



Minnesota Cancer Clinical Trials Network

DISCOVERY & PLANNING 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 the central team at the University of Minnesota (the HUB) serving as a single intermediary group between study teams and 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 are the Masonic Cancer Center, University of Minnesota; the Mayo Clinic Cancer Center; and The Hormel Institute.

The MNCCTN grant program is intended to

1. Develop cancer-focused research that addresses the unique cancer burden of Minnesotans
2. Develop the capacity of clinical sites that are engaged in providing research opportunities for their patients
3. Encourage community-driven research and develop sustainable collaborations between community-based organizations and academic researchers
4. Expand the culture of research across the state of Minnesota

DISCOVERY AND PLANNING GRANT

This award offers funding to develop a community-driven research concept by partnering with an identified community to learn about their cancer-related needs and, working collaboratively with the community, develop potential strategies to address those needs. The completion of the project should result in a collaboratively developed research proposal that could be pilot tested with the identified community.

Successful projects may employ many strategies including local data collection, background research, and coalition building.

For the Fiscal Year 2026-27 funding cycle, up to three will be awarded, each with a maximum award amount of \$20,000 per grant.

This award is open to applicants from all of MNCCTN's clinical and research partners named above.



PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

- Proposed projects must be cancer-related and based in Minnesota.
- The identified community partner(s) (community groups, organizations, or other defined stakeholders) must be located in Minnesota.
- Proposed projects should result in the development of a research proposal that can be piloted with the identified community.
- Proposed projects that are currently underway will **not** be considered. Projects that have not yet begun, but may have additional/complementary funding sources, **may** be considered. Applicants using additional funds for project activities must disclose the source and amount of that funding in the Budget Overview (see below). Masonic Cancer Center members may have another active MCC grant.
- Proposals must include:
 - a letter of support from the community partner(s).
 - a plan for meaningful partner engagement in the project, including the development of the research proposal.
 - “Meaningful” engagement can include many different types of activities. Our definition is guided by the [Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership](#) framework authored by Rosa Gonzalez. We seek proposals to move community engagement along the spectrum, based on any starting point.
 - a plan for sharing planning and project findings with key community partners and stakeholders.

PROJECT FUNDING PERIOD AND ALLOWABLE COSTS

Project awards are for a 12 month period beginning September 1, 2026. A no-cost timeline extension may be requested.

Allowable costs may include conducting a needs assessment, training, convening community for educational and discussion sessions, travel, food and beverages (excluding alcohol), effort of the awardee and members(s) from the community. Discovery and Planning grants **do not pay indirect costs or institutional overhead** to grant recipients.

The Discovery and Planning grant facilitates collaboration between community organizations and researchers; funds are **not** intended to solely support the work of an academic individual. No more than 33% of the funding may be used to support research or academic effort.

None of the awarded funds will be directly sent to the named community partners; they will only be released to the grant awardee.

Funding 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.



REVIEW CRITERIA

Criteria:

- Meaningful **participation** and **engagement** of intended communities
 - in identifying and understanding their cancer-related needs;
 - in the development of the research proposal
- Defined next steps to conduct pilot tests with the community

Priority will be given to:

- Projects without additional funding.
- Projects intending to reach populations or communities historically underrepresented in cancer clinical research or with a focus on the unique cancer burden of Minnesotans (including, but not limited to, the 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. High rates of non-Hodgkin lymphoma and leukemia incidence and mortality 6. High rates of melanoma 7. Colorectal and lung cancer disparities in American Indian population 8. Colorectal cancer screening disparities in urban and rural populations 9. Disparities in prostate cancer mortality 10. 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 PROCESS

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.

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

Full Proposal Submission

- Due by **Sunday, May 31, 2026** at 10:00 PM
- See the Application Requirements section below for details.



Applicants may submit only one concept proposal for this award mechanism as the main applicant. There is no limit on the number of proposals for faculty as collaborators.

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

The award period begins September 1, 2026.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Applications must be submitted through the University of Minnesota’s InfoReady system. Applications submitted in other ways will not be reviewed. Applications must include all sections detailed below.

Section	Description	Page Limits
Applicant Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title Principal Investigator’s name, organization, brief summary of research experience Co-Investigators name(s) and organization(s) (if any) 	
Applicant CV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum Vitae of the PI 	
Project Background	Brief summary of the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the short and long term goals of the project? Community partner name(s) and brief description of their commitment to reducing the cancer burden of their community Who is/are the group(s) that will benefit from the development of the research concept? 	1.5 page
Community Partner(s)	Description of the partner’s role in the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are they involved in each aspect of the proposed project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a timeline and scope of work, engaging community members, maintaining communication, data collection, review of findings, creating a research proposal etc. What is the plan for joint decision-making? 	.5 page
Letter(s) of Support	Letter(s) of Support from named Community Partner(s) must address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the community partner anticipate the project will benefit the community they serve/represent? 	1 page
Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for sharing project findings with the targeted community or population (Required) Plan for sharing project findings with academic community (Optional) 	.5 page



Section	Description	Page Limits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Dissemination costs should be included in the budget, with appropriate justifications.	
Budget Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Budget Spreadsheet (template provided)All budgeted items must include justification in narrative summary formatDisclosure of any additional funding sources and amounts for project activities.	
References	Optional	

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

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