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Funding schemes

Childhood Cancer Therapeutic Catalyst

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Overview

This scheme accelerates the translation of discovery research into novel therapeutics for children and young people with cancer.

Key information

Timelines

Applications are reviewed two times per year. Upcoming deadline for expressions of interest: 10 April 2026

Funding period

Up to 18 months

Funding amount

Up to £250K per project

About the scheme

Funded projects run collaboratively between academic and Cancer Research Horizons drug discovery laboratories (the Therapeutic Innovation team), with funding awarded by Cancer Research UK to further our charitable objectives. At the full application stage, you will be assigned a scientist from the Therapeutic Innovation team to support you throughout your proposal development, working with you to build and pitch the proposal.

These scientists bring significant expertise and serve as a single point of contact to manage all the internal (Cancer Research Horizons drug discovery) and external resources required to deliver your project.

If funded, the project is owned and managed by the grantholder with advice/input from the Therapeutic Innovation team through catch-up meetings every four to six weeks where you'll discuss progress, data and the next steps.

Additionally, if appropriate, Cancer Research Horizons can support you in identifying options to accelerate the project toward patient benefit, including through C-Further.

[Find out more about Cancer Research Horizons](#)

Who is eligible?

You can apply for our Childhood Cancer Therapeutic Catalyst if you are an academic researcher based at any university or research institute world-wide. You should also have your own lab and/or perform independent research.

This scheme is open to global applications.

What is suitable for this scheme?

This scheme aims to de-risk early projects to facilitate further drug discovery research, funding, or partnering. 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. Some examples of projects we might fund include the following areas:

- deconvolution and validation of novel targets and pathways
- novel therapeutic approaches to validated targets
- target identification projects (including development of platforms, assays and screens)
- drug discovery feasibility and de-risking

Therapeutic Catalyst

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

[Learn about the Therapeutic Catalyst](#)

C-Further: Childhood Cancer Therapeutics Consortium

If your project is later stage, you 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.

[Explore the consortium](#)

What isn't suitable for this scheme?

The following types of projects are not within the remit of this scheme and will not be progressed:

- discovery or basic biological research relating to cancer
 - target identification proposals based solely on the use of gene silencing or editing methods in commercially available tumour cell line
 - full hit-finding activities, clinical development and preclinical studies to initiate clinical trials (for example bulk synthesis/manufacture to Good Manufacturing Practice, toxicology to Good Clinical Practice)
 - drug product toxicology, formulation and delivery
 - development of technology to address an area of early detection, diagnostics or prevention
 - basic biological research relating to cancer exploratory studies to uncover the underpinning mechanisms of therapeutic resistance
 - drug repositioning/repurposing approaches with clinically approved therapies, including in combinations
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How are applications reviewed?

There are two stages to the application process.

Expression of interest

You must first submit an expression of interest. An internal cross-functional committee will triage and review the therapeutic potential of the project and feasibility for eligibility and strategic fit. If successful, you will be invited to submit a full project proposal.

Full proposal

If you are invited to submit a full proposal, one of our scientists will be assigned to work with you to create a collaborative and costed project proposal and timeline, led by the principal investigator.

There is no guarantee of funding at this stage. The Therapeutic Innovation scientist (and anyone else at Cancer Research UK or Cancer Research Horizons directly involved in the proposal development) will not be involved in the final funding decision.

The scheme adheres to Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) expert review principles. Submitted applications will be reviewed by the Childhood Cancer Therapeutic Catalyst Review Panel of independent, external and cross-functional experts who make the final funding decision.

Assessment criteria

Successful applications are based on high impact scientific discoveries with a clear route of translation to benefit children and young people with cancer (including 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.

Feedback

We will provide feedback on your application, but all funding decisions are final. Panel members cannot discuss their decisions with applicants, so please do not approach them directly.

This allows our panel members to keep the Code of Practice for Funding Committees and Panels, which keeps our review process fair and protects applicants, committee members and external reviewers.

Our review process is extremely important to us, so we reserve the right to decline applications from anyone who compromises its integrity. We do not accept resubmissions, unless recommended by the committee.

What are the key timelines?

Applications are reviewed twice per year, in April and October. Deadlines for expressions of interest for 2025 and 2026 are as follows:

- 10 October 2025
 - 10 April 2026
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What costs are funded?

Successful projects will receive up to £250k for up to 18 months.

This funding covers resources externally from the applying academic laboratory and/or outsourced activities. Academic funding can be provided for staff time (research or technical) and any associated running expenses as set out in our costs guidance. In the UK, as an AMRC charity, we fund the direct costs of research.

[Read our costs guidance](#)

How do I apply?

Contact us for a confidential discussion

If you are interested in applying, please complete our expression of interest form via our online management system, Flexi-Grant.

We recommend that you contact us before applying for a confidential initial discussion of your project and feedback including whether in remit, timeframe, application process, etc.

[Access our expression of interest form](#)

[Contact therapeutic.catalyst@cancer.org.uk](mailto:therapeutic.catalyst@cancer.org.uk)

Read relevant policies and guidance

We recommend you also read additional guidance such as our costs guidance, grant conditions, and other policies to understand any additional requirements before applying.

Read our research policies and guidance

 **Read the special terms and conditions for this scheme** (PDF, 68.2 KB)

Applying through our grants management system

You can manage your application and if successful, your grant, through our online grants management system, Flexi-Grant.

Learn about Flexi-Grant

Who can I contact if I have questions?

Please contact us if you have questions about your eligibility, application or active award.

Contact therapeutic.catalyst@cancer.org.uk

Other support and resources

Disability and accessibility adjustments

Reasonable adjustments can be made throughout the grant application process. We do not require a formal diagnosis to access support.

Find out about our disability and accessibility support

Applying for and managing your funding

Explore the resources, policies and other support we offer to help you understand how to apply for and manage your funding.

Explore our online guidance

Career support for researchers

We develop outstanding cancer researchers through funding, mentoring and coaching, training and networking opportunities.

Learn how we can support your research career

**Together we are
beating cancer**

About our information

Terms and conditions

Privacy

Modern slavery statement

Cookies

Accessibility

Sitemap



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