



Childhood Cancer Therapeutic Catalyst

About this scheme

Key information

Career level

Established independent researcher
Transitioning to scientific leadership
Clinician
Non-clinical researcher

Research area

Cancer biology
Drug discovery
Therapeutic intervention
Immunotherapy
Pre-clinical research

Preliminary submission

31 January 2025

Final submission

25 April 2025

Committee review

May 2025

Funding period

up to 18 months

Funding amount

up to £250,000

The Childhood Cancer Therapeutic Catalyst accelerates the translation of discovery research into novel therapeutics. Expression of interest due: 31 January 2025

Eligibility

You should:

- be an academic researcher based at any university or research institute world-wide
- have your own lab and/or have undertaken a significant period of postdoctoral research

This scheme is open to international applications.

Scientific remit

This scheme aims to de-risk early therapeutic opportunities to facilitate further drug discovery activity. We are seeking projects with strong potential to deliver novel therapeutics for children and young people with cancer.

We invite applications for early drug discovery proposals from across all childhood cancer indications and modalities. Activity that would be considered eligible for support through this award includes:

- deconvolution and validation of novel targets and pathways
- novel therapeutic approaches to validated targets
- development of platforms, assays and screens to identify novel therapeutics
- drug discovery feasibility

Not in remit

The following are examples of activity that are not within the remit of this scheme:

- discovery or basic biological research relating to cancer
- target identification proposals
- full hit finding activities, as likely to be beyond the scope of this award
- preclinical and clinical drug development studies (including, bulk synthesis/manufacture to Good Manufacturing Practice, toxicology to Good Clinical Practice)
- development of technology to address an area of early detection or diagnosis
- exploratory studies to uncover the underpinning mechanisms of resistance to therapies
- novel therapeutic combinations
- repurposing of existing therapeutic agents into a childhood cancer setting

Contact the [Therapeutic Catalyst team](#), highlighting that you are interested in the Childhood Cancer Therapeutic Catalyst Award, to discuss your proposal and whether it fits the remit of this scheme. Later stage projects may be able to access support through our partnered children's and young people's cancer therapeutic consortium, [C-Further](#), where we are a founding partner.

Collaborative approach

Funded projects will run collaboratively between academic research groups and Cancer Research Horizons' drug discovery laboratories (Therapeutic Innovation), with joint decision-making and accountability for project progression.

At the full application stage, you will be assigned a scientist from Therapeutic Innovation to support you in developing your proposal, and during the project if you are successful. These scientists bring significant expertise and serve as a single point of contact to manage the internal (Cancer Research Horizons drug discovery) and external resources required to deliver your project.

We can also offer additional expertise, resources, and capabilities from across Cancer Research Horizons, Cancer Research UK, and our wider investigator network to help your project progress more effectively. Additionally, if appropriate, Cancer Research Horizons can support you in identifying options to accelerate the project toward patient benefit, including through C-Further.

What is funded

Successful projects will receive up to £250k for up to 18 months. These are focussed and milestone-driven awards, therefore go/no-go criteria will be embedded into the project and funding will be awarded through instalments.

Funding can be used to support:

- staff time (research or technical)
- associated running expenses
- outsourced research activities (where appropriate)

Funded projects may also receive in-kind support and expertise through [Therapeutic Innovation](#).

How to apply to this scheme

Before you begin your application consider reaching out to us to discuss your project, its current stage of development and how we might be able to support its progression.

There are two review rounds per year and the application process is as follows:

1. Expression of interest (next deadline 31 January 2025):
 - Submit your [Expression of Interest form](#) to the [Therapeutic Catalyst team](#).
 - If successful, the applicants will be invited to submit a full project proposal by the end of February.
2. Full proposal (next deadline approximately 25 April 2025):
 - We will arrange a call with successful applicants to discuss the scientific feedback, as well as where we can provide expertise and capabilities to support your project.
 - One of our scientists will be assigned to work with you to create a collaborative, costed and milestone-driven full project proposal.
 - Applicants will be invited to a committee interview in mid-May and outcomes will be shared in early June.

What makes a successful application

Successful applications are based on high impact scientific discoveries with a clear route of translation to benefit children and young people with cancer (eg robust proof of concept, strong disease positioning hypothesis, innovative models for target validation or identification, etc).

The proposed project must reach an inflection point within the 18-month window, with validation of the hypothesis and positioning of the project for potential onward investment.

Successful applications are fully collaborative in nature, making the most of expertise based in your own research laboratory and our Therapeutic Innovation group.

Funding committee reviewing your application

Expressions of interest are reviewed by an internal cross-functional committee from our Therapeutic Innovation group who examine the therapeutic potential of the project and feasibility.

Full applications are reviewed by a committee incorporating internal and external experts across childhood cancers and therapeutic discovery. The composition of the committee will be shared with applicants prior to their interview.

Cancer Research UK contact details

Therapeutic Innovation team

When contacting, please highlight in the subject that you are interested in the Childhood Therapeutic Catalyst Award.

therapeutic.catalyst@cancer.org.uk

Other things you may be interested in

Interested in learning more about Therapeutic Innovation?

[Discover our capabilities and meet the team](#)

Is your project later stage? If so, consider a submission to C-Further.

[Explore the consortium](#)

Is your therapeutic opportunity relevant to non-childhood cancer indications? Consider our Therapeutic Catalyst awards, which are open to all cancers.

[Learn more about the Therapeutic Catalyst](#)

Speak to a nurse

[Nurse Helpline](#)

[0808 800 4040](#)

Questions about cancer? Call freephone

9 to 5 Monday to Friday or [email us](#)

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