

The Pershing Square Sohn Cancer Prize
An initiative from the Pershing Square Sohn Cancer Research Alliance (PSSCRA)
2025 Prize Application Guidelines

“For a challenge this huge, we need incredible innovators who don’t take the standard approach.” – Dr. Deborah Hung

PRIZE OVERVIEW

The Pershing Square Sohn Cancer Prize (formerly known as the Pershing Square Sohn Prize for Young Investigators in Cancer Research) provides greater New York City area-based early career scientists the freedom to take risks and pursue their boldest research at a stage when traditional funding is lacking. **Prize winners each receive \$250,000 a year for three years, totaling \$750,000.** Approximately six prizes are awarded annually.

The Pershing Square Sohn Cancer Research Alliance (PSSCRA) is dedicated to accelerating cures for cancer by advancing the pursuit of innovative cancer research and by facilitating collaborations between the science and business communities. PSSCRA seeks to guide philanthropic funds to feed critical scientific discoveries, attracting like-minded investors to the cause of fighting cancer and creating a pipeline for early-stage biomedical investments.

In addition to receiving funding, Prize winners are given access to a unique network and are invited to participate in select programs, including:

- Facilitated partnerships with other researchers within and across institutions
- Networking programs (including but not limited to: collaborations/discussions between Prize winners and industry mentors, introductions to philanthropic and for-profit investors in the business community, invitations to special industry networking and entrepreneurship events, and more)
- Annual retreat
- Ability to present the best ideas at conferences and events (hosted by PSSCRA and other organizations)

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process will be conducted in three stages:

Stage 1: Letter of Intent (LOI) – Opens on **Monday, September 23rd, 2024**, to all eligible research organizations. LOIs must be completed online. LOIs must be submitted online through our application submission website: <https://prizeapplication.smapply.io>.

Stage 2: Full-Length Proposal (FLP) – By invitation only; based on a review by PSSCRA of the LOI submission.

Stage 3: Presentation – Finalists will be invited to present their proposal to the Governing Board, Prize Advisory Board, and Scientific Review Council at the 2025 Prize Review Board Meeting.

TIMELINE AND KEY DATES

Please note that PSSCRA may adjust the notification dates without notice to applicants:

September 23, 2024:	Application opens to receive Letters of Intent (LOI)
October 28, 2024:	Deadline to submit LOI
December 16, 2024:	Selected applicants invited to submit Full-Length Proposals (FLPs)
January 24, 2025:	Deadline to submit FLPs
April 3, 2025:	Prize Finalist Review Board Meeting in NYC
Mid-April 2025:	Prize winners notified
TBA, 2025:	Prize Award Dinner
Summer 2025:	Projects start

KEY CRITERIA

Radically innovative and scientifically sound research: Novel approaches in cancer research characterized by a strong scientific rationale and novel methodologies. Research areas may include, but are not limited to, basic research and technological applications. PSSCRA is seeking high-risk, high-reward proposals characterized by radically novel scientific approaches that would otherwise not be funded. The objective is to support projects that may be too innovative and speculative for traditional funding sources but still have a likelihood of producing important findings. It should be a unique project for scientists, who are encouraged to stretch their imagination into areas that can substantially change the area of research. Scientific merit will be evaluated and determined by the Pershing Square Sohn Cancer Prize Scientific Review Council and Prize Advisory Board. For more insight, please review our panel of board members and archive of past winning proposals on our website: <http://psscra.org>.

Quality of the applicant: Applicants must display creativity, adaptability, strong written communication skills, and the ability to collaborate with others. They embody an entrepreneurial spirit for driving impact and scale.

Application to cancer: Proposals that articulate a clearly defined application to cancer will be favored. The goal is to advance research in new ways that will have an impact on understanding, diagnosis, prevention and/or treatment of cancer.

Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to submit proposals that leverage a multidisciplinary approach.

ELIGIBILITY

An MD, PhD, MD-PhD degree (or equivalent) is required. Applicants must have at least two (2) years of experience running their own laboratories but no more than **six (6) years of experience** by the start date of the Prize (July 2025). Exceptions due to prolonged medical or family leave will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Principal Investigators (PIs) must hold faculty appointments at academic research institutions in the greater New York City area at the level of Assistant or Associate Professor (or equivalent). The greater New York City area includes New York City's five boroughs, Long Island, Westchester County, New Jersey, Western Connecticut (including Fairfield and New Haven Counties), and Philadelphia. **Applicants may only apply to the Prize a total of two (2) times.**

An applicant who is not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, by submitting an application for this funding, assures that his/her visa status will provide sufficient time to complete the project and grant term within

the United States. Investigators need not be specifically trained in cancer research; however, they should be working in an environment capable of conducting high-quality, high-impact cancer research.

The Pershing Square Sohn Cancer Research Alliance does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability or any other legally protected characteristics.

LETTER OF INTENT (LOI)

LOIs are due **Monday, October 28, 2024 by 5pm EST**. Applicants must fill out and submit the LOI online. The LOI is a one-page document in Georgia, 11-point font, single-spaced, and one-half inch (.05) margins (figures are accepted, references not included in the limit), that **must** include the following elements:

1. A description of the applicant's scientific accomplishments to date;
2. A description of the proposed research project—must include scientific background, aims, and research plan;
3. A description of why the project is innovative within the specific research focus area;
4. A description of how the Prize funding will impact their research.

A **biosketch using our template** (slightly different from the NIH template) will be required in addition to the LOI. The template can be found on our application submission platform.

The submission form can be found on our application website: <https://prizeapplication.smapply.io/>.

FULL-LENGTH PROPOSAL (BY INVITATION ONLY)

- Full-Length Proposals are due no later than **Friday, January 24th, 2025 at 5pm EST**. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered.
- Applicants must fill out the 2025 Pershing Square Sohn Prize proposal application template and submit the proposal through the submission website: <https://prizeapplication.smapply.io/>.
- Content should be single spaced in Georgia, 12-point font.
- The applicant's name should be on every page. Please include page numbers.
- Figures can be included as long as the information is clearly legible.
- Each section should be indicated with a section number and heading.
- The Full-Length Proposal application template, with detailed information on each section, can be found [on our application submission website](#) in late December. (*Only applicants who have progressed to this stage will be able to access the forms.*)
- Complete 2025 Prize proposals will include the following components:
 - Cover Page (Project title, Principal Investigator contact info, abstract)
 - Lay Abstract
 - Scientific Abstract
 - Significance and Innovation
 - Specific Aims
 - Project Description
 - Statement of How the Expertise of the Applicant is Suited for the Research Proposed
 - Collaboration Description (*if applicable*)
 - Timetable and Milestones
 - References (*sent separately*)
 - Budget* (*template provided- see note below*)

- Budget Justification
- Other Support
- Biographical Sketch (*in NIH format*)
- Signed Submission Agreement

***NOTE:** The total budget per year should not exceed \$250,000 (this includes direct and indirect costs). Therefore, the budget should be constructed as follows:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Total Direct Costs	\$225,000	\$225,000	\$225,000	\$675,000
Indirect Costs (10%)	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$75,000
TOTAL (Direct & Indirect)	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$750,000

REVIEW MECHANISMS

- After submission of the LOI, PSSCRA will invite the selected applicants to submit FLPs.
- All proposals will undergo review by the PSSCRA Scientific Review Council.
- Applicants will be selected from a group of qualified individuals based on their credentials, the merits of their proposals, and the connection of their proposals to the goals of the PSSCRA.
- Finalists will be invited to present their proposal to the PSSCRA Governing Board, Prize Advisory Board, and Scientific Review Council at the 2025 Prize Board Meeting on Thursday, April 3, 2025.
- The final selection will be contingent upon ratification by the PSSCRA Governing Board.
- As a policy, PSSCRA does not provide reviewer critiques or evaluations to applicants.

PRIZE ADMINISTRATION

Award Agreement

Upon acceptance of the Prize, the PI and their employing institution will be required to sign an award agreement indicating acceptance of The Pershing Square Foundation Grant Terms and Conditions. Among other requirements, PSSCRA must be notified in advance and approve of any significant changes in research objectives, key personnel, or budget, and must be acknowledged in publications.

Publicity

By submitting an application for funding, the PI grants PSSCRA permission to use their name, image, likeness and quotes at any time in connection with the publicity relating to this Award (whether during the Award period or after) provided that such use is factual, accurate and for non-commercial purposes only. PSSCRA will coordinate with the appropriate individuals with the employing institution for use of institution name. (Further publicity terms related to the PI's institution will be outlined in the award agreement and will be agreed to upon agreement execution.)

Funding

PSSCRA will allow no more than 10% of the award amount (\$25,000/year) to be allocated to indirect costs. Full term funding will be contingent upon review of annual progress reports and other oversight activities conducted by PSSCRA. PSSCRA will determine future funding at its sole discretion. Multi-year support is not automatic and is conditioned on meeting certain milestones and deliverables defined in the Full-Length

Proposal and Award Agreement, including submission of complete and accurate progress reports indicating that the project is meeting measurable objectives.

Annual Retreat

Prize winners, academic and industry leaders, Scientific Review Council and Prize Advisory Board members, and select guests will be invited to attend the Pershing Square Sohn Annual Retreat, held each fall.

Reporting Requirements

All grantees are required to provide an annual progress (narrative and financial) report in accordance with applicable IRS requirements. The reports will be reviewed to ensure that the purposes of the grants are being fulfilled. A template and reminder will be sent in advance of the deadline.

The procedures outlined above are in accordance with the procedure for making grants to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations approved by the IRS for The Pershing Square Foundation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please find answers to [Frequently Asked Questions here](#).

We also recommend [reading this article](#) from *PLoS Computational Biology* on best practices for grant applicants.

Any additional questions concerning this RFP should be addressed to Christy Hudson:
chudson@persq.org

About the Pershing Square Sohn Cancer Research Alliance: <http://psscra.org>