

Minnesota Cancer Clinical Trials Network

CANCER RESEARCH SUPPORT GRANTS

Request for Applications – FY 2026-27

The [Minnesota Cancer Clinical Trials Network \(MNCCTN\)](#) aims to improve cancer outcomes for all Minnesotans through greater access to cancer clinical trials. Funded by the State Legislature through [MnDRIVE](#), the MNCCTN operates as a modified hub-and-spoke model with MNCCTN Coordinating Center (MNCCTN-CC) at the University of Minnesota supporting study teams, MNCCTN partner organizations, and their community clinics. Making up the MNCCTN are three research partners and four clinical partners, each with a varying number of community clinics. Participating Clinical Partners include Essentia Health, Sanford Health, Mayo Clinic Health System, and M Health Fairview. MNCCTN's Research Partners include the University of Minnesota Masonic Cancer Center, the Mayo Clinic Cancer Center, and The Hormel Institute.

The MNCCTN grant program is intended to

- Develop cancer-focused research that addresses the unique cancer burden of Minnesotans
- Develop the capacity of sites that are engaged in providing research opportunities for their patients
- Encourage community-driven research and develop sustainable collaborations between community-based organizations and academic researchers
- Expand the culture of research across the state of Minnesota
- Broaden the depth and reach of clinical trials offered to cancer patients in Minnesota

CANCER RESEARCH SUPPORT GRANT – THREE PATHWAYS

These awards aim to broaden the depth and reach of clinical trials offered to cancer patients throughout Minnesota. Applicants must choose one of the following pathways for their application

- **Therapeutic Trial Extension**
- **Expanding Opportunities**
- **Investigator-Initiated Non-Therapeutic Trials**

For Fiscal Year 2026-27 funding cycle up to three grants will be awarded, each with a maximum award amount of \$75,000 per grant. MNCCTN may award any combination of Pathways as applications warrant.

Therapeutic Trial Extension

Focused on interventional therapeutic cancer research that is already in progress, this funding pathway aims to provide supplemental support for multi-site implementation at MNCCTN sites.

Business and industry sponsored trials are not eligible for MNCCTN funding unless the trial is investigator initiated with an IND held by a MNCCTN research partner organization.

Eligibility

- Only MNCCTN Research Partners may apply
- Research must be conducted at MNCCTN Clinical Partner sites

Expanding Opportunities

Focused on a population that is underrepresented in cancer research or experiences higher-than-average morbidity/mortality from cancer, this funding pathway aims to provide support to develop and run new trials.

Eligibility

- MNCCTN Clinical and Research Partners may apply
- Research may be conducted at MNCCTN Clinical Partner Sites AND/OR at other sites that better serve the targeted population

Investigator-Initiated Non-Therapeutic Trials

This pathway is open to any new non-therapeutic cancer research study, including supportive care trials that help patients along their cancer journey.

Eligibility

- MNCCTN Clinical and Research Partners may apply
- Research must be conducted at MNCCTN Clinical Partner sites

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposed projects must be *cancer-related*

- Each pathway may address different points on the spectrum of cancer care including prevention, screening, cancer control, and survivorship

Proposed projects must be *interventional*

- Proposals that will not be considered include data/specimen registries, observational studies, and quality improvement projects

Proposed projects must consider and leverage the *distinct characteristics of MNCCTN*

- Enroll Minnesota residents at Minnesota sites (including tribal nations)
- Include significant involvement of the clinical site research personnel
- Studies must be feasible in the community oncology clinic environment; interventions that require specialized equipment or personnel may not be feasible

Proposed projects must be *unique* to MNCCTN

- Projects that are currently enrolling will NOT be considered
 - For Therapeutic Extension proposals, trial may already be enrolling but not at multiple sites
- Applicants may have additional funding for these trials outside of the MNCCTN grant program
 - Projects funded by business and industry are not eligible unless they are investigator-initiated

PROJECT FUNDING PERIOD AND ALLOWABLE COSTS

MNCCTN Cancer Research Support Awards are funded in two stages.

Stage 1 – Development and Planning Awards

- Stage 1 Cancer Research Support Awards fund **up to \$20,000** for one year for clinical study development and startup activities. Studies that include an IND application or anticipate development steps that require additional time may request a longer Stage 1 award period by including a written justification.
- Stage 1 budgets are intended to support investigator, statistician, and other staff efforts required for project planning and development. Stage 1 award balances may be rolled forward into Stage 2 awards, if applicable.
- Milestones for successful completion of Stage 1 awards include a project ready to begin site startup, including all appropriate regulatory approvals, and the submission of an annual progress report.

Stage 2 – Enrollment and Intervention Awards

- Stage 2 Cancer Research Support Awards fund **up to \$55,000** for two years for clinical trial site start-up and implementation, enrollment, analysis related to primary outcomes, and dissemination of findings. Stage 2 funding is contingent upon successful completion of Stage 1.
- Stage 2 budgets are intended to support study-related activity, including study drug, purchase of phlebotomy supplies, specimen shipping, and MNCCTN-required participant compensation. MNCCTN infrastructure currently provides support for all MNCCTN site staff effort including investigator, RN/coordinator, and regulatory; these costs should not be included in the proposed budget.

The MNCCTN Coordinating Center provides network-wide support for trial project management, regulatory, and quality assurance, and will provide guidance on protocol development for implementation in a rural/community clinical setting, as needed.

MNCCTN Cancer Research Support Awards **do not pay indirect costs or institutional overhead** to grant recipients.

Awards will be provided with the understanding and expectation that these funds will be spent on services outlined in the approved budget. Grant awardees may need to make appropriate revisions to their study plans and/or budgets that reflect feedback from the review committee before funds are made available.

Direct any questions about allowable funding to mncctn@umn.edu.

COMMON REVIEW CRITERIA

MNCCTN Cancer Research Support Grant application reviews focus on study innovation, quality of the research approach, and the feasibility of accomplishing the proposed project within the given timeline and budget

Priority will be given to studies that make full use of the skills and local capabilities at clinical sites, and with a focus on the unique cancer burden of Minnesotans (see table below).

MN - Most Common Cancers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breast, Prostate, Lung, Skin, Colon/Rectum, Uterine/Bladder
MN - Demographic Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large rural and immigrant populations Unique disparities impacting American Indian communities
MN - Cancer Disparities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High rates of non-Hodgkin lymphoma and leukemia incidence and mortality High rates of melanoma Colorectal and lung cancer disparities in American Indian population Colorectal cancer screening disparities in urban and rural populations Disparities in prostate cancer mortality Infection-related cancers in the Hmong population
MN - Unique Environmental Exposures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PFAS, Taconite Mining, Arsenic, Radon
MN - Reduce Cancer Disparities Through Risk Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smoking cessation programs in American Indian population Improved rates of cancer screening in the Native American and Somali populations Improved rates of lung cancer screening Reduce disparities in cervical and breast cancer through improved screening

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Statement of Intent

This brief statement and any additional attachment must be submitted to the MNCCTN Coordinating Center by Sunday, April 26 at 10 p.m. to mnctn@umn.edu. Statement of intent must include all overview elements detailed below, plus the relevant pathway sections.

- **Overview**
 - Working Proposal Title
 - Principal Investigator's name, Organization, brief summary of research experience
 - Co-Investigators name(s) and Organization(s), if applicable
 - One paragraph summary of the trial concept
- **Pathway-specific**
 - Therapeutic Trial Extension – include the current protocol of existing trial
 - Expanding Opportunities – include a Letter of Support from a planned clinical site if the intent is to open the study at a non-MNCCTN site

Community Advocate Consultation

All applicants will be matched with a member of the [Community Advocates Program](#). Advocates have been trained to review trial applications and protocols. Applicants are required to meet at least once with your assigned Advocate to discuss your application and incorporate their feedback into your grant application.

Connect with your Community Advocate once you receive their contact information to set up a consultation meeting. During your Advocate consultation, you will

- Share your trial idea with the Advocate
- Receive advice and consideration from your assigned Advocate to include in your final proposal
- Applications that fail to incorporate suggestions from their Advocates are less likely to be funded

Full Application

Proposals must be submitted electronically via InfoReady by **Sunday, May 31, 2026 at 10 PM**. Applications must include all general sections detailed below plus the relevant pathway sections.

GENERAL SECTIONS

- **Overview** – 1 page
 - Project Title
 - Principal Investigator name, organization, brief summary of research experience, and full CV
 - Co-Investigator name(s) an organization(s), if applicable
 - Project Abstract
- **Background and Significance** – up to 2 pages
 - Significance of the research question
 - Current literature and knowledge
 - Impact on research question
- **Study Description and Plan** – up to 3 pages
 - Specific aims or objectives
 - Primary and secondary outcomes
 - Intervention and study design
 - Study population with eligibility description and enrollment targets
 - Procedures and measures including plans for patient-reported-outcomes and biospecimen collection, if applicable
 - Schedule of events may be included, if available, will not count towards section page limit
- **Study Personnel** – 1 page
 - Description of any support needed from MNCCTN (biostatistical, protocol writing, etc.)
 - Availability of additional staff for study plan development, implementation, and analysis (e.g. statistician, pharmacist, project manager, laboratory support, or regulatory)
 - Specific individuals do not need to be named

- **Milestones – 1 page**
Timeline of when following indicators will be achieved
 - Protocol complete
 - IRB approval
 - Site startup begins
 - First site activated
 - Enrollment complete
 - Primary outcome analysis complete
- **Data Analysis – 1 page**
 - Statistical analysis plan, including power analysis (if appropriate)
 - Plan for Electronic Data Capture system
- **Dissemination – 1 page**
 - Plan for dissemination to MNCCTN network
 - Plan for dissemination within affiliated organizations or targeted populations / community
 - Plan for wider scholarly dissemination
- **Budget Overview – attachment**
 - Budget Spreadsheet and Justification (template provided)
- **Letters of Support – attachments**
 - Two letters of support required
 - Letters should demonstrate support from key partners, collaborators, mentors, or project stakeholders
- **References**

PATHWAY-SPECIFIC REQUIRED SECTIONS

- **Therapeutic Trial Extension**
 - Current protocol of existing trial may serve in place of Study Description
 - Milestones should be for translating to a multi-site study and opening at MNCCTN sites, not existing milestones for single-site implementation
- **Expanding Opportunities**
 - Significance of the research question to targeted population
 - Description of plan for collaboration with the targeted population or representatives of, detailing specific areas of community input and involvement
 - Study population with eligibility description and enrollment targets

APPLICATION TIMELINE

Informational Sessions

Applicants are highly encouraged to attend an Informational Session and share your application idea. MNCCTN leadership can offer guidance on ideas that would work well for this award mechanism and trials that would be successful at MNCCTN sites.

Info Session dates will be posted on the MNCCTN website: <https://cancer.umn.edu/mncctn>

Statement of Intent

- Due by **Sunday, April 26, 2026** at 10:00 PM
 - Applicants may submit only one concept proposal for this award mechanism as the PI
 - There is no limit on the number of proposals for faculty as collaborators

Community Advocate Consultation

- Completed before full proposal is finalized

Full Proposal Submission

- Due by **Sunday, May 31, 2026** at 10:00 PM
 - Documents will be reviewed by representatives from MNCCTN Clinical and Research Partners, Masonic Cancer Center leadership, and Community Advocates

All applicants will be notified of their funding status by the end of July.

The award period begins September 1, 2026.

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

All questions and inquiries should be directed to: mncctn@umn.edu