



Inter-Institutional Pilot Awards Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

The Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center (Massey) has a rolling call for pilot research applications for inter-institutional collaborations with between two institutions. This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) outlines the priorities and guidelines for 2025.

Purpose

- Provide pilot funding for new concepts in cancer-related research, including but not limited to: discovery, diagnosis, treatment, prevention and control, and survivorship.
- Address the most immediate cancer needs of Massey and their partner institutions catchment areas including cause or reversal of cancer outcomes.
- Catalyze discoveries by fostering transdisciplinary and translational collaborations among researchers and clinicians.
- Produce preliminary data to serve as a foundation for future applications to the NCI, other NIH institutes, and/or other agencies or foundations that use a peer review process.
- Develop and submit collaborative team science application within 2 years of receiving the award.

Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center Priorities

- Massey will continue to prioritize application addressing the 2021-2025 research strategic plan focal areas – breast, prostate, lung and GI cancers; the lifestyle factors of tobacco and obesity and survivorship.
- Projects that genuinely demonstrate transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or translational approaches to addressing cancer-related research question(s).
- Proposals that represent collaborative, team science approaches, particularly those that involve investigators from more than one Massey research program in meaningful ways.
- Projects that utilize Massey-supported shared resources, especially those applicants who have collaborated with one or more Massey-supported shared resource directors to optimize the full capabilities or innovative capabilities of a shared resource.

Investigator Eligibility

- Only applications submitted by Multiple Principal Investigators (MPIs) are eligible; each institution should be represented in the MPI leadership. For MPIs, at least one PI must be from each eligible institution and hold a full-time faculty appointment at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and the other collaborating institution.
- VCU based applicants are required to be an NCI Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG)-eligible Research Member (please verify with Massey Administration before applying by contacting Alex Haynes, haynesa4@vcu.edu).
- Effort between MPIs from different institutions must be comparable, and both MPIs must contribute to the overall project in similar magnitude.
- An individual may submit only one application as PI or MPI per year. An individual is allowed to be a co-investigator, consultant, or mentor on multiple submissions. A faculty member currently funded in the role of PI or MPI by a Massey pilot research award is not eligible to submit an application to this opportunity unless their current award will end by the scheduled start date.

Award Information

- The Research Development Inter-Institutional Collaboration Pilot Awards represents a partnership commitment between Massey and a partner institution which will provide a dollar-for-dollar match up to \$75,000 per project.
- This mechanism aims to support collaborative projects between faculty investigators at Massey and a partner institution who are engaged in cancer research. Applications must include Multiple Principal Investigators (MPIs), with both MPIs being comparable in scope and contributing equally to the overall project.
- Total awards are dependent upon available funding. The number of awards and the award amount may increase or decrease each year dependent upon the budget and philanthropic funding available in any given year.
- The number of awards and the award amount may increase or decrease each year dependent upon the scientific merit of the projects submitted for review and the priorities established for this NOFO.
- Projects are expected to be completed within the specific total project period not to exceed 2 years.
- Budget requests may not exceed direct costs of \$75,000 per institution or \$150,000 combined. Funding is allocated by institution (Massey and the partner institution) and must be utilized to support the awarding organization's related costs as outlined on the budget.
- Projects that do not adhere to these guidelines will be disqualified from administrative and scientific review.

Funding Limits

- A Massey based applicant can request up to \$75,000 (\$150,000 combined).
- Massey will provide a dollar-for-dollar match up to \$75,000 per project with a partner institution

Award Period

- The proposed award period for the Inter-Institutional Pilot is up to 24 months.

LOI Submission Guidelines

- Letters of intent (LOI) are accepted on a rolling basis.
- All LOIs are submitted using the Submittable platform.
- Required fields include: Name and institution of external collaborator, biosketches for the MPIs and key collaborators, and a summary of the proposed research (300-700 words)
- The LOI will be reviewed by the Massey Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) within 30-days of submission
- The MPI team will be notified if the SSC has approved the request for a full application. If approved the MPI team will be provided a secondary full application Submittable link.

Submission Guidelines

- All applications must include the items below, in order as listed.
- All applications must be submitted using the Submittable platform.
- The application PDF uploads should be formatted in 11 pt. Arial font (main text); 9pt. Arial font (figures, legends and tables).

1. **Biosketches**— Use NIH Biosketch. Include any present or recently completed research support. Include biosketches of collaborators and mentors. Guidelines can be found on the NIH website (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>) - uploaded as a PDF to Submittable
2. **Research Strategy**
 - a. Specific Aims—*Limit 1 Page (Uploaded as a PDF to Submittable)*
 - b. Research Strategy—*Limit 6 Pages (Uploaded as a PDF to Submittable)*
 - i. Significance
 1. Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses.
 2. Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses.
 3. Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.
 - ii. Innovation
 1. Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms.
 2. Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.
 3. Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches/methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.
 - iii. Approach
 1. Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted.
 2. Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims.
 3. If the project is in the early stages of development, describe any strategy to establish feasibility, and address the management of any high-risk aspects of the proposed work.
 4. All applicants are expected to seek the support of the Massey Biostatistics Shared Resource in the design and statistics methods to be employed. Please indicate who will be providing biostatistical support. Contact Dr. Nolan Wages at wagesn@vcu.edu to schedule a consultation.
 5. Massey's Office of Community Outreach and Engagement (COE) is available to assist all applicant teams with identifying and facilitating the involvement of a Community Champion with their project, if desired. If you would like assistance from the Office of COE, please submit a request in a timely manner at the following website <https://redcap.vcu.edu/surveys/?s=JW8EWLM8LTTKWKER> or you may also contact via email at CancerChamps@vcu.edu Please allow 24-48 hours for a response and at least 2-5 business days to identify a Community Champion.
 - c. Literature Citations (*Uploaded as a PDF to Submittable*)

3. Multi-PI Leadership Plan (if applicable; 1-page maximum)

For applications designating multiple PIs, a leadership plan is required. The rationale for choosing a multiple PI approach should be described, including the added benefit of this approach. The governance and organizational structure of the leadership team and the research project should be described, including communication plans, process for making decisions on scientific direction, and procedures for resolving conflicts. Each PI must bring key scientific knowledge and responsibilities. The roles and administrative, technical, and scientific responsibilities for the project or program should be delineated for the PIs, including responsibilities for human or live vertebrate animal subject studies as appropriate.

4. Plan of Subsequent Funding (1-page maximum)

Discuss how the findings from your pilot will be used to write a proposal for subsequent NCI/NIH funding. In this regard, applicants should list potential aims for a NIH proposal. This section is an important criterion for award selection.

5. Massey Shared Resource Utilization (1-page maximum)

Describe Massey shared resource usage. Project(s) are highly encouraged to use at least one Massey Shared Resource. If no shared resources are utilized for the project, please include a page stating not applicable.

Massey Supported Shared Resources:

- Bioinformatics
- Biostatistics
- Cancer Mouse Models
- Flow Cytometry
- Microscopy
- Proteomics
- Tissue and Data Acquisition and Analysis
- Transgenic/Knockout Mouse
- Lipidomics / Metabolomics

6. Compliance Documents(s)

Include all applicable compliance approvals need on the cover sheet (e.g., animal, IRB). Funds will not be allocated and no aspect of the project can begin (including non-human subject research components) without documentation of required approvals.

Note: Appendix materials are not allowed unless specifically requested above.

7. Budget and Budget Justification—

The applicant should use the budget table provided on the submittable platform. Please include a separate budget justification PDF document with written justification for each category of expenses. (See Allowable and Non-allowable expenditures below). Budget Justifications can be uploaded as a PDF to Submittable.

<u>Allowable expenditures include:</u>	<u>Non-allowable expenditures include:</u>
▪ Salary support for research staff ▪ Research supplies ▪ Per diem charges for patients if part of a clinical study, not reimbursable by standard payment terms ▪ Stipends for community champion/advocate participation ▪ Technical assistance ▪ Graduate student/postdoctoral stipends if relevant to the project with a detailed justification ▪ Domestic/foreign travel necessary to carry out proposed project based on institutional travel policies ▪ Computational services ▪ Other expenses such as laboratory and shared resource fees, pathology, imaging, etc. ▪ Consultant costs ▪ Equipment/technology with the intent to design, test, or facilitate a new device and non-office equipment necessary to carry out the proposed project. Requests over \$5,000 must include a detailed justification. ▪ Publications costs not to exceed \$4,000 across the total project period	▪ PI or other faculty salary expenses ▪ Secretarial/administrative personnel salary support ▪ Office equipment and supplies ▪ Computer and equipment maintenance fees ▪ Tuition ▪ Travel and/or registration/related fees for conferences ▪ Travel not essential to carrying out the proposed research ▪ Purchasing and binding of periodicals and books ▪ Dues and membership fees in scientific societies ▪ Faculty recruiting and relocation expenses ▪ Administrative or institutional charges for services normally considered overhead (e.g. space rental, utilities, building maintenance) ▪ Non-medical or personnel services to patients ▪ Sub-contracts to institutions not affiliated with Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center ▪ Pre-award costs

Terms of Award

- Acceptance of funds implies a firm commitment to provide a brief verbal/email check-in progress report quarterly (financial and scientific) by the deadline outlined in the Notice of Award (NOA) and subsequently, a written annual update for a five-year follow-up period. Awardees who do not reply to the five-year follow-up requests will jeopardize their eligibility for future Massey awards.
- MPIs must spend on their Massey assigned index within 60 days of receipt of the Notice of Award or funding may be rescinded and will require a written explanation for the delays addressed to Massey Senior Leadership.
- All awards must have appropriate institutional compliance approvals (e.g., IRB, IACUC) within 90 days of receipt of the NOA and before funds will be allocated. Restrictions may be applied for expenditures prior to receiving compliance approvals.
- Following the initial 60-days Massey expects that the grantee will completely utilize the full amount of funding during the term of the award and are required to meet regularly with the Massey Post-Award and Administrative Teams.
- Projects are expected to be completed within the specific budget period. Projects will be monitored quarterly for scientific progress and expenditures, and the PI will be expected to account for any inactivity in any given quarter.
- A No Cost Extension is highly discouraged and will only be considered under exceptional circumstances and **must be requested no later than 60-day before the end of the project period**. All unspent funds at the end of the grant period will be returned to the Massey.
- All awards, publications, and presentations must acknowledge Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center as specified in the NOA.
- Acceptance of funds implies a firm commitment to provide the Massey leaders access to meet the team, give talks to the public, and tours of your facilities. Access to your laboratory will be facilitated by Massey Administration.

Review Process

Applications will be evaluated and scored according to:

- Scientific merit using NIH guidelines for scoring. Please note that the Massey review is run similar to an NIH study section and while its score drivers are similar, there is an important distinction: the Massey exists to support projects that need vital data to become competitive for an R01 or similar award. For this reason, an IMPORTANT score driver in the Massey review is the potential for future funding. It is the PI's job to lay out how the Massey funds will ensure a competitive future application. One page is dedicated to this purpose and that page is carefully evaluated during the Study Section meeting and by Massey Senior Leadership when making funding decisions.
- Potential for achieving high-impact results on an accelerated timeline when compared to the traditional pace of cancer research.
- Alignment with Massey priorities outlined in each year's NOFO.

Questions

Questions can be addressed to **Alex Haynes, Manager of Membership and Research Data Analyst**, at haynesa4@vcu.edu or 305-915-4200.