

Winship Invest\$: Request for Pilot Grant Proposals Winter 2024

Winship Invest\$ Winter 2024 Research Domains At-a-Glance

Awards are \$50,000 for one year unless otherwise indicated

Research Programs	
Cancer Immunology (CI)	Inter-programmatic research involving CI and another program with emphasis on human subject studies and Winship catchment area relevance
Cancer Prevention and Control (CPC)	Cancer epidemiology, prevention, early detection, survivorship, and HPV-related malignancies with priority for inter-programmatic collaborations
Cell and Molecular Biology (CMB)	New intra- and inter-programmatic collaborations with emphasis on catchment area priorities
Discovery and Developmental Therapeutics (DDT)	Therapeutic discovery, development, and novel radiology diagnostics/theranostic approaches with priority for collaborations
Strategic Research Domains	
Early Career Investigator Research Projects	Supporting early-career investigators (Instructor/ Assistant Professor) without independent funding for clinical, basic, or translational research
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Innovative AI applications in cancer biology, detection, treatment, and prevention with emphasis on novel AI approaches in basic and translational research
Promoting Cancer Health Equity and Reducing Cancer Disparities	Addressing cancer disparities, social determinants of health, prevention and cancer control, and community engagement in Georgia, targeting underrepresented populations Award: \$100,000 over 2 years
Disease-Specific Research	
Extramammary Paget's Disease (EMPD)	Translational, clinical, and preclinical research on EMPD, including quality of life, detection, treatment, and biological characterization with emphasis on collaborative teams Awards: \$50K or \$100K, renewable to 2 years
Diabetes and Cancer	Exploring biological, clinical, and public health intersections between diabetes and cancer to advance both fields, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration
Breast Cancer	Translational or therapeutic research addressing disparities, novel targets, prognostic markers, immune pathways, and prevention strategies in breast cancer

Key Dates

RFP Announcement:	Monday December 23, 2024
Applicant Letter of Intent:	Tuesday, February 4, 2025
Application Receipt Date:	Tuesday, April 1, 2025
Anticipated Start Date:	Sunday, June 1, 2025

Winship Invest\$: Request for Pilot Grant Proposals Winter 2024

Winship Cancer Institute is pleased to release the Winter 2024 Request for Pilot Grant Proposals for its *Winship Invest\$* pilot project program. *Winship Invest\$* is a peer-reviewed program that provides pilot funding for novel, innovative cancer research projects. This program enables Winship investigators to obtain preliminary data for publication and for subsequent peer-reviewed funding. *Winship Invest\$* has two funding opportunities every year. Successful applications are supported by philanthropic contributions to Winship and by developmental funds from the Winship's NCI Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG).

Proposals with a budget of up to \$50,000 for one year may be considered for *Winship Invest\$* (unless otherwise stated for specific research domains). Investigators may submit only one proposal as PI to the *Winship Invest\$* Request for Pilot Grant Proposals (RFP) per funding cycle. The current *Winship Invest\$* RFP seeks applications in the following research domains:

Winship Invest\$ Winter 2024 Research Domains:

I. RESEARCH PROGRAMS

1. **Cancer Immunology (CI) Program** – The CI Program will be considering applications with the following emphasis:

Inter-Programmatic Activities – Research projects that stimulate inter-programmatic team science activities. Must have at least two program members, one from CI and at least one from another research program (DDT, CMB, or CPC), each of whom has a substantial intellectual contribution to the project. CI studies involving human subjects are highly encouraged in addition to projects with direct relevance to the Winship catchment area*.

2. **Cancer Prevention and Control (CPC) Program** – The CPC Program will be considering proposals with the following emphasis:

- a. ***Cancer epidemiology***, which aims to identify risk factors, including individual biological and behavioral factors, community and policy factors, and environmental exposures in an effort to inform targeted interventions and strategies to reduce cancer risk in Georgia.
- b. ***Prevention and early-detection interventions***, which focus on developing, testing, & disseminating interventions to reduce cancer risk or improve early detection.
- c. ***Cancer outcomes and survivorship***, which focuses on identifying mechanisms underlying cancer survivorship outcomes and interventions to improve outcomes after a cancer diagnosis, including care quality, access, and policy factors.

Based on a recent HPV symposium co-hosted with CI, proposals fostering inter-programmatic collaborations with CI, CMB, or DDT that are focused on HPV-related malignancies, prevention and HPV vaccine uptake will be prioritized.

From amongst the most competitive proposals in these topic areas, proposals fostering inter-programmatic collaborations with CMB, DDT and CI research programs will be prioritized, and preference will be given to those that: (a) have the best potential to provide preliminary data supporting external grant submissions; (b) establish new inter-programmatic collaborations; (c) make use of Winship shared resources; (d) make use of the Georgia Cancer Registry as a resource to understand cancer prevention and control priorities in the state; of (e) address disparities in social determinants of health and other demographics with direct impact on the Winship catchment area*.

3. **Cell and Molecular Biology (CMB) Program** – The CMB Program will be considering applications with the following emphasis:

Intra- and inter-Programmatic Activities – Research projects that are intended to stimulate new intra- and inter-programmatic collaborations. Preference will also be given to the collaborations with either CPC program

members or a disease-team at Winship. Each application must have two or more co-PIs. Since the funding is intended to stimulate new interactions, the co-PIs cannot have a record of prior joint funding or publications within the last three years. Research with a direct impact on Winship catchment relevant priorities*.

4. **Discovery and Developmental Therapeutics (DDT) Program** – The DDT Program will be considering applications with the following emphasis:
 - a. Research focused on therapeutic discovery and development. Collaborations with chemistry/pharmacology faculty to propel novel drug discovery and development are strongly encouraged.
 - b. Research to develop novel radiology diagnostics/theranostic approaches. Inter-programmatic collaborations will be prioritized.

*Winship catchment area is the state of Georgia and priorities include cancers with increased incidence, disparities, vulnerable populations and/or risk factors in Georgia. This includes but is not limited to:

- Cancers: lung, breast, prostate, colorectal, pancreatic, multiple myeloma
- Risk Factors: Obesity, Low Screening Rates, Health Literacy, HPV vaccination, UV exposure, tobacco use, poverty
- Vulnerable Populations: Black/African American, rural, low socioeconomic status, people living with HIV, uninsured

II. STRATEGIC RESEARCH DOMAINS

1. **Early Career Investigator Research Projects** – Applicants should be at the Instructor/Assistant Professor (or equivalent) with faculty appointments of four years or less who are eligible to apply for independent national competitive (peer-reviewed) research grants, but who currently do not hold such funding. Research projects should focus on clinical, basic or translational cancer-related research that offer significant potential for reducing the incident, mortality, and morbidity of cancer and/or improving the quality of life.
2. **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** – Winship is seeking proposals for a pilot grant program aimed at fostering innovative applications of artificial intelligence (AI) in basic and translational cancer research. This initiative seeks to support pioneering projects that harness AI technologies to address critical challenges in cancer biology, detection, treatment, and prevention. Preference will be given to projects proposing new AI approaches that focus on basic and translational research, including but not limited to, protein structure prediction, identifying new druggable targets, high resolution imaging, cellular analysis, and analysis/integration of large data sets. Proposals should emphasize novel strategies for leveraging AI that would have the potential for future extramural funding.

III. PROMOTING CANCER HEALTH EQUITY

1. **Promoting Cancer Health Equity and Reducing Cancer Disparities** – The Winship Center for Cancer Health Equity Research (WCCHER) and the Winship Community Outreach and Engagement (COE) are funding up to two (2) new cancer health equity research pilots. This opportunity will support research projects that focus on the unique cancer needs and priorities to reduce the cancer burden within the Winship catchment area (state of Georgia). Projects may focus on research related to high incidence tumors in our state, populations that experience health disparities, social determinants of health, prevention and cancer control efforts, implementation/dissemination of evidence-based interventions, and impact on policy. Projects can focus on basic/translational research that addresses mechanisms contributing to cancer disparities in our catchment area, clinical research to reduce disparities in cancer survivor symptoms or response, or ways to improve diversity of enrollment on clinical trials. Projects should result in preliminary data needed to investigate potential solutions needed to promote cancer health equity throughout the state of Georgia and leading to extramural funding. Catchment area data and priorities may be accessed at: <https://winshipcancer.emory.edu/research/community-outreach-and-engagement/index.php>. Questions related to this proposal may be directed to Theresa Gillespie, PhD (tgilles@emory.edu), Director of the Winship Center for Cancer Health Equity Research.
 - a. Funding will provide up to \$100,000 over a two-year project period. A total of two (2) pilots will be funded if sufficient meritorious applications are submitted.
 - b. Applications must be from a multi-PI team, with the PI's representing two or more Winship programs.

- c. The proposal should clearly indicate how, if the project is successful, it will promote greater cancer health equity among populations in Georgia.
- d. Cancer health equity target populations will include racial/ethnic minority populations, those residing in rural or urban underserved areas, people living with HIV, older adults, sexual-gender minority populations, people with disabilities, populations from poverty/lower socio-economic status, or other groups that experience disparities or are under-represented across the cancer research continuum – basic, translational, clinical, or population sciences.
- e. The proposal must include a well-designed plan as to how the work will be completed in the two-year time period and how the results will lead to submission of applications for extramural funding.
- f. The proposal must include some aspect of community engagement, such as receiving input from the COE community research panel, patients/survivors, community partners, or feedback on study design or research plan from community stakeholders. The proposal may also engage with established or new community or patient advisory groups.

IV. DISEASE TYPE-SPECIFIC RESEARCH

1. **Extramammary Paget's Disease ("EMPD")** - Thanks to the generosity of Dexter and Ann Crotts, the "Dexter T. and Ann Crotts Global Initiative for Extramammary Paget's Disease" was established in January of 2024. As a part of that initiative, the program leadership is soliciting investigator-initiated proposals focused on this rare tumor. Two proposals will be funded as per the details below:
 - a. Translational, clinical or health-services research focusing on EMPD treatment, detection and diagnosis, or patient quality of life. Junior faculty are encouraged to apply. Collaborative and team-based research or multi-institution studies will be reviewed favorably. Studies that prioritize investigation of health care disparities are encouraged. Proposals do NOT have to be therapeutic. This proposal will be funded up to \$50,000 for one year with a renewable second year of support requiring a progress report for renewal.
 - b. Preclinical proposals focused on genetic and genomic characterization of EMPD, therapeutic or diagnostic/imaging targets, immunology of EMPD or novel investigation into etiology or predictive factors will be considered. Senior, funded investigators with established track records of scientific investigation will be prioritized. Team-based research, collaboration (especially inter-institutional), and potential for future extramural funding will also be reviewed favorably. This proposal will be funded up to \$100,000 for one year with a renewable second year of support requiring a progress report for renewal.

All funded investigators will be required to provide a written report detailing outcomes of their research, including manuscripts published or presentations resulting from the work, to be shared with the donors (regardless of request for renewal). In addition, any academic output generated from this support will require acknowledgment of the Initiative and a thank you to the donors.

2. **Diabetes and Cancer** – Winship Cancer Institute, in collaboration with the Emory Global Diabetes Research Center, is excited to announce a pilot grant program focused on exploring the critical intersection of diabetes and cancer. This initiative seeks to leverage the expertise of one investigator from each field to collaboratively drive innovative concepts and new paradigms. Projects should focus on shared biological mechanisms, clinical overlaps, prevention, public health, health disparities, or contributing factors, such as obesity, metabolism, nutrition, and inflammation, with the goal of uncovering insights that could potentially advance both fields. By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, this program aims to generate transformative discoveries that deepen our understanding of the interplay between diabetes and cancer and inform novel prevention, diagnostic, and treatment strategies. Questions related to this domain may be directed to Jeff Mills, MBA (jeff.mills@emory.edu), Program Director for the Georgia Center for Diabetes Translation Research (GCDTR).
3. **Breast Cancer** - Thanks to the generous donations from the Glenn Family Breast Center, we are pleased to solicit investigator-initiated proposals for breast cancer-specific translational research from both Preclinical Research Scientists AND Clinical Investigators. Junior faculty are strongly encouraged to apply. This opportunity aims to support:

- a. Therapeutic or non-therapeutic studies which prospectively enroll patients for research studies, utilize breast cancer samples/data, or develop innovative technology to address patient care opportunities or improve patient well-being.
- b. Preclinical studies which prospectively utilize translationally minded in-vitro studies, breast cancer tissue samples, or drug delivery and animal-based disease models.

Submitted projects that leverage the strengths and expertise of multiple investigators from across two or more Winship research programs or research disciplines will be prioritized.

Project proposals should focus on (but are not limited to) the following breast cancer research concentration areas:

- Addressing Disparity
- Novel Targets and Therapeutic Strategies
- Development of Prognostic and Predictive Markers
- Non-immune Therapeutic Mechanisms
- Immune Therapy Pathways and Overcoming Resistance
- Carcinogenesis and Prevention

OTHER REQUIRED INFORMATION FOR ALL APPLICATIONS:

1. Community Outreach and Engagement Statement

For all research domains, a community outreach and engagement (COE) statement is required. The COE statement should describe the project's impact on Winship's catchment area, defined as the state of Georgia. It should justify how the proposed research will address and help reduce the cancer burden in Winship's catchment area, or state how proposals will disseminate evidence-based interventions to communities in Georgia or beyond. Investigators should highlight how their research aligns with catchment area priorities when appropriate.

Research catchment area priorities include cancers with increased incidence, disparities, vulnerable populations and/or risk factors in Georgia. This also includes but is not limited to:

- Cancer types: lung, breast, prostate, colorectal, pancreatic, multiple myeloma
- Risk Factors: Obesity, Low Screening Rates, Health Literacy, HPV vaccination, UV exposure, tobacco use, poverty
- Vulnerable Populations: Black/African American, rural, low socioeconomic status, people living with HIV, uninsured
- More information and resources about COE can be found [here](#). Questions may be directed to Theresa Gillespie, PhD (tgilles@emory.edu), Winship Associate Director for Community Outreach and Engagement (COE).

2. Underrepresented Populations

Special consideration will be given to proposals submitted by early career investigators and those from populations underrepresented in cancer research. Populations commonly identified as underrepresented in cancer research include: Women, Black and African American, Hispanic American, American and Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander. Applicants must self-identify as a member of an underrepresented population in the submitted proposal to be considered during the review process.

WINSHIP INVEST\$ ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:

1. Pilot projects will be awarded to active Winship members (<https://winshipcancer.emory.edu/research/research-programs/index.php>). To maintain active membership status, the following criteria must be met:
 - a. Attendance of at least 50% to published meetings of the research program to which the member belongs;
 - b. Maintenance of good financial standing with Winship (no pilot projects in deficit);
 - c. Acknowledgement of the Winship Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) on all publications resulting from utilization of services in one or more of Winship Shared Resources;
 - d. Acknowledgement of the appropriate pilot funding source on all publications resulting from work supported by the *Winship Invest\$* Program.

2. Winship members may receive only one pilot project award in a 12-month period and may not submit more than one proposal through any RFP. Members who have an active Winship Invest\$ pilot project are not eligible to apply.
3. Salary support for the principal investigator is not allowed except for junior faculty at the rank of Assistant Professor and below (NIH salary cap applies).
4. All proposals must include a clear plan for subsequent extramural grant submissions as a result of the work proposed, and a one-year timeline based on specific aims, unless otherwise noted for specific research domains.
5. Data Management – Proposals must include a plan to maintain research data in Redcap or other secure data management system (if relevant) with quality control and stored on the Emory system with back-up and potential for data sharing. Consultation for data sharing plans are recommended with the Winship Data and Technology Applications (DATA) Shared Resource. (<https://winshipcancer.emory.edu/research/shared-resources/winship-data-and-technology-applications.html>)
6. Clinical Research – Proposals can only be submitted by MDs, MD/PhDs, or RN/PhDs. All clinical research awardees are expected to follow clinical research guidelines set by Emory IRB, Winship Clinical Trials SOPs and the Winship Protocol Review and Monitoring Committee and must satisfy clinical research training requirements. Proposals must include the following:
 - a. A Human Subjects Research document
 - b. Winship PRMC Application
 - c. Clinical Protocol and Informed Consent Form
 - d. A plan to maintain clinical research data in Oncore or with the support of the Winship DATA shared resource
7. Vertebrate Animals Research - Proposals that include *in vivo* studies must include a section addressing *Vertebrate Animals* research and include either a draft to be submitted or IACUC-approved protocol.

Letter of Intent

A Letter of Intent must be submitted and approved by Winship to advance a proposal to full application status. This document must identify the PI, all potential co-investigators and/or collaborators on the project, the research program of the applicant, the research domain for which the project is to be considered, a proposed title and a brief description of the proposed research project. Letters of Intent should be no longer than two pages and should be uploaded as a single PDF document to <https://intranet.winship.emory.edu/pilotgrant> **no later than 11:59 pm on Tuesday, February 4, 2025**. Please direct any questions you have regarding this funding opportunity to winshipgrants@emory.edu.

Timeline:

Date:

RFP Announcement:	Monday December 23, 2024
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