



2026 Bladder Cancer Research Innovation Award
\$300,000 over two years
Letter of Intent (LOI) Guidelines

Purpose of Award

The aim of the 2026 Bladder Cancer Research Innovation Award is to support exceptionally novel and creative projects with great potential to produce breakthroughs in our understanding of bladder cancer. Applications to this funding mechanism must include innovative approaches and new ideas which may include, but are not limited to, novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions in the field of basic, translational, clinical, or epidemiological research with direct applicability and relevance to bladder cancer and/or upper tract urothelial carcinoma.

Projects that are high-risk and high-reward, as opposed to incremental in nature, are required. Applications lacking innovative approaches will be considered non-responsive to this funding mechanism. Successful proposals must propose projects that 1) address an important problem and/or critical barrier to progress in the field of bladder cancer research and 2) contribute to an area in which there is a significant gap in current knowledge. Well-justified proposals for innovative projects that demonstrate a high likelihood of developing preliminary data necessary to prepare and submit a competitive research grant application to a major funding agency are encouraged.

Up to two proposals will be funded for the Bladder Cancer Research Innovation Award in 2026. The Award recipients are expected to attend the annual Bladder Cancer Think Tank meeting in August 2027 and to present the results of the funded research during the 2028 Think Tank meeting.

Application Process

Interested applicants must submit an LOI by **Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at 5:00pm EST.** The LOIs will be reviewed by members of the Research Innovation Award Scientific Review Group. Those applicants whose LOIs are deemed most meritorious will be invited to submit full research proposals and compete for the Award. Applicants will be notified of the decision status of the LOI by **Friday, February 27, 2026,** and the deadline for complete applications will be **Friday, April 10, 2026.** The Award decision will be announced in July 2026. BCAN will not discriminate based on gender, race, ethnicity, creed, religion, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, age, or any other factor irrelevant to the quality of the LOI.

Eligibility

1. Applicant must have a medical and/or doctoral degree (including Ph.D., M.D., D.O., D.D.S, D.V.M, Pharm.D., Sc.D., D.N.S. or equivalent doctoral degree) at the time of

submission. Eligible applicants include investigators who have experience in other areas of cancer or biomedical/health science research with promising ideas and approaches that can be applied to bladder cancer research. If the applicant's primary area of expertise is outside of bladder cancer, including a Co-Primary Investigator with expertise in bladder cancer research is acceptable and recommended.

2. Applicant must be full-time independent investigator employed by a non-profit academic, medical, or research institution within the United States or Canada. The applicant must hold the rank of Assistant Professor, Research Assistant Professor, Tenure-Track Investigator, or higher.

Proof of permanent resident status or a valid work visa is required if the applicant is not an American or Canadian citizen.

3. Employees or subcontractors of for-profit private industry are not eligible for the Award but may serve as Collaborators for an applicant.

4. Applicant may not have previously received a BCAN Research Innovation Award nor have other funding with significant scientific overlap. If an applicant receives notice of funding from another funding agency for a proposal with significant scientific overlap following submission of their Innovation application or following Award notice, the applicant must decide between the Awards. BCAN will not allow the applicant or awardee to modify the aims for either Award.

5. Eligible applicants are allowed to hold only one active grant from BCAN at a time.

6. Investigators may submit only one LOI for a Bladder Cancer Research Innovation Award. Eligible investigators may apply for this Award even if they applied for BCAN's Career Development Award. If an investigator is awarded the Career Development Award, they will be administratively withdrawn from the Research Innovation Award review process.

7. Applications may have Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PIs). However, applicants should make the rationale and roles for this choice clear to the reviewers.

Budget Guidelines

The Research Innovation Award is for \$300,000 over two years for direct research expenses, which may include salary and benefits for postdoctoral or clinical research fellows and/or research assistants (salary support for the Primary Investigator or Co-Primary Investigator(s) is limited to 20% of the total budget); research/lab supplies; and equipment. There is a spending cap of \$200,000 during the first year of this Award. The second year of funding is dependent on approval of a one-year progress report after submission to and review by BCAN. Funds cannot be used to support the purchase of capital equipment. BCAN considers the threshold for a capital expenditure to be the lower of \$2,000 or any capitalization threshold established by the applicant's institution. All equipment purchases require advance approval from BCAN. For institutions that mandate payment of indirect costs, a maximum of 10% of the total direct costs may be used for this purpose. The 10% cap includes any subcontracts. You do not need to submit a budget with the LOI submission. You do need to indicate the total amount of funds you will be requesting on the Title Page of the LOI application.

LOI Description

Please ensure that your application and ALL attachments conform to the instructions outlined in these guidelines and the related templates, including formatting (e.g., page limits, section headers, etc.) and required content. Applications or application components, including required templates and attachments, that do not adhere to the instructions outlined in the guidelines and templates may be administratively withdrawn and will not advance for review.

- Must be in English, single-spaced. Please follow the formatting instructions:
 - Paper Size: 8.5" x 11"
 - Margins: at least 1/2" all sides.
 - Font: Arial or Helvetica at least 11pt (or larger).
- The LOI is limited to 2 pages and must describe the proposed bladder cancer research project, including the Specific Aims; Rationale, Methodology and Approach; Statement of Innovation (describing how the proposed study employs an innovative approach to bladder cancer research, either conceptual or technological); and Statement of Significance and Relevance to bladder cancer. Proposals missing the required sections will be administratively withdrawn before the review.
- Relevant references must be attached. There is no page limit for this section.
- The applicant's biographical sketch must be attached and adhere to NIH page limits. Applications with Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PIs) must include the biosketch for each Co-PI with the LOI submission. Co-Investigator biosketches are not required for the LOI submission but should be included with the full application.
- The technical abstract is limited to 2,000 characters including spaces. The technical abstract should provide a clear, concise, and comprehensive overview of the proposed bladder cancer research project. Specify the relevant background, research question, hypothesis, aims, and methodologies of the project.

Evaluation Process and Criteria

LOIs will be reviewed by the Research Innovation Award Scientific Review Group (SRG), comprised of medical and scientific experts recognized for their own accomplishments in cancer research and as leaders in the field. Approximately 10 applicants who submit letters of intent will be invited to submit a full proposal.

The SRG will also review and score the full applications based on the merits of the research proposals. In the full applications, the budget description should be sufficiently detailed to evaluate the feasibility and timeline of the project. The Award review process is based on the peer review system used by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Any reviewer with a conflict of interest is excused from reviewing, discussing, and voting on a specific application.

The SRG Chair will present the highest-ranked proposals to the BCAN Research Management Committee (RMC), which will accept the scientific merit scores. The RMC will review the ranking of the top applications based solely on those scores and recommend the

final Award decision, based on all included criteria specified in the Award Guidelines, for approval by the BCAN Board of Directors. Any member of the Management Committee or the BCAN Board of Directors with a conflict of interest is prohibited from voting on and discussing the Award decisions. Evaluation of LOIs and invited applications will include the following criteria:

- **Investigator:** Does the applicant have the appropriate experience and training to successfully complete the proposed project? Has the applicant achieved, or do they have the potential to achieve, a track record of accomplishments to advance the field of bladder cancer research? If the applicant's primary area of expertise is outside of bladder cancer, does the project include a Co-Principal Investigator with sufficient knowledge and expertise to ensure the project's success?
- **Innovation:** Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice patterns by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions? Areas to be addressed include but are not limited to bladder cancer prevention; bladder cancer detection and diagnoses; understanding tumor development, recurrence and progression; improving therapy and outcomes.
- **Significance:** Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field of bladder cancer research? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved?
- **Approach:** Are the overall strategy, methodology, analyses, and statistics well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? Is the budget fully justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed project and timeline?
- **Environment:** What institutional support, equipment, and resources are available to the applicant, and are they adequate to successfully complete the proposed project?
- The proposal missing the required sections will be administratively withdrawn before the review.

LOI Filing Instructions

All applicants for the Bladder Cancer Research Innovation Award must submit a LOI online by Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at 5:00 PM U.S. Eastern Time using the ProposalCentral website at <https://proposalcentral.com/ProposalGI.asp?SectionID=2432&ProposalID=-1>

Exceptions will not be made to the LOI deadline of Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at 5:00 PM U.S. Eastern Time. BCAN strongly suggests beginning application submission well before the deadline to allow time for submission and electronic signatures.

You will receive a confirmation email once you submit your LOI. If you do not receive one, or if you have questions, please contact Anne Collins at acollins@bcan.org. Inquiries or technical issues regarding ProposalCentral and the online application process should be directed to customer support at Phone: 703-964-5840, Toll-free phone: 1-800-875-2562, Email: pcsupport@altum.com. Please note that ProposalCentral live customer support is only available from 9am – 5pm U.S. Eastern Time. Please do not contact BCAN for technical assistance. Inquiries about the LOI Award Guidelines, eligibility requirements, and LOI materials

can be directed to Rebecca Johnson (rjohnson@bcan.org), Anne Collins (acollins@bcan.org), or to BCAN (grants@bcan.org).

LOI Application Instructions:

BCAN requires applicants to submit an online application using ProposalCentral. The LOI application must include the following components:

- ☒ Letter of Intent
- ☒ References
- ☒ Applicant's Biographical Sketch and, if applicable, any Co-Principal Investigators' biosketches
- ☒ Technical Abstract

Starting your LOI Application in ProposalCentral:

Access ProposalCentral and log in with your username and password. If you are a first-time user, click "Register" to get a username and password. If you have forgotten your password, click on the "Forgot your password?" link.

To start an application, select the "Manage Proposals" tab (first blue tab on the left). Below the "Manage Proposals" tab are several links; select the "In Progress" link. A list of all applications for which you have applied through ProposalCentral will appear. Find the program titled "Bladder Cancer Research Innovation Award." Then in the "Edit" column (second column from the left) select the "Edit" link to access your application.

Complete all fields in the application and the templates that are provided. Upload all requested documents in PDF format.

Application Format:

Please ensure that your application and ALL attachments conform to the instructions outlined in these guidelines and the related templates, including formatting (e.g., page limits, section headers, etc.) and required content. Applications or application components, including required templates and attachments, that do not adhere to the instructions outlined in the guidelines and templates will be administratively withdrawn and will not advance for review.

1. Title Page

- a. Enter your project title.
- b. Enter your total amount requested: Not to exceed "\$300,000".
- c. Respond to required fields.

2. Download Templates & Instructions

- a. The LOI guidelines and the templates can be downloaded from ProposalCentral.
- b. You must download and complete the following three templates: Letter of Intent template, References template, and Applicant [Biosketch Template](#). You must include Biosketch template(s) for Co-Principal Investigator(s) (Co-PI(s)), if applicable. Biosketches for Collaborators and/or Co-Investigators do not need to be submitted at the LOI stage.

- c. Templates should be uploaded as PDF files.
- d. See Section 8 for how to complete and upload the templates.

3. Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal

- a. Optional

4. Applicant Information

- a. Enter updates for the applicant directly into ProposalCentral.

5. Institution & Contacts

- a. Enter information for the lead institution and signing official. No signatures are required for the LOI, but they will be needed for the full proposal.

6. Key Personnel Information

- a. Please enter any Co-PI(s).
- b. Please enter any anticipated Collaborators and/or Co-Investigators(s), if applicable.

7. Abstracts & Keywords

- a. Enter your technical abstract, which can be up to 2,000 characters including spaces.
- b. Enter your keywords.

8. Application Attachments

- a. Formatting instructions: Must be in English, single-spaced.
 - Paper Size: 8.5" x 11".
 - Margins: at least 1/2" on all sides.
 - Font: Arial or Helvetica at least 11pt (or larger).

9. Project Site

10. Validate

- a. Validate the LOI on ProposalCentral. This is an essential step. An application that has not been validated cannot be submitted. "Validate" checks for required data and required attachments. You will not be able to submit if all the required data and attachments have not been provided.

11. Application Attachments Check

- a. You can print signature pages to save or keep a copy of your LOI. You do not need to sign or upload anything here.

12. Submit

- a. After successfully passing the "Validate" and "Application Attachments" checks, click the "Submit" link. An email will be sent to you confirming your submission.
- b. Once your LOI application is submitted you may view it by accessing the "Submitted" link under the "Manage Proposals" tab. The status column will show "Submitted" and the date. You may need to refresh your browser screen after submitting the application to see the updated status.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- 1. How do I submit an application with Co-PI(s)?
 - a. You must include an applicant biosketch for each Co-PI. Additionally, you must enter the Co-PI's information in the Key Personnel Information tab.

- b. Biosketches for Collaborators and/or Co-Investigators are not required at the LOI stage.
2. Do I need to submit a budget with the LOI submission?
 - a. You do not need to submit a budget with the LOI submission. You do need to indicate the total amount of funds you will be requesting on the Title Page of the LOI application.
 3. How long can my biosketch be?
 - a. Please adhere to NIH formatting and page limits for your biosketch. See the NIH [Biosketch Template](#).
 4. Are signatures required for LOI submission?
 - a. Your signature and institutional signatures are not required for the LOI.
 5. When does the proposed project start and end?
 - a. The proposed project start date is August 1, 2026.
 - b. The proposed project end date is August 1, 2028.
 6. I missed the January 13, 2026, deadline. Can I still apply?
 - a. No. This deadline is final.
 7. What do I do if I have questions about what to include in my LOI?
 - a. Please review the Bladder Cancer Research Innovation Award LOI Guidelines. If the guidelines don't answer your question(s), then please reach out to Rebecca Johnson (rjohnson@bcan.org), Anne Collins (acollins@bcan.org), or to BCAN (grants@bcan.org).