleic acids

Researchers conducting wet lab work are expected to provide this certificate. Please consult your institution's biosafety department for specific requirements.

Animal Care Certificate
Projects that involve the use of live animals must have an animal care certificate to ensure adherence to ethical animal care standards.

Human Ethics/Human Stem Cells Approval

Any research involving human subjects or human stem cells requires approval from the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the principal investigator's institution.

Requirement for the Use of Human Biospecimens
The Cancer Research Society is committed to ensuring that only high-quality biospecimens are used in CRS-funded research to promote reliable, reproducible data. Therefore, all awardees are required to provide evidence of registration or enrollment of the funded project's biospecimen collection with a recognized quality assurance program before funds are released.

This requirement applies to both:

- Prospective (new) biospecimens collected during CRS-funded research
- Retrospective (previously collected) biospecimens obtained from biobank(s)

Quality Assurance Programs: To ensure biospecimen quality, participation in recognized quality assurance programs is required. Examples of such programs include:

- Canadian Tissue Repository Network (CTRNet)
- CAP, ISO, or CLIA certifications (learn more)
- Participation in external quality assurance programs is an eligible grant expense.
- To register for free with the CTRNet quality assurance program, [click here].

Certificates Timeline and Compliance
Required certificates may be submitted following the approval of the funding application, but all certificates must be received before the payment of the first installment.

Non-Compliance Clause
Failure by the grantee or co-applicants to comply with these requirements may result in the revocation of the award.