

German Cancer Aid: Call for Applications

Special Funding Program: 'Preclinical Drug Development'

Despite impressive advances in targeted therapies and immune oncology, cancer remains for many patients an incurable disease. Especially for cancer that are rare and/or are driven by factors that are difficult to target, which often lack attractiveness for the pharmaceutical industry, there is a medical need of identifying and testing new compounds and agents for future clinical applications. This further applies to conceptually novel treatment strategies developed by academic research based on biological tumor properties that do not (yet) reflect an established target structure for large-scale industrial drug screening. Here, academic drug development remains an option but also represents a major challenge in current oncological research.

Therefore, the German Cancer Aid is launching a new call to support academic preclinical drug development by establishing a national center or network for providing a drug development pipeline from screenings to validated agents. The call is open for development of either small compounds or biologicals. Therefore, experts from the fields of biology, medicinal/pharmaceutical chemistry, pharmacology and immunotherapy are welcomed to present their ideas. The overall budget is 15 Mio. Euro for five years.

The following aspects are considered as important:

- a. Conclusive mission statement/Rationale for an academic program
- b. Defined initial target portfolio (with perspectives for the addition of targets through nationwide collaborations)
- c. Strategies and procedures for target prioritization
- d. Infrastructure concept (Available and newly established infrastructure and development pipeline, e. g. medicinal chemistry, libraries, chemical and virtual screens, biochemistry, pharmacology, pharmacokinetics, toxicology, administration, counseling and interactions with external partners)
- e. Cooperating networks for target definition and validation (library screens, lead compound development, preclinical models for testing safety and efficacy)
- f. Strategies for the transfer of compounds/targets to commercial developers and/or clinical testing ('exit points')
- g. Intellectual property
- h. Accessibility (of counseling, drug developing platforms and cooperation opportunities) for projects from external institutions
- i. Strategies for additional fundraising and project financing

Furthermore, applicants should highlight their strategy how to maintain the drug development center after the period of funding (sustainability).

Applicants must inform the German Cancer Aid by **13.12.2021** that they plan to submit an application. Full applications should be submitted by **14.02.2022**. Based on the evaluation of these applications by an international board of referees from diverse scientific backgrounds, applicants will be invited to present their ideas orally to the board of referees ('hearings').