

2025 Ovarian Cancer SPORE Career Enhancement Program -- Request for Applications

Background

HCC Ovarian Cancer Specialized Programs of Research Excellence (SPORE) supports a Developmental Research Program (DRP). The SPORE grant mechanism is aimed at translational research projects, defined by the NIH as:

Translational cancer research transforms scientific discoveries arising from laboratory, clinical, or population studies into clinical applications that reduce cancer incidence, morbidity, and mortality.

The goal of the mentored CEP is to recruit and support new independent investigators in the field of translational ovarian cancer research. Research initiatives that will be funded by the CEP are expected to have a major translational component, including those with an emphasis on etiology, diagnosis, early detection, treatment, or population science. Laboratory, clinical, epidemiological, and behavior-based projects emphasizing translational ovarian cancer research are all eligible for this award.

In addition to providing funding for translational research projects, the CEP will support awardee career development via multiple mechanisms, including mentorship from a senior investigator with expertise in ovarian cancer research (chosen by the applicant); mentorship from CEP leadership and SPORE Faculty; access to SPORE core resources, including model systems, human specimens, and statistical support; and access to development and enrichment programs, including monthly ovarian cancer research working group and OvCa SPORE meetings, external and internal seminar series, the annual HCC retreat, the OvCa SPORE annual retreat, and University of Pittsburgh career enhancement programs.

Funding

The CEP will fund 1-2 awards of **\$50,000 per year for two years (total \$100,000 per award)**. Second year funding is contingent on acceptable progress of the project, as documented in a progress report. Successful applicants must submit a final progress report at the end of the funding period, including plans for future federal grant applications. Funds cannot be used for salary coverage of Principal or Co-Investigators, indirect costs, publications, or equipment not specifically needed for the proposed research. Salary coverage for technicians, graduate students, or postdoctoral fellows is permitted. Cost of travel is limited to \$2000 total.

Successful applicants must attend and present their ongoing work at monthly OvCa SPORE meetings and the OvCa SPORE annual retreat.

Eligibility

- Outstanding research and/or clinical faculty at the Assistant Professor level and defined by NIH as an early-stage investigator (ESI) (see: <https://grants.nih.gov/policy/early-stage/index.htm>)
- Senior postdoctoral or clinical fellows transitioning to a faculty position by the start of the award period who are deemed to have high potential to develop independent research programs.
- Experienced investigators (i.e., Associate Professor/Professor level and above) wishing to transition their careers into translational ovarian cancer research.
- For applicants outside of the University of Pittsburgh, a letter of institutional commitment of matching funds (\$25,000 per year for two years) is required.

Mentors

Anyone serving as a mentor must be a SPORE-associated investigator or senior investigator (Associate/Full Professor or equivalent) who has expertise in translational ovarian cancer research and a demonstrated history of faculty mentorship. Mentors are expected to be committed to the scientific and career development of the applicant and may be contacted during the review process to affirm their planned interactions with and support available to the candidate.

Deadlines

Full proposals, including all documents listed below, are due **June 9, 2025, at 5:00 pm ET**. **Late submissions will not be accepted.**

Format

Applicants must adhere to a modified NIH R21 format; required documents and page length are provided in the **Cover Page Checklist** below.

All data critical to review must be included in the proposal text. **No Appendices are allowed.**

Review Criteria

All applications will be reviewed by scientific investigators and patient advocates using a modified NIH research project review criteria and the NIH scoring system (1-9). These criteria include:

- Significance
- Approach
- Potential to produce definitive results within the proposed time frame
- Potential to advance to a SPORE Individual Research Project or R01-type funding
- Investigator
- Translational Potential
- Innovation
- Mentor

Resubmissions

Previously submitted applications that did not receive a fundable score are eligible for funding consideration in a subsequent review period. Resubmissions must include a 1-page response to previous reviewer comments and indicate the application as a resubmission on the cover page.

Questions

For scientific questions, please contact:

Dr. Francesmary Modugno (modugnof@upmc.edu)

Dr. Nadine Hempel (NAH158@pitt.edu)

For administrative questions, please contact: **Cait Kelly** (kellyc23@upmc.edu)

Timeline for the OvCa SPORE Career Enhancement Program (dates tentative and subject to change)

06/09/2025	5pm ET Full proposals due – <i>late submissions will NOT be accepted</i>
07/15/2025	Applicant notifications
09/01/2025	Budget start date
09/01/2026	First year progress report due
10/15/2026	Present first year results and 2 nd year plans to SPORE IAB/EAB
10/01/2026	Notification of 2 nd year of funding decision
10/01/2027	Final project report due
10/15/2027	Present final results to SPORE IAB/EAB

Cover Page and Checklist

Part A: Applicant information			
Principal Investigator:			
Faculty Title:			
Department:		Email address:	
Mentor and Co-Investigators		Department & Email address	
PROJECT TITLE (80-character limit)			
Resubmission?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
Funding requested	\$		
Part B: IRB / IACUC Approvals <i>Include approval documentation as appropriate.</i>			
IRB	<input type="checkbox"/> YES #: _____	date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> PENDING
IACUC	<input type="checkbox"/> YES #: _____	date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> PENDING
Is there anyone who would have a conflict of interest if they were asked to review this proposal?			
<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO			
<i>If yes, please provide list of names on separate page (not included in page limits)</i>			
Part C: PI Signature and date			
Part D: Checklist of required documents			
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 60%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cover Page..... <input type="checkbox"/> Response to Reviewers (for resubmission applications only) <input type="checkbox"/> Specific Aims..... <input type="checkbox"/> Translational Potential..... <input type="checkbox"/> Research Plan..... <input type="checkbox"/> References Cited..... <input type="checkbox"/> Timeline and Milestones..... <input type="checkbox"/> Career Development Plan..... <input type="checkbox"/> Candidate's Biosketch..... <input type="checkbox"/> Other Support (verified by applicant's fiscal office)..... <input type="checkbox"/> Mentor's Biosketch..... <input type="checkbox"/> Letter of Institutional matching funds (non-Pitt applicants only)..... <input type="checkbox"/> Biosketches for co-investigators – OPTIONAL..... <input type="checkbox"/> Budget and Justification..... <input type="checkbox"/> If human subjects or animals are involved, include IRB/IACUC approval letter or submission date </div> <div style="width: 35%;"> (must use provided cover page) (1-page max) (1-page max) (1/2 page max) (3-page max) (no page limit) (1 page max) (1-page max) (NIH Format) (PHS 398) (NIH Format) (1-page max) (NIH Format) (2-page max) </div> </div>			
NO APPENDICES ARE PERMITTED			

Email final application in a single PDF document by **June 9, 2025 at 5:00 pm ET** to
Cait Kelly (kellyc23@upmc.edu)