



Students
Career Path Postbaccalaureate Predoctoral
Mentoring Opportunities
Grants Training Prevention Clinical
Research Internships Fellowships Cancer
Basic Science Collaboration Postdoctoral Innovation
Data Science Epidemiology



CABTRAC Town Hall Meeting with the NCI Center for Cancer Training

Nastaran (Nas) Zahir, PhD

Acting Director, Center for Cancer Training

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Objective

1. *NCI support for cancer research training and workforce development*
2. *NOFO updates*
3. *Application and review updates*
4. *Resources*

NCI CENTER FOR CANCER TRAINING (CCT)

MISSION & GOALS



OUR MISSION

The mission of the NCI Center for Cancer Training (CCT) is to **catalyze the development of a 21st century workforce** capable of advancing cancer research through a **scientifically integrated approach**.



1

COORDINATE & PROVIDE

Coordinating and providing research training and career development activities for fellows and trainees in NCI's laboratories, clinics, and other research groups.

OUR GOALS



2

DEVELOP & IMPLEMENT

Developing, coordinating, and implementing opportunities in support of cancer research training, career development, and education at institutions nationwide.



3

IDENTIFY & ADAPT

Identifying workforce needs in cancer research and adapting NCI's training and career development programs and funding opportunities to address these needs.



PEOPLE

Investing in the next generation of scientists



SCIENCE

Advancing innovative, collaborative cancer research



IMPACT

Strengthening the workforce. Improving lives.



INTEGRATION

Uniting different disciplines for greater discovery

NCI 2026 Bottom Line Blog: Commitment to Training

[Home](#) > [Grants & Training](#) > [NCI Bottom Line Blog](#) > NCI Remains Committed to Cancer Research Training

NCI Remains Committed to Cancer Research Training

[Subscribe](#)

January 13, 2026, by Sanya Springfield, Ph.D., Nastaran Zahir, Ph.D., Douglas Lowy, M.D., Nelson Aguila, D.V.M.

At NCI, we recognize that the discoveries that will redefine cancer research are already taking shape in the hands of today's trainees and early-stage investigators. By continuing to invest in their growth, we are cultivating the leaders and innovators who will chart the future of cancer research.

We are eager to start a new year. In 2026, NCI is strengthening our commitment to train the next generation of researchers and support a robust and skilled cancer research workforce. The future of cancer discovery is being shaped now, and it is our responsibility to ensure emerging talent is ready to lead it.

Cancer research training that supports everyone, from middle school students to established, independent scientists, is a fundamental pillar of NCI's mission that was forged when the institute was started more than 80 years ago. Many of the field's most influential leaders—pioneers in basic,



<https://www.cancer.gov/grants-training/nci-bottom-line-blog/2026/commitment-to-cancer-research-training>



NCI is the federal government's principal agency for cancer research and training.

Located in Maryland, across three campuses, NCI offers paid mentored research opportunities, including:

- Summer internships
- Postbaccalaureate fellowships
- Graduate partnerships
- Postdoctoral fellowships



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MORE!**

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TRAIN AT NCI
WEBSITE**



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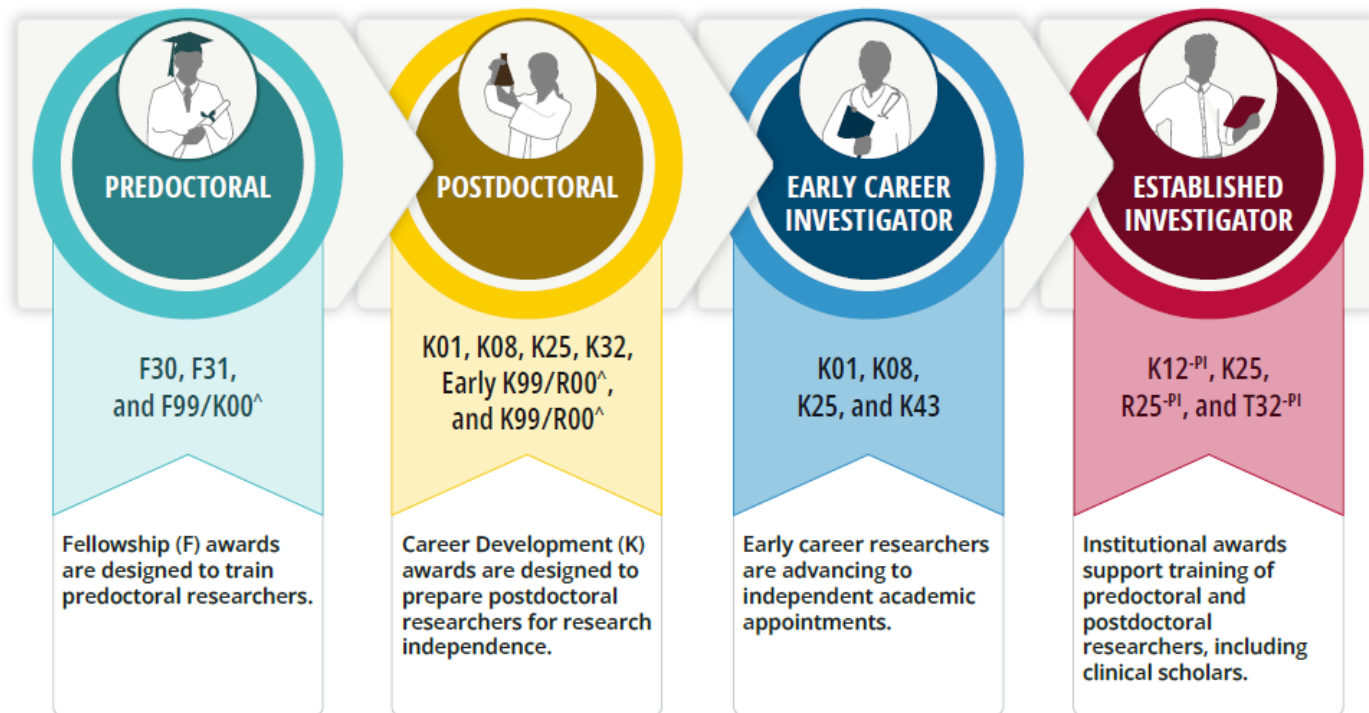


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NCI Funding Opportunities for Cancer Research Training

The career stage indicated is when an applicant is eligible to apply for each award.



Key

F = Fellowship
K = Career Development
R = Research
T = Training

[^] = NIH intramural postdocs are eligible to apply

^{-PI} = The principal investigator of the application must be an established investigator

Loan Repayment Programs (LRPs)



<https://www.cancer.gov/grants-training/training/funding>

Streamlining Funding Opportunities to Support Cancer Training

Program	NIH parent or NCI	New/ Planned
F99/K00	NCI	New NIH Parent NOFO published 6/16/2026
K12 Calabresi	NCI	NOFO reissuance published 6/3/2026
K12 McCaskill Stevens	NCI	Last app due date in Feb2027; NCI NOFO was disapproved by NIH – will incorporate concepts into Calabresi K12 and encourage applications in community oncology
K32	NCI	New NCI NOFO – published 5/27/2026
“Early” K99/R00	NCI	Last app due date in Oct 2026; NCI NOFO reissuance was disapproved by NIH – will incorporate into NCI “extended” K99/R00
“Extended” K99/R00	NCI	Last app due date is Oct 2027; Request to reissue 1 NCI NOFO may be forthcoming (CT not allowed)
R25	NCI	New NIH Parent NOFOs published 6/8/2026 (courses for skills development, research experiences, & mentoring activities). NCI NOFOs expired early.



Predoctoral to Postdoctoral Transition Award (Parent F99/K00 – Clinical Trial Not Allowed): *PA-27-037*

- **Supports PhD and other Research Doctoral candidates** to complete their dissertation research training (F99 phase) and transition in a timely manner to a mentored, cancer-focused postdoctoral career development research position (K00 phase).
- Subsequent NCI career development awards are allowable (e.g. K01, K99, R00) for F99/K00 awardees.
- First application due date is August 8, 2026 followed by standard F due dates.
- Note the “letter of certification” referenced in the NOFO before June 24 is not required. The NOFO will be updated to remove this application requirement.
- See [NIH ICO pages](#) for each ICO’s specific guidelines for the F99/K00 program.

*ICO: institutes, offices, & centers

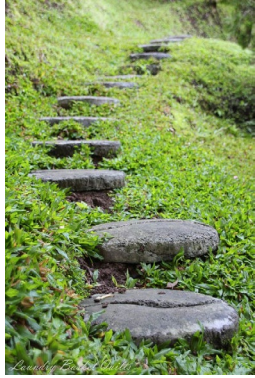


Predoctoral to Postdoctoral Transition Award (Parent F99/K00 – Clinical Trial Not Allowed): *PA-27-037 Key Changes*

Category	Former NCI F99/K00 NOFO	New NIH Parent F99/K00 NOFO
Application deadlines	One due date per year	Three due dates per year
Number of applications per institution per due date	Limited to one	Unlimited
Eligibility – US Citizenship or Permanent Residency	Not required	Required by the time of award
Eligibility – Institutional nomination	Required	Not required
Eligibility – time from PhD	Must be in 3 rd or 4 th year of research doctoral program	Must have 1-2 years from the requested start date before completion of their doctoral degree
Salary Limit for K00 phase	Limit of \$76K per year	Limit of \$80K per year
K00 duration of support	Up to 4 years	Up to 3 years

Academic Career Excellence (ACE) Award (K32 Independent Clinical Trial Not Allowed): *PAR-27-062*

- **For early-stage postdoctoral scholars** to obtain experience in applying for NIH funding up to one year before and no more than two years into their postdoctoral phase (including resubmissions).
- Support for up to \$80,000 salary and \$30,000 research development per year for up to 3 years.
- U.S. Citizenship or permanent residency required to be eligible for award.
- Subsequent NCI career development awards are allowable (e.g. K01, K99,R00) for K32 awardees.
- First application due date October 12, 2026 followed by standard K due dates.



Paul Calabresi Career Development Award for Clinical Oncology (K12 Clinical Trial Not Allowed) *PAR-27-025*

- Supports career and professional development for **clinical scientist scholars** trained in clinical and translational cancer research.
- Scholar appointments are up to 2 years.
- Scholar salaries can be requested up to \$110,000 and up to \$30,000 research development support per year.
- First application due date Oct 12, 2026.



New NIH Parent R25 Research Education Program Funding Opportunities

- NCI NOFOs were expired early: PAR-23-276, PAR-23-277, PAR-23-278. This will not impact existing or pending awards.
- Resubmissions and renewals can be submitted to the new NIH parent R25 NOFOs (first application due date September 25, 2026).
 - PA-27-034: Courses, curriculum & methods
 - PA-27-036: Research experiences
- PA-27-035 Mentoring Activities & Networks is a new R25 funding opportunity category for NCI (first application due date September 25, 2026).
- Visit the [NIH ICO Specific Information](#) page to view NCIs parameters for these R25 funding opportunities.
- The NCI R25 Youth Enjoy Science (YES) NOFO remains active: [RFA-CA-24-026](#). Upcoming application due date on September 28, 2026.

New NIH Parent R25 Research Education Program Funding Opportunities

- [PA-27-034](#) -- NIH Research Education Program - Courses, Curriculum & Methods (Parent R25 - Clinical Trial Not Allowed)
- [PA-27-035](#) -- NIH Research Educational Program - Mentoring Activities & Networks (Parent R25/UE5 - Clinical Trial Not Allowed)
- [PA-27-036](#) -- NIH Research Education Program - Research Experiences (Parent R25 - Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

Email: NCIR25@nih.gov

The NIH Loan Repayment Program Helps Pay Back Education Loans

- NCI Eligible Candidates: Researchers with post-graduate degree and eligible educational debt conducting cancer-focused studies.
- Award is up to \$50K annually for up to 2 years and renewable if eligibility criteria continue to be met.
- 2-year research commitment in return for award.
- Application deadline: annually in November.
- FY25: NCI funded 245 applications. Success rate: 93%
- NCI LRP Liaison: NCILRPInquiries@mail.nih.gov

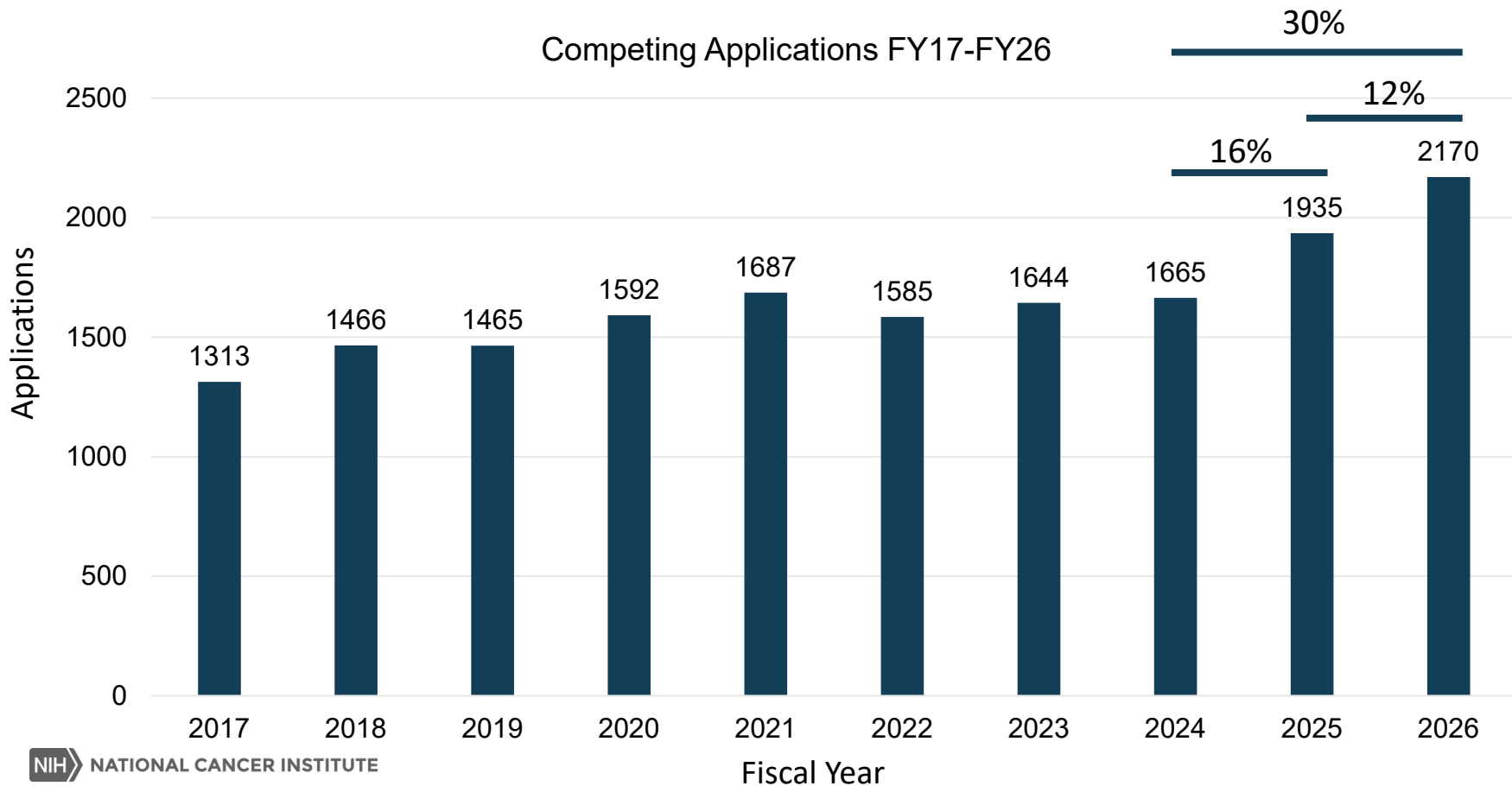


<https://www.lrp.nih.gov/> | 2024 Technical Assistance Webinar Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l63xAYf4-Os>

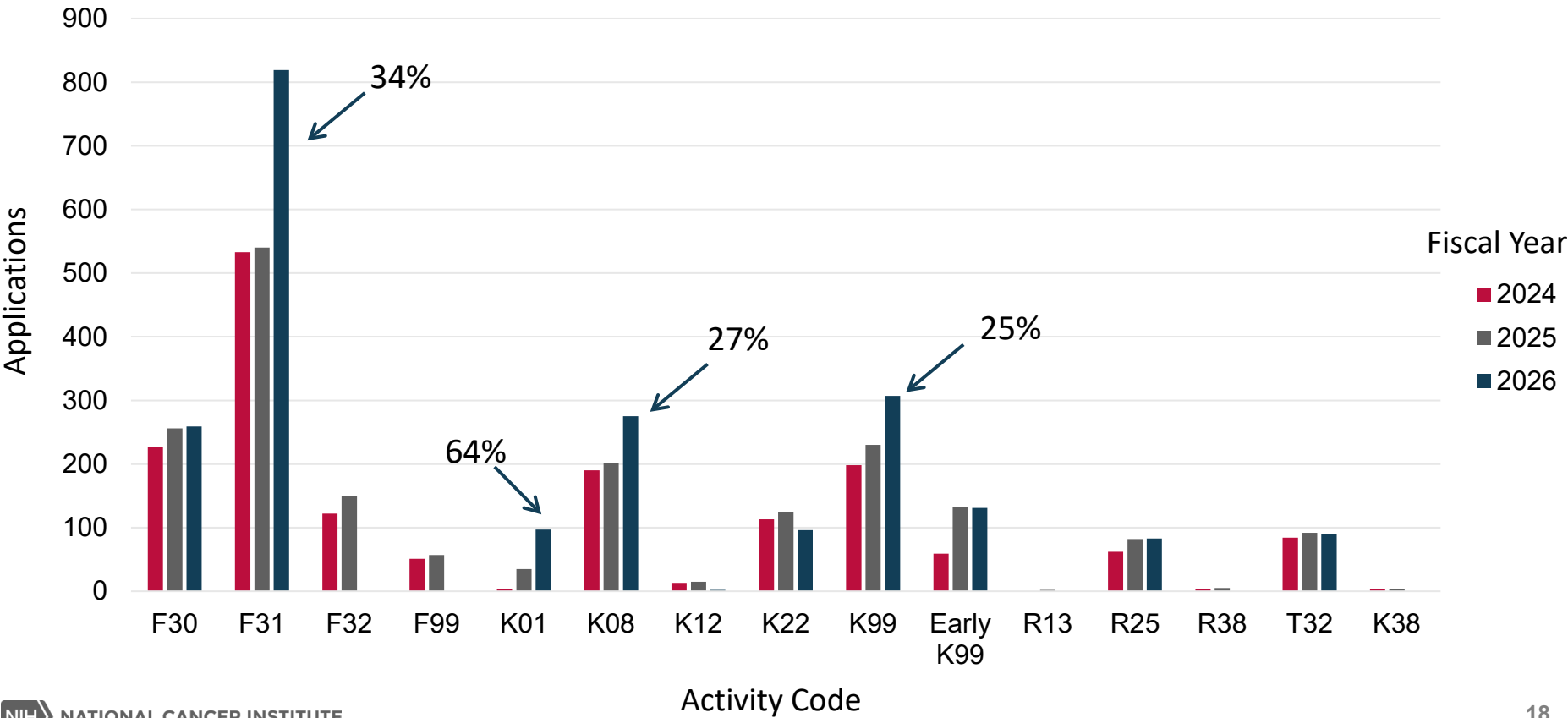
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The Number of NCI CCT Applications has Increased: *Includes Fs, Ts, Ks, and R25s*



The Number of NCI CCT Applications has Increased: *predominantly F31, K01, K08, and K99/R00*



Review Updates: NIH Center for Scientific Review (CSR)

- CSR has special emphasis panels for review of Fs, Ts, Ks, and R25s <https://public.csr.nih.gov/StudySections/SpecialEmphasis>
- NCI applications were percentiled for FY26 for Ts, Ks and R25s and will no longer occur starting in FY27 because they were percentiled against the entire CSR base.
- Fs will continue to be percentiled.
- Most Ks are reviewed together and Ts are reviewed together. R25s may be on different SEPs depending on their focus area.

NIH Funding Blog

One Year Later: How Centralized NIH Peer Review is Strengthening Efficiency, Competition, and Transparency

April 20, 2026

By Bruce Reed, Acting Director, Center for Scientific Review (CSR)

In March 2025, NIH [announced](#) that all peer review would be centralized within the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) (see also [this NIH Guide Notice](#)). We explained that centralizing peer review allowed for cost savings through increased efficiency, as well as improved consistency of review, and would maximize scientific competition to better identify the most innovative ideas.

Less than three months later, CSR assumed responsibility for the first level of peer review of all applications for grants and cooperative agreements and proposals for contracts. As the one-year anniversary approaches, we are providing an update on the consolidation and its initial effects on the peer-review process.

<https://grants.nih.gov/news-events/nih-extramural-nexus-news/2026/04/one-year-later-how-centralized-nih-peer-review-is-strengthening-efficiency-competition-and-transparency>

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New NIH ICO Specific Pages

g/find-a-fit-for-your-research/nih-institutes-centers-offices/NCI

NIH GRANTS & FUNDING

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Home > Funding > Find a Fit for Your Research > NIH Institutes_Centers_Offices > National Cancer Institute (NCI)

Funding

Back to Find a Fit for Your Research

NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices ▾

- Fogarty International Center (FIC)
- NIH Brain Research Through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies® Initiative (BRAIN)
- NIH Helping to End Addiction Long-term® Initiative (HEAL)
- National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS)
- National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH)
- National Cancer Institute (NCI)
- National Eye Institute (NEI)
- National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI)
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
- National Institute on Aging (NIA)
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)
- National Institute of Arthritis and

National Cancer Institute (NCI)

On this page:

- Mission Statement
- Interest Areas
- Highlighted Topics
- Funding Opportunities
- ICO Funding Policies and Considerations
- Additional Information by Funding Category

Mission Statement

The NCI Mission is to lead, conduct, and support cancer research across the nation to advance scientific knowledge and help all people live longer, healthier lives.

Interest Areas

General Topics

Cancer Biology: Supports research that advances fundamental understanding of the causes and biology of cancer, including cancer genomics, to improve prevention, detection, diagnosis, and treatment.

Cancer Prevention: Supports cancer prevention research to identify factors that cause cancer in humans and to develop risk-reduction strategies and preventive interventions.

Cancer Screening and Early Detection Research: Supports a variety of programs designed to improve early detection and enhance cancer screening.

Cancer Treatment, Diagnosis and Prognosis: Supports research to advance cancer treatment and disease control, as well as

Visit this page for information about the NCI mission, interest areas, highlighted topics, funding opportunities, ICO funding policies and considerations, and additional information by funding category.



New NIH ICO Specific Pages

Additional Information by Funding Category

Administrative Supplements	+
Conferences and Meetings	+
Individual Career Development	+
Individual Fellowship	+
Institutional Career Development	+
Institutional Training	+
Research Education	+
Small Business	+
Additional Contacts	+



NCI Career Development Workshop: Advancement to Research Independence

Monday, March 9, 2026

10:00 AM – 4:00 PM EDT

Recording and slides are available!

The goal of the workshop is to support NCI career development awardees and prospective applicants in gaining the knowledge and skills needed to advance toward independent cancer research careers.

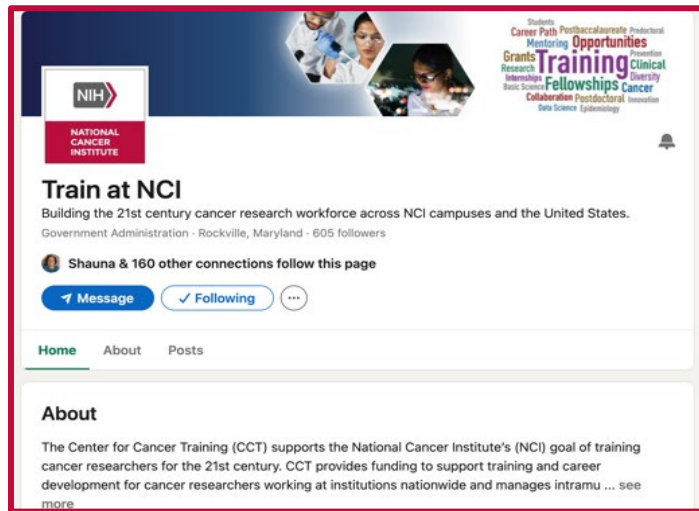
<https://events.cancer.gov/nci/K-workshop>



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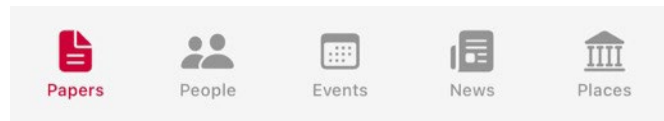


<https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/train-at-nci/>

Contact a program director to discuss!
<https://www.cancer.gov/grants-training/training/funding>

NanCI provides tools for managing the literature & connecting via shared interests

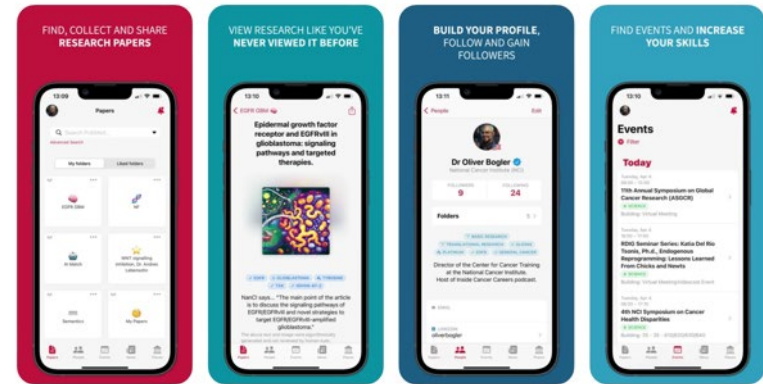
- NanCI - Connecting Scientists is a mobile and web application developed by NCI that uses machine learning algorithms to match users' interests and provide a unique experience by recommending tailored content such as interesting scientific papers, people to connect with, and events to attend.
- NanCI also has localized AI chatbots for **Events, News & Places**
- Roadmap developed – user input welcome



NanCI by NCI
Blue Pane Studio LLC
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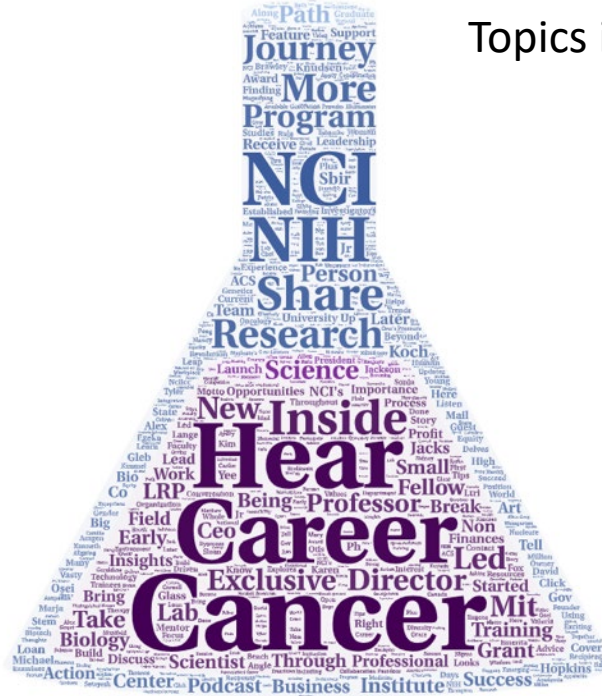
iPhone Screenshots



NIH NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

**INSIDE
CANCER CAREERS**

- Science policy
- Tech transfer
- Cancer prevention fellowship program
- Small businesses
- Non-profit sector
- Academia
- Global health
- Data science & AI
- Staff scientists
- Mentorship



Manuscripts: Impacts of the K99/R00 and the K08 Programs

Journal of Cancer Education (2024) 39:490–503
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13187-024-02420-1>



Evaluation of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) Pathway to Independence Award (K99/R00) Program

Michael Schmidt¹ · Corinne Boulanger-Espeut¹ · Grace Liou¹ · Nan Ma² · Sasha Torres¹ · Susan Cersosimo¹ · Oliver Bogler¹ · Nastaran Zahir¹

Accepted: 29 February 2024 / Published online: 18 March 2024
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Journal of Cancer Education
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13187-026-02896-z>



Outcome Evaluation of NCI Clinical Scientist Research Career Development Award (K08) Program

Corinne Boulanger-Espeut¹ · Lindsay Demblowski¹ · Michael Schmidt¹ · Sasha Torres¹ · Oliver Bogler¹ · Nastaran Zahir¹

Received: 12 March 2026 / Accepted: 5 May 2026
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K08 Clinical Scientist Research Career Development Award: *Evaluation Takeaways*

- **The K08 works: it retains clinical scientists and moves them toward research independence.** ~80% of K08 awardees went on to submit R01-equivalent applications, and ~60% received awards. This is roughly double the rates seen in unfunded applicants.
- **Program reforms in FY2018 dramatically expanded reach.** Broadening eligibility to include patient-oriented research and raising salary support to the legislative cap drove a nearly 4-fold increase in applications by FY2024, with NCI investment exceeding **\$50 million** that year.
- **Protected research time is the single most valued feature.** Over 90% of survey respondents credited the K08's protected time for research as essential to securing an independent position and establishing their research program, and nearly all said they would recommend the program to trainees.
- **The K08 confers a modest (~1 year) delay in transition to independence.** Awardees obtained their first R01 about one year later than unfunded peers. This likely reflects NIH grant policy in concurrent support and the incentive to maximize protected time before competing for R01 funding.
- **Institutional resources matter.** K08 awardees are concentrated at the most research-intensive institutions, highlighting a continuing access gap for scholars at less-resourced programs.
- **Key gaps remain, and the program can be further strengthened.** Awardees consistently flagged the \$50K/year research budget as inadequate, salary support as still too low, and the lack of structured post-award support during the K-to-R transition as an unmet need. Potential improvements include increased research funds, shorter award duration, and dedicated bridge-to-independence programming.

K99/R00 Pathway to Independence Award:

Evaluation Takeaways

- **The K99/R00 works: it substantially boosts transition to independence and R01 success.** Nearly 90% of K99 awardees went on to submit an R01-equivalent application, and 65.6% received at least one, which is more than triple the rate of F32 awardees (20.7%) and double that of unfunded K99 applicants (32.4%).
- **The Research Plan is the make-or-break component of your application.** Among all review criteria, the Research Plan showed the strongest correlation with overall impact score ($r = 0.78$, $R^2 = 0.62$). Applications scoring in the top two tiers on Research Plan were almost always in the fundable range, regardless of scores on other criteria.
- **The K99/R00 is a powerful career asset, but it is NOT a prerequisite for independence.** Only 31% of NCI Early-Stage Investigator R01 awardees had any prior K award, and 100% of surveyed non-applicants said they felt the K99/R00 would have been advantageous, suggesting its value is real but the path without it remains viable.
- **The award does not accelerate the timeline to independence, but it doesn't delay it either.** K99 awardees, unfunded applicants, and F32 awardees all required a median of ~10 years from PhD to first R01. The K99 did not compress that window as originally intended, pointing to a need for structural solutions beyond the award itself.
- **Institutional environment matters, and the 4-year eligibility window is a significant barrier.** K99 awardees are disproportionately concentrated at the most research-intensive institutions. Meanwhile, 31% of non-applicants cited ineligibility due to the 4-year postdoc window. Expanding eligibility to 6 years captures more promising scholars who face delays from publishing timelines, personal circumstances, or visa challenges.

Please Provide Your Feedback to the NIH

RFI: request for information

Related News

How Would You Measure and Reward Scientific Impact and Replicable Research Practices?

What does scientific impact look like today? For decades, measures such as publication counts, citation rates, and grant funding have been primarily used to assess the success of researchers. Yet biomedical research has become increasingly collaborative, interdisciplinary, and data-intensive. Progress often depends on teams of investigators, shared datasets and software, rigorous validation of findings, and sustained mentorship and training efforts.

Top Stories

Feedback Sought: Proposal to Cap the Number of Simultaneous Research Project Grants per Principal Investigator to Support More Researchers and Maximize Scientific Productivity and Innovation

We are seeking your feedback on whether distributing [Research Project Grants \(RPGs\)](#) funding across more investigators could increase overall scientific productivity and innovation (see [NOT-OD-26-086](#)). Through this Request for Information (RFI), NIH is presenting a proposal as one possible approach to advance stewardship, workforce sustainability, and the goals of the [NIH Unified Funding Strategy](#). Comments may be sent [electronically here](#) by August 3, 2026.

Top Stories



Thank you for your attention

Email: nas.zahir@nih.gov

LinkedIn CCT Page: Train at NCI



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