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Priority Program: 'Translational Oncology'

Applicants' Guidelines for
Letter of Intent

Introduction

The major goal of the German Cancer Aid's funding program for the development of 'Interdisciplinary Oncology Centers of Excellence' ('Onkologische Spitzenzentren') in Germany is to continuously improve the treatment and care of cancer patients. Conducting interdisciplinary research programs that encompass both basic science as well as the essential translation of scientific findings into clinical practice is therefore an essential task of 'Interdisciplinary Oncology Centers of Excellence'. Patients can then rapidly benefit from new scientific progress. The priority funding program 'Translational Oncology' of the German Cancer Aid is intended to contribute to addressing this challenge.

With the goal of further supporting collaborative translational cancer research projects at 'Interdisciplinary Oncology Centers of Excellence' (CCC) the German Cancer Aid has decided to launch a 14th call for applications within the priority funding program 'Translational Oncology'. Applications may be submitted for a collaborative scientific project ('Verbundprojekt'; CP), a combination of a collaborative scientific project and a clinical trial (Phase I/II; CPT) or an innovative clinical trial (Phase I/II; T). The projects/clinical trial (CP, CPT and T) must be performed at least at 3 sites (separate cities) and necessitate close collaboration between several research groups. At least one research group must be located at an 'Interdisciplinary Oncology Center of Excellence' (CCC) funded by the German Cancer Aid.

The total budget available for all projects funded under this call is 7 million Euros.

What to consider before applying

Translational research:

This program supports projects that aim to transfer current results from biomedical basic research into effective medical applications and treatments. Results from basic research are in this sense a prerequisite for successful applications in this program. Proposed work programs should be hypothesis-driven rather than designed to prove a hypothesis. Therefore, both 'proof-of-principle' and 'proof of concept' should have been demonstrated prior to submission.
Translational research includes e.g.:

- research on underlying mechanisms of human oncological diseases (rather functional than descriptive investigations)
- therapeutic interventions
- clinical trials (phase I/II)

Scientific research projects involving human material from clinical trials can also be subject of an application.

Funding may be requested for the German contribution to a larger European or international clinical trial.

Projects focusing on basic research or the development of new technologies, methods, assays or equipment are not eligible under this priority program.

Within the framework of this priority program, only interventional clinical trials are regarded as clinical trials. Application for non-interventional clinical trials, e. g. diagnostic and observational clinical trials, may be eligible only if submitted as a 'small' subproject within a Collaborative Project (CP). Register studies will not be accepted, as they do not fall within the scope of the priority program 'Translational Oncology'.

Applicant eligibility and composition:

Researchers based in Germany who have completed their academic training, (usually with a doctorate) are eligible to apply within the priority program 'Translational Oncology'.

As a general rule, the following persons are not eligible to serve as applicants:

- persons working at a commercial, profit-oriented organization*;
- persons who are not permitted to publish results in a generally accessible form,
- persons living or working at organizations located outside of Germany.

* As a rule, persons working at an institution/a hospital/a clinic which is organized as 'GmbH', a private company or a private medical practice are not eligible as applicants. If you are not sure, if a person is eligible as applicant, please contact the office of German Cancer Aid before sending a LOI or project outline.

The projects/clinical trial (CP, CPT and T) must be performed at least at **3 sites** (separate cities) and necessitate close collaboration between several research groups.

At least one research group must be located at an 'Interdisciplinary Oncology Center of Excellence' (CCC) funded by the German Cancer Aid.

To ensure a clear allocation of responsibilities, the number of applicants should, whenever feasible, be restricted to one applicant per subproject.

I. Overall project design:

1. The consortium application must demonstrate a clear added value. The proposed cooperation of the participating working groups should provide substantial benefits in contrast to single project applications.
2. All subprojects must be closely linked and jointly contribute to the common aim of the overall project. Funding will only be considered for proposals in which the scientific quality of the whole project itself and the quality of all subprojects are visible.
3. The proposed project must address an unmet clinical need and must be based on a clear-and sound study concept.

4. Effective collaboration among consortium members must be proven by existing joint publications in the thematic field of the proposal. Each applicant should be an expert for the subproject he/she is involved in, again proven by publications.
5. A special coordination subproject may be included in the application. For example to finance a shared platform, techniques or resources used jointly by the participating groups.

II: Work program

1. The work program must be feasible within the applied period.
2. The work program should be hypothesis-driven (Applicants are required to state a clear hypothesis for which a 'proof of principle' should already exist).
3. Appropriate statistical considerations must be included. Statistical calculations and justification of sample sizes should be provided for all key experimental endpoints and proposed outcomes.
   This requirement is especially important for clinical trials: An expert in bioinformatics or statistics must be involved. If this person is not an applicant, a written confirmation must be submitted stating that he or she has undertaken to oversee the statistical planning of the project.
4. As a general prerequisite, model systems must be already established in the consortium and proven to mimic the human situation. If cell lines are used as model systems, preliminary results must be verified in more than one cell line.

Guideline for a Letter of Intent

The letter of intent (LOI) must be sent as a PDF-document per email to the following address: foerderung@krebshilfe.de. Please use 'Translational Oncology 14. Call; LOI_Name of speaker/type of application' in the reference line (e.g. Translational Oncology 14. Call; LOI_Müller_CPT) and nothing in addition.
The PDF-document of the LOI must be named: "LOI_name of the speaker_type of application" (e.g. LOI_Müller_CPT").

1. **Applicants**

The following information is needed for the **lead and all co-applicants**. A LOI will not be accepted if the names and locations of co-applicants are not listed. Please give the name of the lead applicant (only one person possible), who is the speaker of the consortium and the contact person for correspondence with the German Cancer Aid first:

- First name, surname, academic degree (e.g. Prof. Dr. Thomas Müller, PD Dr. Thomas Müller)
- Full name and address of the institution at which the lead applicant works*
- List of all co-applicants and the full name of their participating centers/institutions *
- Email addresses

*If applicants are working at more than one institution, please name only this institution at which the project/subproject will be performed.

2. **Project title** (not more than 160 characters, including commas and spaces)

3. **Type of application**. Please state whether this is a collaborative scientific project (CP), a combination of a collaborative scientific project and a clinical trial (Phase I/II; CPT) or a Phase I/II clinical trial (T).
4. **Lay summary of the planned project** (max. ½ DIN A4-page).
5. **Description** of how the planned project could **impact cancer patients** (max. ¼ DIN A4-page).
6. **Description** of the **translational aspects** of the planned project (max. ¼ DIN A4-page).
8. Please give 5 - 10 **key words/phrases** describing the key features of the planned project and the **cancer entity/entities** and specify if the project deals with **special/rare cancer entities** and which ones these are.
7. Please confirm, with the signatures of all applicants that all have read the chapter **'What to consider before applying'**. Electronic signatures will be accepted.

General Comments/Procedure:

The following steps are involved in the application and evaluation procedure:

1. **LOI**: Applicants must send a Letter of Intent to the German Cancer Aid by **December 09, 2026, 17:00 (per email)**.
2. **Project Outline**: Project outlines must be submitted no later than **February 04, 2027, 13:00 (per email)**.
3. **Full Proposal**: Only if the preliminary evaluation is favorable, will applicants be asked to submit their full applications. Deadline is **July 07, 2027, 13:00 (per email)**.
4. **Hearings**: Applicants invited to submit a full application will be asked to present their proposals to the review committee. The hearings will be held in person at the offices of the German Cancer Aid in Bonn on **September 22.-23, 2027**. The lead applicant will be informed of the exact date of the hearings in July 2027. Only 3 applicants of each proposal (lead and 2 other applicants) will be allowed to participate at the hearings. **It is mandatory that applicants attend in person**, so please block these dates in your calendar.

The guidelines for project outlines will be put online shortly.

Within two weeks of receipt of the letters of intent, project outlines and full applications by the German Cancer Aid, the lead applicant will receive a written confirmation of receipt. If no confirmation has been received within this period, please send an email to the funding department of the German Cancer Aid (foerderung@krebshilfe.de), giving the full project title and your telephone number.

If you have any questions, please contact:
Dr. Sabrina Kuhl: 0228 / 729 90-228, email: kuhl@krebshilfe.de
Kim Tiede: 0228 / 729 90-217, email: tiede@krebshilfe.de

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