



Career Development Program Guidelines & Instructions

Special Fellow

July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

Application Deadlines	
Eligibility Phase deadline:	October 17, 2025; 3:00 PM (ET)
Letter of Intent Phase deadline:	November 1, 2025, 3:00 PM (ET)
Letters of Reference deadline:	November 15, 2025, 3:00 PM (ET)
Full Application Phase deadline:	November 15, 2025, 3:00 PM (ET)
Award Start date:	July 1, 2026

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What's New?

Number of Special Fellow Applicants Associated with a Lab

We are expanding access to this award by allowing those that are co-mentored and working in two different labs to apply. Starting in the current application cycle, any one Sponsor may have up to one Special Fellow applicant fully mentored by the Sponsor and one Special Fellow applicant partly mentored by the Sponsor and partly mentored by another person from another lab. A variation is that one person may have two Special Fellow applicants partly mentored by that person and partly mentored by another person. ***There are no other acceptable variations.*** In these co-mentored situations, the applicant is generally working in both labs and/or is working on a project that is overlapping in both labs. The primary mentor must be the Sponsor, and is usually the official primary mentor whose lab the trainee spends the most time in. The primary mentor may also be defined by who is paying the salary (including which institution is paying).

The purpose of this rule is to create a fair system to increase access while also ensuring that large labs do not take too large a share of available CDP slots and leaving less for the smaller labs. However, this new policy also potentially increases the number of mentees that are supported from any one lab.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society staff have the final say on implementing this policy.

ORCID

Starting this application cycle, we are requiring all applicants to sign up for ORCID (<https://orcid.org/>) and provide their ORCID number during the LOI phase and to keep their profile updated for the remainder of the funding period, if awarded. This policy will enhance our ability to track former awardees which will help us understand the level of success of the Career Development Program.

Disease Demographics and Equitable Research Models and Approaches

Last cycle, we added a Disease Demographics and Equitable Research Models and Approaches section. While some applicants presented clear information on disease demographics and a thoughtful description of how they might consider equitable research models and approaches, others did not. To achieve better descriptions, we have separated these into two separate sections. We are also encouraging potential applicants to begin thinking about this early. The SEER database is a great place to start, while Google and PubMed searches may help as well. Reviewers will give a score boost to those with clear information on demographics and thoughtful discussions about equitable research models and approaches while those with little information on demographics and lack of thoughtful discussions about equitable research will get a score reduction.

Application Compliance

In prior award cycles, ~20-30% of eligibility requests were rejected. We have updated the eligibility form to make rejections far less likely, but it takes much more time to complete. **To avoid eligibility rejection, read these Guidelines & Instructions carefully and fill out the eligibility form completely. Be sure to start this process early.**

A rejected applicant can only re-submit an eligibility request once.

In prior cycles, >10% of Career Development Program (CDP) applications submitted (from all non-clinical subcategories) were disqualified without full review based on non-compliance with the Mission Relevance of the application and environment. Carefully read the Mission Relevance and Mission Score sections to determine if The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's CDP award mechanism best fits your research, mentorship environment, and career goals. The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society has recently taken an active role in making sure that our scarce funds go to applicants who are most closely aligned with our Mission.

In recent years, approximately 10-15% of all full applications had serious structural flaws. These include non-adherence to section lengths, font size, or missing attachments (e.g., a Sponsor Letter or Biosketch), or critical sections not completed (e.g., data attribution).

Applications with such flaws run the risk of administrative disqualification.

Carefully check the final version of your application prior to upload (even if someone else uploads for you).

About The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Inc.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Inc. (LLS) is a national voluntary health agency dedicated to the conquest of hematologic malignancies and relevant premalignant conditions. LLS supports research, patient aid, community service programs, advocacy, and public and professional education.

Description of the CDP Special Fellow Award

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society supports talented blood cancer researchers in the early phase of their careers through the Career Development Program. CDP continues to provide a pool of dedicated researchers to advance the understanding and diagnosis of blood cancer, as well as the development of treatment and prevention options that will ultimately lead to a higher quality of life for blood cancer patients.

The Special Fellow award is a subcategory of CDP that exists to support the career development of mentored trainees. ***This is not a project grant.*** Salary support is given to assist the Special Fellow in all their research activities. As such, all research activities of funded Special Fellows are supported by the Special Fellow award. We ask for a research project as part of your application, which aids in the evaluation process of your overall application package. However, any funded Special Fellow's research is supported by the Special Fellow award, even if it is not directly related to the aims in the original application. Therefore, all presentations and publications of a funded Fellow ***must*** properly acknowledge support from the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

The **Special Fellow** Award is for 2 or 3 years, depending on eligibility, and supports postdoctoral-level trainees (generally those with a title such as "postdoc" "fellow" or "instructor") who are training for a career in blood cancer research and/or treatment. Each Special Fellow has a Sponsor who is their primary mentor and who is the head of the laboratory in which the applicant is pursuing their research.

Recognizing that junior investigators may be excellent Sponsors, we have relaxed the funding requirement for Sponsors with equal to or less than 5 years of independence as of the award start date. See Research Support Requirement section for specific details. This change will increase opportunities for eligible trainees who are under the direct mentorship of high quality,

junior investigators. The blood cancer relevance of the junior Sponsor's current research program must be clear. Given the decreased experience of junior Sponsors, the competitiveness of applicants with these Sponsors may be lower. Therefore, it is highly recommended that applicants having junior Sponsors assemble a mentorship team to help them in all aspects of their research, including grant writing. Though all trainees will likely benefit from a mentorship team, those with junior Sponsors will likely benefit even more.

The Special Fellow award supports postdoctoral-level trainees who have clearly demonstrated success in their current position and who need an additional 2-3 years of training to be competitive for an independent position. The emphasis is on "Special" and not simply "senior." The Special Fellow award is not intended for those who will likely be in an independent academic position within 1 year of this award's start date. Note that any funded Special Fellow may transfer this award to their new institution should they take an independent academic position, **but only if they have had this award for at least one year. Those who have had the Special Fellow award for less than one year will not be allowed to transfer this award if they transition to an independent position.**

The maximum award per year is \$75,000 and includes a *minimum* of \$70,000 for the applicant's salary/stipend. A Special Fellow's salary/stipend may be supplemented by funds from another source. Indirect costs may be included and cannot exceed 5% of the **total award amount** requested in the proposal, up to \$3,750 per year. Any remaining funds may be used for fringe benefits. Expenditures for laboratory costs/equipment, travel, tuition, etc. are not permitted (some exceptions to this rule apply in the case of K99 recipients). It is anticipated that the proposed research will occupy most of the applicant's time, though there are no requirements for a certain percent effort in our budget template.

Funded Fellows and Special Fellows may receive up to \$3,600/year for childcare expenses such as before or afterschool care, preschool, nursery school, nannies, au pairs, or other similar expenses that allow the parent to return to work in the lab. This is in addition to the CDP award stipend. The amount provided will depend on LLS budgetary considerations. These costs are not meant to offset other costs associated with a child (i.e., formula, diapering, etc.), nor will funding be provided when a family member is providing the childcare service (unless that family member is providing care through their childcare business). Though we understand that this stipend is a fraction of the typical yearly cost of childcare, we hope this will provide some relief to allow the parent to return to work in the lab. As such, this supplement goes to parents who have direct childcare responsibilities, which typically means parents who live with or near their child. Please contact researchprogram@lls.org for questions.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society honors those CDP awardees whose awards are ending and who have done the most impactful work. One Special Fellow awardee will be honored with the **CDP Achievement Award**. This high honor will be given to the Special Fellow who has had the most impactful publication of *direct* relevance to blood cancer resulting from their work as a Special Fellow. An absolute requirement is that the publication must acknowledge the support of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (preferably as a specific acknowledgement of this funding mechanism*). Since we consider a CDP awardee to always be part of the LLS family while funded, **all** publications should acknowledge our support, regardless of the aims stated in the original application.* A further consideration is the total publication record and productivity during the award period as well as career trajectory. Lastly, some consideration will include

whether the applicant has complied with reporting requirements as well as reasonable requests from LLS, such as participating in an LLS event.** *Though not guaranteed, we hope to continue the CDP Achievement Awards indefinitely.*

*Use this format when acknowledging The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society: “XYZ...was supported by a Special Fellow award from The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.”

**LLS realizes that not all requests can be fulfilled by the CDP awardee, but if multiple requests are either ignored or are not fulfilled, then this information will contribute to the final CDP Achievement Award decision.

Eligibility

Special Fellow applicants must...

- Have an appropriate Sponsor who:
 - Must be the head of a laboratory at a non-profit, academic institution where the applicant’s research will be performed
 - ***Must be the applicant’s primary research mentor***
 - Must be the applicant’s direct research supervisor, as documented by the institution’s Human Resources department (or equivalent)*
 - Must be a tenure-track, assistant professor or above (or equivalent)
 - Must not be nor have been the applicant’s doctoral-level thesis advisor nor the head of the laboratory where the applicant’s doctoral-level thesis research was performed
 - Must have at least three recent first/last author publications** that **directly** impact our understanding of blood cancer (See Mission Score and Key Publications of Sponsor Demonstrating Blood Cancer Contributions sections); these must be within the last 10 years and may be co-corresponding and/or co/dual first authorship publications
 - Must have adequate blood cancer-focused funding to support the proposed research (See Research Support Requirement section); for Sponsors that have more than 5 years of independent experience (as of the CDP award start date), funding must be at least one grant with a total of \$200,000/year (USD) for at least three years and which is active after the CDP award start date; for Sponsors with 5 years or less of independent experience (as of the CDP award start date), other funding may be acceptable, but it must be clearly focused on blood cancer
 - Must only be a Sponsor for one Special Fellow applicant in any one application cycle

*For applicants with an MD who are in a clinical fellowship (or equivalent), their direct supervisor may be the fellowship program’s director while their research mentor may be someone else. In this case, the research mentor will be the Sponsor. ***Documentation of the role of the research mentor/Sponsor may be asked for during the eligibility phase.***

Peer reviewed manuscripts that are *fully*** accepted by the Eligibility Phase due date are acceptable. A copy of the letter from the journal must be provided to LLS by the Eligibility Phase due date; clear evidence of full acceptance (with no more than minor structural/grammatical changes) is required.

Special Fellow applicants must also...

- Be a postdoc/instructor in their Sponsor's lab at the time of full application submission
- Not be working with a co-mentor that was the applicant's doctoral-level thesis advisor nor the head of the laboratory where the applicant's doctoral-level thesis research was performed
- Have their main current/future project be focused ***directly*** on blood cancer
- Not be in a graduate program at the award start date that takes more than 20% of the applicant's time
- Not plan to concurrently hold a Special Fellow award (should it be awarded) with any career development-type award nor any research grant that has a total value higher than the total value of the Special Fellow award (the exception is the K99)
- Have generated substantial preliminary data during their postdoctoral training that forms the basis of their research proposal; this is an essential part of the review process- ***applicants without such data do not score well during the review meeting***
- Have at least one first author (including co-first or dual-first author), full length (which may include short reports), peer-reviewed, primary research publication available by the Eligibility Phase due date* (***Not*** including reviews, perspectives, conference/meeting presentations or abstracts, etc.)
- Not have any ***unexplained*** gaps in training, education, or employment
- Have a ***total*** of postdoctoral experience that is more than 3 years, but no more than 5 years at the time of the award start date (see Experience/Eligibility Clock for more details)
- Explain all positions and titles starting from their first doctoral-level educational position (graduate school and/or medical school) (when applicable) in the eligibility request form; more detailed explanations are also required for those with training that does not follow the standard US-based training or who have position titles that are not common in the US
- Explain, where appropriate, eligibility window extension requests in the Eligibility Window Extension section of the eligibility template, which may ***only*** be used to request expansion of the window of eligibility describing any of the following**:
 - Dates of parental leave
 - Dates of military service
 - Dates related to Visa issues caused by unusual governmental delays (these are very rare)

*Peer reviewed manuscripts that are ***fully*** accepted by the Eligibility Phase due date are acceptable. A copy of the letter from the journal must be provided to LLS by the Eligibility Phase due date; clear evidence of full acceptance (with no more than minor structural/grammatical changes) is required.

**See Pauses to the Eligibility Clock section for complete details.

Position Title

The Special Fellow award is intended for early/mid-stage postdoctoral fellows. Generally, position titles must be "postdoctoral fellow," "fellow," or "instructor." Other titles may be acceptable based on the applicant's institutional rules if the position is equivalent to a mentored postdoctoral fellow/instructor. Any other titles must be explained in the eligibility request form.

Applicants whose titles significantly differ from the above examples must have a letter submitted by the full application deadline explaining the position and the terminology. If the eligibility form is submitted by the Eligibility Phase deadline, and everything else aligns with LLS's policies, eligibility will likely be provisionally accepted pending receipt and evaluation of this letter. This letter must come from the appropriate institutional representative that is in a position to explain this (e.g., Human Resources). LLS will make the final determination of the nature of any position titles.

Citizenship

The program welcomes applications worldwide from appropriate non-profit academic institutions and investigators of any nationality.

Degree

Applicants must hold a PhD, MD, DVM, or equivalent degree by the full application start date. Applicants may not be in a degree-granting program at the award start date that takes away from your research (e.g., >20% time/effort in graduate program) or be a graduate program involve your research.

CDP Eligibility Outline 2025-2026 Application Cycle: Degree and Dates					
Degree and Dates	Scholar	Scholar in Clinical Research	Special Fellow (2-year)	Special Fellow (3-year)	Fellow
Degree	MD, PhD, DVM, or equivalent	MD, PhD, DVM, or equivalent	MD, PhD, DVM, or equivalent	MD, PhD, DVM, or equivalent	MD, PhD, DVM, or equivalent
Earliest doctoral-level oral thesis defense date (for those with only a PhD)	N/A	N/A	June 30, 2021	June 30, 2022	June 30, 2023
Most recent doctoral-level oral thesis defense date (for those with only a PhD)	N/A	N/A	June 29, 2022	June 29, 2023	Eligibility Phase due date
Maximum <i>total</i> postdoctoral experience as of the CDP funding start date (July 1 of the following year)	N/A	N/A	5 years	4 years	3 years
Independent faculty position required?	Yes ^a	Yes ^a	No	No	No
Earliest start date of independent position	January 1, 2018	January 1, 2016	N/A	N/A	N/A
Most recent start date	January 1, 2024	January 1, 2022	N/A	N/A	N/A

^a Mentored faculty positions (e.g., Instructor) do not count as independent; all non-mentored positions **do** count as independent, which may include positions with the title “Research Professor,” Assistant Research Professor,” “Adjunct Assistant Professor,” etc.

CDP Eligibility Outline 2025-2026 Application Cycle: Requirements					
Requirements	Scholar	Scholar in Clinical Research	Special Fellow (2-year)	Special Fellow (3-year)	Fellow
Applicant having adequate, blood cancer-focused research funding of their own as of the CDP award start date?	Yes ^b	Yes ^c	No	No	No
Sponsor/mentor having adequate, blood cancer-focused research funding as of the CDP award start date? (For Sponsors/mentors with more than 5 years of independence as of the CDP award start date)	N/A	N/A	Yes ^b	Yes ^b	Yes ^b
Sponsor/mentor having adequate, blood cancer-focused research funding as of the CDP award start date? (For Sponsors/mentors with equal to or less than 5 years of independence as of the CDP award start date)	N/A	N/A	Yes ^d	Yes ^d	Yes ^d
At least 1 first author publication?	No	Yes/No ^{e,f}	Yes ^f	Yes ^f	Yes ^f
At least 1 corresponding author publication, primarily on blood cancer, as an independent investigator?	Yes ^f	Yes/No ^{e,f}	No	No	No

^b Must be at least one peer-reviewed, nationally competitive research grant providing at least a total of \$200,000/year (USD) for at least 3 years; see the Research Support Requirement section of the guidelines for a full description; it is acceptable to have a letter demonstrating that funding will occur by the funding start date in cases whereby the funding starts after the eligibility due date

^c Funding may come from any source, but must be able to fund the research program

^d For Sponsors/mentors with equal to or less than 5 years of independence as of the CDP award start date, adequate funding may come from an R00, institutional startup funds, or other grants to sufficiently support the research; grant funding must clearly support blood cancer research in order to be considered adequate for this program; it is acceptable to have a letter demonstrating that funding will occur by the funding start date in cases whereby the funding starts after the eligibility due date

^e Scholar in Clinical Research applicants need at least one first author or one corresponding author research publication (no reviews, perspectives, conference/meeting presentations, or abstracts); having either a first author or a corresponding author publication will qualify

^f Full length, primary research publication (no reviews, perspectives, conference/meeting presentations or abstracts); peer reviewed manuscripts that are **fully** accepted by the eligibility due date are acceptable; clear evidence of full acceptance (with no more than minor structural/grammatical changes) is required at the eligibility phase

Experience/Eligibility Clock

Applicants must have a **total** of postdoctoral experience that is more than 3 years, but no more than 5 years at the time of the CDP award start date (see Eligibility Outline table). All postdoctoral-level experience is added to obtain the level of postdoctoral training. The purpose of this rule is to be sure that Special Fellow awardees remain competitive. It is likely that mentored postdoc/instructor-level training beyond 7 years will have decreasing returns and may even be determinantal to success. Therefore, LLS funding reflects this, and we encourage trainees to avoid overly long training periods.

For those with only a PhD

For those with only a PhD as their doctoral degree, postdoctoral experience is measured from the oral thesis defense date. When there is no required oral thesis defense, other events signaling the end of graduate training will be considered. In these cases, details must be provided in the Other Information section of the eligibility form. In all cases, typically after a successful oral thesis defense, LLS starts the eligibility clock as soon as an institution considers a former graduate student as having a PhD.

For those with only an MD

For those with an MD, postdoctoral experience is measured when post-MD *research* training is sustained at greater than 50% of the time. This is generally the 2nd or 3rd year of the Hem/Onc Fellow period. Time in **clinical** training (with less than 50% research), where applicable, does not start the eligibility clock.

For those with an MD/PhD (continuous/sequential degrees)

For those with an MD/PhD obtained through a dual degree program or as sequential degrees with no gap between these programs, postdoctoral experience is measured when post-MD/PhD *research* training is sustained at greater than 50% of the time. This is generally the 2nd or 3rd year of the Hem/Onc Fellow period. Time in **clinical** training (with less than 50% research), where applicable, does not start the eligibility clock.

For those with an MD and PhD with a gap between degrees

Those who obtain one doctoral-level degree and then do research before starting their next doctoral-level training program will have any research phase between programs counted as postdoctoral-level experience. The next graduate training period is not counted as postdoctoral experience, nor is any clinical training (with less than 50% research). After graduate and clinical training, the postdoctoral eligibility clock will resume as described in the prior situations.

There must be no unexplained gaps in training.

In some cases, LLS may ask the applicant to provide a letter from any applicable institution confirming date(s).

For all applicants:

- **All** postdoctoral research experience is counted against the eligibility clock.
- Time in **any laboratory as a postdoctoral fellow (or equivalent) is counted; the eligibility clock does not start with the start date in your current laboratory.**

LLS support for Special Fellows may not extend total postdoctoral research training (excluding clinical training) beyond 7 years. Applicants who receive a Special Fellow Award will receive either two or three years of funding to comply with this requirement.

Pauses to the Eligibility Clock

The following events may be used to request a pause to the eligibility clock:

- Parental leave
- Military service
- Visa delays that are caused by governmental agencies*

These events, including dates, must be stated in the Eligibility Window Extension section of the eligibility form. A letter from your current Sponsor or former advisor stating the nature of the leave or Visa delays and the associated dates may be requested, and if so, should be sent to researchprograms@lls.org by the full application deadline.

There are no other acceptable pauses to the eligibility clock.

The eligibility window extension's purpose is to provide equal opportunity to those whose research is unavoidably delayed. Those on parental leave or fulfilling military service are not performing research. **Some** who are applying for a Visa to do their postdoctoral research in another country **may** have a temporary disruption of their research and if so, LLS will consider this using the guidance below.*

*The eligibility window may be extended for unavoidable Visa delays. Those requesting such an extension must abide by these rules:

- The Visa application must have been submitted within 90 calendar days of their oral thesis defense date (or equivalent) or the end of their clinical training.
- Additions to this 90-day rule may be extended for another 90 days under specific circumstances to abide by governmental or institutional rules. The original steps in the Visa application process must be documentable and within the first 90 days mentioned in the first bullet point.
- Documentation is required if asked for. This may include documents from the government and the institution, as well as original email correspondence. All documents should be sent as an attachment to researchprograms@lls.org.
- Visa eligibility extensions are ***not*** given for applicants who have decided to stay in their graduate lab for an extended period beyond their oral thesis defense (or equivalent), nor will extensions be given for those transferring to a second postdoctoral position.

Career Trajectory

LLS encourages applications from Special Fellow candidates with diverse scientific backgrounds and who wish to pursue a career path that is directly beneficial to blood cancer

patients. The Sponsor letter should detail the training plan for this career path. ***Applicants who are not currently pursuing a career in blood cancer research should not apply.***

Institution Affiliation

Applicants must be affiliated with a non-profit academic institution at the time funding commences and for the duration of the award.

Research Support Requirement

Special Fellow Awards generally fund only salary (see the K99 discussion in the Other Grants/Awards section for an exception). Applicants must have a Sponsor who has substantial funding to support the applicant's research (or related research). This funding must clearly be focused on blood cancer. For Sponsors who have equal to or less than 5 years of independence as of the CDP award start date, this funding may come from institutional startup funds, R00, and/or other grants. The Sponsor must be the primary recipient of these funds (e.g., not a co-investigator). For Sponsors with more than 5 years of independence as of the CDP award start date, this funding will be from active grant(s) (peer-reviewed, national-level; substantial, multi-year funding*) on which the Sponsor is the Program Director, Contact PI, other PI, co-PI, Multiple PI, Project Leader, and/or other terms that clearly signify full or equal responsibility for the grant's oversight to support the research proposed in the application (or related research).* The position of co-investigator does not count for eligibility. In cases where funding starts after the eligibility due date but by the CDP funding start date, the applicant must send evidence from the funding agency of the award details to researchprograms@lls.org (including funding agency, type, total and annual award amounts, start date, and end date). This must be received by LLS by the full application due date. If the eligibility form is submitted by the Eligibility Phase deadline, and everything else aligns with LLS's policies, eligibility will likely be provisionally accepted pending receipt and evaluation of this documentation.

*Funding typically will be an R01. However, other funding sources qualify if/they have the other characteristics listed above.

Research support that ends prior to the award start date may not be used as evidence of adequate support.

It is expected that there will be overlap of CDP applications with their Sponsor's currently funded grants. In some circumstances, a Special Fellow's proposal may have overlap with an application submitted by their Sponsor to LLS during the same application cycle. In these cases, the applicant must show that there is **current** funding to support their research (since CDP is salary only). Though we may consider such proposals, it is likely they will have a higher bar to reach during the review process. Contact researchprograms@lls.org for questions about specific proposals.

Application Limitations

Applicants may only submit one application.

We are expanding access to this award by allowing those that are co-mentored and working in two different labs to apply. Starting in the current application cycle, any one Sponsor may have up to one Special Fellow applicant fully mentored by the Sponsor and one Special Fellow applicant partly mentored by the Sponsor and partly mentored by another person from another lab. A variation is that one person may have two Special Fellow applicants partly mentored by

that person and partly mentored by another person. ***There are no other acceptable variations.*** In these co-mentored situations, the applicant is generally working in both labs and/or is working on a project that is overlapping in both labs. The primary mentor must be the Sponsor, and is usually the official primary mentor whose lab the trainee spends the most time in. The primary mentor may also be defined by who is paying the salary (including which institution is paying).

The purpose of this rule is to create a fair system to increase access while also ensuring that large labs do not take too large a share of available CDP slots and leaving less for the smaller labs. However, this new policy also potentially increases the number of mentees that are supported from any one lab.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society staff have the final say on implementing this policy.

A Sponsor may sponsor one Fellow in their own lab, one Special Fellow in their own lab, as well as multiple Scholar applicants in this application cycle. There is no limit to the number of applications submitted from a specific institution. It is acceptable for a Sponsor who currently has active Fellow and/or Special Fellow awardees in their lab to sponsor a Fellow applicant during another award cycle.

The applicant is required to coordinate with their Sponsor to be sure that this policy is upheld.

Other Grants/Awards

No career development-type award or research grant with a higher total award amount (compared to the Special Fellow Award) may be held at the time of the award start date. If such an award/grant is activated after receiving a Special Fellow Award, the LLS award must be relinquished. Those who have previously held any award with a higher total funding amount compared to the Special Fellow award may apply for a CDP Award. Those who currently hold such an award can apply as well, but they cannot hold that award should they accept the CDP award.

The exception to this rule is when an applicant has a K99 award. Current K99 awardees may apply for a Special Fellow award, and current Special Fellow awardees may accept a K99 award and keep the CDP Award, pending LLS approval. Certain information, including the aims of the K99 award, must be provided to LLS to ensure that the K99-funded research is directly relevant to LLS's Mission. Funding may be conditionally approved pending review of publicly available information once the K99 is activated. Funding from the Special Fellow Award may be used for any purpose related to the CDP application/award, whether it be awardee salary, technician salary, or research supplies, pending LLS approval. Note that the NIH/NCI has its own approval process. It is recommended that Special Fellow applicants and Special Fellow awardees notify LLS of any developments in the K99 application process. Contact researchprograms@lls.org for questions about LLS's approval process for holding both awards.

If a career development-type award or research grant (of lower total value compared to the Special Fellow award) is held by the applicant, this funding may be held concurrently with the LLS award at LLS's discretion, should the LLS award be funded. In all such cases, the LLS funding may only be used to support the applicant/awardee's salary. It is anticipated that the research proposed in the Special Fellow application will occupy most of the applicant's time,

though there are no requirements for a certain percent effort in our budget template. LLS will not change any aspect of the Special Fellow award to accommodate other awards (with the exception of the K99 award).

In addition, an absolute requirement is that the other funding must support blood cancer research. Funding from organizations that are focused on diseases other than blood cancer may not be held concurrently with the Special Fellow award. This requirement reflects the necessity that a Special Fellow's research should be fully (or largely) focused directly on blood cancer.

Transfers

The application must be designed from the perspective of where the research will be performed. If a transfer to a different lab with a different Sponsor (within the same institution or at another institution) is being considered during the application process, the applicant must submit the application based on work that will be performed in the new laboratory and obtain the appropriate signatures from the new destination. In addition, the applicant must be in the new lab by the full application due date. Transfers to a new lab with a new Sponsor are not allowed between the full application due date and the award start date. Transfers to a new institution but with the **same** Sponsor are usually acceptable but must be approved by LLS. Transfers may be allowed after the award start date; however, transfers undergo a review, **and thus their approval is not guaranteed**. In addition, the Special Fellow Award is issued to an individual, and is not transferable to another person. Please notify LLS at least 30 days prior to the transfer date by contacting researchprograms@lls.org.

Change in Applicant or Awardee's Status

Applicants who are postdoctoral fellows or mentored, non-tenure track faculty (e.g., instructors) are eligible to apply. However, Special Fellow awardees cannot be independent faculty members and hold the Special Fellow award within the first year of funding. Special Fellow Awards will not be given to those with independent positions, and those already funded must terminate their award at the time they transition to independence **if within the first year of funding**. LLS must be notified as soon as any change in status is contemplated. LLS reserves the right to require the return of any funds given after the start of an independent position if this change occurs within the first year of funding.

It is anticipated that Special Fellow applicants will be contemplating applying for independent positions, and LLS encourages this career progression. However, the Special Fellow award is intended for those who still need training. Special Fellow awardees who have been in their Sponsor's laboratory as a mentored fellow/instructor for one year (after the award start date) are allowed to carry their funding with them should they receive an independent faculty-level position, pending LLS approval.

Key Publications of Sponsor Demonstrating Blood Cancer Contributions

Special Fellow applicants must provide a description of publications that best highlight their Sponsor's contributions to the understanding of blood cancer. **Three publications from the past 10 years must be listed in the eligibility template**. The Sponsor must have expertise in blood cancer. This information will be used to determine the qualifications of the Sponsor to mentor the applicant's blood cancer-relevant research career.

These publications must:

- directly correlate with Mission Scores of 1, 2, or 3 (see Mission Score section)
- have the Sponsor as the first or corresponding author (or co-first author or co-corresponding author) on all these publications*
- be primary research publications
- be available on PubMed by the full application due date or be **fully** accepted by the Eligibility Phase due date; clear evidence of full acceptance (with no more than minor structural/grammatical changes) is required

*In cases whereby the highlighted publications are from the Sponsor's training period, the relevance to blood cancer must still be clear in their current research program and current funding. If a Sponsor appears to be moving away from blood cancer, the Special Fellow's application may not be fully reviewed.

These publications must not:

- have only an indirect relation or no relation to blood cancer
- be review articles
- be manuscripts that are not available on PubMed on the full application due date or do not have full acceptance by the Eligibility Phase due date

Mission Relevance

General

The purpose of LLS's CDP award mechanism is to support scientists who are pursuing a career in blood cancer research and/or treatment. Thus, the research of the applicant must address questions that are **directly** relevant to hematologic malignancies and/or relevant premalignant conditions/states. Relevance is determined by the experimental approach. The environment to pursue this research program must also be appropriate.

Correlation of a biological phenomenon with blood cancer is not sufficient evidence of relevance to LLS's Mission unless there are experiments to directly address this correlation.

Special Fellow applicants whose Sponsors do not have an established record of publications and funding demonstrating a commitment to blood cancer research will be disqualified without full review.

In prior CDP application cycles, multiple Special Fellow applicants were eliminated prior to full review for lack of direct blood cancer relevance of their current/proposed research and/or lack of appropriate blood cancer research experience of their Sponsor.

The proposed experiments must seek to answer questions about blood cancer. These experiments must use blood cancer patient samples, blood cancer cell lines, or mouse models appropriate for blood cancer. Research using other model systems must make it clear why those model systems are being used to address questions of direct relevance to blood cancer and why they are better suited than standard blood cancer models. ***The environment and expertise provided by the Sponsor must be appropriate to perform the blood cancer-relevant work.*** There must also be funding support for this research (see Research Support Requirement section).

Mission Scores

The applicant also receives a **Mission Score** to measure adherence of the application to LLS's Mission of curing blood cancer. CDP Awards must focus on those questions of **direct** relevance to blood cancer. The Mission Score will be assigned based on the overall focus of the application.

Proposals that do not have clear relevance to blood cancer will be disqualified without full review.

Mission Score of 1: Research that directly investigates the pathogenesis, diagnosis, or treatment of hematologic malignancies and/or relevant premalignant conditions/states. In addition, at least some experiments must include patients, and/or patient materials (including PDX models).

Mission Score of 2: Research that directly investigates the pathogenesis, diagnosis, or treatment of hematologic malignancies and/or relevant premalignant conditions/states. In addition, at least some experiments must use blood cancer cell lines and/or animal models of blood cancer.

Mission Score of 3*: Research that investigates basic mechanisms directly relevant to normal blood cell development, hematopoietic stem/precursor cell function, or immune responses that are *directly* relevant to blood cancer. These studies must have the intention of improving our understanding of blood cancer and must use appropriate models to understand these mechanisms in blood cells.

Mission Score of 4:** Research that investigates pathological processes that may be associated with blood cancer. These studies do not have the intention of improving our understanding of blood cancer, nor do they use appropriate models to understand these mechanisms in blood cells.

Mission Score of 5:** Research that investigates processes not directly associated with blood cancer or normal blood cell development/function.

*Proposals with a Mission Score of 3 are rare. Investigators interested in biological/pathological processes in blood cancer will generally be actively engaged in research that at least partially qualifies as a Mission Score of 1 or 2.

**Applications with a Mission Score of 4 or 5 will be eliminated without full review.

Post-Award Adherence to Aims

CDP Awards are selected in part based on the aims in the application. LLS requires approval for any substantial change to aims to continue receiving LLS funding. LLS understands that science does not progress in a direct path, and thus minor changes need not be approved by LLS (but should be indicated in annual progress reports). **Changes to the aims that substantially reduce the impact of the research on LLS's Mission will not be approved and funding may be reduced or eliminated. Changes to aims without prior approval from LLS may also result in termination of LLS funding.** Therefore, it is highly recommended that aims in the application be carefully crafted in terms of feasibility and blood cancer relevance, and that they are aims you intend to pursue. Careful consideration of aims during the

application process will enhance the ability to modify research directions in a Mission-relevant fashion, should the need arise after funding commences.

Funded Special Fellows who do not show evidence of progress on blood cancer-relevant research may be terminated early at LLS's discretion. Progress is evaluated by LLS scientific staff annually after Progress Report submission, and this evaluation may also include an analysis of publicly available information regarding publications and meeting presentations.

Review Process & Applicant Notification

CDP applications are reviewed by an independent, voluntary panel of experts.

Review criteria for **Special Fellow** applications include:

- **Direct** relevance of proposed research to blood cancer
- Likelihood of the applicant pursuing a career in blood cancer research
- Prior accomplishments of the applicant (**graduate** research of the applicant need **not** be blood cancer-based but must be high quality)
- Substantial preliminary data generated in their current postdoc/instructor position that forms the basis of the presented proposal
- Qualifications of the Sponsor to mentor the applicant in blood cancer research
- Scientific quality of the proposal
- Access to applicable key materials and models, which may include patient materials, animal models, drugs, etc., to demonstrate feasibility of the proposed experiments
- Clarity of presentation
- **Clear and robust training plan from the Sponsor**
- Demonstrated need for continued funding with a clear trajectory to an independent career within a few years

Based on these criteria, the application receives a Priority Score based on the NIH scoring system.

After the review panel meeting, Mission-relevant applications (Mission Scores 1, 2, and some 3) will be rank-ordered based on their Priority Scores and those within or near the payline will be presented to LLS's oversight committees for approval. Funding will be based on ranking, Mission Scores, and LLS priorities. Funding status is relayed by email only and is not available by phone. All Priority Scores are confidential and are available only to LLS oversight committees and staff. Brief, anonymous feedback from the review panel may be provided but only when available.

Applicants can see the status of their application on the [LLS Research Portal](#). Up until final decisions are made, the status will be "Under Review." After final decisions are made, the status will either be "Awarded" or "Waitlist," or "Not Funded." Please do not call or email regarding status updates.

Key Dates

Applicants can begin the application process once the program is open and can move through each step up until the deadline. Note that each step can be submitted early. As long as each

step is done thoughtfully and meticulously, there may be an advantage to progressing through the steps well ahead of the deadlines.

Phase	Date
Eligibility Phase: open	July 1, 2025
Eligibility Phase: close	October 17, 2025; 3:00 PM (ET)
Eligibility determination by LLS staff	Rolling; typically within 2 business days of submission
Letter of Intent Phase: open	Immediately after eligibility is approved
Letter of Intent Phase: close	November 1, 2025, 3:00 PM (ET)
Full Application Phase: open	Immediately after Letter of Intent Phase submission
Reference letters due	November 15, 2025, 3:00 PM (ET)
Full Application Phase: close	November 15, 2025, 3:00 PM (ET)
Award Notification*	May 2026
Award Start Date	July 1, 2026

*LLS's non-negotiable Funding Agreement Terms & Conditions are available on www.lls.org.

The submission deadlines will be enforced. Please note that all times are Eastern Time (ET). If any date falls on a weekend or US holiday, the deadline becomes the next business day.

It is highly recommended that submissions are done the day prior to the deadline.

Internet traffic may be slow near the deadline, which may result in difficulties in submission. In addition, LLS's response time to questions may be delayed by the high volume received near the deadline. Therefore, it is imperative that any questions be posed to LLS as far ahead as possible. Every year, a few applicants get caught with difficulty near the deadline. Some tried to submit after the deadline but did not have their application reviewed. ***The best way to avoid this problem is to submit every phase well ahead of the deadline.*** In addition, those who are rushing right up until the deadline are more likely to make mistakes that may reduce the fundability of the application.

General Application Instructions

The CDP application process consists of 3 distinct phases: Eligibility*, Letter of Intent*, and Full Application.*

*Information provided at the earlier phases must match that provided at later phases. *Divergence between information provided at the Eligibility and/or Letter of Intent Phases and information provided at the Full Application Phase **may result in administrative disqualification; if not disqualified, any divergence may be shared with the review committee.***

Below are step-by-step instructions for applying:

1. Read these Guidelines & Instructions in full.
2. Log in to the [LLS Research Portal](https://lls.fluxx.io/) (<https://lls.fluxx.io/>) and select Career Development Program. Click "Apply Now" to begin the application process (well ahead of the deadline).
 - o If you have applied to LLS in the past, you do not need to create a new registration and can log-in with your username (email address associated with your account) and your password. If you forgot your password, simply click the "reset or create password" link and enter your email address. The system will send your username and a link to update your password.
 - o If you are a first-time user to the [LLS Research Portal](https://lls.fluxx.io/), please complete the intake form located at this link: [Account Creation Request](#) so an account can be created for you.
3. Familiarize yourself with the [LLS Research Portal](https://lls.fluxx.io/).
4. **The application process consists of 3 phases, and each phase must be submitted through the [LLS Research Portal](https://lls.fluxx.io/). The status of each phase is found on the [LLS Research Portal](https://lls.fluxx.io/): after submission of each phase, your status will change indicating successful submission. ***Only when you see this change in status can you be assured that you submitted.*** This change in status that you see reflects the status that LLS staff sees. It is therefore ***highly recommended*** that you confirm each stage of the application process by checking your application status on the [LLS Research Portal](https://lls.fluxx.io/).**
5. Follow the instructions on the [LLS Research Portal](https://lls.fluxx.io/) and this document to complete and submit your Eligibility Phase components. The Eligibility Phase requires completion of both the web form and the current eligibility form, which should be downloaded from the Project Document section of the web form.
6. You will receive an email notifying you of your Eligibility approval status, which happens after LLS staff review. It typically occurs within 2 business days, but may take up to 10 business days, which means you will benefit by doing this step early. Once your Eligibility is approved, return to the [LLS Research Portal](https://lls.fluxx.io/), select "New or Pending" under *Requests* on the left panel and follow the instructions on the site and in this document to submit your Letter of Intent Phase components.
 - o You may be contacted by an LLS staff member if the information provided on your eligibility request suggests that you may be better suited for a different award category.
 - o LLS staff will determine eligibility on a rolling basis using the criteria described in this document.

7. Reference letter **requests** are required during the Letter of Intent Phase. Applicants are responsible for making sure that all required reference letters are submitted by their letter-writers by the Full Application deadline.
8. Once you have submitted your Letter of Intent Phase information, you may immediately begin the Full Application Phase. Please carefully follow the instructions on the [LLS Research Portal](#) and this document. The Full Application Phase requires completion of both the web form and the current application template, which must be downloaded from the Project Document section of the web form. **Failure to follow all application instructions may result in administrative disqualification of your application.**
 - o Contact researchprograms@lls.org with any questions about the application that are not addressed in the [LLS Research Portal](#) or this document.
9. Submit your Full Application to LLS prior to the Full Application deadline. We strongly recommend submitting well before the deadline, as site traffic on the day of and days leading up to the deadline will be heavy.
10. Character limits include spaces. Character and other length limits are strictly enforced on the web form and the uploaded project description template. Font must be black Arial 11 pt. including figure legends, which must be text boxes separate from the figure itself. Tables should also have text with Arial 11 pt. black font. **If character limits and font restrictions are not adhered to, or the preset margins are altered, the application may be administratively rejected.**
11. Line spacing is preset in the Word document. **Do not change the setting. Pasting text from another document, which should generally be avoided, may result in a change in the line spacing in the template.** Any modifications in line spacing, particularly if the change allows for more text to fit into the page, **may result in administrative rejection of your application.** However, you may add spacing between paragraphs.
12. To create a fair process to all applicants, these Guidelines & Instructions and information on the [LLS Research Portal](#) must be followed. **Do not ask for exceptions to these policies, including but not limited to exceptions to deadlines or making corrections to your document past the deadline.**
13. Applicants **must** identify their current application status by a status bar as well as another status indicator. At each stage, locate these and use them to self-identify your status (e.g., whether you have successfully submitted to a new stage or are still at the prior stage). The information that applicants see reflects what LLS sees. Both status indicators are the clearest way for an applicant to know their status. **It is the applicant's responsibility to determine their status and whether they have successfully completed a step.**

Carefully check every page of your application prior to submission. You are ultimately responsible for this submission, even if someone else submits on your behalf.

You may save your work and return to it at any time by clicking "Save." Clicking "Submit" will lock your application and prevent further modification at that stage. Contact researchprograms@lls.org if you submit in error (must be at least one hour prior to the deadline).

At any time during the application process, including after submitting your Full Application, you can check the status of your application by logging in to the [LLS Research Portal](#), selecting your

application (under *Requests* in either “New or Pending” or “Submitted”), and referring to the Status in the yellow box at the top of the page.

If you have any technical difficulties with the [LLS Research Portal](#), please contact researchprograms@lls.org.

Detailed Eligibility Phase Instructions

Applicants may submit Eligibility Phase components upon opening of the program. It is recommended to submit as soon as possible, as there is almost never a benefit to waiting. There are both webform components and an eligibility template that you must obtain from the [LLS Research Portal](#). Your completed eligibility template must be uploaded onto the [LLS Research Portal](#). Eligibility will be evaluated by LLS scientific staff on a rolling basis (see the Eligibility Review section below). If eligibility is approved, the applicant may proceed to the next phase of the application process. If eligibility is rejected, the applicant may submit one more time if new information is provided and the eligibility deadline has not passed.

All information requested on the eligibility form must be provided. Write “N/A” for anything not applicable to you.

The eligibility template is lengthy and must include information about your Sponsor. It is highly recommended that this process is started well before the eligibility deadline.

Submission and Confirmation

You will receive an automated email stating that your information was successfully submitted within 2 business days of submission. If you have not received this email within two business days, contact researchprograms@lls.org. **It is highly recommended that you confirm each stage of the application process by checking your application status on the [LLS Research Portal](#); submitted Eligibility, Letter of Intent, and Full Application phases will be located in the “Submitted” Requests on the left side of the screen.**

You ***must*** confirm each stage of the application process by checking your application status on the [LLS Research Portal](#); there are two indicators of your status, and you ***must*** self-identify your place in the process. Both status indicators are the clearest way for an applicant to know their status.

Eligibility Review

LLS scientific staff will review eligibility on a rolling basis, and you will generally receive notification within 2 business days, but the process may take longer. Refer to Key Dates for details. **Contact researchprograms@lls.org if you have not received notification within 10 business days.**

If eligibility is accepted, you will have access to the Letter of Intent Phase and you will have immediate access to the full application template.

Prior to the Eligibility Phase deadline, the applicant should carefully consider who will write reference letters on their behalf and alert them of the due date for these letters (See Reference Letters subsection in the Detailed Letter of Intent Phase Instructions below as well as the Key Dates table above). *Letters submitted past the deadline will not be accepted.* It is

therefore beneficial to have a backup letter-writer in case one of your original writers is not able to submit on time.

In prior cycles, some applicants did not provide complete and/or clear information in the eligibility form. In these cases, the applicant must update the eligibility form in order for the eligibility request to be reviewed. This information must be received in time for the applicant to complete the next phase. ***The LOI phase deadline will not be changed based on an eligibility form being returned to the applicant for incomplete and/or unclear information.***

Detailed Letter of Intent Phase Instructions

Applicants may access Letter of Intent Phase components as soon as their eligibility request is approved by LLS. The components on the [LLS Research Portal](#) must be completed by the Letter of Intent Phase deadline. This includes reference letter-writer request information, which must be input into the [LLS Research Portal](#) by this deadline (however, reference letter-writers should be contacted well before this time). Once these components on the [LLS Research Portal](#) are submitted, the applicant will have immediate access to the rest of the Full Application Phase components (the full application template was available after eligibility was accepted). Note that reference letters must be uploaded by the letter-writers by the Full Application Phase deadline.

There are three main aspects of the Letter of Intent Phase:

- Reference letter requests (letter-writer information added to our grants management system)
- ORCID
- First author publications
- Project information
- Collaborator/mentor information

The reference letter information can be added as soon as the application moves to the Letter of Intent Phase (after eligibility is approved). It is recommended to complete the reference letters information before starting the Title, Summary, and Project Information components, so that the writers get their submission instructions early (more details are found in the next section). Completion of the reference letters section and all other components must happen prior to final submission of the Letter of Intent.

Reference Letters

The applicant must have reference letters submitted on their behalf. These letters must be submitted directly by the letter-writers to the [LLS Research Portal](#) (see Initiating Blind Reference Letters below). Reference letter requests must be done by the applicant during the Letter of Intent Phase, but the letters must be submitted by the letter-writers by the Full Application deadline.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the letters are submitted in the [LLS Research Portal](#) and received by the deadline. Letters received by LLS after the deadline will not be accepted.

If there are not at least 3 letters of reference received by the full application deadline, the application will be administratively disqualified.

Reference Letter Policies

- Reference letter information must be provided by the applicant at the Letter of Intent stage, but the letters are not due until the full application deadline
- Three letters are required
- No more than four letters will be accepted
- It is beneficial to have a backup letter-writer in case one of your original writers is not able to submit on time
- It is beneficial to add letter-writer information to our grants management system as early as possible as well as to contact the letter-writers early
- Though not required, it is beneficial to have two of the letters coming from outside your institution
- Letters are blinded to the applicant and must be uploaded directly by the writer

The Sponsor Letter is separate from the reference letters and therefore is not considered one of the three reference letters; Sponsor information should not be provided in the reference letters section on the [LLS Research Portal](#) (see Sponsor Letter section).

You may have one person write both a collaboration/support letter and a letter of reference. Closely follow the rules for reference letters and collaboration/support letters to prevent disqualification.

Initiating Blind Reference Letters

During the Letter of Intent Phase, the applicant must contact those who will write their reference letters. A section called “Request Blind Reference Letters” is available on the [LLS Research Portal](#) during the Letter of Intent Phase. For each letter-writer, press the green “+” button on the right side. A pop-up window will appear. Copy and paste the first name, last name, and email address of the letter-writer into the designated spaces. After adding this information, press “Create Recommendation.” The pop-up will disappear, and an email will be automatically sent to the letter-writer. The email will contain a unique link that allows the writer to directly upload the letter to the [LLS Research Portal](#). This process is repeated for each of the letter-writers. If a name is added in error, such as your Sponsor’s name (which does not belong here), it cannot be deleted. Simply move on and add the name(s) that are needed here.

The email may end up in the letter-writer’s spam. Therefore, after the letter-writer’s information is added in the [LLS Research Portal](#), **it is critical for the applicant to follow up with each writer to be sure they received the email.** If they have not received this email within 2 business days, email researchprograms@lls.org, and the link will be re-sent to them.

The letters will not be viewable by the applicant. However, the applicant can view reference letter status on the [LLS Research Portal](#). Prior to each letter’s submission, a note will be visible to the applicant indicating that no letter is uploaded. After the letter is uploaded, this note will change to indicate that the letter has been submitted.

ORCiD

Starting this application cycle, we are requiring all applicants to sign up for ORCiD (<https://orcid.org/>) and provide their ORCiD number during the LOI phase and to keep their profile updated for the remainder of the funding period, if awarded. This policy will enhance our

ability to track former awardees which will help us understand the level of success of the Career Development Program.

First Author Publications

Using the *Blood* citation format, list all first author publications following the instructions on the template and below.

These must be:

- First author publications, which may include co-first author or dual first author publications (first authorship must be verifiable on the manuscript)
- Primary research publications (clinically oriented publications are acceptable, but must be primary observations/analyses)
- Peer-reviewed publications that are available on PubMed or the journal's website by the full application due date; peer reviewed manuscripts that are **fully** accepted by the eligibility due date are acceptable; clear evidence of full acceptance (with no more than minor structural/grammatical changes) is required at the Eligibility Phase

These must not be:

- Publications on which you are not first author (or on which you are not co-first author or dual first author)
- Non primary research publications (reviews, perspectives, etc.)
- Conference presentations
- Manuscripts submitted or under review/revision (except **fully** accepted manuscripts with no more than minor structural/grammatical revisions; see prior section)
- Manuscripts that are accepted (with no more than minor structural/grammatical changes) that were not declared at the Eligibility Phase
- Manuscripts found only on a preprint server

Applications will be checked by LLS scientific staff for accuracy. **Significant deviations from publicly available information may result in administrative disqualification. Failure to follow these rules may cause an administrative disqualification of the application.**

Project Information

Provide the following after completing the initiation of blind reference letters. All information provided here must remain consistent with the full application. **Significant divergence between information in this section and in the full application may negatively affect your funding chances.**

Project Summary

For funded applications, we post awardee information on our website. Together with the applicant's biographical information, there is a short Project Summary of the applicant's research. From there, a reader may choose to look at the longer Lay Description. Therefore, please provide a 3-5 sentence Project Summary describing your work. The total of all sentences should be no more than 500 characters, including spaces. Use this guide to structure the short paragraph:

- Overall question/focus of your research (1 sentence)

- High-level approach you will use to address this question (1 to 2 sentences)
- Outcome/goal of your research (1 to 2 sentences)

The overall goal is to provide a succinct overview of your research in a short, cohesive paragraph.

Title

Provide a succinct title to describe your research; 150-character limit, including spaces.

Research focus and details

Provide the following details that form the basis of your research. Only state information that is **directly** related to your research. This information must reflect what will be in your full application; significant divergence may negatively affect your funding chances. A common problem that should not happen is listing “human patient samples” in this section but not describing human patient samples in the full application.

For each section, provide brief details using these criteria:

- Only provide information of direct relevance to your research
- Provide either the full name or the abbreviation but do **not** include both
- For multiple items, separate each by a comma; do not hit enter within the text box

Provide details for these items:

- Disease or Subject Focus
- Technological Approaches
- Model System(s); if you are working with human patients, put “human patients” or “human patient samples”

Collaborators and mentors

List the names and institutions of all investigators, outside of your institution, with whom you have significant and current interaction regarding your research project/program or your career development. Individuals listed here may be contacted by LLS to verify a connection.

- Include those who are outside your institution who you are collaborating with or who have a significant role in your career development
- Include only researchers who are at or above tenure-track level (or equivalent)
- Include only full names and institutions with no additional information
- Do not list their full institutional titles
- Do not include the names of those who are writing letters of reference

Submission and Confirmation

After clicking the “Submit” button, you will receive an automated email within 2 business days stating that your information was successfully submitted. If you do not receive the email confirmation, contact researchprograms@lls.org.

You ***must*** confirm each stage of the application process by checking your application status on the [LLS Research Portal](#); there are two indicators of your status, and you ***must*** self-identify your place in the process. Both status indicators are the clearest way for an applicant to know their status.

Immediately after Letter of Intent Phase submission, you will have access to the Full Application Phase and may proceed with the application.

Changes

Information collected in the Letter of Intent Phase will automatically populate fields in the Full Application Phase. Carefully and thoughtfully complete these sections as the fields are locked after the Letter of Intent Phase is completed. Letter of Intent Phase components must accurately reflect the focus of the full application. **Failure to follow these policies may result in disqualification of the application.**

In addition, applicants must place some of that LOI information on the full application template. This information must exactly match. Therefore, applicants must be thoughtful about the LOI information and only submit when it is clear that the information is final. Some applicants change this information in the full application, and starting this year, we will not accept that. ***Either the application will be disqualified or the information on the full application template will be replaced with the information from the LOI phase.***

At this stage, the applicant should follow up with those chosen to write reference letters to remind them of the upcoming deadline for letter submission.

Detailed Full Application Phase Instructions

Some sections of the full application will carry through from the Letter of Intent Phase. Information that carries through must not be modified; changes made to the Letter of Intent Phase components after the Letter of Intent Phase deadline may result in administrative disqualification of the full application. The remainder of the full application consists of web form components and elements to be uploaded as a ***single PDF***.

Failure to submit as a single PDF in the order described on the template may result in disqualification of the application.

Three sections are required in this phase:

- Section 1: Abstracts and Brief Biography
- Section 2: Project Description Template
- Section 3: Attachments

Some information is put in the webform, some on the application template (downloaded from the [LLS Research Portal](#)), and some information is put in both.

Section 1: Abstracts and Biography

Lay Description

The Lay Description (Lay Abstract) should clearly state the relevance of your research to blood cancer and describe your current/proposed research, including the problem/question to be addressed, approach, and anticipated results using non-technical language that is easily understood by the lay community. Scientific/Greek characters or symbols must not be used. The Lay Description is essential for LLS to continue successful fundraising to support our current and future grantees, including the later years of ***your*** award, should it be funded. Thus, we require a well-written Lay Description, with sufficient detail and suitable language for non-scientists. Be aware of your confidential information, as the Lay Description (and Project

Summary) will be shared with others. **The Lay Description has a minimum of 2,000 characters and a maximum of 2,500 characters, including spaces.**

Helpful hints:

- Consider how you would communicate your research to a friend or family member who is educated *but is not a scientist*.
- Limit the use of scientific terms that are specific to your field.
- When specific scientific terms are necessary, be sure to include a brief definition.
 - When in doubt, err on the side of over-explaining.
- Avoid using too many acronyms or other abbreviations and always define them before using (except for common acronyms like “DNA”).

Use the following list of questions as a guide for creating your Lay Description:

- What is the overall problem?
- What is the specific goal of your project? How does it fit into the overall problem?
- What is unique about **your** research? You must describe the specifics of your research and approach while avoiding being overly generic.
- What will be the indicators for success in this project?
- What will be the next steps for this project beyond your current specific aims?
- How will your research benefit blood cancer patients now or in the future? **If your research is distant from the clinic, it is critical to make the connection between your research and the benefit to *blood cancer patients* in the future.**

Scientific Abstract

The Scientific Abstract should accurately reflect your research (current/proposed). Though putting your research in a broader context may be useful, it is also important to avoid overstating your research beyond what you are actually doing. Do not use disease names or other terms that are not directly relevant to your research. **1,500 characters maximum, including spaces.**

Brief Biography

Provide a brief, professional biography introducing the applicant to a lay audience. **1,000 characters maximum, including spaces.**

Section 2: Project Description Template

(Downloaded from the [LLS Research Portal](#))

The template consists of the required elements listed in the Project Description Template Components section. You will find detailed instructions for each element on the full application template (as well as below). Please ensure that you provide all requested information. If you have any questions regarding these elements, please contact researchprograms@lls.org. **No information may be attached to the beginning of this template; such added information may result in administrative disqualification of the application.**

Use Arial 11 pt. black font in each section of the application. This includes figure legends, which must be separate text boxes that use Arial 11 pt. black font. Do not shrink the figure legends, which makes the font appear smaller than Arial 11 pt. Tables must also use Arial 11 pt. black font.

The figures themselves *may* have smaller text size and/or a different font. However, it is to ***your advantage*** to have figures that are easily readable by the reviewers. Reviewers who have difficulty understanding your figure, which often happens with small text within the figure, will more likely downgrade the score of your application.

Outside of the figures themselves, should any font be smaller than Arial 11 pt. (including shrunken figure legend text boxes, which will appear smaller), the application may be administratively disqualified without review.

Line spacing is preset in the Word document. ***Do not change the setting. Pasting text from another document, which should generally be avoided, may result in a change in the line spacing in the template.*** Any modifications in line spacing, particularly if the change allows for more text to fit into the page, ***may result in administrative rejection of your application.*** However, you may add spacing between paragraphs.

Project Description Template Components

- **Applicant and Project Information:** Provide Applicant and Sponsor Names and Institution, Project Title, Project Summary, and Scientific Abstract. ***The Project Title and Project Summary must exactly match what was provided at the LOI stage. If it differs, the application may be disqualified or that information may be replaced with the information provided at the LOI phase.***
- **Writing Sources:** Substantial copying/pasting from other sources is not allowed (the exceptions are similar applications submitted by the applicant to other funders); excessive use of artificial intelligence/large language models is not allowed. Indicate how much if any use of either approach was used in your application.
- **Current or Previous LLS Fellow Awardees (if applicable):** ***For current or former LLS Fellows only.*** Include a description of progress you have made on your original LLS Fellow award aims or progress on LLS-approved, modified aims. Include reference to any first-author publications and/or presentations at national meetings.
- **Previous CDP Applications (if applicable):** If you previously submitted a CDP application that was not funded, briefly describe what has changed from that application. Include reference to any first author publications and/or presentations at national meetings. Your prior application may be shared with the current review committee.
- **Description of Models, Drugs/Reagents, and Trials (these tables are found after the References section):** Provide information on the models, drugs/reagents, and trials described in your project description. This provides reviewers with an easily accessible reference source and serves to demonstrate feasibility of your research plans. ***All materials in the Project Description section must be listed here.***
- **Graphical Abstract:** Provide up to two graphical abstracts to describe some aspect of your research, such as signaling pathways, overall approach, etc. This is similar to the graphical abstract in a Cancer Cell paper and provides reviewers (and others) with a quick overview of your research. Graphical abstracts must not be professionally developed. They must be developed primarily by the applicant using tools readily available in a typical lab (e.g., PowerPoint, Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, BioRender, etc.). You will be judged on your ability to convey information in a simple manner, but you will not be judged on artistic ability. Do not rotate the image; it must be viewable by the reviewer without rotating the page. Avoid excessive use of words.
- **Project Description and Data Attribution:**

- **Data Attribution:**
 - Provide appropriate attribution for all data/figures as well as “data not shown.” It should be clear which data/figures were generated primarily by the applicant and which data/figures were primarily generated by others. The Background and Previous Data from Others section must only contain data generated primarily by others. **The Preliminary Data from the Applicant section and the Experimental Design and Expected Outcomes section may only contain data/figures that were generated primarily by the applicant.**
 - ***Applications without appropriate and clear attribution in the Data Attribution tables as well as in the Project Description sections will be unfavorably reviewed and may be administratively disqualified.***
- **Project Description:**
 - Follow the order in the template.
 - If you do not have direct and demonstrable access to materials, access should be confirmed through letters of collaboration/support from the supplier. Lack of clear access to materials may indicate feasibility issues which may negatively affect the review of your application.
 - The text in the body of the Project Description sections as well as in the figure legends must clearly identify the model system(s) with enough description so that the reviewer understands the system. Use appropriate descriptors in these sections which may then refer to details in the Description of Models, Drugs/Reagents, and Trials sections.
 - Applications that appear to include writing and figures directly from their Sponsor’s prior grant submissions will be unfavorably reviewed; the exceptions are figures in the Background and Previous Data from Others section of the application template (but proper attribution is necessary). In addition, excessive and direct copying/pasting sections from publications is not acceptable. In cases where figures are used from publications, proper attribution must be clear in the figure itself, even if it is from the Sponsor’s and/or applicant’s publication. Failure to follow these rules will negatively affect your application (as it has in prior application cycles).
- **Disease Demographics and Equitable Research Models and Approaches:** As the scientific and medical fields are increasingly aware of demographic differences in disease incidence as well as outcomes, it is important for basic/translational scientists to begin exploring ways in which they can contribute to a better understanding of these disparities. Engaging with this question not only enhances the relevance of your research but also helps in developing more effective and equitable treatments.
 - **Disease Demographics:**
 - Describe the racial, ethnic, and gender demographics for all diseases that are the focus of your research program. Indicate what age(s) are affected. Charts and graphs are welcome. Provide citations (referring to the References section).
 - **Equitable Research Models and Approaches:**
 - Where possible, describe how you will consider equity in your research models and approaches. As an example, if one is using genomic data or patient samples in their research, they should describe how they will

attempt to use genomic data or patient samples that represent the population affected by their disease of interest. If your research does not readily incorporate these approaches, please provide a brief explanation for why it does not. Provide citations (referring to the References section).

- **Age Focus of Research:** Indicate the approximate percentage of pediatric focus of your research. For any number greater than 0%, briefly describe how the research has a pediatric focus.
- **References:** Use the *Blood* citation format.
- **Description of Models, Drugs/Reagents, and Trials:** See description above.
- **Access to Non-Commercially Available Reagents, Drugs, and Models:** Confirm that you have (or will have) access to all reagents, drugs, and models necessary for the proposed research. This will be another component used to assess the feasibility of your research.
- **Sponsor Mentor Table:** The Sponsor should complete this table.
- **Sponsor Letter:** Carefully follow the rules in these guidelines as well as the template. ***The Sponsor Letter forms a critical part of the review process. Applicants with Sponsor Letters that follow the rules and clearly outline appropriate mentorship will have a better chance of funding.***
- **Budget**
- **Signature Page:** Please ensure all signatures requested are complete. *Electronic signatures are acceptable.*

Section 3: Attachments

The following sections must be attached to the end of the template (from Section 2) to create a single PDF. Attach in the order stated on the application template. No other information may be provided in this section.

NIH Biosketches and Other Support documents

Biosketches and Other Support documents must be provided and must use the NIH format. Please refer to the NIH guidelines for questions on how to fill out these documents, except as follows. An eRA Commons User Name is not required. The Sponsor and the applicant must each have their own biosketch. The applicant's biosketch must ***not*** be the fellowship format. The Sponsor and the applicant must each have their own Other Support documents. The applicant's Other Support should provide information on funding sources that list the applicant as the grant/award principal investigator; ***do not list the Sponsor's other support on the applicant's Other Support document.*** The Other Support document ***must be a document separate from the biosketch.*** You do not need to switch to a new version should the NIH update any format during the application process. Therefore, use the most recent format as of July 1 of this application cycle (though you may use a later version if you wish and if one becomes available). Do ***not*** use the postdoctoral fellowship version; do ***not*** include undergraduate/graduate courses and their associated grades.

Failure to provide separate Other Support Documents for the applicant and for the Sponsor may result in administrative disqualification.

Sponsor Letter

The Sponsor Letter forms a critical component of the review process, and it is therefore important to follow these rules. The Sponsor Letter must be signed and on institutional letterhead and must at least contain the following:

- Description of the applicant's position and how the applicant's research is integrated in the overall laboratory.
- Brief description of how much of the application was written by the applicant; this should include certification that the Preliminary Data from the Applicant section and the Experimental Design and Expected Outcomes section of the application include **only** data generated primarily by the applicant.
- The Sponsor's experience in mentorship, which summarizes the information contained in the Sponsor Mentor Table.
- Source of funding for the applicant's research. All Sponsors should address this, but it is more critical for those Sponsors with equal to or less than 5 years of independence.
- **Training plan** to develop the applicant into an independent researcher, clinician, or other professional **whose major function will be to directly or indirectly enhance the lives of blood cancer patients. This is an integral component of the review process.**
- Commentary on plans to transition the applicant from a mentored position to an independent position; this can be a part of the training plan.
- Description of any co-mentor and/or mentoring team for the applicant (a mentoring team is likely beneficial for all applicants but is particularly useful for those with junior Sponsors); this can be a part of the training plan.
- Sponsor signature.

The Sponsor Letter is separate from the reference letters; **Sponsors may not write a reference letter.**

LLS does not allow co-Sponsors for CDP applicants. Therefore, do not attach any letters from those who are providing co-mentorship. Co-mentors are allowed to write a letter of reference that is separate from the application template (only 4 total letters of reference are allowed). ***Any such letters attached to the template may negatively affect your funding chances.***

Collaboration/Support Letters (Required where applicable)

When there are significant collaborations, letters of support are required. This is critical when access to patient samples, animal models, or specialized equipment outside of the applicant's laboratory or department is necessary for the proposed research. If a company asset is required and is not commercially available from scientific supply companies, such as proprietary drugs, a letter from the company supplying this asset **must** accompany the application. The letters must be signed and must be provided on institutional/company letterhead. ***Failure to provide this information will negatively affect the review of your application.***

Collaboration/support letters must be short-typically 1 or 2 brief paragraphs. Each should briefly describe what support will be given to your research program. **These letters should avoid any lengthy description of the positive attributes of you or your research** (a sentence or two is fine), otherwise, they will be considered letters of reference. ***There can only be 4 total letters of reference (submitted separately), otherwise the application may be administratively***

disqualified; therefore, instruct each writer of a collaboration/support letter to largely restrict their letter to the collaboration and/or service provided to prevent their letter from being considered a letter of reference.

Letters attached must not be letters of reference. All letters of reference must be uploaded separately by the writer (and blinded to the applicant). ***Outside of the Sponsor Letter, any letter attached to the application that is not primarily a letter of collaboration and/or a letter stating access to materials and/or other resources may result in administrative disqualification of the application.***

You may have one person write both a collaboration/support letter and a letter of reference. Closely follow the rules above for reference letters and collaboration/support letters to prevent disqualification.

Clinical Protocol Summary (Required where applicable)

Clinical trial protocol summaries should only be attached if the applicant is directly involved in the clinical trial, which is rare for applicants in this program. Provide a summary (up to two pages) of any clinical protocols essential to the proposed research. Include the NCT number. Include approval date and compliance number. Indicate if IRB approval is pending and provide a letter from the institutional official regarding IRB status. ***Do not attach a full clinical protocol.***

Full approval for any IRBs that are necessary for the research must be obtained by the award start date.

Assurances (Required)

All assurances that are applicable to your research must be accompanied by a signed letter from the **appropriate institutional official**, including assurances that are pending. Do not send letters signed by yourself nor from anyone outside of the designated institutional offices.

Any application without these letters attached will not be reviewed.

Human Subjects

Indicate if human subjects will be involved in the proposed research. The status (approved, pending, or exempt) of IRB (or equivalent institutional designation) approval must be provided. Documentation of any current or pending approvals must be contained in the full application. There is also a section on the web form that must be completed. An application may be submitted with IRB approval pending, but IRB approval must be obtained and provided to LLS prior to the award start date.

Laboratory Animals

Indicate if animals will be involved in the proposed research. The status and date of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) (or equivalent institutional designation) approval must be provided. The Animal Welfare Assurance number must be included. Documentation of any current or pending approvals must be provided in the full application template. There is also a section on the web form that must be completed. An application may be submitted with approval pending, but approval must be obtained and provided to LLS prior to the award start date.

Recombinant DNA

Indicate if the proposed research involves recombinant DNA. Documentation of any current or pending approvals must be contained in the full application template; there is also a section on the web form that must be completed.

Biohazard Statement

Indicate if the proposed research involves the use of biohazards. Documentation of any current or pending approvals must be contained in the full application template. There is also a section on the web form that must be completed.

No attachments besides those listed above should be included, nor should there be any attachments preceding the template (e.g., no cover letters). Applications that include additional documents besides those requested may be administratively disqualified.

Uploading the project document and final submission

Upload the full application components, as a single PDF on the web form.

All documents must be combined into a single PDF in the order listed above before uploading. Failure to submit as a single PDF in the order above may result in disqualification of the application.

Check each page of your PDF before uploading to be sure that everything is present and there are no issues with the text/figures. Changes to your PDF are not allowed past the deadline.

Submission and Confirmation

After clicking the “Submit” button, you will receive an automated email **within 2 business days** stating that your information was successfully submitted. **If you do not receive the email confirmation of submission, contact LLS at researchprograms@lls.org.**

You ***must*** confirm each stage of the application process by checking your application status on the [LLS Research Portal](#); there are two indicators of your status, and you ***must*** self-identify your place in the process. Both status indicators are the clearest way for an applicant to know their status.

Only one application document and one eligibility request document should be present. If extra documents remain after submission and before the deadline, email researchprograms@lls.org and let us know which documents to remove.

Carefully check your PDF prior to submission. If you notice problems with your PDF after you have submitted, email researchprograms@lls.org, and we will help you upload the correct document if you are unable to delete the incorrect document. ***This email must be received, with the correct document, prior to the deadline; there are no exceptions to this rule.***

Check the application prior to final submission. The applicant is ultimately responsible for the submission, regardless of who is uploading information on the [LLS Research](#)

Portal. Every year, we hear from a small number of applicants that notice problems with their application after the deadline. Applicants will avoid this problem by carefully checking their application prior to final submission. Submitting well ahead of the deadline is also beneficial.

Once the deadline has passed, only the following updates may be made via email to researchprograms@lls.org:

- Manuscripts that are accepted for publication; the following must be provided:
 - Complete list of authors as they appear on the accepted manuscript with your name in bold
 - Manuscript title
 - Journal
 - Date of publication or online ahead of print (if known)
 - A copy of the acceptance letter from the journal
- Updates regarding any transfers to a new institution (see Transfers section in Eligibility)