



AACR-Mark Foundation Chemistry in Cancer Research Grants

2026 Program Guidelines and Letter of Intent Instructions

American Association for Cancer Research

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Last Updated: November 4, 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROGRAM SUMMARY.....	3
LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE	3
APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	3
RESEARCH PROJECT CRITERIA.....	5
COMPETITIVE LETTER OF INTENT DESCRIPTION	5
EVALUATION OF COMPETITIVE LETTERS OF INTENT AND INVITED APPLICATIONS	6
TOBACCO INDUSTRY FUNDING AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST STATEMENT	6
LETTER OF INTENT PROCEDURES	8
GETTING STARTED IN PROPOSALCENTRAL	8
LETTER OF INTENT FORMAT	9
SUBMITTING COMPLETE LETTER OF INTENT	12
CHANGES TO YOUR APPLICATION	13
INQUIRIES	13
MORE ABOUT THE PARTNERS	14

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Mark Foundation for Cancer Research and the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) are proud to announce the AACR-Mark Foundation Chemistry in Cancer Research Grants. This grant mechanism seeks to support chemists to pursue impactful research in the field of cancer.

Each grant provides \$435,000 over three years for research project-related expenses. Grant funds may be used for research expenses attributable to the project, which may include supplemental salary support, equipment, research/laboratory supplies, and other research expenses. Each Grantee will be required to attend an Annual AACR Grantee Recognition Event to formally accept their Grant. Up to \$3,000 may be allocated from the Grant to cover expenses for attending the Annual Grantee Summit and the Annual Grantee Recognition Event. Additionally, up to \$2,000 per year from the Grant Funds may be allocated to support the Grantee's attendance at the Mark Foundation Scientific Symposium. For institutions that mandate payment of indirect costs, a maximum of 10% of the direct costs may be used for this purpose.

LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE

December 16, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time

We recommend confirming this time in your respective time zone. To do so, please use a time zone converter.

APPLICANTS NOTIFIED OF DECISION STATUS OF LETTER OF INTENT

March 2026

FULL APPLICATION DEADLINE *(for those invited to apply based on the Letter of Intent)*

April 2026

NOTIFICATION OF AWARD

July 2026

ANNUAL GRANTEE RECOGNITION EVENT

Grant recipient must attend the Annual Grantee Recognition Event during the AACR Annual Meeting or a similar recognition event to accept their grant. Grant funds may be used to support the grantee's registration and travel to this event.

In the event of unforeseen scheduling changes, the grantee will be contacted regarding alternative arrangements.

START OF GRANT TERM

September 1, 2026

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

At the start of the grant term on September 1, 2026, applicants must:

- Have a doctoral degree (PhD, MD, MD/PhD, or equivalent) in a related field and not currently be a candidate for a further doctoral degree.
- Be an **independent investigator** working at an academic, medical, or non-profit research institution.
 - If eligibility is based on a future position, the position must be confirmed at the time of application, and CANNOT be contingent upon receiving this grant.
 - If the future position is at a different institution than the applicant's current institution, the applicant must contact AACR's RGA at grants@aacr.org **before** submitting their application for information on additional verification materials/signatures that may be required.
 - There are no citizenship or geographic requirements. However, by submitting an application for this grant, an applicant applying from an institution located in a country in which they are not a citizen or a permanent resident assures that their visa status will provide sufficient time to complete the project within the grant term at the institution from which they applied.
 - Postdoctoral or clinical research fellows or the equivalent who are working under the auspices of a scientific mentor are **not eligible** to apply. Qualified fellows are invited to apply for an AACR Fellowship.
 - Employees or subcontractors of a U.S. government entity or for-profit private industry are **not eligible**. Employees or subcontractors of a U.S. government entity or for-profit private industry may serve as Collaborators, but no grant funds may be directed toward these individuals.

AACR is obligated to comply with U.S. laws and regulations regarding research and related transactions in countries subject to U.S. Government enforcement of economic and trade sanctions for particular foreign policy and national security reasons. If your proposed project involves U.S. Government [sanctioned countries](#) subject to restrictions, please contact AACR's RGA at grants@aacr.org.

Applicants **must** be AACR **Active** members in good standing (dues paid for the current year). Please be informed that no dues are required for members located in countries building cancer research capacities ([view list of eligible countries here](#)). Nonmembers interested in this grant opportunity must submit a satisfactory application for AACR Active membership by the application deadline. Nonmembers interested in this grant opportunity must submit a satisfactory application for AACR membership by the Letter of Intent (LOI) deadline. **Nonmembers** can apply for membership [online](#). Please review the [Membership Categories](#) for the category that best fits your qualifications. Nonmembers must obtain a statement of support from a nominator who is an Active AACR member in good standing (dues paid for the current year). Nonmembers requiring assistance with finding a nominator may email membership@aacr.org and include your geographical location to receive a list of members in your area to contact for nominations. For more information check the [membership FAQ](#). **Members** can renew their membership through [myAACR](#). You will need your login (email address) and password to access the member portal. If you require assistance logging in, please submit a [help form](#). **Lapsed** members must be members in good standing by the LOI deadline and should contact the Membership Department at membership@aacr.org for assistance.

Investigators may submit only **one** letter of intent for the AACR-Mark Foundation Chemistry in Cancer Research Grants but may concurrently apply for other AACR grants. However, applicants are expected to accept the first grant they are awarded. Individuals may accept and hold only one AACR grant at a time.

Employees or subcontractors of a U.S. government entity or for-profit private industry are not eligible. Employees or subcontractors of a U.S. government entity or for-profit private industry may serve as Collaborators, but no grant funds may be directed towards these individuals.

Current AACR grantees may apply only if their current grant ends before the start of the grant term of this funding opportunity (i.e., September 1, 2026). Also, the terms of their current grant must require that the final progress reports be approved by the AACR before September 1, 2026.

Postdoctoral or clinical research fellows or the equivalent who are working under the auspices of a scientific mentor are not eligible to apply. Qualified fellows are invited to apply for an AACR Fellowship.

Members of the Scientific Review Committee are not eligible to apply for the AACR-Mark Foundation Chemistry in Cancer Research Grants.

All applicants with questions about eligibility should contact AACR's RGA at grants@aacr.org before submitting an application.

RESEARCH PROJECT CRITERIA

These grants are designed to support groundbreaking basic or translational research projects that utilize chemistry or chemical biology to address urgent issues in cancer. Projects should aim to develop innovative chemical tools and/or probes to validate difficult or emerging cancer targets to advance our understanding of cancer biology. Potential areas of research include, but are not limited to:

- Development of chemical tools and/or probes to explore cancer biological function, gene function, molecular interactions, as well as target validation (e.g. antibodies, peptides).
- Novel conjugation approaches to improve the effectiveness of biologics.
- Approaches that use induced proximity (i.e., molecular glues or PROTACs) to modulate cancer-driving proteins.
- Advancement of delivery systems that improve the delivery of drugs, genes, or other therapeutic agents to tumors.

COMPETITIVE LETTER OF INTENT DESCRIPTION

An AACR Competitive Letter of Intent is an application tool designed to identify the projects with the greatest scientific potential and alignment with the Program Guidelines without requiring applicants to first submit a full application. A Letter of Intent is not written as *correspondence* to the Scientific Review Committee, but instead follows a prescribed template which gathers information summarizing the proposed research project. Letters of Intent have also been called "pre-applications", "concept papers", or "letters of inquiry" by other funders.

Letters of Intent are peer-reviewed by the Scientific Review Committee. A limited number of applicants whose Letters of Intent are deemed most meritorious will be invited by the Committee to submit full applications.

The Letter of Intent for the AACR-Mark Foundation Chemistry in Cancer Research Grants is limited to two pages and must describe the proposed cancer research project, including the Specific Aims; Rationale, Preliminary Data, Methodology, and Approach; and Significance and Statement of Relevance. Relevant references must be attached and are limited to two pages.

The Letter of Intent must be accompanied by:

- Lay and Scientific Abstracts, limited to 3,000 characters each including spaces, which provides a clear, concise and comprehensive overview of the proposed research project
- Applicant's Biographical Sketch
- Letter of Institutional Commitment

EVALUATION OF COMPETITIVE LETTERS OF INTENT AND INVITED APPLICATIONS

Letters of Intent and full applications will be peer-reviewed by a Scientific Review Committee comprised of researchers and physician-scientists respected for their own accomplishments in cancer research and viewed as leaders in the field. The President of the AACR will appoint the members of the Scientific Review Committee.

The Committee will consider the following criteria when reviewing the Letters of Intent and invited full applications and determining funding decisions:

- **Investigator.** Is the applicant well suited to the project? Does the applicant have appropriate experience and training to successfully complete the proposed project? Has the applicant achieved, or has the potential of achieving, a track record of accomplishments to advance the field?
- **Significance.** Is the scientific and technical merit of the proposed project of significance? Is the proposed project of high quality, and what potential does it have to advance the field of cancer research and eventually benefit patients?
- **Approach.** Are the overall strategy, design, and methodology well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project within the grant term? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? Is the budget justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed project?
- **Institutional Environment.** What evidence is provided of institutional commitment for the scientific development of the applicant? What support, equipment, and resources will be available to the applicant and are they adequate to successfully complete the proposed project?

TOBACCO INDUSTRY FUNDING AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Scientific investigators or health professionals who are funded by the tobacco industry for any research project are not eligible for any AACR grant. Grantees who accept funding from the tobacco industry for any research project during the term of an AACR grant must inform the AACR of such funding, whereupon the AACR grant will immediately be terminated.

Tobacco industry funding is defined for purposes of AACR grant applicants and recipients as money provided or used for all or any of the costs of any research project, including personnel, consumables, equipment, buildings, travel, meetings and conferences, and operating costs for laboratories and offices.

It is not defined as money provided or used for meetings or conferences that don't relate to any particular research projects.

Tobacco industry funding includes: funds from a company that is engaged in or has affiliates engaged in the manufacture of tobacco produced for human use; funds in the name of a tobacco brand, whether or not the brand name is used solely for tobacco products; funds from a body set up by the tobacco industry or by one or more companies engaged in the manufacture of tobacco products.

The following do not constitute tobacco industry funding for the purposes of this policy:

- Legacies from tobacco industry investments (unless the names of a tobacco company or cigarette brand are associated with them)
- Funding from a trust or foundation established with assets related to the tobacco industry but no longer having any connection with the tobacco industry even though it may bear a name that (for historical reasons) is associated with the tobacco industry

LETTER OF INTENT INSTRUCTIONS

LETTER OF INTENT PROCEDURES

The AACR requires applicants to submit an online letter of intent by **1:00 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on Tuesday, December 16, 2025**, using the ProposalCentral website at <https://ProposalCentral.com>.

In order to submit a complete letter of intent, applicants need to enter information directly into the online submission platform as well as upload a number of documents. Below are details about information that needs to be entered and the materials that need to be uploaded. The section numbering corresponds with the section numbers in the Letter of Intent Format below and the letter of intent on ProposalCentral.

Information to be Entered Directly into ProposalCentral	Letter of Intent Format Section	ProposalCentral Section
Project Title and Acknowledgement of Reading the Terms and Conditions	1. Title Page	1) Title Page
Applicant Information	4. Applicant	4) Applicant
Institution and Contact Information	5. Institution & Contacts	5) Institution & Contacts
Lay Abstract	6.A. Lay Abstract	6) Abstracts
Scientific Abstract	6.B. Scientific Abstract	6) Abstracts
Specific Aims	7. Specific Aims	7) Specific Aims
PI Data Sheet	9. PI Data Sheet	9) PI Data Sheet

Templates	Letter of Intent Format Section	ProposalCentral Section
Letter of Intent Template	8.A. Letter of Intent Documents	8) Letter of Intent Documents
Applicant's Biographical Sketch Template	8.B. Letter of Intent Documents	8) Letter of Intent Documents

Additional Materials	Letter of Intent Format Section	ProposalCentral Section
Applicant's Biographical Sketch	8.B. Letter of Intent Documents	8) Letter of Intent Documents
Letter of Institutional Commitment	8.C. Letter of Intent Documents	8) Letter of Intent Documents

Required Signatures	Letter of Intent Format Section	ProposalCentral Section
Application Signature Page(s)	10. Signature Page(s)	10) Signature Page(s)

GETTING STARTED IN ProposalCentral

If you are a new user of ProposalCentral, click the "Need an account?" link and complete the registration process. After logging in, complete your Professional Profile before starting a letter of intent.

If you are already registered with ProposalCentral, access the site and log in with your Username and Password. If you have forgotten your login information, click on the "Forgot Your Password?" link.

To start a letter of intent, select the "Grant Opportunities" tab. A list of grant opportunities will be displayed. The list of applications can be filtered for just this organization by clicking "Filter by Grant Maker" at the top and selecting "American Association for Cancer Research" in the drop-down menu. Find "**AACR-Mark Foundation Chemistry in Cancer Research Grants**" and click the blue "Apply Now" button in the "Apply" column.

If you have any difficulties registering, logging in, or creating your application, contact ProposalCentral Customer Support at: 800-875-2562 (Toll-free U.S. and Canada), +1-703-964-5840 (Direct Dial International), or by email at pcsupport@altum.com. See the ProposalCentral [FAQ](#) section for additional information.

LETTER OF INTENT FORMAT

The following information is required to submit a complete letter of intent. Numbers correspond to the sections found on the left side of the ProposalCentral website.

- 1. TITLE PAGE.** Enter the title of the research project. The title is limited to no more than 100 characters (including spaces). Do not use abbreviations. A project title must be entered and saved before additional sections may be accessed.

Terms and Conditions of the Grant. In order to ensure that the applicant is informed of the terms and conditions of the grant should they be selected as a recipient, applicant must acknowledge that they have read the Terms and Conditions and have shared them with their institution by typing in their name and date in the box provided.

The terms and conditions of this grant may be modified or amended by AACR prior to execution of the Grant Agreement. In addition, the grant recipient's institution may only request revisions to sections VII.F.; XII.; XIII.F.; and XIV.A. of the Grant Agreement prior to execution. Only in special circumstances will revisions be considered to sections other than those noted above.

- 2. DOWNLOAD TEMPLATES & INSTRUCTIONS.** The Program Guidelines and Application Instructions, Terms and Conditions, Applicant Checklist, and all templates can be downloaded from this page.

See Section 8 of the Letter of Intent Format for how to complete and upload the templates.

- 3. ENABLE OTHER USERS TO ACCESS THIS PROPOSAL.** Optional.
- 4. APPLICANT.** Enter information for the applicant. Applicants must include their contact information, including e-mail address, phone number, mailing address, and AACR membership information.

Applicants are also strongly encouraged to have an ORCID iD and include this identifier with their application.

- 5. INSTITUTION & CONTACTS.** Enter information regarding the applicant's institution and signing official.

- 6. ABSTRACTS.**

A. Lay Abstract. Limited to 3,000 characters (including spaces), which provides a clear, concise, and comprehensive overview of the proposed research project in language suitable for a non-scientific audience. Do not use abbreviations unless absolutely necessary.

B. Scientific Abstract. Limited to 3,000 characters (including spaces) and must provide a brief summary of the proposed research project.

If funded, these Abstracts will become public information; therefore, do not include proprietary or confidential information.

From the lists provided, select the research areas that are most applicable to this project (*select no more than two*), select the tumor site that is most applicable to this project (*select only one*), and indicate how you found out about this grant opportunity.

7. SPECIFIC AIMS. Please enter Specific Aims exactly as written in the Letter of Intent Narrative (see Section 8 of the Application Format). Be sure to click the 'Save' button after each Specific Aim entry.

8. LETTER OF INTENT DOCUMENTS.

Formatting Instructions. Applicants must adhere to the following instructions in completing the templates. **Failure to observe type size specifications and page limits will result in the return of the application without review.**

- Type size. Must use 12-point Times New Roman for the text, and no smaller than 9-point type for figures, legends, and tables.
- Single-spaced text. Single-spacing is acceptable, and space between paragraphs is recommended.
- Margins. The page margin must be no less than 0.75 inches on each side.
- Page numbering. The Proposal Narrative must be numbered consecutively; do not use section designations such as "3A" or "3B."
- Tips and techniques for inserting images in documents.
 - Reduce the file size of documents with images by "inserting" the image (as opposed to "cutting" and "pasting"). Save graphical images as JPG or GIF files. Insert the image into the document by selecting "Insert – Picture – From File" from the MS Word menu.
 - Insert only GIF or JPG graphic files as images in your Word document. Other graphical file formats are either very large or difficult to manipulate in the document.
 - Do not insert Quick Time or TIFF objects into your document.
 - Anchor the images you embed in your document.
 - Once you have anchored the inserted image, you can format text to wrap around the image.
 - Do not edit your images in Word. Use a graphics program.
 - Do not embed your images in tables, text boxes, and other form elements.
 - Do not add annotations over the images in Word. Add annotations to the images in a graphics program.

When a template is provided, the template MUST be used. Prepare and upload the following documents into your application in portable document format (PDF):

A. Letter of Intent. Applicants are required to use the template available from the ProposalCentral website. The information must be presented in this order:

- I. Letter of Intent Narrative. Limited to two pages,** including figures and tables. The References section does not count against this page limit. The information must be

presented in this order and include these subheadings: (A) Specific Aims; (B) Rationale, Preliminary Data, Methodology, and Approach; (C) Statistical Analysis Plan; and (D) Significance and Statement of Relevance.

- II. References.** Limited to two pages. AACR reference style follows that of the [Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals](#). Note that the *Uniform Requirements* specify that, for articles with more than six authors, the names of the first six authors must be listed, followed by “et al”. For articles with six or fewer authors, all authors must be listed.

- B. Applicant's Biographical Sketch.** *Applicants are required to use the template available from the ProposalCentral website.* This template as well as an example are available for download from the ProposalCentral platform. All sections of the biosketch must be filled in the and the biographical sketch must be in English.
- C. Letter of Institutional Commitment.** The letter must be written by the department head, dean, or other senior member of the institution on behalf of the applicant and addressed to the Scientific Review Committee. It should explain the applicant's relationship with the institution, and the nature and extent of support for the proposed research available from the institution, including laboratory space and financial and other resources.
- D. Applicant Eligibility and Compliance Guide.** Please note that this document will not be uploaded onto the platform with your other application materials, and is only provided as a guide to help applicants to ensure their submission meets all eligibility and compliance requirements.

Uploading the attachments into your application. Once you have converted your attachments to PDF files, the next step is to upload the files to your online letter of intent. *Only PDF attachments are permitted for this application submission.*

- Open your online application and go to the section for attaching files. Click the blue “Attach Files” button.
- Select the appropriate type of attachment from the drop-down list.
- Enter your own description of the file in the “Describe Attachment” field.
- Click on the “click here to browse” link to select the file from your computer or drag and drop. Click on the “Upload and Continue” button. You will get a confirmation message on your screen that the file was uploaded successfully. You will also see that your file is now listed in the “Current list of uploaded attachments” section of the screen. Clicking the “Back” or “Upload and Return” button allows you to go back to the main page of this section where the uploaded documents should now be listed. **Click the download icon next to the file name to open and view your uploaded documents.** To delete the file, click on the trashcan icon to the right under the “Delete” column.

In the section for attachments, all the required attachments are listed in the middle of the screen, just below where you upload your files. This list of required attachments helps you track completion and uploading of your required attachments. Once you upload a required attachment, that attachment type will be removed from the required list and will be displayed in the "Current list of uploaded attachments."

If you wish to modify the attached file, make the revisions to your **original** file on your computer, convert the file to PDF, and use the same process as above to attach the new file. **Delete any previously submitted versions of the file before submitting your application.**

SUBMITTING COMPLETE LETTER OF INTENT

9. **PI DATA SHEET.** Please verify the applicant gender, race, and ethnicity. This is automatically populated based on the applicant's Professional Profile within ProposalCentral. Changes to the selections on this screen will be reflected in your Professional Profile. The information is handled separately from the application and will not be provided to the Scientific Review Committee.
10. **SIGNATURE PAGE(S).** In order to ensure that all parties have approved the application, electronic signatures are required from the Applicant/PI and Signing Official. Any user whose signature is required will have automatic access to this application. An email notification is sent to all signatories when a signature is provided.

To sign, enter your name then click the sign button  .

Use the "Download Application" button to download a copy of your Letter of Intent, including attachments.

NOTE: Data entered in the online Letter of Intent submission are automatically included in the Signature Pages. The following signature page fields will remain blank until the full application process: Dates of Proposed Project, Proposed Budget, Human Subjects, Vertebrate Animals, Recombinant DNA, and Biohazards. If information is missing in the Signature Pages, it could be because you have not entered the information in one of the online sections **OR** the information is not required for this grant program. If the institution's Employer Identification Number (EIN) is not completed on the Signature Page, please request your institution to provide that information in their ProposalCentral profile.

The AACR **strongly encourages** applicants to also use the "Download Application" option. This option can be used if your institution wishes to review the Letter of Intent but also should be used by the applicant to ensure that your attachments loaded properly.

Errors may occur when the uploaded PDF files are assembled by the system. Please check to ensure that all pages of every document included appear in the "Download Letter of Intent" option. If you are having any issues with this option, please contact ProposalCentral customer support at: 800-875-2562 (Toll-free U.S. and Canada), +1-703-964-5840 (Direct Dial International), or by e-mail to pcsupport@altum.com.

10. **VALIDATE.** Validate the application on ProposalCentral. This is an essential step. An application that has not been validated cannot be submitted. "Validate" checks for required data and attachments. You will not be able to submit if all the required data and attachments have not been provided.
11. **SUBMIT.** After successfully passing the validate check, click the "**Submit**" button. An e-mail will be

sent to you confirming your submission.

Once your application is submitted you may view it by selecting “Submitted” from the “Proposal Status” drop-down menu under the ‘Proposals’ tab, then clicking the “View” button under the Edit column. The status column will show “Submitted” and the date submitted. You may need to refresh your browser screen after submitting the application to see the updated status.

CHANGES TO YOUR APPLICATION

Withdrawal of Application. Please advise AACR’s RGA promptly, in writing, should you decide to withdraw your application for any reason. Your correspondence should include your name, the grant opportunity to which you applied, the project title, and the reason for withdrawal.

Change of Address. Notify AACR’s RGA in writing of any changes of address, e-mail, or phone number, following the submission of an application. Include your name and the ProposalCentral identification number. The e-mail address provided with your application will be used for all official communication about your submission including the recipient selection results. Your Professional Profile in ProposalCentral must be kept up to date.

Change of Institution or Position. If you change your institution or professional position, contact AACR’s RGA to determine whether your application is still eligible for review.

INQUIRIES

Inquiries or technical issues regarding ProposalCentral and the online application process should be directed to customer support at: 800-875-2562 (Toll-free U.S. and Canada), +1-703-964-5840 (Direct Dial International), or by e-mail to pcsupport@altum.com.

Inquiries about the program guidelines, eligibility requirements, and application materials can be directed to AACR’s RGA at grants@aacr.org.

MORE ABOUT THE PARTNERS



The Mark Foundation for Cancer Research, a charitable organization based in New York City, actively partners with scientists worldwide to accelerate research that will transform cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Since 2017, Mark Foundation has awarded over \$275 million in grants to investigators at more than 115 academic institutions across 18 countries, with research programs focusing on early career support, team science collaboration, new technology innovation, and therapeutics discovery. Additionally, Mark Foundation maintains a growing portfolio of investments in early-stage cancer diagnostics and therapeutics companies, including several that have transitioned from grantee projects into commercial development. To learn more, please visit www.themarkfoundation.org.



Founded in 1907, the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) is the world's first and largest professional organization dedicated to advancing cancer research and its mission to prevent and cure cancer. AACR membership includes more than 58,000 laboratory, translational, and clinical researchers; population scientists; other health care professionals; and patient advocates residing in 141 countries and territories around the world. Presently, 32% of members live outside the United States and 22% of AACR's international members are located in countries with emerging economies. The AACR offers seven categories of membership to support each aspect of our members' professional development and enhancement in cancer research. In support of the professional development of early-career researchers, no annual dues are required for Associate membership. The AACR marshals the full spectrum of expertise of the cancer community to accelerate progress in the prevention, biology, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer by annually convening more than 30 conferences and educational workshops, the largest of which is the AACR Annual Meeting with more than 22,500 attendees. The AACR's Virtual 2020 Annual Meeting attracted over 74,000 attendees. In addition, the AACR publishes ten prestigious, peer-reviewed scientific journals and a magazine for cancer survivors, patients, and their caregivers. The AACR funds meritorious research directly as well as in cooperation with numerous cancer organizations. As the Scientific Partner of Stand Up To Cancer, the AACR provides expert peer review, grants administration, and scientific oversight of team science and individual investigator grants in cancer research that have the potential for near-term patient benefit. The AACR actively communicates with legislators and other policymakers about the value of cancer research and related biomedical science in saving lives from cancer. For more information about the AACR, visit www.AACR.org.