

Emerging Leader Award



Program Overview

The Mark Foundation Emerging Leader Awards support innovative cancer research from the next generation of leaders. These grants are awarded to outstanding early career investigators **to support high-impact, high-risk projects that are distinct from their current research portfolio.**

Upcoming Webinars

Interested in the Emerging Leader Award? Register now to join us for one of three upcoming informational webinars to learn more about the award and the application process.

March 10, 2026 | 10 AM Eastern | [Register](#)

April 7, 2026 | 10 AM Eastern | [Register](#)

April 8, 2026 | 5 PM Eastern | [Register](#)

Eligibility

- MD, PhD, or an equivalent degree is required.
- **New in 2026:** Emerging Leader Awards support scientists **worldwide**. There are no eligibility restrictions based on geography or citizenship for this program.
- Open to non-profit academic/research institutions worldwide.
- Applicants must have established their independent laboratories three to eight years prior to December 31, 2026 (i.e., the official start date of the independent appointment must fall within the calendar years 2018–2023). Exceptions due to prolonged medical or family leave will be considered on a case-by-case basis. To be considered “independent”, applicants must have their own dedicated laboratory space, the ability to independently hire personnel, and institutional permission to apply to grants as principal investigator. Research track, adjunct faculty, and independent fellow positions are not eligible.
- This award is not intended to be the main source of funding for the applicant’s laboratory. Applicants must demonstrate multi-year independent funding, active in 2027, that sustains the central activities of the laboratory (for example, for US-based applicants, this should be at least one or two NIH/R01).
- The Mark Foundation will assess the eligibility of individual applicants during the review process – due to the volume of applications received, we cannot provide eligibility determinations prior to submission of the application.
- Projects for this award must be centered on evidence-based laboratory data and/or medical science.
- Proposed projects must not be supported by other sources of funding. Finalists will be asked to discuss any potential overlap with other current or pending awards during the interview.
- Only one submission per applicant is permitted per cycle.
- Institutions may submit multiple applications, but no more than one award will be made per institution in each funding cycle.
- If selected, finalists must be available for virtual interviews in October 2026.

Award Terms

- **New in 2026:** The grant amount totals \$1,000,000 (USD) distributed evenly over four (4) years (\$250,000 USD per year).
- Budget limits are inclusive of both direct and indirect costs, with indirect costs allowed up to 10% of the direct costs and included in the total grant amount.
- Emerging Leader Awards are granted to a single investigator; co-investigators are not permitted. The award may be used to support projects carried out with collaborators, who may provide letters of support.
- The letter of agreement will include IP terms with a revenue-sharing component.
- The award start date will be January 1, 2027.

Submission Process

- Letters of Intent must be submitted through the online application system no later than **5 PM Eastern Time on April 30, 2026**. Registration and email address verification are required. **Notifications will be sent from the application system, so please be sure these emails are not caught in spam filters.**
- The initial Letter of Intent should include:
 - Project Title
 - Project Summary: description of the proposed project, including a concise discussion of the rationale, experimental approach, innovation, and potential impact (350 words).
 - Statement of Project Distinction: a brief paragraph describing how the proposed project is unique from the main focus of the lab and prior research activities.
- Applicants will also be requested to provide a biosketch (NIH format or similar) and a list of current grants and other funding supporting the lab.
- To ensure fairness, the initial review process of the Letters of Intent will conceal the applicant's name and institution. Please avoid citations and references to the applicant and institution name in the Project Summary and Statement of Project Distinction. Letters of Intent that contain identifying information such as the applicant's name, institution name, or citation of articles authored by the applicant may result in disqualification.
- All application materials, including Letter of Intent, biosketch, and letters of support, must be submitted in English.
- After the Letters of Intent have been evaluated, full applications will be accepted by invitation only.

Key Dates

- **March 25, 2026:** Letter of Intent portal opens
- **April 30, 2026:** Letters of Intent due by 5 pm ET
- **Week of June 22:** Applications invited
- **July 30, 2026:** Applications due by 5 pm ET
- **Week of September 28:** Finalists notified
- **Week of October 12:** Virtual finalist interviews
- **January 1, 2027:** Grant start date

