Cancer Research Society

2026

OPERATING GRANTS

Program Description and Guidelines

In the spotlight this year:

- Grant amount has increased to **$ 140,000 over 2 years**
- Targeted funding opportunities: refer to **partner funding opportunities** for this year's specific calls
- Applicants **must** provide a valid ORCID ID in their ProposalCentral profile (refer to Application and Review Process section)

Effective November 12, 2025 – September 1, 2026

This document was last updated November 12, 2025

CONTENTS

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 **$70,000** 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: Research to advance our understanding of the biological mechanisms underlying cancer risk and development, with the aim of identifying new targets and approaches for cancer prevention and risk reduction.
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 advance our understanding of the biological mechanisms underlying the risks and development of toxicities and complications that arise after completion of cancer treatment, with the aim of identifying more effective strategies to prevent or mitigate these adverse effects.

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 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 participate on the project but do 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.*

An Early Career Investigator *is an independent investigator who has started their career in a university or research institution within the last 5 years (i.e. after August 31, 2021).*

A Mid-Career Investigator *is an independent investigator who has held an academic position in a university or research institution for 5-15 years as of September 1, 2026.*

An Established Investigator *is an independent investigator who has held an academic position in a university or research institution for more than 15 years as of September 1, 2026.*

3. Application and Review process

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 they have been invited to submit a Full Proposal.

This year, applicants **must provide a valid ORCID ID** in the designated section of their ProposalCentral profile. ORCID helps ensure accurate researcher identification and enables the Cancer Research Society (CRS) to track publications and other outputs resulting from CRS-funded research.

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

LOIs must be received by **December 10, 2025, 11:59 pm (ET).**

Full Proposals must be received by **February 11, 2026, 11:59 PM (ET).**

Only complete proposals received by the submission deadline will be considered. Proposals that do not respect the guidelines will be rejected.

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

Reviewers evaluate proposals according to the following criteria:

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

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

3) 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

4) 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

The Operating Grants are awarded to the proposals with the highest scores. All applicants, regardless of their score, will be notified of the outcome of their application in August 2026. If an applicant declines the award, CRS may offer the grant to the next meritorious proposal on the list. **The Cancer Research Society's decisions are final.**

4. Key Dates

Call for proposals	November 12, 2025
Letter of Intent submission deadline	**December 10, 2025, 11:59PM (ET)**
Invitation to submit Full Proposal	December 17, 2025
Full Proposal submission deadline	**February 11, 2026, 11:59PM (ET)**
Update publication list deadline	April 08, 2026
Review process completed, awards announced	August 2026
Grant start date	September 2026

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 2026 CRS Operating Grants Competition and must be completed via the CRS Research Portal, ProposalCentral click *HERE*, by **December 10, 2025, 11:59 pm (ET)**.

Applicants may submit more than one LOI, but there will be a maximum of 1 new project proposal per main applicant. This limit does not apply to renewal applications. Applicants may submit one new project application and one renewal application as the main applicant.

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.

Late or incomplete LOIs will not be reviewed. Applicants are encouraged to verify all required fields (including ORCID, title page, and research panel selection) prior to submission.

Title Page: 81 characters maximum

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

> ***Renewal:*** Applicants who currently hold a CRS Operating Grant that will end **August 31, 2026** may apply for a renewal. Renewal applications are considered continuations of existing projects; however, only projects with an end date of **August 31, 2026**, are eligible. Each renewal will undergo the full peer review process to ensure it meets CRS's current evaluation criteria and aligns with the objectives of the Operating Grants program.
>
> ***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 prior evaluation reports in the designated ProposalCentral section ("Upload Attachments") and clearly describe how feedback from the previous review has been addressed. 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. For example, if the original project was submitted in 2025 and you resubmit in 2026 and 2027, these are considered two consecutive resubmissions. After two consecutive unsuccessful attempts, the applicant must submit the proposal as a new project.

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

Partner funding opportunities (optional): CRS offers 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, 2026, 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. Refer to Section 14, Upload Attachments, for a complete list of required documents

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 submitted in the 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:** Summary of the research project in lay terms to be understood by those who are not in biomedical research (for press release and communications to donors). Character limit of 850. CRS emphasizes the importance of outreach and the lay summary will be reviewed internally to ensure clarity and suitability to inform the general public. Applicants **must** provide a lay summary in English and are **strongly encouraged** to include a French version for use in communications to donors and the public.

- **Description of Proposed Project:** Describe the proposed research project using a **maximum of 5 pages (8.5" x 11"),** font Arial 11 pt. or Times New Roman 12 pt. or similar, single spacing, minimum 2 cm margins. Supporting figures and tables for preliminary data should be embedded in the 5-page research proposal, a 9-pt. font may be used for figure texts. The font type and size may vary, but figures, tables and graphs, and their accompanying legends must be readable when printed on one 8.5" x 11" page at normal (100%) scale. Non-compliance with the guidelines could lead to an administrative rejection of a submitted application prior to its scientific evaluation.

  The project description must include the following elements:

  - **Literature Overview:** Brief overview of recent literature with references.
  - **Proposed aim(s)/objectives:** Objectives that align with the two-year period of the grant 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:** Describe the expertise and contributions of the applicant, co-applicants and key personnel in relation to the proposed project.
  - **Collaborators:** Describe the expertise and contributions of the 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 submitted in the LOI.

- **Review Panel:** Same as submitted in the LOI.

- **Budget Period Detail:** Indicate, in Canadian dollars, the financial requirements for 2 years. This grant is limited to $70,000/year for a maximum total of $140,000 over 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 include all sources of research support currently held or applied for, including but not limited to grants (including any from CRS), contracts and any current start-up funding.

  CRS will not award funds if overlapping and/or comparable support for a project has been obtained, even partially, from another agency, as each project funded by CRS has to be original. Failure to provide a complete declaration may result in grant cancellation and a request for the 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 filled out by the main applicant and all co-applicant(s). For each applicant, please create a single document composed of the following sections:
  - **EDUCATION:** List all post-secondary education, including baccalaureate or other initial university education and post-doctoral training.
  - **ACADEMIC, RESEARCH AND INDUSTRIAL EXPERIENCE:** List your current position followed by previous positions, experiences, and honors in chronological order.

- **PUBLICATIONS:** List in chronological order COMPLETE references, including titles, for all publications during 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 their publications. (e.g PubMed, Google Scholar)
- **INTERRUPTION:** 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 the 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:** This information enables CRS to assess applicant diversity and strengthen equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in its funding programs. It will not be used as part of the peer review process.

7. Contact information

For questions regarding the **2026 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) made up of 14 to 17 Canadian and/or international scientists with expertise in the appropriate domains of cancer research.

Applicants must indicate, based on the research area and topic, their first and second choice among the five expert review panels. The second choice must differ from the first. CRS will make every effort to respect the applicant's first choice; however, it reserves the right to assign the proposal to the panel deemed most appropriate.

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 adherence to ethical, safety, 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.