CURESEARCH
FOR CHILDREN'S CANCER

# CureSearch Catapult Award in Pediatric Cancer

## *2025/26 Request for Applications*

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## 2025/2026 FUNDING CYCLE TIMELINE

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|---|---|
| **Request for Applications Opens** | September 1, 2025 |
| **Letter of Intent Deadline** | October 7, 2025 |
| **LOI Notification/Full applications invited** | November 10, 2025 |
| **Full Applications Due** | January 18, 2026 |
| **Earliest Award Notification*** | March 2026 |

**Awards will be made on a rolling basis, pending the availability of funds.*

## CATAPULT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

CureSearch's Catapult Award program aims to accelerate the development of novel, innovative, less-toxic treatments for children with cancer. The goal of the Catapult Award is to overcome barriers to pediatric cancer drug development by providing meaningful funding to advance the development of promising oncology research out of the lab and into clinical trials, with the ultimate goal of improving clinical outcomes in childhood cancer patients and making more effective and less toxic treatments widely available.

The Catapult Award is currently soliciting proposals for its 2025/26 award cycle. CureSearch for Children's Cancer will review and fund projects advancing promising therapies for pediatric cancer into or further along in clinical development, showing strong potential for future approval and commercialization. The Catapult Award will provide funding support, as requested, up to $2.5M over three years, for **"clinic-ready" projects** that fit the following parameters:

- **Phase 1 or Phase 2 pediatric clinical trials** that seek to test single or combination therapies for a pediatric cancer indication.
- Preference will be given to projects that address areas of high unmet need in pediatric oncology, such as high-risk, relapsed, and/or metastatic disease and adolescent and young adult patient populations.
- All pediatric clinical trial projects should be either IND-ready (i.e., with sufficient data to support the submission and approval of an IND or IND-equivalent), available for clinical trial use under an existing, active IND (or IND-equivalent), or have already gained approval by the FDA or other competent regulatory authority for an adult indication, but have not been studied in pediatric oncology indications.
- All pediatric clinical trial projects are expected to meet the following established milestones: enrollment of the first patient in the first year, completion of patient accrual within the second year, and manuscript submission by the end of the third year of funding.

- For "first in human" clinical studies, all pre-clinical pharmacology and non-human safety and toxicology studies should be completed.
- CureSearch is strongly interested in **collaborative projects** that leverage existing regulatory guidelines or governmental programs that require or reward **research in developing new therapies for pediatric patients**. Collaborative projects between academia and industry are strongly encouraged (see eligibility below).

### 2025/26 LETTER OF INTENT CHECKLIST:

- [ ] Title Page Information (*Completed in proposalCentral*)
- [ ] Download Templates & Instructions (*Completed in proposalCentral*)
- [ ] Applicant/Principal Investigator Information (*Completed in proposalCentral*)
- [ ] Organization/Institution & Contacts (*Completed in proposalCentral*)
- [ ] Abstract & Keywords (*Completed in proposalCentral*)
- [ ] Project Impact (*Completed in proposalCentral*)
- [ ] Development Plan (*Completed in proposalCentral*)
- [ ] Scientific Approach, Feasibility, and Innovation (*Attachment, Template provided*)
- [ ] Cited Publications (*Attachment*)
- [ ] Biosketches for Key Personnel (*Attachment, Template provided*)
- [ ] Letter(s) of Support (*Attachment*)
- [ ] Other Supporting Document(s) (*Attachment*)

## ELIGIBILITY

Catapult awards are open to applicants from academic scientists and physician researchers from non-profit research institutions or consortia worldwide. Priority will be given to academic researchers whose institutions own the intellectual property protecting the proposed research technology and who have licensed the technology through a spin-out company. Applications will also be considered from small, privately held, for-profit startups, biotechnology, or pharmaceutical companies worldwide seeking funding for the early-stage clinical development of proprietary oncology drug technology. Applicants and institutions must conform to the below eligibility criteria to apply for a Catapult award. Eligibility requirements must be met at the time of full application submission. Applicants with questions about eligibility should contact CureSearch before submitting a Letter of Intent.

Research shows that diverse teams working together and capitalizing on innovative ideas and distinct perspectives outperform homogenous teams. Scientists and trainees from diverse backgrounds and life experiences bring different perspectives, creativity, and individual enterprise to address complex scientific problems. The following racial and

ethnic groups have been shown to be underrepresented in biomedical research: Blacks/African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, Indigenous Peoples/Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders. In addition, it is recognized that underrepresentation can vary from setting to setting. CureSearch encourages applicants from diverse populations to enhance the participation of researchers identified as nationally underrepresented in the biomedical and clinical sciences.

## APPLICANT (PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR)

- The applicant must be the principal investigator (PI). The PI must be an academic scientist or physician researcher from a non-profit research institution or consortium. Applications will also be considered from small, privately held, for-profit startups, biotechnology, or pharmaceutical companies. Applications are open to applicants in North America, the European Union, Japan, the United Kingdom, China, South America, and Australia. Non-U.S. applicants must comply with U.S. anti-terrorism financing laws.
- The applicant must have a doctoral degree, including MD, PhD, DO, or equivalent.
- Laboratory scientists and clinical investigators must have adequate space to conduct proposed research and protected time for research, verified by a Letter of Institutional Support.
- For applicants seeking support of $500,000 or greater, a minimum committed effort of 10% from the PI is required.
- Applicants must not hold an active CureSearch grant or apply for funding through another CureSearch program during the same cycle.
- All applications must be written in English.

## INSTITUTIONS:

Open to nonprofit academic or research institutions and small, privately held, for-profit startups, biotechnology, or pharmaceutical companies. Collaborative efforts with different disciplines, institutions, consortia, nationalities, or biotechnology and pharma companies are encouraged.

Applicant organizations may submit more than one application, provided that each application is scientifically distinct. CureSearch will not accept duplicate or highly overlapping applications under review at the same time. This means that CureSearch will not accept:

- A new application that is submitted before issuance of the summary statement from the review of an overlapping new or resubmission application.
- A resubmission application that is submitted before issuance of the summary statement from the review of the previous new application.

- An application that has substantial overlap with another application pending appeal of initial peer review.

### RESUBMISSION POLICY

Applicants may resubmit an application that advanced to the full proposal stage in a previous RFA cycle but was not selected for funding. The LOI must be marked as a resubmission within the Proposal Central site. If invited to submit a full application, applicants will be asked to include a cover letter that addresses reviewer comments and outlines specific revisions. Resubmissions will compete with new proposals for funding consideration.

## FUNDING INFORMATION AND GRANT TERM

Catapult awards are contingent upon the availability of funds and the receipt of applications of high scientific merit and potential impact. CureSearch is likely to fund one proposal.

Academic institutions will receive bi-annual grant payments over the project period if an award is made. Awards to for-profit entities may be made in accordance with pre-determined milestones, or in the case of equity investments, as a single investment as a portion of the capital raised by that company, or through an alternate schedule, depending on the project. For collaborative projects, payments will be made accordingly to the institution/entity of the principal investigator listed on the project.

The budget should reasonably reflect the direct costs needed to carry out the project and **should not exceed $2.5M total costs over the three-year project period (including 10% indirect costs).** The budget should be as evenly distributed across the requested years of support as possible.

### BUDGET GUIDELINES

- Personnel on the project are limited to a base salary at or below the NIH Salary Cap, which is currently $225,700 per year.
- 10% indirect costs are allowed.
- Equipment costs are limited to no more than 20% of total direct costs for equipment that is an integral part of the proposed project (if additional equipment costs are required, prior approval by CureSearch is required).
- National and international travel costs are allowable, limited to no more than $5,000 per year of the award.
- Publication and meeting-related costs are allowable.

- Graduate and postdoctoral fellow tuition costs, visa costs, and professional membership dues are not allowable.

# REVIEW PROCESS

CureSearch employs a multi-step approach to application and reviews. This RFA invites the submission of a Letter of Intent (LOI), the success of which will result in an invitation to submit a full application. LOIs are first reviewed for eligibility, adherence to formatting requirements, and responsiveness to the research focus specified in this RFA. Applications that do not meet the requirements will be withdrawn and will not undergo scientific review.

Each qualifying LOI is reviewed by a panel of international scientific experts appointed by CureSearch. Reviewers will assess the strengths and weaknesses of each application based on the defined review criteria described below. Only applicants with LOIs deemed most meritorious and aligned with the program's primary goals will be invited to submit full applications. Applicants will be notified of LOI review decisions via email. Applicants invited to submit a full application will be granted access to the full application site.

## LOI SCIENTIFIC PEER REVIEW CRITERIA

All LOIs will be evaluated based on: (1) scientific and clinical merit, feasibility, and the potential to obtain scientific insight and learnings regardless of trial outcomes, (2) probability of technical and regulatory success for clinical development, and (3) commercial benefit. The following components will be assessed:

- Relevance to improving clinical outcomes in childhood cancer patients (i.e., survival, acute toxicity, late effects)
- Innovative biological or pharmaceutical approach
- Compelling scientific hypothesis
- Supporting preliminary data demonstrating clinical and drug development feasibility and likelihood of clinical efficacy
- Availability/accessibility of research agent or technology
- Demonstrated planning of development beyond the project period
- For academic institutions, a documented track record of out-licensing technology to pharma and/or successfully spinning out start-up companies
- A viable product commercialization pathway that includes application in pediatric cancer patients

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# LETTER OF INTENT SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

All LOIs must be submitted in accordance with the requirements and instructions of this RFA. **LOIs must be completed by 11:59 pm on October 7, 2025**, and submitted via proposalCENTRAL at https://proposalcentral.com.

You must establish a user account to submit a grant application. If you have a user account with proposalCENTRAL, simply log in. To begin an LOI, select "Grant Opportunities". In the upper left-hand corner, click on "Filter by Grant Maker" and select CureSearch for Children's Cancer from the drop-down menu. Find the "CureSearch Catatpult Award in Pediatric Cancer Drug Development" and click the "apply now" link to create your LOI.

Complete all fields in the application and all templates that are provided. Upload all requested documents in PDF format. See the proposalCENTRAL FAQ section for more information.

If you have difficulties registering, logging in, or creating your application, contact proposalCENTRAL Customer Support by phone (800) 875-2562, or email pcsupport@altum.com.

## DOCUMENT FORMAT

Please adhere to the following formatting requirements:

- PDF file format
- Font size: 12 point
- Font Type: Times New Roman
- Page Size: No larger than 8.5 inches x 11.0 inches
- Margins: 0.5 inch in all directions
- The complete LOI Scientific Approach must not exceed 2 pages in length.

### Section A: Title, Applicant, & Organization Information

Applicants should enter the title of their proposal, investigator and organizational information.

### Section B: Abstracts (500-words each) & Keywords Information

Applicants should enter a scientific abstract, a lay summary, and select their major research interest and keywords from the lists provided.

### Section C: Project Impact (3-5 Sentences)

Describe your project and your project's impact in 3-5 sentences. Include how the

project would have significant potential to lead to a critical pathway to identify a breakthrough toward improving childhood cancer outcomes.

**Section D: Development Plan (1000 Words):**
Describe the following:

- Outline the next phase of the development process of the early-phase trial, if successful
- Current and anticipated intellectual property
- Commercialization potential
- The path to development of the treatment, including an anticipated transition plan into later phase clinical trials

**Section E: Scientific Approach, Feasibility, and Innovation (2 Pages, template provided)**
Clearly and concisely outline the hypothesis(es), specific aims, and approaches that will be taken to address each aim. In this section, address the following:

- Rationale and background: Describe how the proposed technology or therapeutic fulfills an unmet medical need, benefits the pediatric patient population, how the proposed agent is superior to existing therapies, and how the technology and/or approach is innovative.
- Preliminary studies: summary of key preclinical or pre-IND/IND-enabling studies (include figures if necessary).
- Pediatric safety considerations/therapeutic index.

## LETTER OF INTENT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The following documentation is required for the LOI, and will not count toward the page limit:

- **CITED PUBLICATIONS**: References must be numbered. Cited publications are not included in the page limit. Please include in attachments.
- **BIOSKETCHES:** Complete and upload an NIH Biographical Sketch (maximum five pages each) for all key project personnel, beginning with the Principal Investigator. CureSearch defines "key project personnel" as any individual with an advanced degree who will play an instrumental role in the accomplishment of the research project.
- **LETTERS OF SUPPORT/COLLABORATION**: All letters of support/collaboration must be provided at the time of LOI submission and uploaded in PDF format.

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## FULL APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Only applicants with LOIs deemed most meritorious and aligned with the Program's goals will be invited to submit full applications. Full applications will require additional information from the applicant, including, but not limited to:

- IND submission packet and documentation of relevant IND (or IND-equivalent) enabling studies (non-clinical pharmacology studies, summaries of relevant CMC data/strategy, clinical trial protocols, pre-clinical data that includes proof of biology/mechanism, and evidence of tumor efficacy in relevant preclinical models)
- Documentation from regulatory interactions (e.g., minutes, correspondence, briefing documents, presentations)
- Information on any regulatory incentives granted by the FDA (or other competent regulatory authority) or under review (i.e., orphan drug status, pediatric priority review voucher status)
- Business/commercialization plan
- Correlative Science: Aims and Resources needed
- Budget Estimate
- (Cell therapy) Production Process
- (Personalized vaccine) Selection and Production Process
- (Checkpoints) Biomarkers + Adverse Events Monitoring
- Contractors, CROs agreements/quotes/letters
- Track record of valorization/commercialization

Instructions on how to submit a full application will be provided at the time of the LOI decision.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

CureSearch treats all LOIs, full applications, and associated research information (collectively, the "Confidential Information") in confidence using no less than reasonable care in protecting such Confidential Information from disclosure to third parties who do not participate in the grant review process and CureSearch assessments. All Confidential Information will be used by CureSearch and its scientific reviewers only internally for the purposes of reviews and assessments and will be shared only in accordance with its sharing policy stated herein.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Principal investigators, co-investigators, sub-contractors, or collaborators submitting applications to the RFA will be excluded from serving on the scientific review committee. However, non-applicants who are invited to serve on the scientific review committee

may still have a conflict of interest if (1) the application is from the reviewer's own institution regardless of whether or not the reviewer has had any involvement in preparing the application, (2) the reviewer, his/her immediate family, or close professional associate(s) has a financial interest, or vested interest in the outcome of the proposed research, or (3) the reviewer has been involved in discussions regarding the application, is a provider of services, cell lines, reagents or other materials, or writer of a letter of support for the applicant. When a conflict of interest is deemed to be present, the reviewer will be ineligible to review the proposal and be asked to recuse themselves from the deliberations.

# SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

## SHARING POLICY

Being a public, philanthropic charity, research conducted with funds from CureSearch must be conducted in the public interest. CureSearch acknowledges that any discoveries and related regulatory approvals made by researchers through the funded research are the property of those conducting and responsible for the research and that unless otherwise agreed to by the parties, such researchers have the first opportunity to exploit the research commercially or otherwise. However, subject to intellectual property protection considerations, each applicant acknowledges that CureSearch has the right, after reasonable consultation, to release a summary of findings of the research to the general public.

## PUBLICATION

It is also required that the results of the research will be published as rapidly as possible in the open scientific literature. Publications should be consistent with high standards of scientific excellence and rigor and include acknowledgment of the funding provided by CureSearch for Children's Cancer.

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY/INVENTIONS

The recipient of this Award or his/her institution shall own any invention. However, the recipient shall promptly notify CureSearch of any invention and associated patent filing resulting from the research. If the recipient or his/her institution grants any right to the invention to a third party for commercial application and receives any amounts from the invention, CureSearch shall be entitled to receive a share calculated by multiplying the amounts received by a fraction, the numerator of which is the amount of the Award, and the denominator of which is the direct cost incurred by the recipient and his/her institution in developing the invention, except in no event shall the CureSearch share of any such amount received that exceeds 30%.

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## REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARDEES

Progress Reports for CureSearch are due every six months. Progress report templates and instructions will be provided by CureSearch via proposalCentral, and reminders will be provided prior to due dates.

If held, Principal investigators are required to attend the annual CureSearch Summit. Grantees will have the opportunity to network with other investigators, industry, and other stakeholders, explore possible collaborative efforts and identify strategies/resources to advance projects toward clinical application and commercialization.

Principal investigators will work closely with CureSearch to translate complex science, findings, and outcomes for donors and constituents. This will be done by conducting interviews for videos, podcasts, webinars, newsletters, and/or other written updates.

Grantees are expected to account for the monies expended under the Award; any monies spent either not in accordance with the approved research project or prior to pre-approval of any material change in the project are not recoverable and may be cause for immediate termination of funding by CureSearch.
Grantees are expected to meet scheduled milestones and submit deliverables on time. Failure to meet milestones, furnish scheduled deliverables, including the reports, or to comply with the terms of the grant may serve as a base for the termination of funding by CureSearch.

# QUESTIONS?

Contact information for all inquiries about application submission is provided below.

| Type of Inquiry | Contact |
|---|---|
| **All programmatic inquiries (including questions related to eligibility, application requirements, etc.)** | **CureSearch**<br>Email: researchgrants@curesearch.org<br>Phone: +1-240-235-2215 |
| **All technical inquiries related to the online application system, proposalCENTRAL** | Email: pcsupport@altum.com<br>Phone: 1-800-875-2562 |