

THE HOPE FOUNDATION FOR CANCER RESEARCH

The Hope Foundation SEED Fund for SWOG Early Exploration and Development 2025 Funding Announcement

OVERVIEW

The mission of SWOG Cancer Research Network is to significantly improve lives through cancer clinical trials and translational research. SWOG is a National Cancer Institute-supported network of more than 5,000 cancer researchers at more than 650 institutions in the U.S., Canada, and beyond. Additional educational and cancer research support is provided by SWOG's non-profit philanthropic partner, The Hope Foundation for Cancer Research.

Awards are made from The Hope Foundation SEED Fund to encourage preliminary research that will potentially translate to future clinical trials or trial-associated projects (translational medicine studies) within SWOG and the National Clinical Trials Network (NCTN). These awards may assist investigators with projects that support the following types of studies: pre-clinical data, secondary data analysis from clinical trials, pilot and feasibility studies (including early-stage clinical trials), small, self-contained research projects, or development of research methodology/technology. Direct application to future SWOG research, larger in scope, is critical and will be a metric of success for this funding program. Another metric of success will be the ability to obtain extramural funding based on studies done during the tenure of the support of this grant.

Awards will be issued through a competitive, peer-review process that includes SWOG Executive Officers and Hope Foundation leaders, as well as externally nominated reviewers, as necessary.

Individual projects may be funded for up to \$50,000 (direct costs) and may be spent over a 1- or 2-year award period. Indirect costs are limited to a rate of 25%. The number of awards and duration of program is contingent upon available funding at SWOG and The Hope Foundation.

OBJECTIVES

The Hope Foundation SEED Fund encourages well-defined projects which have strong potential to direct future SWOG research and which realistically can be completed in 1-2 years.

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Because the research proposal is of limited scope, a SEED grant application will not contain extensive detail or rise to the level of discussion found in a SWOG/Hope Impact award proposal. Accordingly, reviewers will evaluate the direct correlation to future SWOG research potential, emphasizing conceptual framework and general approach to the problem, placing less emphasis on methodological details and certain indicators traditionally used in evaluating the scientific merit of Impact applications including supportive preliminary data. Appropriate justification for the proposed work can be provided through literature citations, data from other sources, or from investigator-generated data. Preliminary data are not required, particularly in applications proposing pilot or feasibility studies.

KEY DATES

- Deadline: July 1 at 5pm ET
- Awards Announced: September 1
- Award Period: October 1-September 30

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Any SWOG member investigator eligible for NIH funding is encouraged to submit to this program. Awardees are expected to present their work at one or more semiannual SWOG group meetings and to adhere to Group policies and procedures as applicable to the project.

Though funding is awarded for Investigator-initiated projects, funding will be administered directly through an institution. Eligible institutions include:

- Non-profit organizations
- Public or private institutions, such as universities, colleges, hospitals, and laboratories
- Units of state and local governments
- Eligible agencies of the federal government
- Domestic or foreign institutions/organizations

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APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

This SEED fund program requires the following application materials:

- Cover Letter (< 2 pages) that introduces project and PI/PD relationship to SWOG
- Specific Aims Page (1 page, 1-inch margins, Arial 11 font)
- Budget for Entire Proposed Period (utilize Hope's template linked on program page)
- Brief Budget Justification (salary for PI not allowed)
- Biographical Sketch for Key Personnel (4 pages approx.)
- Other Support Form
- Research Plan (3-page limit inclusive of tables, graphs)

Applicants may submit more than one application, provided that each project is scientifically distinct.

SUBMISSION

Completed submission materials should be uploaded as a **single PDF** using the application form found [here](#).

Additional submission details:

- The Error Correction Window for the SEED application is 48-hours from time of submission.
- Should the due date fall on a weekend or holiday, the deadline is automatically extended to next business day.
- In case of emergency or extreme weather, documentation of institutional closing should be sent along with application, which must be received by 5pm local time on the first business day that the Institution is open.

Late submissions will not be accepted but will be referred to the next award cycle.

SCORING CRITERIA

The Hope Foundation utilizes the NIH scoring criteria and template. **This has been updated to reflect the new three factor scoring system for 2025.** This system utilizes the traditional 9-point scale for Factors 1 and 2. Factor 3 is not assigned an individual score, but will be considered in the reviewer's assessment of overall impact.

A score of 1 indicates an exceptionally strong application with essentially no weaknesses. A score of 9 indicates an application with serious and substantive weaknesses with very few strengths; 5 is considered an average score. Ratings are in whole numbers only (no decimal ratings).

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DEFINITIONS

Factor 1: Importance of Research

Significance

- The importance of the proposed research in the context of current scientific challenges and opportunities, either for advancing knowledge within the field, or more broadly. Assesses whether the application addresses an important gap in knowledge in the field, would solve a critical problem, or create a valuable conceptual or technical advance.
- Evaluates the rationale for undertaking the study, the rigor of the scientific background for the work, if relevant, and whether this scientific background justifies the work.
- Evaluates the role this work could potentially play within the SWOG Cancer Research Network portfolio, in line with the Group's [mission and values](#).

Innovation

- Evaluates the extent to which innovation influences the importance of undertaking the proposed research. Note that while technical or conceptual innovation can influence the importance of the proposed research, a project that is not applying novel concepts or approaches may be of critical importance for the field.
- Evaluates whether the proposed work applies novel concepts, methods or technologies or uses existing concepts, methods, technologies in novel ways, to enhance the overall impact of the project.
- Evaluates whether the proposed work moves SWOG's research forward, via new methodologies, trial designs, infrastructure or patient need.

Factor 2: Rigor and Feasibility

Approach

- Evaluates the scientific quality of the proposed work. Evaluates the likelihood that compelling, reproducible findings will result (rigor) and assess whether the proposed studies can be done well and within the timeframes proposed (feasibility).

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- Evaluates whether the proposed work is appropriate within the cooperative group setting.

Rigor

- Evaluates the potential to produce unbiased, reproducible, robust data.
- Evaluates the rigor of experimental design and whether appropriate controls are in place.
- Evaluates whether the sample size is sufficient and well-justified.
- Assesses the quality of the plans for analysis, interpretation, and reporting of results
- Evaluates whether the investigators presented adequate plans to address relevant biological variables, such as sex or age, in the design, analysis, and reporting.
- For applications involving human subjects or vertebrate animals, also evaluates:
 - Rigor of the intervention or study manipulation (if applicable to the study design).
 - Whether outcome variables are justified.
 - Whether the results will be generalizable or, in the case of a rare disease/special group, relevant to the particular subgroup.
 - Whether the sample is appropriate and sufficiently diverse to address the proposed question(s).
- For applications involving human subjects, assesses the adequacy of inclusion plans as appropriate for the scientific goals of the research. Considerations of appropriateness may include disease/condition/behavior incidence, prevalence, or population burden, population representation, and/or current state of the science.

Feasibility:

- Evaluates whether the proposed approach is sound and achievable, including plans to address problems or new challenges that emerge in the work. For proposed studies in which feasibility may be less certain, evaluate whether the uncertainty is balanced by the potential for major advances. Please keep in mind both the attributes and challenges of the cooperative group environment.

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- For applications involving human subjects, evaluates the adequacy and feasibility of the plan to recruit and retain an appropriately diverse population of participants. Additionally, evaluates the likelihood of successfully achieving the proposed enrollment based on age, racial, ethnic, and sex/gender categories.
- For clinical trial applications, evaluates whether the study timeline and milestones are feasible.

Factor 3. Expertise and Resources

- **Investigator(s)**
Evaluates whether the investigator(s) have demonstrated background, training, and expertise, as appropriate for their career stage, to conduct the proposed work. For Multiple Principal Investigator (MPI) applications, assesses the quality of the leadership plan to facilitate coordination and collaboration. Within SWOG, engagement of early stage investigators is encouraged but not required.
- **Environment**
Evaluates whether the institutional resources are appropriate to ensure the successful execution of the proposed work.

PAYMENT

Payment will be remitted as described in the executed Award Notice from The Foundation. Certain contingencies for release of funds may exist, including provision of Just In Time data, confirmation of SWOG samples/bank inventory, IRB approval, or updated Other Support forms, as applicable. Funding is non-federal.

PROGRESS REPORTING

Awardees are expected to present their progress reports as an oral presentation at one or more semi-annual SWOG meetings upon request, and with an annual 2-page progress and financial report.

Please note: In compliance with the Physician Payments Sunshine Act, components of this program (travel, meals, research payments, educational materials) may require reports of payment or transfer of value provided to all US licensed physicians. The Foundation will alert grantees should regulations mandate reporting.

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All inquiries related to this award may be directed to:

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