



2023

PANCREATIC CANCER ACTION NETWORK

CANCER INFORMATICS & DATA SCIENCE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

Program Guidelines and Application Instructions



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Please direct questions to:

Research Grants Department

grants@pancan.org

**PANCREATIC CANCER
HAS THE LOWEST
FIVE-YEAR RELATIVE
SURVIVAL RATE
OF ALL MAJOR CANCERS**



**ADVANCE RESEARCH.
SUPPORT PATIENTS.
CREATE HOPE.**

I. GUIDELINES

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network's competitive Research Grants Program funds promising and meritorious research on pancreatic cancer. The organization's grantmaking strategy recognizes the need to maintain a pipeline of researchers at various stages in their careers dedicated to studying pancreatic cancer and acknowledges an urgency to accelerate scientific and medical breakthroughs that benefit patients.

In addition to funding research, PanCAN is also leading large-scale research initiatives that will help transform the way pancreatic cancer is detected and treated. Many of these initiatives generate a wide range of patient health data including molecular, multi-omic, clinical, patient-reported, treatment and outcomes. Ensuring rapid access to these diverse data is another way that PanCAN helps accelerate discoveries that will ultimately improve pancreatic cancer patient outcomes.

SPARK is a cloud-based data and analytics platform that integrates patient health data from PanCAN's research initiatives. Through SPARK and its connections with the NCI Cloud Resource (Seven Bridges Cancer Genomics Cloud [CGC] platform), qualified researchers can mine and analyze available patient health data to computationally tackle complex questions in pancreatic cancer. Currently, SPARK contains data from PanCAN's precision medicine service, Know Your Tumor®. With this service, pancreatic cancer patients are provided tumor tissue biomarker testing and genetic testing for inherited mutations. This real-world data (RWD) consists of a rich array of clinical, genomic, transcriptomic, molecular, and whole-slide pathology imaging data that will allow researchers to address many fundamental research questions in pancreatic cancer.

The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network Cancer Informatics & Data Science Research Fellowship represents an effort to encourage and support doctoral and/or postdoctoral candidates to apply computational and data science approaches to available pancreatic cancer data to support important biological and/or clinical hypotheses in the field. The grants will provide funding over two years to a graduate student and/or postdoctoral fellow that will apply computational and/or data science methods to problems in pancreatic cancer research. The research proposed for funding should leverage PanCAN patient health data in the SPARK platform, and applicants are highly encouraged to submit proposals that also leverage the applicant's own relevant data as well as other publicly available pancreatic cancer data. The fundamental biological questions tackled must have direct applicability and relevance to pancreatic cancer.

It is anticipated that two grants will be funded: one for a graduate student and one for a postdoctoral fellow.

Grant recipients not only receive financial support for their funded research, but also join the *Community for Progress* built by PanCAN to achieve the goal of increasing survival and improving patient outcomes. Our mentorship program connects grantees with leading scientists in the field. Ongoing career support activities offer opportunities for education and professional development to help keep our community of researchers committed and involved. The *Community for Progress* is a growing, robust and collaborative research community that is dedicated to changing the course of history for pancreatic cancer.

IMPORTANT DATES

Applications are due **March 15, 2023**, by noon Eastern Standard Time.

Funding decisions are anticipated by **May 2023**.

Start of grant term is **July 1, 2023**.

Grant recipients are expected to attend the PanCAN Annual Scientific Summit. The meeting location and dates are to be determined.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must be either currently enrolled in a doctoral program in the biomedical sciences or in a field applicable to health science research at a U.S. university (graduate students) or be recent PhD graduates (within the past 5 years) currently in a postdoctoral position at a U.S. university.

At the start of the grant term on July 1, 2023, applicants must:

- Be currently enrolled in a PhD or MD/PhD program at a U.S. university (for graduate students) or be a recent PhD or MD graduate (within the past 5 years) and currently in a postdoctoral position at a U.S. university.
- Work at an academic, medical or research institution **within the United States**; there are no citizenship requirements. However, by submitting an application, an applicant who is not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident assures that their visa status will provide sufficient time to complete the project and grant term within the United States.

For questions regarding eligibility, contact PanCAN's Research Grants Department at grants@pancan.org before submitting an application.

BUDGET

- Stipend salary levels for predoctoral and postdoctoral fellows with 0-5 years of experience are as determined by the National Research Service Award (NRSA) stipend level released May 13, 2022.
- Institutional allowance for training-related expenses (e.g., administrative support, health insurance, and research supplies) for each trainee:
 - Predoctoral—\$4,400 per year at non-federal, public and private, non-profit institutions and \$3,300 per year for federal and for-profit institutions.
 - Postdoctoral—\$11,950 per year at non-federal, public and private, non-profit institutions and \$10,850 per year for federal and for-profit institutions.
- An additional \$5,000/year is allowed for research-related costs, including computational costs, computer hardware or software, or attendance at a scientific conference.
- Indirect costs at a maximum of 10% of the total cost are permitted.



RESEARCH PROJECT CRITERIA

- Computational and/or data science research projects must have **direct** applicability and relevance to pancreatic cancer.
- The research proposed for funding should include use of PanCAN patient health data in the SPARK platform, and applicants are encouraged to include other external pancreatic cancer data sources. Descriptions of the available clinical data in the SPARK platform can be found [here](#) and molecular data [here](#).
- PanCAN SPARK is a cloud-based analytical framework that includes over 500 built-in pipelines and workflows for raw multi-omics data analysis as well as an interactive data studio with cloud-based Jupyter and RStudio implementations. In addition to the PanCAN patient health data stored in SPARK, grantees will also have access to all of the analytical capabilities of the platform. Grantees may also use external computational resources.
- Grantees are encouraged to work under the mentorship of an interdisciplinary team of computational scientists, cancer biologists and/or clinical oncologists to address questions in pancreatic cancer.

EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS

PanCAN's Cancer Informatics & Data Science Research Fellowship will be awarded using a competitive, rigorous peer-review process. Applications will be evaluated by a Scientific Review Committee appointed by PanCAN's Research Grants Department. The Committee is composed of scientists that are respected for their accomplishments in computational biology, data science, and/or pancreatic cancer research and viewed as leaders in the field.

The Committee will consider the following criteria when reviewing applications:

- **Candidate**
 - Does the applicant have the appropriate training, experience, and/or oversight to ensure successful implementation of the proposed project?
- **Significance**
 - Is there a strong scientific rationale for the proposed project?
 - Is there sufficient background and preliminary data to support the significance of the proposed project?
 - Is the proposed project of high quality, and what potential does it have to advance the field of pancreatic cancer research and/or benefit patients?
- **Approach**
 - Are the overall strategy, design and methodology well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project within the grant term?
 - Have possible barriers been anticipated and are solutions and alternative strategies proposed?
 - Do the proposed data sources utilized include PanCAN health data, suggest other complementary data sets, and are they appropriate for the proposed study?
 - Are proposed expenses justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed project?
- **Environment**
 - What evidence is provided of commitment for the scientific development of the applicant?
 - Has the necessary infrastructure for the project been identified and is the environment appropriate and conducive to the success of the project? Has an opportunity for interdisciplinary training been identified?

II. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Applications are due by midnight Eastern Standard Time on Wednesday, March 15, 2023, using the ProposalCentral website at <https://proposalcentral.com>.

In order to submit an application, applicants need to enter information directly into the online submission platform as well as upload a number of documents. The following instructions provide details about information that needs to be entered and the materials that need to be uploaded. The numbering in the table below corresponds to the sections found on the left side of the ProposalCentral application webpage and to the sections that follow in the Application Instructions.

Information to be entered directly into ProposalCentral	Instructions/ ProposalCentral Section
Title Page	1. Title Page
Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal (optional)	3. Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal
Contact PI (Applicant) Information	4. Applicant
Institution and Contacts	5. Institution and Contacts
Project Team	6. Project Team
Abstract	7. Public and Scientific Abstracts
Budget	8. Budget
Budget Summary and Justification	9. Budget Summary and Justification
Organizational Assurances	10. Organizational Assurances
Templates to be downloaded, completed and uploaded	
Download templates:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project Proposal TemplateProject Milestones and Timeline Template	2. Download Templates and Instructions
Upload documents:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project ProposalProject Milestones and TimelineBiographical Sketch of the ApplicantLetter(s) of SupportApplication Signature Pages (section 14)Other Materials (optional)	11. Application Documents
Other sections to be completed before submission	
PI Data Sheet	12. PI Data Sheet
Validate	13. Validate
Print Signature Pages and Application	14. Print Signature Pages and Application
Submit	15. Submit

GETTING STARTED IN PROPOSALCENTRAL

If you are a new user of ProposalCentral, follow the "REGISTER" link and complete the registration process. After you click the "Create an Account Now" button, complete your Professional Profile (fourth tab from the left) before starting an application.

If you are already registered with ProposalCentral, access the site and log in with your Username and Password. If you have forgotten your password, click on the "Forgot Your Username/Password?" link. Supply your User ID or email address in the space provided; your password will be sent to you by email.

To start an application, select the "Grant Opportunities" tab (gray tab furthest to the right). A list of applications will be displayed. Find the **Pancreatic Cancer Action Network Cancer Informatics & Data Science Research Fellowship** and click the "Apply Now" link (second-to-last column) to create your application.

Complete all fields in the application and all templates that are provided. Upload all requested documents in portable document format (PDF). For more information, see the ProposalCentral FAQ section under the "Help" link at the top right of the page.

*Important note: To ensure your PDF files upload in their entirety, please avoid: replacing files multiple times, using files that were once password-protected or encrypted and combining multiple scanned documents or files into one PDF. Review your full application before submitting to check that all pages of your PDF files are displaying properly.



If you have difficulty registering, logging in or creating your application, contact ProposalCentral Customer Support. Phone: (800) 875-2562 or (703) 964-5840; Email: pcsupport@altum.com.

COMPLETING AND SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

The following information is required to submit a complete application. Numbers correspond to the application sections found on the left side of the ProposalCentral application webpage.

1. **Title Page.** Enter the title of the proposed research project directly into the ProposalCentral system. The title is limited to no more than 75 characters in length (including spaces). Do not use abbreviations. A project title must be entered and saved before additional sections may be accessed. Also complete the other required (*) items on this page.
2. **Download Template and Instructions.** The Guidelines and Application Instructions document, the Project Proposal template and the Project Milestones and Timeline template should be downloaded from this page. Click the "Download" icon to save each of the templates to your computer. See below instructions on how to complete the templates.
3. **Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal.** Optional.
4. **Contact PI (Applicant) Information.** Enter information for the Contact PI directly into the ProposalCentral system. The Contact PI is required to update his/her Professional Profile, including Contact Information, Other Support* and Publications. *The "Other Support" information, including secured and pending support, should be imported into section 9, "Secured and Pending Support" (see below).
5. **Institution and Contacts.** Enter information for the contact PI's institution, post-award contact person and the designated signing official directly into the ProposalCentral system.
6. **Project Team.** Enter information for each member of the Project Team.



7. **Abstract.** Enter the public and scientific abstracts directly into the ProposalCentral system. Each abstract should be limited to 3,000 characters (including spaces) and must be concise and comprehensive. The public abstract should be geared toward a lay audience and provide specific information and insights about your project to share with donors, patients, and other stakeholders. Describe the overall objective of the project; the scientific discovery that will be translated; plans for applying the discovery, including aims, methods and samples; how results will benefit patients and plans for measuring and evaluating progress. For the scientific abstract, describe the relevance of the proposed project to pancreatic cancer, the foundational research that has been completed to justify proposed next steps, the practical application that is planned, the specific aims, activities and study design, expected accomplishments by the conclusion of the grant term and how results will contribute to the goal of improving patient outcomes.

From the list provided, select the primary and, if applicable, secondary Common Scientific Outline code that best describes the proposed project. For additional details about these research categories, see <https://www.icrpartnership.org/CSO>.

8. **Budget.** The Budget should be presented for each year of the grant term (“period”). For each period, please complete:
- **Personnel Costs:** Complete Name, Role, Requested Salary/Stipend and Requested Fringe. In “Other Role,” precisely describe the role the person has on the project.

No grant funds may be directed toward salary or benefits of any individuals from a U.S. government or for-profit entity, nor for any research expenses related to the project that are incurred by these individuals.
 - **Non-personnel Costs:** Complete Materials and Supplies, Equipment, Travel, Publication and Other Expenses Costs. For each category, choose a line item category from the dropdown menu.

Professional membership dues, pre-award charges and any other research-related expenses not directly related to this project are not allowable expenses.
 - **Indirect Costs:** A maximum of 10% of the grant may be used for this purpose. Indirect costs should be part of the total grant amount. No additional funds will be granted for indirect costs.

Any general office supplies or individual institutional administrative charges (e.g., telephone, other electronic communication, utilities, IT network, etc.) are considered to be part of indirect and are not allowable budget line items.

9. **Budget Summary.** This page contains a summary of the proposed Budget completed in section 8. **At the bottom of the page, provide a budget narrative** in under 5,000 characters that justifies the application budget detailed in section 8. Include subheads for Personnel, Materials and Supplies, Equipment, Travel, Publication and Other Expenses costs.
10. **Organizational Assurances.** Select the appropriate assurances options for your proposed research and complete the Approved or Pending Date field. If a grant is awarded, you will be required to submit the regulatory and compliance documents to the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network.
11. **Application Documents.** Upload all required documents. For instructions and details on the required documents, see “Completing the Application Documents” below.
 - Project Proposal (please see template for page limits)
 - Project Milestones and Timeline
 - Biographical Sketch of the Applicant
 - Letter(s) of Support

To upload the documents, all documents must be converted to PDF files. To ensure your PDF files upload in their entirety, please avoid replacing files multiple times, using files that were once password protected or encrypted and combining multiple scanned documents or files into one PDF. Follow the instructions on the page to upload the documents. In the section for attachments, all the required attachments are listed in the middle of the screen. This list helps you track completion and uploading of your required attachments. Click the “Attach Files” button to upload your documents. Once you upload a required attachment, that attachment type will be removed from the required list and will be displayed in the “Current list of uploaded attachments.” If you wish to modify the attached file, make the revisions to your original file on your computer (offline), convert the file to PDF and use the same process above to attach the newly revised file. Delete any previously submitted versions of the file before submitting your application.

12. **Contact PI Data Sheet.** This is an automatically populated data sheet based on the contact PI’s ProposalCentral profile. Information for gender, race and ethnicity must be provided. The Scientific Review Committee does not receive this information.
13. **Validate.** Validate the application on ProposalCentral. This is an essential step. “Validate” checks for required data and required attachments. You will not be able to submit the application if all the required data and attachments have not been provided.
14. **E-Signature Pages and Application.** The PI and the Signing Official from the applicant institution must e-sign the application prior to submission. The application will not validate and cannot be submitted without the required signatures. If you wish to view the application in its entirety (recommended), select the “Download Signature Pages with Attachments” option.
15. **Submit.** After successfully passing the validate check and printing your documents, click the “Submit” link. An email will be sent to you confirming your submission. Once your application is submitted, you may view it by accessing the “Submitted” link under the “Proposals” tab. The status column will show “Submitted” and the date submitted. You may need to refresh your browser screen after submitting the application to see the updated status.

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

- **Project Proposal.** Complete on the template available from section 2 on the ProposalCentral application website. Formatting restrictions and detailed instructions for completing the Project Proposal template are indicated in the template. The template indicates page limitations for each section, with a six-page limit for the Project Narrative.
- **Project Milestones and Timeline.** Complete on the template available from section 2 on the ProposalCentral application website. The Project Milestones and Timeline template is meant to list the various milestones and deliverables necessary to complete the research aims and the estimated time it will take to complete each. Detailed instructions are indicated in the template.
- **Biographical Sketch of the Applicant.** The biographical sketch must be in English. The NIH Biographical Sketch Form (OMB No. 0925-0001/0002 [Rev. 09/17]) is acceptable. The contact PI must adhere to the five-page page limit and other biographical sketch requirements.
- **Letter(s) of Support.** The letter must be written on letterhead by the applicant's advisor (required) and other mentors (optional) and should be addressed to the Scientific Review Committee. The letter should confirm the Applicant's independence status (i.e., whether the Applicant is authorized to conduct the funded research). It should contain details on the nature and extent of support for the proposed research that is available to the Applicant.



CHANGING YOUR APPLICATION

Withdrawal of application. Please advise PanCAN promptly, in writing, should you decide to withdraw your application. Your email (or letter) should include your name, the title of the proposal and the reason for withdrawal.

Change of address. Notify PanCAN in writing of any changes of address, email or phone number, following the submission of an application. Include your name and the application number.

Change of institution or position. If you change your institution or professional position, contact PanCAN to determine whether your application is still eligible for funding consideration.

INQUIRIES

Inquiries or technical issues regarding ProposalCentral and the online application process should be directed to customer support at (703) 964-5840 or toll-free at (800) 875-2562 or by email at pcsupport@altum.com.

Inquiries about the 2023 Cancer Informatics & Data Science Research Fellowship guidelines and application materials should be directed to grants@pancan.org.



PANCREATIC
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NETWORK

THE PANCREATIC CANCER ACTION NETWORK

leads the way in accelerating critical progress for pancreatic cancer patients. PanCAN takes bold action by funding life-saving research, providing personalized patient services and creating a community of supporters and volunteers who will stop at nothing to create a world in which all pancreatic cancer patients will thrive.