

Report
ad hoc Working Group
on Extramural Research Concepts and Programs

Dr. Neli Ulrich, Chair

Meeting on April 8, 2026

- Provide recommendations on NCI extramural research priorities to NCAB to ensure scientific merit, timeliness and necessity of NCI research
- Evaluate new and reissued concepts for future funding announcements
 - Consider whether the proposed initiatives will advance/enhance NCI's current research efforts and advise regarding future research directions.
- NCAB WG provides external concept review to NCI and advice to NCAB on extramural research concepts and programs.



Summary of WG Recommendations

Concept Type	New/Reissue	Title	Recommendation
RFP	Reissue	Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Program	Approve
RFA	Reissue	Innovative Molecular Analysis Technologies (IMAT) Program (R61/R33)	Approve
RFA	Reissue	Radiation Oncology–Biology Integration Network (ROBIN) (U54)	Approve
RFP	Reissue	Clinical Trials Evaluation Program Enterprise System (CTEP ESYS)	Approve

Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Program

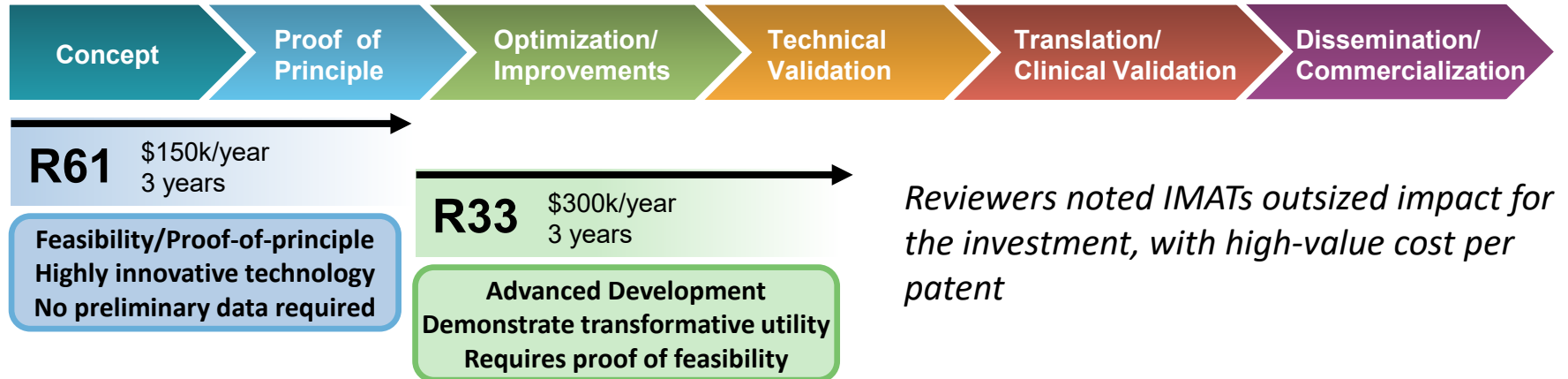
- Authoritative source for cancer statistics in the US and standard for quality among cancer registries worldwide
 - Collects diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes of cancer and provides national estimates for cancer incidence, survival, mortality, prevalence, lifetime risk
 - 17 Population-based registries representing ~46% of the U.S. population and providing ~1M incident cancer cases annually
 - Critical for measuring trends (e.g., early-onset cancers) and prevention/treatment success
 - **10-year contract with at \$600M ceiling with a first-year set-aside of \$52M.**

WG recommendations:

- Establish external advisory committee, consider expanding to underrepresented populations and modernize with AI/data linkages
- Uniform and strong endorsement from reviewers and WG.
- **Recommend to approve concept.**

Innovative Molecular Analysis Technologies (IMAT) Program

- **Program Goal:** Catalyze **multidisciplinary development** of **highly innovative technologies** to address the complexity of cancer biology and create new possibilities for the fight against cancer.
- **RFA reissuance** to support **high-risk, high-reward technology development** spanning a broad range of technical disciplines including:
 - Instrumentation, platforms, techniques, devices, methods, assays, and analytical tools.



IMAT RFA Concept Proposal

- Budget request of **\$12M** per year for 2028-2030 supporting 2 funding mechanisms.

Funding Opportunity (Awards made in FY2028, 2029, and 2030)	Est. # Awards Per Year	Est. 1 st Year Total Costs
Early-Stage (Proof of Concept) Innovative Technology Development for Cancer Research (R61)	23	\$5.4M
Advanced Development and Validation of Emerging Technologies for Cancer Research (R33)	14	\$6.6M
Total	37	\$12M

- Strong enthusiasm among reviewers and WG.
- **Recommend to approve concept.**

Radiation Oncology–Biology Integration Network (ROBIN)

- RFA reissuance with a total budget request of **\$36M over 5 yrs to fund 5 U54 awards**
- **Goal:** Real-time biological characterization during radiation therapy
 - Define mechanistic treatment-response dynamics in human tumors and normal tissues and
 - Identify actionable biological changes that can inform biomarker development, drug–radiation combinations, and adaptive treatment strategies.
- WG noted the importance of sample and data SOPs to ensure comparability and reproducibility and clearly defined performance metrics.
- WG recommended a mid-cycle external program evaluation.
- WG members expressed strong support for renewal.
- **Recommend to approve concept.**



Clinical Trials Evaluation Program Enterprise System (CTEP ESYS)

- Mature NCI-wide enterprise platform that supports the **conduct, oversight, coordination, and evaluation of NCI-sponsored clinical trials**
- Integrated enterprise system capable of handling increasingly complex protocols, novel trial designs, expanded safety requirements, and growing data volumes.
- RFP for a **10-year R&D contract** with a **ceiling of \$223.7M** to provide flexible infrastructure to keep NCI trials at the forefront of operational innovation
- Recommend greater interoperability and seamless data flow across the enterprise.
- Enthusiasm for use of AI, ML, and advanced analytics for protocol review, accrual monitoring, and safety surveillance.
- **Recommend to approve concept**

Coordinated suite of 24 highly integrated internally & externally applications to NIH/NCI

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