2025-2026 Request for Proposals

Special Opportunity:
RTFCCR-MRA Team Science Awards on Melanoma Early Detection, Diagnosis, and Risk Stratification

September 17, 2025

The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) is pleased to announce a Special Opportunity Request for Proposals (RFP) for Team Science Awards, jointly funded by The Rising Tide Foundation for Clinical Cancer Research (RTFCCR) and MRA. MRA and RTFCCR intend to support up to two awards through this partnership.

Email questions about this RFP, eligibility, or other issues about MRA or its awards to science@curemelanoma.org. For questions on the patient involvement plan or questions for RTFCCR, please email Zoraide Granchi, PhD at zoraide.granchi@risingtide.ch.

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Introduction

About Melanoma: According to the National Cancer Institute, melanoma is the fifth most common cancer in the United States. More effective options for patients and those at risk are urgently needed. While research and treatment have advanced significantly in recent years, leading to the availability of immunotherapies and molecularly targeted therapies for patients, there remains a substantial need for developing new treatment approaches, including treatment for rare melanoma subtypes,

optimizing the effectiveness of existing and emerging therapies, and better preventing, detecting, and diagnosing melanoma.

About the MRA: MRA is a public charity founded in 2007 by Debra and Leon Black, under the auspices of the Milken Institute, with the mission of MRA is to **end suffering and death due to melanoma** by collaborating with all stakeholders to accelerate powerful research, advance cures for all patients, and prevent more melanomas**.** To date, the MRA has awarded $175 million to support over 500 research projects in 19 countries. Please visit www.curemelanoma.org for further information on MRA and the research initiatives funded in prior award cycles.

About RTFCCR: Rising Tide Group is an organization with a strong philanthropic mission. It is based in Schaffhausen Switzerland, however truly global in its reach and activities. Our philanthropic work is organized in two entities – the Rising Tide Foundation (RTF) and the Rising Tide Foundation for Clinical Cancer Research (RTFCCR). Both are charitable, non-profit organizations established in 2010.
At Rising Tide Foundation, we believe prosperity and human flourishing comes when individuals are empowered, capable, and free to take responsibility for their lives.
With patients at the core of the mission, the Rising Tide Foundation for Clinical Cancer Research strives to support clinical trials resulting in the creation of less toxic therapeutic approaches, better disease burden management, earlier cancer detection, and innovative intervention strategies that will lead to increased survival and quality of life. For more information about Rising Tide, Home - Rising Tide Foundation

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY:

RTFCCR-MRA TEAM SCIENCE AWARDS ON IMPROVING THE EARLY DETECTION, DIAGNOSIS, AND RISK STRATIFICATION OF MELANOMA

Letters of Intent due October 27, 2025 by 11:59 pm Eastern Time
Estimated LOI decisions: mid-December 2025
Invited Full Proposals due February 2, 2026 by 11:59 pm Eastern Time

The MRA and RTFCCR will jointly support a Team Science Award for clinical validation studies or pilot (phase I) clinical trials aimed at improving melanoma early detection, diagnosis, and risk stratification. **Patient involvement must be actively demonstrated throughout the full life cycle of the work, including planning and dissemination.** For more information, about how to effectively involve patient partners in research, please watch this video.

We define patient involvement as meaningful engagement of patient partners in the development of therapeutic, detection, or prevention approaches to cancer care. It encompasses the active and collaborative interaction between patient partners and researchers across all stages of the research process from conception to results distribution, where research decision making is supported by patient partners' contributions, recognizing their specific experiences, values, and expertise.

These awards will support innovative approaches with preliminary data, where funding is required to advance the validation of tests, technologies, or devices. We welcome applications from all research groups with a track record in melanoma. Grant applicants should actively involve patient partners in the protocol design.

Term: Up to three years

Amount: Up to $900,000.

Number of Expected Awards: Up to two awards will be supported.

Applicants should submit to the ***RTFCCR-MRA Team Science Award*** LOI opportunity in Proposal Central.

If selected for funding, awardees will be asked to prepare separate budgets with 50% of support provided by RTFCCR and another 50% from MRA. Each funder's financial support will be governed by its own award agreement terms and conditions with the Administrative PI's institution.

Purpose:

RTFCCR and MRA have identified early detection and accurate diagnosis of melanoma and the identification of high-risk patients whose primary tumors are most likely to progress as significant areas of unmet need. The purpose of this call for proposals is to solicit high quality research proposals focused on improving the early detection, diagnosis, and risk stratification of melanoma.

Scope:

The RFP aims to support clinical validation studies or phase I clinical trials using new or improved imaging technologies, biomarkers, monitoring algorithms, diagnostic or screening tests, or devices. Studies proposing the use of technologies that are easily scalable are encouraged.

Examples of the clinical utility of the tests include, but are not limited to:

- Improving stratification criteria for patients with melanoma who are at high-risk of recurrence or progression
- Diagnostic or early-stage melanoma prognostic factors (biomarkers)
- Improving diagnosis and risk stratification of rare and more aggressive subtypes of melanoma across different skin colors, with a focus on acral and nodular subtypes

Eligibility Criteria:

The following criteria must be met for the proposed study:

- The study should validate newly identified tests, test methods, devices, biomarkers, or technologies (eg, imaging technologies, AI).
- At the time of application submission, the study needs to have preliminary data proving the association between the proposed test or detection marker and melanoma.
- Patient and/or caregiver partners must be involved in study design and execution, and the proposal must involve a patient involvement plan.

This RFP does **NOT** support:

- Nation-wide population screening
- Awareness and/or education campaigns aimed at patients or healthcare providers
- Studies using existing tests that have been clinically validated
- Studies using tests that lack data demonstrating the analytical validation in patient populations/samples

- Studies using tests whose intellectual property is owned by a private entity, such as start-ups or biotech companies

Patient partner involvement in research

We adopt the patient partner definition provided by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI). PCORI's definition includes patients (those with lived experience), family members, caregivers, and organizations representative of the population of interest in a particular study.

It is important that patient partners are not confused with trial participants. Patient partners are members of the research team and involved in the planning, conducting, and dissemination of the research, whereas trial participants are individuals enrolled in the study.

We define patient involvement as meaningful involvement of patient partners in the development of detection, therapeutic, or symptom management approaches. It encompasses the active, meaningful, and collaborative interaction between patient partners and researchers across all stages of the research process, where research decision-making is guided by patient partners' contributions, recognizing their specific experiences, values, and expertise.

The strategy, modalities, and budgets for patient partners' involvement, related deliverables, and expected outcomes can be included in the grant budget, as long as they are clearly described in the grant application.

Guidance for planning patient partner involvement in research

Early involvement of patient partners, based on co-design principles, allows for a better formulation of relevant research questions, more credibility of the knowledge produced, identifying, and solving potential challenges faced during the trial, and better application of outcomes to specific contexts.

Here is a checklist to help plan patient partner involvement and complete the Patient Partner Involvement Plan required with the Letter of Intent (LOI). It encompasses points that should be considered during the application phase, during the project's implementation, and beyond the project.

Before the project starts:

- Patient partner involvement is planned across the entire project lifecycle.
- The most appropriate patient partner involvement model is selected.
- The appropriate patient partners are involved early in formulating the concept and hypothesis of the study.
- The appropriate budget for patient partner involvement activities and compensation of patient partners is reflected in the patient partner involvement plan and the overall grant budget request.

During the project:

- The assessment of the needs of trial participants by patient partners is included.
- The trial procedures are adapted where necessary to meet trial participants' needs.

- An assessment of the impact of Patient Involvement is considered at the mid-term and end of the project.

Beyond the project:

- Communication and dissemination of study outcomes with patient/public partners is planned after the project ends.
- Collaboration with the patients' community on trial outcomes is planned.

Please find more information here.

Choice of model of patient partner involvement in research projects

Research teams should think carefully about activities across the whole project lifecycle that patient partners could undertake. Short term activities are easy to define upfront, but it is more challenging to consider sustained involvement across the entire project. Therefore, depending on the research project, it is important to consider the most applicable role of a patient partner for contributing to the clinical research project. Applicants will be asked in the full application to provide a detailed explanation to justify the patient role selected for the project.

Patient partner role	Examples	Involvement level
CONSULTANT	• Patient partners provide priority and continuous consultation on outcomes of importance, study design, etc. • Patient partners are paid investigators or consultants. • Patient partners have a governance role – "a seat at the table".	High
ADVISOR	• Patient partners serve as advisory committee members or provide a priori consultation on outcomes of importance and study design but have no leadership role or governance authority.	Moderate
REACTOR	• Patient partners' input is collected distally through surveys, focus groups, or interviews. Still, patients are not consulted directly or a priori on such things as study design and outcomes of importance. • Patient partners are asked to react to what has been put before them rather than being the origin of the concepts of interest.	Low

Patient Partner Involvement Plan

We require the submission of a Patient Partner Involvement Plan as part of the LOI. It should then be revisited or adapted for the Full Application. The plan should describe patient partner involvement processes during the generation of the project application and during the implementation of your project. It describes involvement, such as how you engage with the

patient community when your research question is defined, while the proposal is written, when it is being submitted and resubmitted, and which patient partner involvement model you chose to implement the project.

When developing the project budget, please ensure that adequate and realistic resources for patient partner involvement are reflected in the Patient Partner Involvement Plan and the overall grant budget request. This could include an appropriate budget for work time (staff or contractors inpatient organizations) and project-related pass-through costs (e.g., travel expenses, meeting venue costs).

In summary, different phases of research will need different activities to ensure patient partner involvement is implemented in the way defined in this document.

Clearly state how the patient partner's input has been used to design the application and how it will be implemented throughout the project activities.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

General eligibility requirements:

- **MRA encourages applications from a diverse pool of investigators with respect to race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, and disability.** MRA recognizes that diversity in the biomedical research workforce is critical for ensuring that the most creative minds have the opportunity to contribute to realizing our research goals and to ensuring more equitable health outcomes for all.
- **Principal Investigators (PIs) must hold a full-time faculty appointment at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent) or above at an academic or other non-profit research institution within or outside the United States**.
- PIs must be able to show clear evidence of an independent research program.
- If previously funded by MRA, applicant must be up-to-date on all reporting requirements.
- Fellows or those in other training or research support positions are not eligible to apply.
- Individuals employed by state or federal government agencies may participate in research proposals as non-funded collaborators, but may not apply for MRA funding.
- Investigators need not be specifically trained in melanoma research; however, they should be working in an environment capable of conducting high-quality, high-impact melanoma research.
- **An investigator may serve as PI on only one proposal submitted to MRA across any and all of the award mechanisms in this cycle, including any Special Opportunity Awards.**
- Mentors for Young Investigator Award applicants may serve as a PI on a separate proposal this cycle; however, that proposal must represent a distinct hypothesis from the Young Investigator's proposal.
- Multiple applications will be accepted from a single institution, provided that each application has a different PI and represents a distinct hypothesis.

RTFCCR-MRA Team Science Award eligibility requirements:

- Team must be multidisciplinary, and consist of two or more established Principal Investigators, one of whom is designated the Administrative PI, a Young Investigator with complementary expertise, and a Mentor for the Young Investigator;
- Teams may consist of investigators from the same institution, or different institutions, and may be international;

- The designated Administrative PI is responsible for administrative leadership. All other Principal Investigators on the team share authority for scientific leadership;
- The Administrative PI and any other Principal Investigators on the team must be senior investigators, past the initial five years of their first academic faculty appointment and must hold a full-time faculty appointment at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent) or above. Co-PIs are not allowed. Other investigators on the team need to be designated as Co-Investigators, Collaborators, or Consultants. See Step #6 under the Application Instructions below for additional details and descriptions of these roles;
- An investigator may serve as a PI, including Administrative PI or Principal Investigator on a Team, on only one proposal this cycle;
- **Each team must include at least one Young Investigator and a designated Mentor for the Young Investigator** (the Mentor is not required to have any additional role within the team), whose work must be integral to one or more of the aims of the proposal (see and comply with all Young Investigator eligibility criteria below);
- An investigator may only be the designated Young Investigator on one application in the Team Science Award category. However, a Young Investigator identified within a Team Science Award application may also apply in the same cycle for their own, individual Young Investigator Award provided that application has a unique research focus and hypothesis.

Young Investigator eligibility requirements:

- **Applicants must be within the first five years of their first independent, full time academic faculty appointment at the application deadline, at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent position);**
- Applicants must designate at least one Mentor who is an established investigator at the same institution who will ensure that adequate support and guidance are provided for successful completion of the proposed research project and provide career mentorship. At least one Mentor with expertise in melanoma research is strongly advised;
- Applicants who have secured an independent full-time faculty position commencing by June 1, 2026 will be considered; in this case, a letter from an institutional official or department chairperson confirming the planned date of faculty appointment is required at the time of application;
- Applicants do not have to be on a tenure-track; however, fellows or others who are in training positions are not eligible to apply;
- Applicants who are in research support positions are not eligible to apply;
- Applicants who have been awarded a prior MRA Young Investigator Award are not eligible to apply for an additional MRA Young Investigator Award;
- Applicants may serve as PI on only one proposal submitted to MRA for any of the award mechanisms in this cycle;
- **All Young Investigator applicants must complete and return the Applicant Eligibility Checklist along with the LOI submission.**

If there are any questions about eligibility, please contact science@curemelanoma.org before submitting an application. Applications from PIs who do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be reviewed.

REVIEW AND SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used to assess the importance, originality, rigor, translational nature of, and degree to which the proposal will lead to rapid clinical benefit.

- **Overall Scientific and Clinical Importance:** Original, innovative, and transformative research approaches with strong scientific rationale and clear capacity to enhance prevention, detection, diagnosis, staging, and/or treatment for patients with melanoma or for individuals at risk will be prioritized. Proposals that articulate a clear path to near-term clinical application will be strongly favored.
- **Rigor and Feasibility:** MRA seeks outstanding and technically rigorous proposals as determined by peer review. Overall study design, methodology, and analyses must be feasible and appropriate to accomplish specific aims.
- **Investigator/Environment:** Applicant has appropriate training, expertise, and evidence of productivity (inclusive of publications, datasets, code, patents, etc.), to carry out proposed research. Applicant's institution and department are sufficiently committed to area of research proposed and to the applicant. Equipment and other institutional resources are sufficient to support the applicant. *In the case of Young Investigator applicants, selected Mentor(s) is appropriate to advance applicant's career and project with evidence of a strong mentorship relationship.* One Mentor must be at the same institution as the applicant.
- Each of the above criteria will account for approximately one-third of the overall score.

LETTER OF INTENT FORMAT AND INSTRUCTIONS

Team Science Award applicants must submit a letter of intent (LOI) to MRA prior to submission of a full proposal (upon invitation). **Please carefully follow the instructions in Proposal Central.**

1. **Title Page:** Enter the project title.
   Under subprogram, select the RTFCCR-MRA Special Opportunity
2. **Download Templates and Instructions:** Download RFP and templates.

3. **Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal:** Allow others (e.g., institutional administrators or collaborators) to view, edit, or submit your proposal.

4. **Applicant/PI:** Team Science applications must identify one PI for administrative purposes (the Administrative PI for the proposal). This is the Applicant. The Young Investigator cannot be the Administrative PI.

5. **Organization/Institution:** This is the Administrative PI's institution. If your institution has a ROR (Research Organization Registry ID), please include.

6. **Key Personnel:** Two or more established Principal Investigators (one of whom is designated the Administrative PI), a Young Investigator, and a Mentor for the Young Investigator are required on all Team Science Award LOIs and applications. All PIs share authority for project leadership. **Co-PIs are not allowed in this award mechanism.** ORCID IDs are required for PI, Young

Investigator, and Mentor roles. *Please see Key Personnel requirements and descriptions of roles under step #6 of the Application Instructions section of the RFP*.

7. **Upload Attachments:** Upload the following

    a. **Letter of Intent: One page maximum** that includes a) a description of the scientific aims and translational potential; and b) the nature of and rationale for the proposed collaboration, the specific role of each participant, and synergistic opportunities. **Letters exceeding the one-page limit will not be considered**.

    b. **Young Investigator Eligibility Checklist and Biosketch:** Required to confirm eligibility. Requires signature of the Department Chair, Division Head, or Dean. Eligibility checklist can be accessed **here**. Applicants can use their NIH biosketch or the template provided in Proposal Central.

    c. **Patient Partner Involvement Plan:** Include a Patient Partner Involvement Plan using the template provided in Proposal Central.

8. **PI Data Sheet:** Please enter your ORCID ID and other requested demographic information. If you do not have an ORCID ID, you can register for one here: https://orcid.org/register. Please note that requested demographic information will NOT be used by MRA in any way during the selection process. Having such information will help MRA better understand its applicant and awardee pool and detect and address any inequities that exist in the selection process.

9. **Validate:** Check for any missing required information.

10. **Submit:** Please note that no proposals will be able to be submitted past their deadline. Technical support for the on-line application system is not available after 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time.

Full length applications will be invited from meritorious LOIs in mid-December 2025.

APPLICATION FORMAT AND INSTRUCTIONS (ALL AWARDS)

All applications are due by 11:59 pm Eastern Time. Proposals will not be considered after the deadline. Applicants must use Proposal Central and the document templates and requirements therein. Please carefully follow the instructions in Proposal Central and below. Applications include the following steps and components:

1. **Title Page:** Enter the project title.
   Under subprogram, select RTFCCR Special Opportunity.

2. **Templates and Instructions:** Download RFP and templates.

3. **Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal:** Allow others (e.g., institutional administrators or collaborators) to view, edit, or submit your proposal. Electronic signatures are required to submit the application for submission. ***The Signing Official from the applicant's institution must be***

provided at least 'Edit' access on this screen to be able to sign. Please review the Signature Page to confirm the signature roles required and add as appropriate on this page.
PLEASE MAKE SURE TO GRANT ACCESS AHEAD OF TIME TO YOUR INSTITUTION'S SIGNING OFFICIAL TO AVOID ANY LAST-MINUTE ISSUES WITH SIGNING AND SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION.

4. **Applicant/PI:** Key information about the applicant PI.

5. **Organization/Institution:** Key information about the PI's institution, including name and email address of the signing official who, in addition to the PI, will be contacted if the award is selected for funding. If your institution has a ROR (Research Organization Registry ID), please include.

6. **Key Personnel:** List and provide contact information for key persons. Include everyone **except the applicant** who will contribute to the scientific development or execution of the project in a substantive, measurable way whether they receive salaries or compensation under the grant. Besides the applicant, ORCID IDs are required for the following roles in Team Science applications: PI, Young Investigator and Mentor.

   Descriptions of Key Personnel roles:
   Administrative PI: Serves as the team leader and primary point of contact for MRA Staff. Along with sharing scientific leadership with other team PIs, the Administrative PI ensures the team complies with the terms of the award, including all reporting, contractual, and financial obligations. The Administrative PI's institution will oversee all organization assurances and certifications.

   Principal Investigator: PI(s) share authority for project leadership equally with the Administrative PI. Team Science Award application must include at least one PI, in addition to the Administrative PI.

   Co-Investigator: Co-I's are vital scientific contributors (at the same or a different institution from the Administrative PI), often bringing a needed expertise to the research team. They commit some level of measurable effort to the project and are, therefore, always designated as Key Personnel whether being compensated or otherwise.

   Collaborator: Play a lesser role in the thinking and logistics of the project than a Principle Investigator or Co-Investigator. Depending on the role and effort, a collaborator may be designated as Key Personnel (although not required) and may be compensated.

   Young Investigator: Each team must include at least one Young Investigator whose work must be integral to one or more of the aims of the proposal. Young Investigators must be within the first five years of their first independent, full time academic faculty appointment at the application deadline, at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent position). Young Investigators must be designated as Key Personnel.

   Mentor: All Young Investigator applicants must designate at least one mentor who is an established investigator at the same institution as the Mentee. Mentors must ensure that adequate support and guidance are provided for successful completion of the proposed research project and provide career mentorship. **Designating at least one Mentor with**

expertise in melanoma research is strongly advised. Mentor(s) must provide a letter of support for the Young Investigator and be designated as Key Personnel.

Consultant: Provides guidance on specific aspects of the research project, as their expertise applies. A consultant may be designated as Key Personnel (although not required) and may be compensated.

Others: Key Personnel may also include (but are not required) project managers, technicians, postdoctoral associates, fellows, research assistants or graduate students, if they will contribute to the scientific development or execution of the project in a substantive, measurable way.

REQUIRED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR KEY PERSONNEL					
Personnel	**Include in KP Section**	**Biosketch**	**Current/Pending Support**	**Letter of Support**	**ORCID ID required**
Administrative PI	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
Principal Investigator	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
Co-Investigator	If applicable	Yes	No	Optional	No
Collaborator	If applicable	Yes, if included as KP	No	Optional	No
Mentor	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Young Investigator	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Project Manager	Optional	Yes, if included as KP	No	No	No
Technician	Optional	Yes, if included as KP	No	No	No
Consultant	If applicable	Yes, if included as KP	No	No	No
Postdoctoral/Fellow	Optional	Yes, if included as KP	No	No	No
Graduate Student	Optional	Yes, if included as KP	No	No	No
Other (such as research asst, etc.)	Optional	Yes, if included as KP	No	No	No

7. **Data and Renewable Reagent Sharing Plan:** In order to promote rapid research advancement, transparency, reproducibility, and collaboration, MRA encourages the open sharing of data and resources generated from its funded awards. Provide information for the types of data and renewable reagents that will be generated as part of the award and how they will be shared.

   MRA has adopted the following **Data Sharing Policy**:

   - MRA **recommends** the posting of manuscripts based on or developed under an MRA Award to a pre-print server ahead of or at the time of journal submission.
   - MRA **recommends** the posting of research outputs (data, code, software) to public data repositories at the time such research outputs are generated.
   - MRA **recommends** that manuscripts based on or developed under an MRA Award be published in open-access journals.
   - MRA **recommends** that all research outputs based on or developed under an MRA Award (including publications, data, code, and software) be made available with no commercial modification rights (e.g. CC BY-NC license).
   - MRA **requires** that the final, accepted version of any publication based on or developed under an MRA Award be deposited in PubMed Central so that it is available 12 months after publication.
   - MRA **requires** that any data, code, and/or software needed for the independent verification of published research results based on or developed under an MRA Award be curated and made freely and publicly available at the time of publication.

   MRA will incur costs associated with policy compliance, provided these fees (e.g. article processing charges, data storage), are included in the original grant application budget.

8. **Abstracts and Keywords:** Provide a general audience abstract (non-technical) and a technical abstract (2,000 characters, *including spaces,* maximum each) and keywords. Please note: the general audience abstract will become public if the award is selected for funding, therefore, it should not contain any proprietary information.

9. **Budget Period Detail:** Enter budget detail for each award period requested. The funds must be used for research-related costs.
   Permissible Direct Costs include the following:
   - Personnel expenses including salary, wage, or stipend with fringe benefits. Supplies and materials requests should be itemized by category.
   - Equipment purchase requests are allowable and applicant must demonstrate that the equipment is directly used and vital for the conduct of the project. Equipment requests may be denied upon further review of the full application and will be funded only upon approval from Rising Tide and MRA.
   - Other direct cost requests can include patient care costs and contract services.
   - Travel costs are allowable by MRA and upon approval by RTFCCR.
   - Please also include any costs associated with compliance to MRA's data sharing policy.

   Indirect Costs: This RFP will not support indirect costs, overhead costs or other institutional levies. However, fringe benefits for personnel salaries are allowable.

10. **Budget Summary and Justification:** A summary of the budget detail will be shown in this step. In addition, provide sufficient detail for the evaluation of the major portions of the budget that are being requested. If more space is required than is provided in the Proposal Central forms (2,000 characters), applicants may upload the budget justification in document form in step #13.

11. **Current and Pending Research Support:** Please list all current and pending support for the Administrative PI, Principal Investigators, and Young Investigators.

    Any overlap of current or pending support with the MRA proposal must be described and explained. Current and pending support can be added to your (and other Key Personnel's) Professional Profile on Proposal Central by clicking on the 'Professional Profile' tab and going to Step #6: Other Support.

    To add your entries, please click on the "+" link and all entries previously saved in your Professional Profile will show. Please select the applicable support, and save. For Administrative PI, Principal Investigators, and Young Investigators, if they have granted you at least 'View' access to their profile, you can select Other Support from their profile as well. If they have not provided you 'View' access, please download the "Current and Pending Support" template provided in step #2 of the application, fill it out with their Other Support, and upload the completed document as an attachment in step #13.

12. **Organizational Assurances:** IRB and IACUC approvals, if applicable.

13. **Upload Attachments:** Upload the following:
    a. **Biosketch for PI and Key Personnel**: Please upload an NIH format biosketch all Key Personnel listed in step #6. Biosketches for research support staff, students, postdocs and other training positions are not required. Applicants who do not have an NIH biosketch may use the template provided in Proposal Central. Besides publications, MRA welcomes the inclusion of research outputs such as datasets, code, patents, and papers posted to preprint servers.

    b. **Current and pending research support:** Use this template ONLY for Key Personnel where the applicant does not have access via Proposal Central to their support. Whenever possible, please enter PI and Key Personnel support directly into Proposal Central in the "Current and Pending Support" section (step #11). Use the template provided in Proposal Central (in steps #2 and #13) to provide information on all current and pending support for appropriate Key Personnel (Administrative PI, Principal Investigators, and Young Investigators ONLY) not included in step #11. Any overlap of current or pending support with the MRA proposal must be described and explained.

    c. **Project description:** Must be formatted in Arial 11 point or Times New Roman 12-point font with no less than ½ inch margins. The project description should be 5 pages maximum, inclusive of the following: Background and specific aims, preliminary data, experimental design and methods, statistical plan, figures (which may be embedded within the above sections), and rationale/fit with key criteria, including the potential for clinical impact.

    d. **Literature references:** A list of up to 30 references supporting the project description is allowed, in addition to the 5-page project description.

e. **Mentor Letter of Support**: Include letters of support from any Mentor(s) designated in the Key Personnel section of the application. The letter(s) should confirm that the applicant has an independent research program and include a brief statement about the applicant, the Mentor's role, mentoring plan, the research environment, and sources of institutional support that the applicant will utilize in conducting the project. MRA recognizes that unconscious bias can manifest in such support letters and therefore strongly recommends considering these or similar guidelines when preparing such letters: https://tinyurl.com/yapwnw3a

f. **Young Investigator Applicant Eligibility Checklist**: Required to confirm eligibility. Requires signature of the Department Chair, Division Head, or Dean. Must be uploaded into Proposal Central with the LOI by October 27, 2025 (LOI deadline). Please also upload a copy as part of the application. Can be accessed **here**.

g. **Patient Partner Involvement Plan:** Include a Patient Partner Involvement Plan using the template provided in Proposal Central. Specific guidance for preparing a Patient Partner Involvement Plan can be found here. Incorporate any feedback provided by MRA staff (will be emailed separately to the applicant).

h. **For proposals involving clinical trials:** Attach a brief protocol synopsis (5 pages maximum), along with a timeline and milestones, including but not limited to IRB and regulatory approval (if applicable), patient accrual timeline, and timeline for completion of analyses.

i. **Application checklist:** Please fill out to ensure all application materials are complete and applicant is eligible to apply.

14. **Statement of Proposal's Fit Within MRA's Research Program**: Provide a brief statement (up to 2000 characters) of how the proposed research project fits within MRA's overall research portfolio, which can be found here: https://www.curemelanoma.org/research/grants. If the work builds on a previously funded project(s), please explain.

15. **PI Data Sheet**: Please enter your ORCID ID and other requested demographic information. If you do not have an ORCID ID, you can register for one here: https://orcid.org/register. Please note that requested demographic information will NOT be used by MRA in any way during the selection process. Having such information will help MRA better understand its applicant and awardee pool and detect and address any inequities identified.

16. **Validate**: Check for any missing required information.

17. **Signature Page(s)**: ***Before submitting the application*****,** an electronic signature is **required** from both the Applicant/PI and a Signing Official from the applicant's institution. Type your name in the text box and click the green 'Sign' button. A date and time stamp will appear next to the button indicating that the electronic signature was successful. To give the Signing Official access to sign this application, enter their information in Step #3: "Enable other users to access this proposal" and grant them at least "Edit" access.

18. **Submit**: Please note that no proposals will be able to be submitted past their deadline. Technical support for the on-line application system is not available after 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time or on weekends.

TIMELINE

All application deadlines conclude at 11:59 pm Eastern Time. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

- **October 27, 2025:** Deadline for Letters of Intent (LOI)
- **Mid-December 2025 (estimate):** Meritorious LOIs invited to submit full proposals
- **February 2, 2026:** Invited full applications due
- **May 2026:** Awardees notified (Note that MRA may adjust the notification date without notice to applicants)
- **June 1, 2026:** Projects start

REVIEW MECHANISM

All proposals will undergo rigorous peer review by a joint Scientific Review Committee appointed by the MRA and RTFCCR. (Full listing of the MRA GRC is available here: www.curemelanoma.org/GRC). Applications will be scored according to the Review and Selection Criteria outlined above. To minimize any real or perceived conflicts of interest (COI), MRA asks reviewers to adhere to a rigorous set of COI guidelines. MRA also provides reviewers with curated resources to help mitigate any potential implicit bias in the review process. For further information about these guidelines and resources, email science@curemelanoma.org. All awards are contingent upon ratification by both the MRA's and RTFCCR's Board of Directors. **MRA will make every effort to provide brief, written reviewer feedback on full applications to all applicants; however, occasionally such comments may not be available due to unforeseen circumstances**. A listing of all research projects funded by MRA, along with abstracts, are provided on our website, and are searchable by investigator, institution, or award at https://www.curemelanoma.org/research/grants.

AWARD ADMINISTRATION

AWARD LETTER

Upon acceptance of the award, the Administrative PI and their employing Institution will be required to sign an Award Letter indicating acceptance of the MRA's Award Terms and Conditions within 30 days. Rising Tide will contract with the awarded Administrative PI's Institution for their portion of the award funds using Rising Tide's Grant Contract. If you would like to request a copy of MRA's or RTFCCR's Award Terms and Conditions to review ahead of applying, you may do so by emailing science@curemelanoma.org or Zoriade Granchi PhD, Rising Tide's Senior Scientific Program Manager, at zoraide.granchi@risingtide.ch. MRA must be notified in advance and approve any significant changes in research objectives, key personnel (including transfer to another employee), or budget.

APPROVALS

MRA requires certification through Proposal Central of compliance with Human Subjects and Animal Care Assurance as applicable. In cases where ethical/regulatory approval is required to perform the work, such approvals will be required before initial payments are made. This includes local IRB approvals of clinical trials supported by MRA funding. For clinical trials, a timeline and milestones must be included in the application package. Failure to meet these milestones within a reasonable time frame may result in termination of the award.

MULTI-INSTITUTIONAL PROJECTS

For projects including key personnel at other institutions, the PI must verify in advance that funds can be transferred from their institution to the collaborating institution. This requirement can be easily met by attaching a letter from the PI's sponsored programs office stating a commitment to comply with this requirement. Sub-award agreements between collaborating institutions must be executed within 60 days of MRA's execution of the award agreement with the applicant institution.

FUNDING

For all proposals, the level and duration of funding may be adjusted by MRA as appropriate for the scope of the proposal and the funds available. Partial funding will also be considered to obtain proof-of-principle data in support of innovative ideas with transformative potential. **Awards will not support indirect costs, overhead costs, or other similar institutional charges**; however, fringe benefits for personnel salaries are allowable. **Full-term funding will be contingent upon review of annual progress reports and other oversight activities conducted by MRA.** Multi-year support is not automatic for any MRA award and is conditioned on submission of complete and accurate progress reports, financial reports, and demonstrated progress on the funded proposal. Under each of its Grant Contracts, Rising Tide will pay the grant recipient against pre-set milestones (more fully described in the Grant Contract) as reflected in a written research progress report prepared by the grant recipient.

MRA SCIENTIFIC RETREAT

PIs will be invited to attend the annual MRA Scientific Retreat. PIs are expected to attend and may be asked to present research findings made under their awards at these meetings. MRA will cover reasonable travel costs related to participation in the Scientific Retreat out of the agency budget, and as such, travel for the retreat should not be included within your submitted budget. The 2026 Annual Scientific Retreat is scheduled for February 25–27, 2026 in Washington, DC.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Eligibility

Q: Must PIs have an academic faculty appointment? Is this a hard-and-fast rule?

A: PIs must have a full-time appointment at an academic or non-profit research institution at the level of 'Assistant Professor' (or equivalent) or above; however, a tenure-track appointment is not required. Evidence of independent investigator status and an environment conducive and supportive of melanoma research is required. If there is any doubt or question about a PI's eligibility, please contact science@curemelanoma.org before an application is submitted. Applications from PIs who do not fit the eligibility criteria will not be reviewed.

Q: Does MRA fund investigators and institutions outside of the United States?

A: Yes. Investigators at non-profit institutions outside of the United States are eligible. PIs must be at the level of 'Assistant Professor' or equivalent. Academic appointments at institutions outside of the U.S. can differ from those traditionally found in the U.S. Contact MRA if there are any questions about eligibility prior to submitting a proposal.

Young Investigators

Q: I do not hold the title of Assistant Professor but I do hold the title of my institution's entry level, full-time faculty position. Am I eligible to apply?

A: Appointments such as research assistant professor, adjunct assistant professor, assistant professor research track, instructor, or lecturer may be eligible to apply as long as your institution considers this an independent, faculty-level position and you have independent lab space. If you are uncertain, please verify your eligibility by the LOI deadline by emailing science@curemelanoma.org.

Q: I am within my first five years of an Assistant Professor position, but previously held an entry level full-time faculty position such as research assistant professor, adjunct assistant professor, assistant professor research track, instructor, or lecturer, either at my current institution or at a different institution. Am I still eligible to apply?

A: If you held any independent faculty-level position prior to November 6, 2020, then you are not eligible to apply.

Q: I will be past the first five years of my first faculty appointment at the time the project starts. May I apply for a Young Investigator Award?

A: Yes, as long as you are within the first five years of your first faculty appointment at the time of proposal submission.

Q: I will be past the first five years of my first faculty appointment at the time of application but I took time off for personal, family, or professional reasons. Does this count against eligibility?

A: If an applicant took leave of absence for family or medical leave or other personal or professional reasons, please inquire to MRA about eligibility. An appropriately documented leave of absence will not be counted in the five years of eligibility. Leaves of absence may include: military service (that does not include research training/experience), family leave, and maternity leave. MRA will extend the period of eligibility for a period equivalent to the time away from research.

Q: I am a Fellow at an academic institution. Am I eligible to apply as a Young Investigator?

A: Generally, no, unless the Fellow title is at least equivalent to Assistant Professor position (which is sometimes the case outside of the U.S.). Those in training positions are not eligible. Only those with a faculty level appointment will be considered. Young Investigator Award applicants who do not hold an 'Assistant Professor' title must contact MRA to verify their eligibility prior to submitting a proposal (see contact information in this RFP) and complete the Applicant Eligibility Checklist.

Q: What is the role of the Mentor?

A: It is expected that Young Investigators are independent faculty members and not in training or in research support positions. However, a Mentor is required to help ensure that the Young Investigator has the resources they need to successfully carry out the work at their institution. It is strongly advised that Young Investigator applicants have at least one Mentor with expertise in melanoma research.

Q: I would like to have a Mentor that is not at my institution. Is this allowed?
A: No. All Young Investigator applicants must have a designated Mentor at their institution to help to ensure that the Young Investigator has the resources they need to successfully carry out the work at their institution. An applicant may have additional Mentors outside of their institution for other purposes, including providing scientific guidance for the project.

Q: Are Mentors of Young Investigator applicants allowed to be a PI of an existing MRA award or award application this cycle?
A: Yes, however, each research proposal must have a distinct hypothesis and scientific aims.

Q: Is there a minimum level of effort for the Mentor?
A: No. Mentors should not be listed as having any percent effort on the award.

Q: What is the expected level of percent effort for a Young Investigator?
A: There is no specific requirement around percent effort, but MRA encourages a minimum of 10% effort on the project.

Application components

Q: Do I need to have an ORCID ID?
A: Yes. MRA now requires that all applicants provide an ORCID ID, as well as the following Key Personnel roles: PI, Young Investigator, and Mentor. If you do not have an ORCID ID, you can register for one here: https://orcid.org/register. More information about ORCID IDs can be found here.

Q: Why is MRA collecting demographic information?
A: MRA requests that applicants and selected Key Personnel roles (PI, Young Investigator, and Mentor), provide demographic information in Proposal Central; however, this information is NOT required and will NOT be used in any way during the selection process. Having such information will help MRA better understand its applicant and awardee pool and detect and address any inequities that exist in the selection process.

Q: How are proposals submitted? Do I need to send a hard copy?
A: All proposals must be submitted electronically through Proposal Central. Proposal Central will only accept electronic signatures on applications.

Q: Does MRA require the NIH salary cap to be used when calculating salary and fringe benefit requests for the budget?
A: No, but applicants may use it at their discretion.

Q: What needs to be included in the "Current and Pending Support" section?
A: Please submit a listing of all sponsored research support for the effort of the PI that is active or pending (submitted or awarded by a research sponsor but not yet started). Include the title

of the project, research sponsor, total annual funding, start and end dates, and percent of committed time. For each project, you must include a statement of overlap or non-overlap with the MRA proposal. A template is provided in Proposal Central.

Q: Is the NIH biosketch format acceptable for submission to MRA?
A: Yes, MRA encourages you to use your NIH biosketch. You may also use the template provided in Proposal Central.

Q: Who should I reach out to if I have a question about patient involvement in the clinical trial?
A: If you have any questions about patient involvement, please contact zoraide.granchi@risingtide.ch.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

Email questions about this RFP, eligibility, or other issues about MRA or its awards to science@curemelanoma.org. For questions on the patient involvement plan or questions for RTFCCR, please email Zoraide Granchi, PhD, Rising Tide's Senior Scientific Program Manager, at zoraide.granchi@risingtide.ch.

Technical questions about the Proposal Central submission system should be directed to their customer support at 800-875-2562 (Toll-free U.S. and Canada), +1 703-964-5840 (Direct Dial International) or by email at pcsupport@altum.com. Support is available from 8:30am-5pm ET, Monday through Friday.