



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



NCI Support for Cancer Research Training and Workforce Excellence

Nastaran (Nas) Zahir, PhD

Acting Director, Center for Cancer Training

Deputy Director, Center for Cancer Training

Branch Director, Cancer Training Branch

nas.zahir@nih.gov

Outline

1. Center introduction (CCT)
2. NCI support for cancer research training and workforce excellence
3. Extramural
 - NOFO and policy updates
 - Award data
4. Intramural program support
5. At Scale – Outreach efforts
6. CRCHD activities (Dr. Calzola)

NCI's Center for Cancer Training (CCT)

- **Mission:** to catalyze the development of a 21st century workforce capable of advancing cancer research through a scientifically integrated approach, by:
 - Supporting cancer research training, career development and education for fellows and trainees at
 - NCI's laboratories, clinics, and other research groups, and
 - Institutions nationwide.
 - Identifying workforce needs in cancer research and adapting NCI's training and career development programs and funding opportunities to address these needs.



NCI 2026 Bottom Line Blog: Commitment to 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.

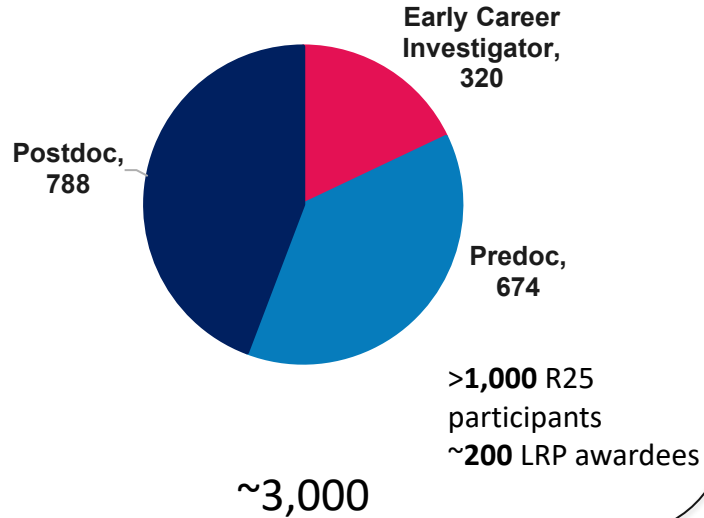
Cancer research training that supports everyone, from middle school students to established, independent scientists, is a fundamental pillar of NCI's mission that was forged when the institute was started more than 80 years ago. Many of the field's most influential leaders—pioneers in basic, clinical, translational, and population cancer research—began their careers through NCI extramural and intramural research training programs and fellowships.



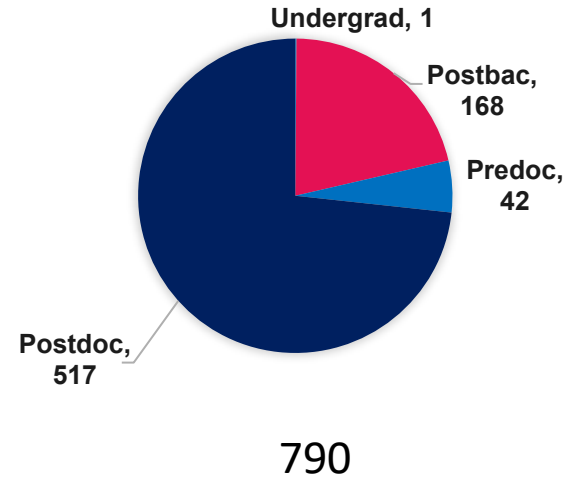
[Scan to read blog](#)

Snapshot of NCI Trainees: Extramural and Intramural

Extramural



Intramural Research Program



Cancer Research Training at NCI – Enterprise Level



Nastaran Zahir, PhD,
Acting Director Center for
Cancer Training (CCT)



Nelson Aguila, DVM, Acting
Director, Center to Reduce
Cancer Health Disparities
(CRCHD)

NCI

Supporting
Trainees
working at the NCI
(Intramural Training
Committee)

Office of Training and
Education (CCT)



Channele Case Borden, PhD

Center for Cancer Research
(CCR)



Shauna Clark, PhD

Office of Education Division of
Cancer Epidemiology
and Genetics (DCEG)



Jackie Lavigne, PhD

Division of Cancer Control and
Population Sciences (DCCPS)



Richard P. Moser, PhD

Cancer Prevention Fellowship
Program, Division of Cancer
Prevention (DCP)



Heather Bowles, PhD

iCURE (CRCHD)



Jessica M. Calzola, PhD

Tech Transfer Center (TTC)



Ruth Simpkins-Morst

Center for Biomedical Informatics
and Information Technology (CBIT)



Shannon Silkensen, PhD

Ethics Office



Eric Hale, JD

Center to Reduce Cancer
Health Disparities, CRCHD



Nelson Aguila, DVM

Cancer Training Branch (CCT)



Nastaran Zahir, PhD

Center for Global Health (CGH)



Sudha Sivaram, DrPH, MPH

Extramural

Cancer Training Branch (CTB)



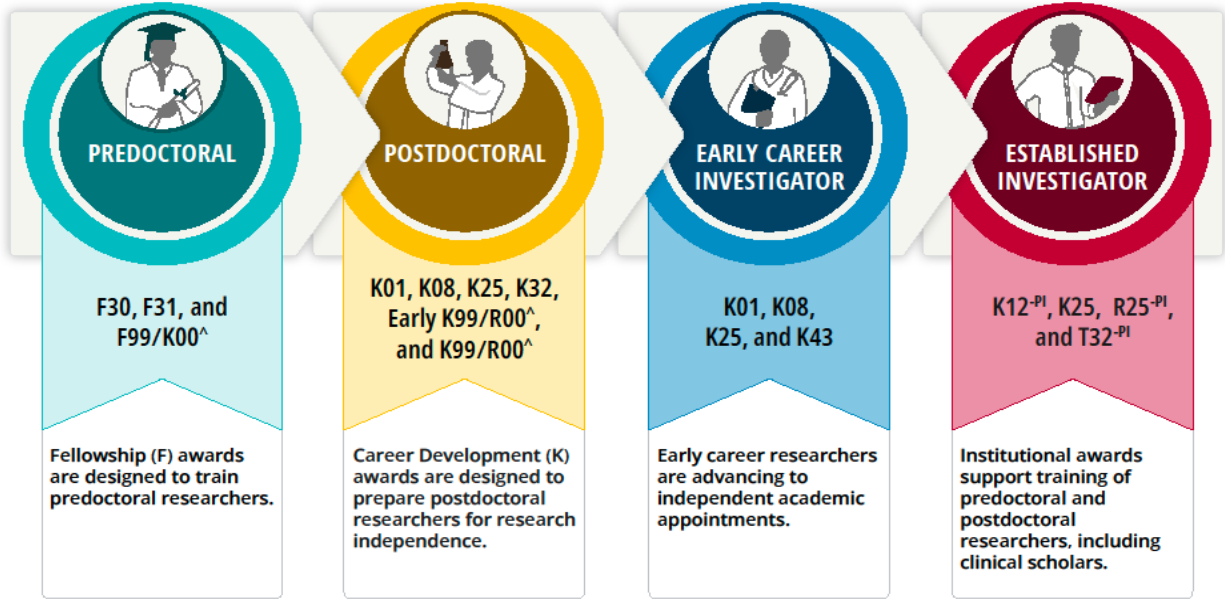
Nastaran Zahir, PhD,
Branch Director

Extramural

NOFO and Policy Updates

NCI Funding Opportunities for Cancer Research Training and Education

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)



Scan for more details

cancer.gov

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	NCI NOFO will not be reissued although it was approved by NCAB. NCI will incorporate concepts and encourage applications in community oncology for the Calabresi K12 NOFO.
K32	NCI	New NCI NOFO – published 5/27/2026. Will be expired early and not reissued.
“Early” K99/R00	NCI	NCI NOFO will not be reissued although the reissuance was approved by NCAB.
“Extended” K99/R00	NCI	NCI NOFO will not be reissued due to the upcoming consolidation of Mentored K NOFOs.
R25	NCI	New NIH Parent NOFOs published 6/8/2026. (courses for skills development, research experiences, & mentoring activities). NCI NOFOs were expired early.

No changes in NCI’s participation in: F30, F31, K01, K08, K25, T32, LRP

Notice of NIH Updates to Career Development (K) Award Programs: NOT-OD-26-098

NIH is updating its Career Development (K) Award programs. These updates include the following for applications due Oct 12, 2027 or later.

- Consolidating individual K notices of funding opportunity (NOFOs).
- Eliminating the requirement for data management and sharing (DMS) plans on Ks.
- Clarifying allowable uses of K award funds for clinical trial research activities.



[Scan for more details](#)

Notice of NIH Updates to Career Development (K) Award Programs: NOT-OD-26-098 (first due dates Oct 12, 2027)

New Activity Code	Award Name	Relevant Codes Covered
KR1	Mentored <u>R</u> esearch Scientist Career Development Award	K01 (Research Scientist), K21 (Addiction), K25 (Quantitative Scientist), K32 (Early-stage postdocs)
KC1	Mentored <u>C</u> linician Research Scientist Career Development Award	K08 (Clinician), K23 (Patient Oriented), K38 (Early stage), K76 (Emerging Leaders)
KS1	Clinical Investigator Award to <u>S</u> upport Mentoring of Early Career Clinician Scientists	K02 (Research scientist), K07 (Academic Teacher), K18 (Career Enhancement), K24 (Midcareer patient oriented), K26 (Midcareer – Biomedical and Behavioral)
KT1/R00	NIH Career <u>T</u> ransition to Research Independence Award	K99 (Pathway to Independence) K22 (Career Transition)

Citizenship Eligibility for All Ks

- The NIH [K citizenship eligibility policy](#) limits PIs to citizens, permanent residents and non-citizen nationals at the time of award (same as NRSA awards).
- The K99/R00 is the only exception noted in the policy.
- Any active NOFO that uses the current K Activity Codes will be expired by July 13, 2027 (except the K00, K12, and K43). This includes the NCI-led K32 and K99 NOFOs.
- Therefore, after July 13, 2027, all Ks including KT1/R00 will be subject to the NIH [K citizenship eligibility policy](#).

Notice of NIH Updates to Career Development (K) Award Programs: NOT-OD-26-098

CLINICAL TRIALS (CT)

- NIH will no longer support 'Independent Clinical Trial Required' K award NOFOs.
- K award funds may not be used to support the costs of conducting a CT, CT feasibility study, or an ancillary study to an existing CT.
- K awardees may continue to gain CT experience by participating in a trial led by a mentor or co-mentor.
- K awardees who wish to lead a clinical trial as PI must secure separate funding (e.g., institutional, philanthropic, or other grant awards) to support those activities.

Request for Information (RFI): Input on Potential NIH Funding Approaches to Support the Development of Future Clinical Trial Investigators

- Serving as the PI of a clinical trial can be an important step toward research independence for many clinician-scientists by providing experience designing, leading, and managing complex clinical research and generating preliminary data to support future studies.
- NIH is exploring funding models that would allow mentored K award recipients to lead clinical trials while maintaining the K award's primary focus on career development.
- Under these models, support for the clinical trial would be provided through
 - Approach 1: a limited competition RPG award, separate from the K award during the mentored K award period, or
 - Approach 2: a phased transition award during the subsequent RPG stage of a K/R transition award

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-26-095.html>

Responses due by September 30, 2026

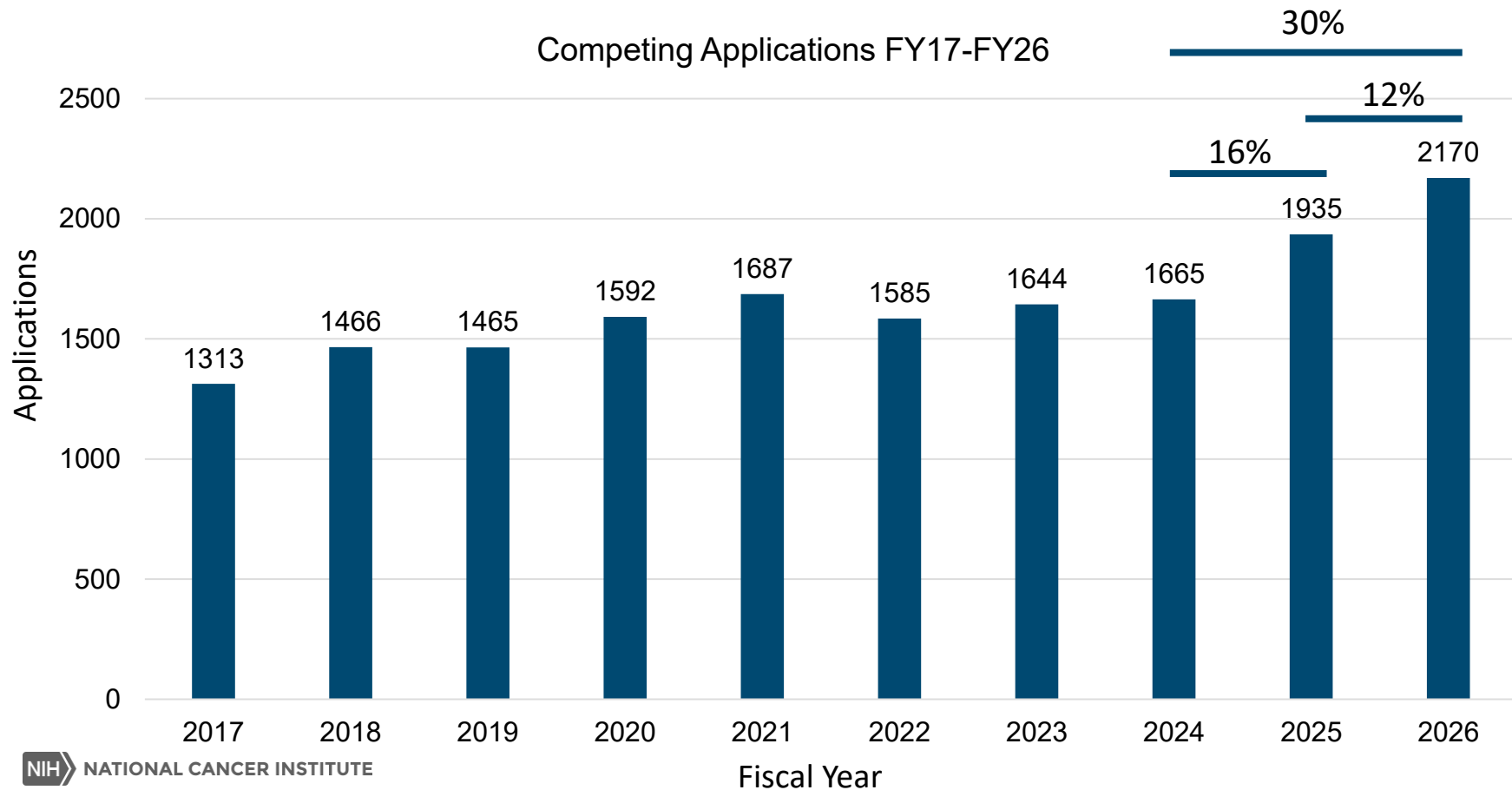


Scan for more details

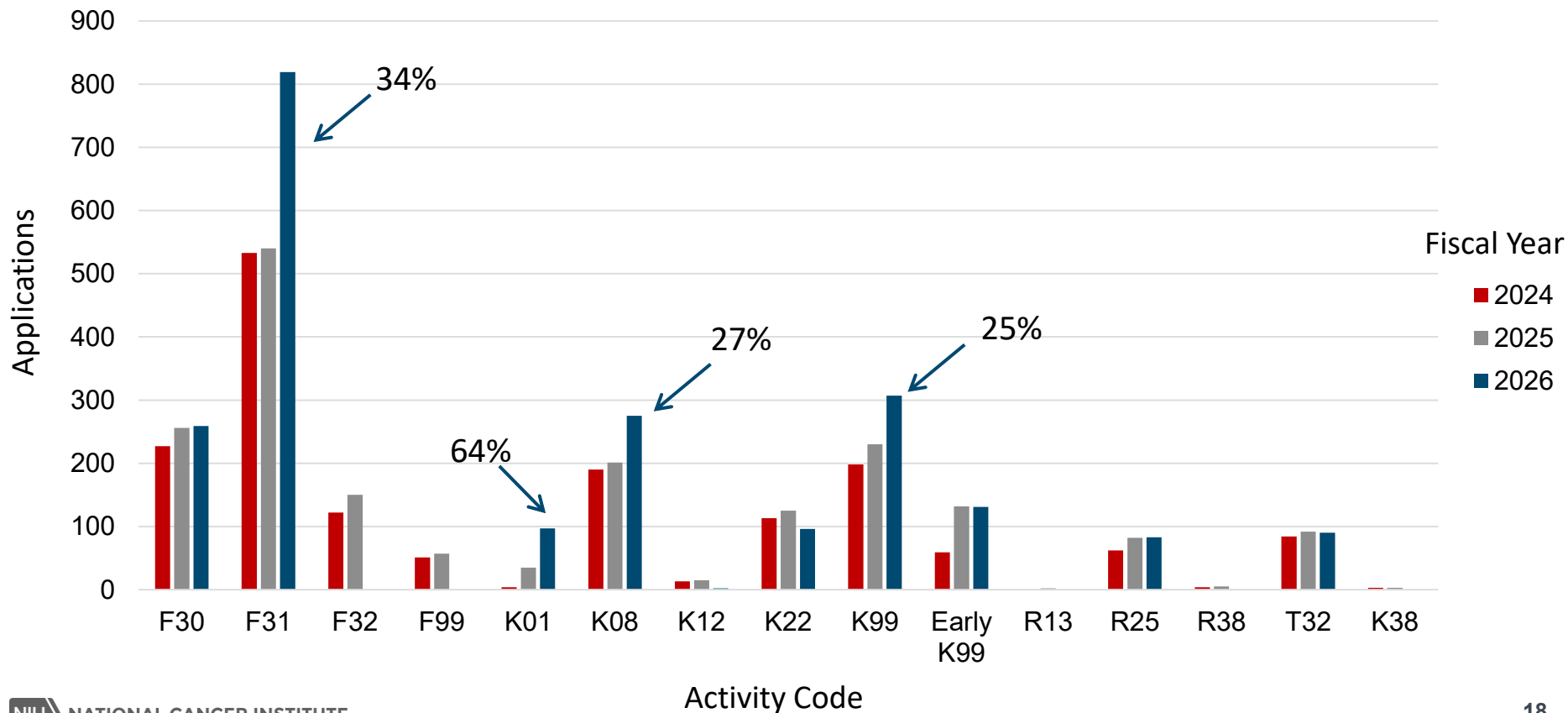
Extramural

Award Data

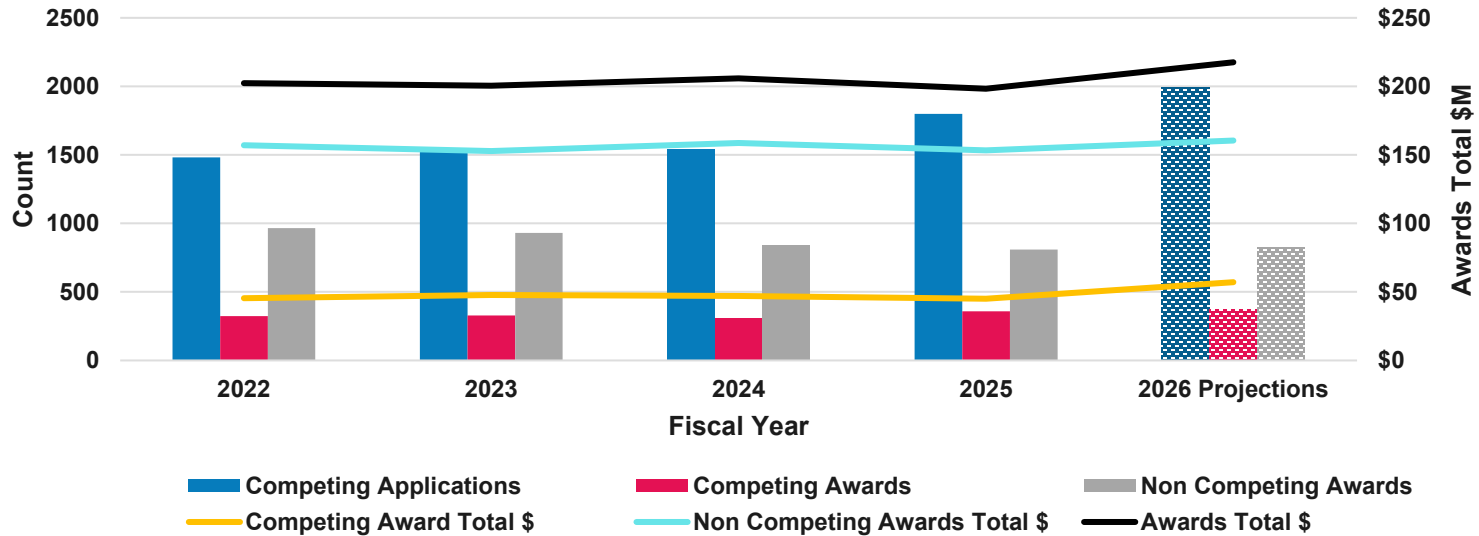
Number of CCT Applications is Increasing



Number of CCT Applications is Increasing *predominantly F31, K01, K08, and K99/R00*



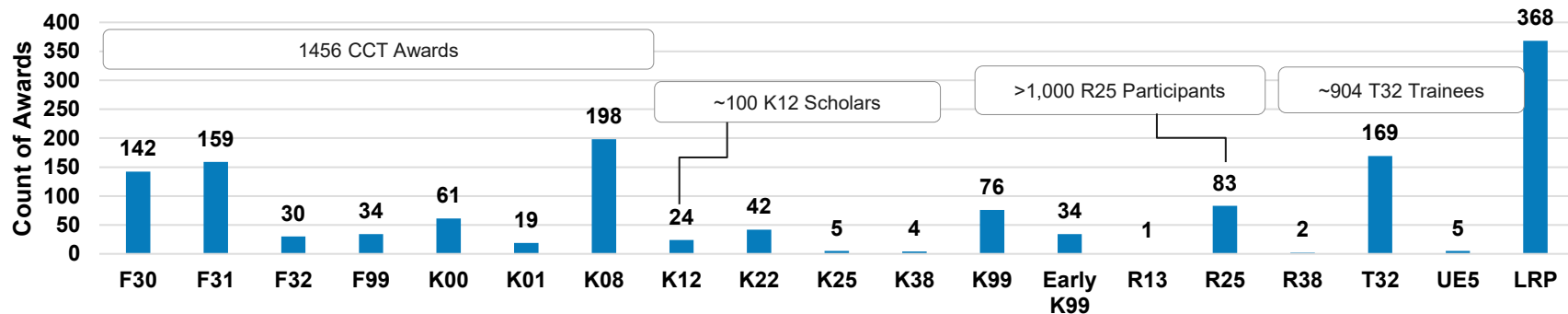
NCI CCT Total Awards



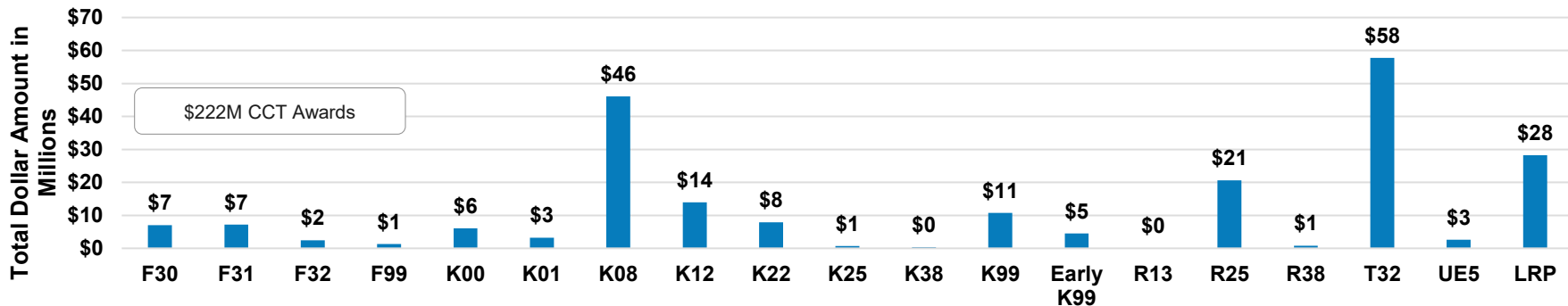
All Awards	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 Projections
Competing Applications	1482	1533	1545	1799	1994
Competing Awards	324	329	311	358	375
Non Competing Awards	966	931	839	810	826
Total Awards	1290	1260	1150	1168	1201
Competing Award Total \$	\$45,381,694	\$47,739,159	\$47,056,229	\$45,030,549	\$57,105,611
Non Comp. Award Total \$	\$156,971,044	\$152,811,965	\$158,697,733	\$153,241,373	\$160,479,226
Awards Total \$	\$202,352,738	\$200,551,124	\$205,753,962	\$198,271,922	\$217,584,837

NCI CCT Training Portfolio Snapshot

Active Awards



Active Award Funding



NCI Awards to Support Cancer Training:

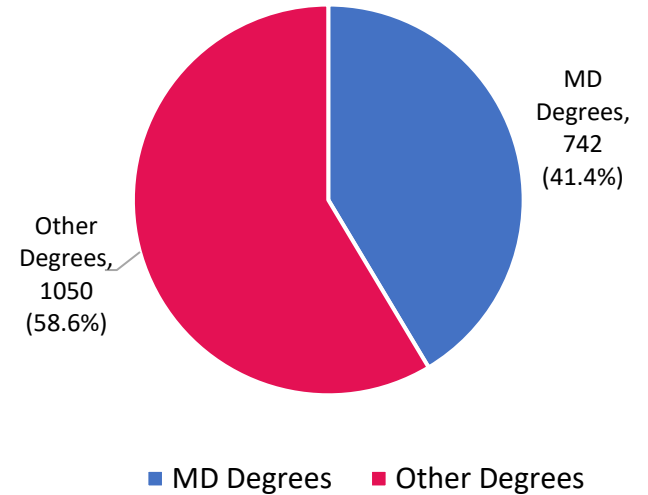
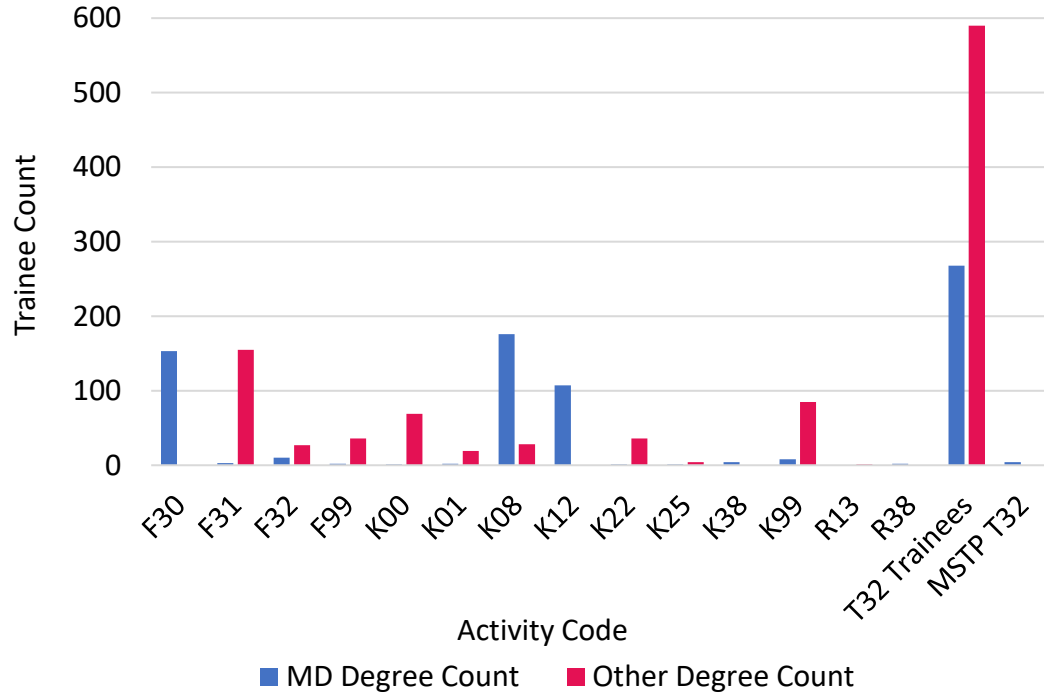
Funding Rates 2-Year Average (Fiscal Years 2024-2025)

Program	Funding Rate
F30	24%
F31	17%
F99/K00	34%
K01	18%
K08	16%
K25	15%
Early K99/R00	17%
K99/R00	16%
R25	27%
K12	35%
T32	32%
LRP	90%



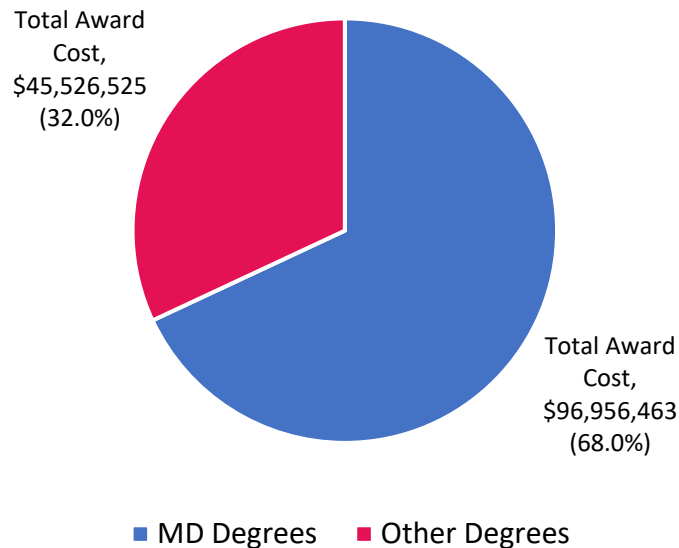
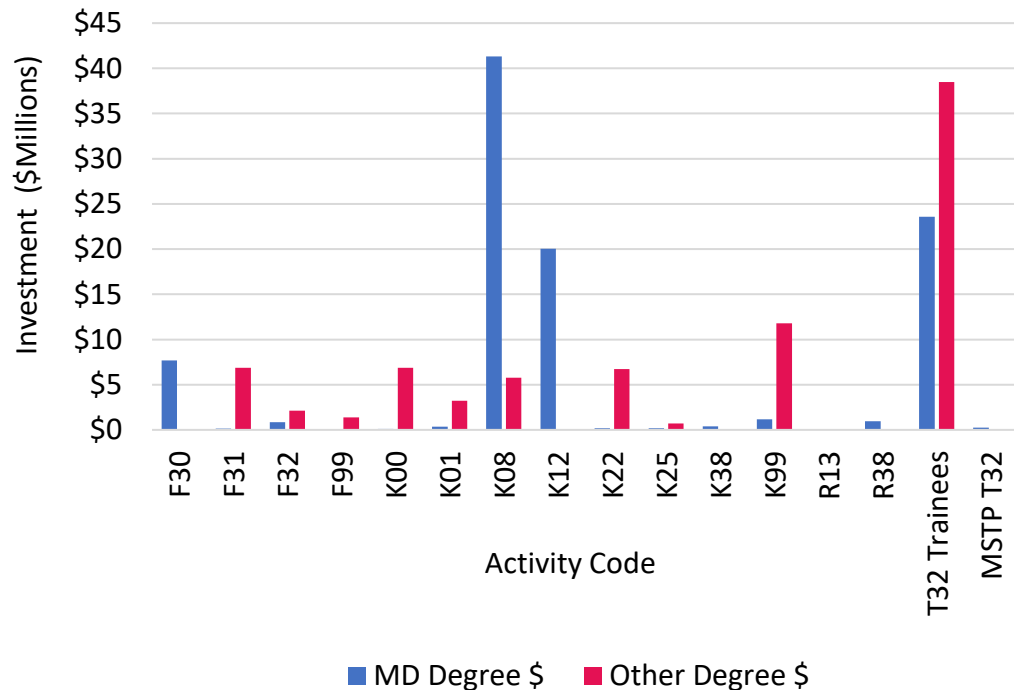
Scan for more details

Number of Clinical Scholars NCI CCT Supports



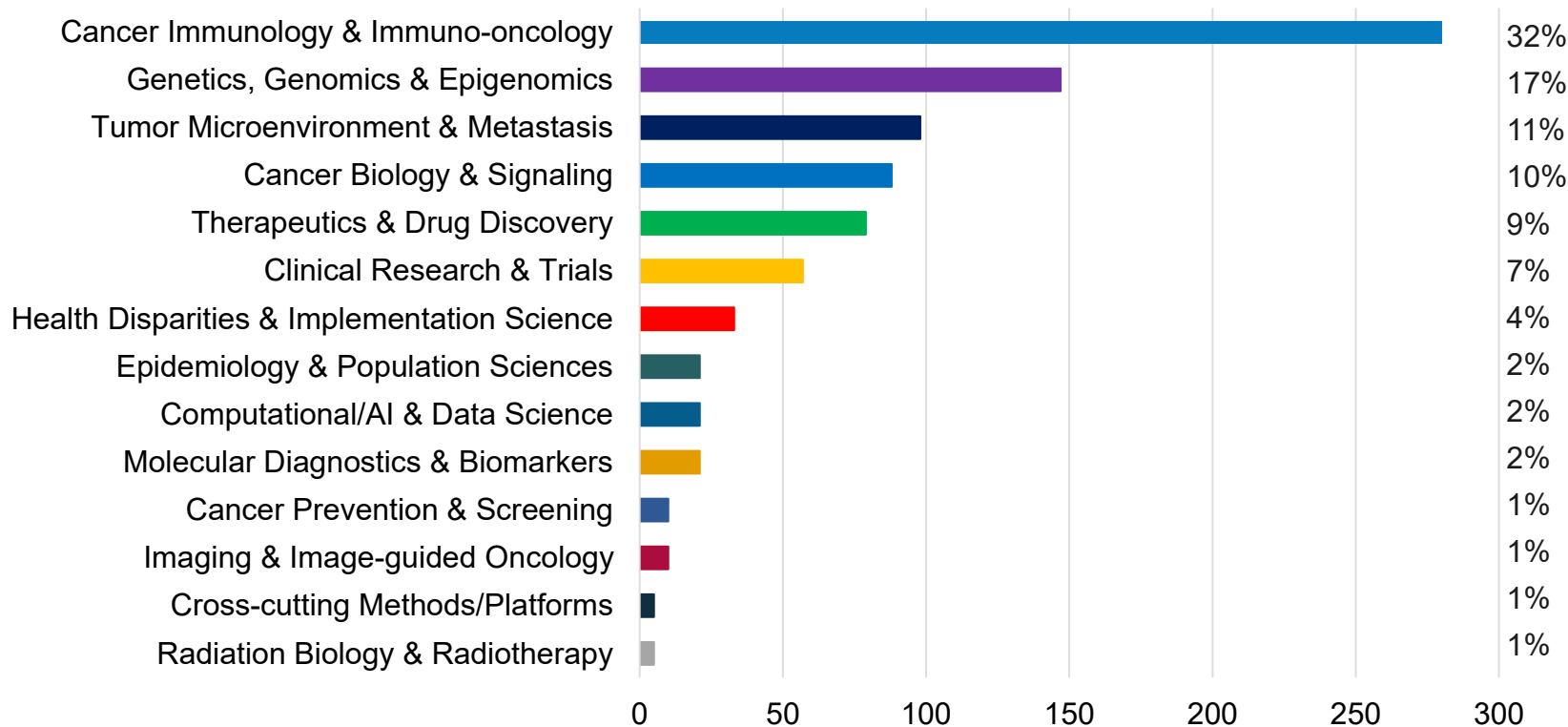
Snapshot August 2026
Other degrees are those without MDs

NCI CCT Investment in Clinical Scholars



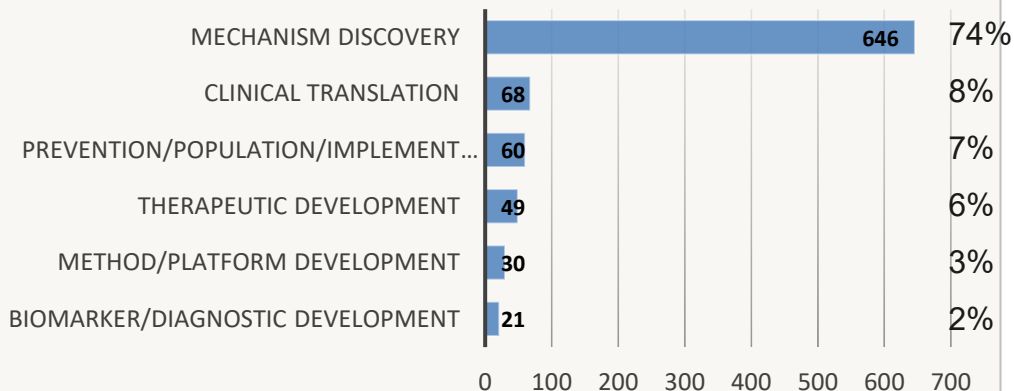
Snapshot August 2026
Other degrees are those without MDs

Primary Scientific Fields of NCI CCT Individual Awards

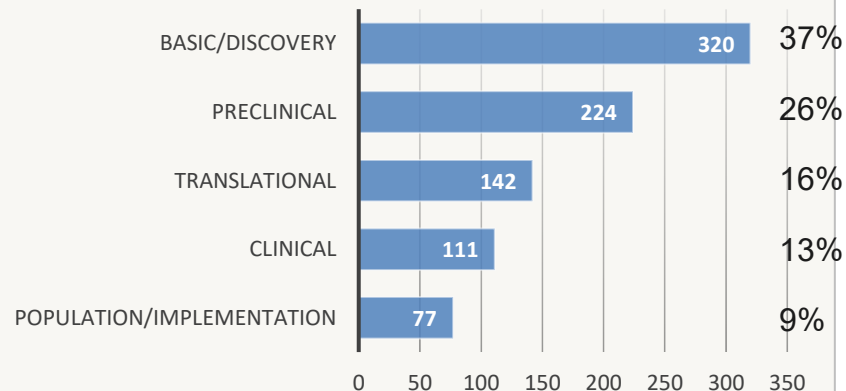


Research Modes and Translational Stages of NCI CCT Individual Awards

Research Mode



Translational Stage



Intramural

Office of Training & Education (OTE)



Chanelle Case Borden, PhD,
Branch Director

Coordination & Oversight

- Liaise for NCI Intramural Training with the NIH Office of Intramural Training and Education
 - Assist with the development and implementation of training policy
 - Currently working to develop an NIH-wide fellow tracking system
- Partner with NCI Training Directors and training staff to enhance the overall training experience at NCI
 - Upcoming goal: Identify new curricula and cross-training opportunities
 - Novel cohort models
 - New partnerships
 - Experiential learning

Career & Professional Development for Intramural Trainees

Scientific Courses

- Translational Research in Clinical Oncology
- Statistical Analysis of Research Data
- Whole-Person Health

Professional Development Workshops

- K Grant Writing
- Teaching & Mentoring
- Job Readiness
- Communication
- Scientific Management Training

Leadership Development

- NCI Education and Outreach Program
- Staff Scientists/Staff Clinicians Career Enrichment Program

Career Exploration

- Pathways for Future Oncologists
- Science-Based Non-Academic Careers Seminar
- NIH Fellows Editorial Board

Award Programs

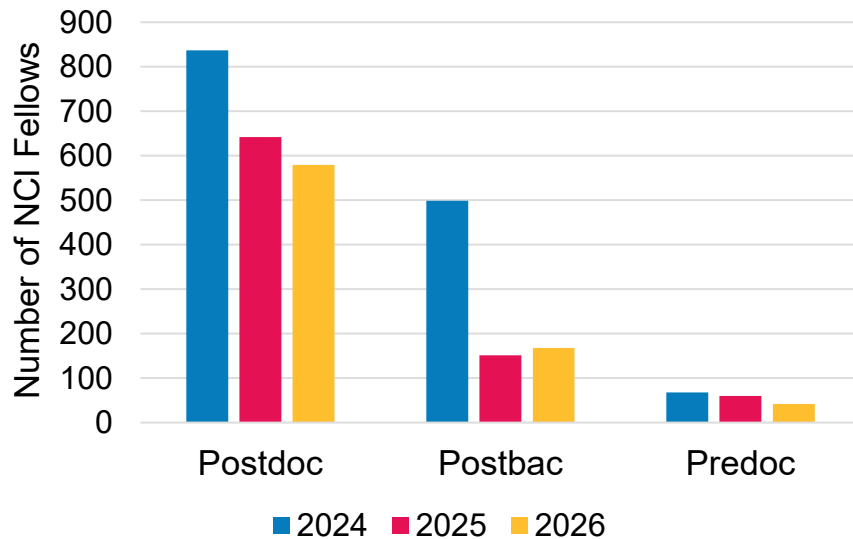
- NCI Outstanding Mentor Award
- Staff Scientists/Staff Clinicians Outstanding Mentor Award

Partnership Programs

- NIH-UPenn Graduate Partnership Program
- NCI-FDA Interagency Oncology Task Force

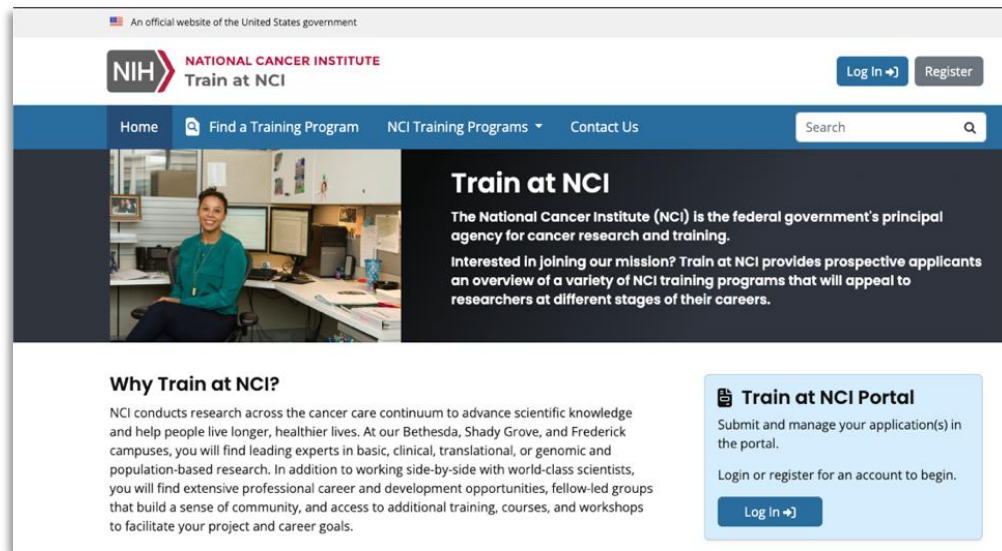
Outreach and Recruitment

- Promote K-12 STEM education at local public schools
- Participate in local & virtual career fairs
- Coordinate NCI-wide presence at national conferences



Outreach and Recruitment 2

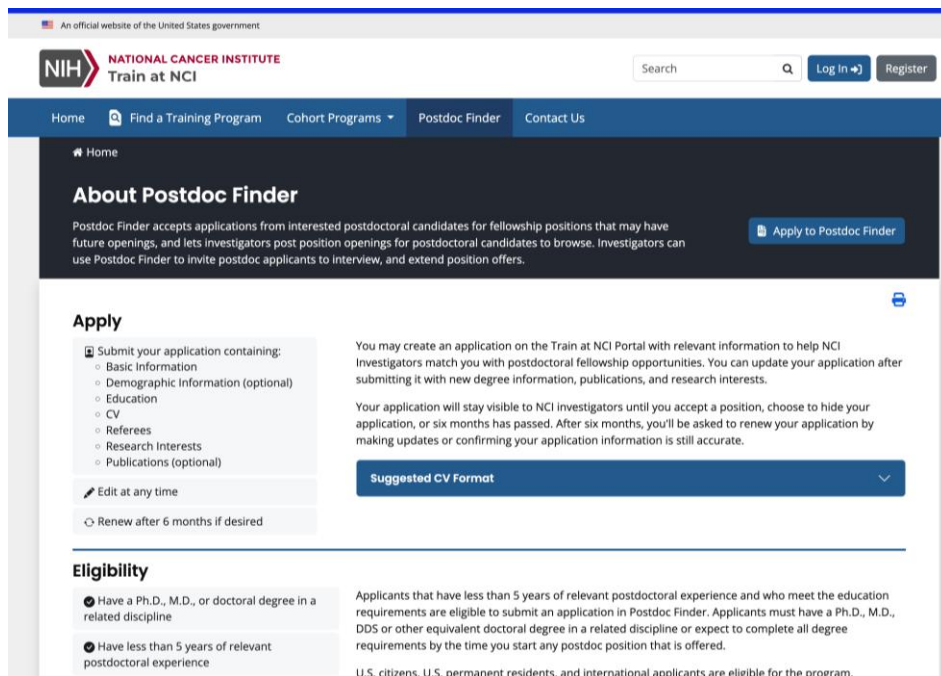
- Developed and maintain Train at NCI, a central application portal to streamline recruitment across the institute
 - Summer internships
 - Postbaccalaureate fellowships
 - Graduate partnerships
 - Postdoctoral fellowships



Scan to access portal

Outreach and Recruitment 3

- **NEW*** Postdoc Finder
 - Application tool for postdocs in Train at NCI
 - Launched in February 2026
 - View available projects in the intramural research program



trainatnci.cancer.gov

At Scale

Outreach Efforts



Angela Jones, Program Analyst, OD and Associate Director, OTE



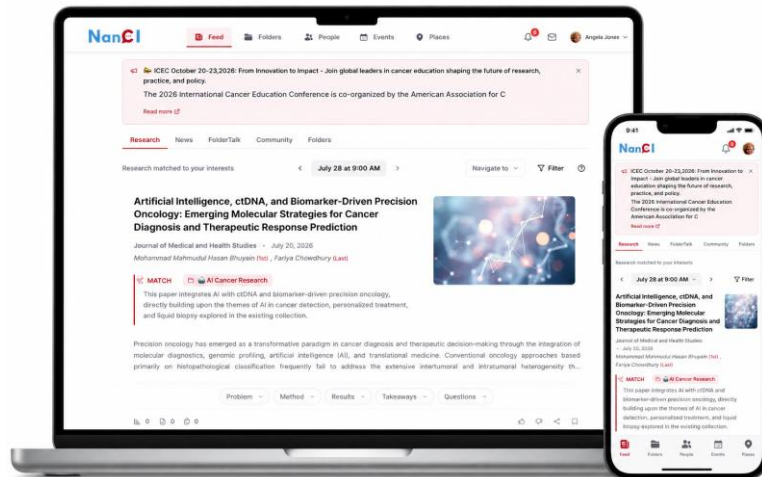
Nas Zahir, PhD, Acting Director



Discover Relevant Papers, People & Events with NanCI

An AI-powered tool built by NCI for the biomedical research community.

- ✓ **Explore papers** NanCI can help you find new scientific papers, share research with your network, and chat with an open source paper to help answer any questions.
- ✓ **Create folders** Organize, like, and share scientific papers and receive daily paper recommendations from NanCI.
- ✓ **Connect with scientists** Create a profile and build your professional network by following other scientists on NanCI.
- ✓ **Discover** NanCI can keep you up to date on some of the latest news in cancer research.



Available on your iOS devices or check out the web app on your desktop or Android devices today!



Scan Me

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 was to support NCI career development awardees and prospective applicants in gaining the knowledge and skills needed to advance toward independent cancer research careers.



Scan me

Stay Connected with the NCI Center for Cancer Training

Funding updates

Training opportunities

Career resources



Follow Us



Follow Train at NCI on LinkedIn for the latest funding announcements, training opportunities, and events.



Subscribe



Get our monthly newsletter with NOFO updates, policy changes, application tips, and more.



Talk With Us



Connect with a Program Director to discuss your training plans before you apply.

Manuscripts K99 and K08

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
This is a U.S. Government work and not under copyright protection in the US; foreign copyright protection may apply 2024



Scan for more details

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
This is a U.S. Government work and not under copyright protection in the US; foreign copyright protection may apply 2026



Scan for more details

Summarizing CCT's Philosophy of Training - Catalytic

If this iceberg represents all of NCI's funding of early mentored career mentored researchers...



- Extramurally, CCT funds ~ 1 in 5 early-career, mentored cancer researchers supported by NCI
- We catalyze the careers of the people we support, e.g. F99/K00 & K99/R00
- We catalyze the activity of the community by signaling the importance of the goals of our mechanisms, e.g.
 - career advancement to independence,
 - clinical scholars who receive > 1/2 of CCT's extramural budget
- Intramurally – we provide programs for cohorts of participants to catalyze successful career paths

Thank you for your attention

Email: nas.zahir@nih.gov

LinkedIn CCT Page: Train at NCI



**NATIONAL
CANCER
INSTITUTE**

Visit our website for more information,
and contact us

cancer.gov/CCT

www.cancer.gov

www.cancer.gov/espanol



Visit our website!



Download our flyer

Access our flyer for Cancer
Training Funding Opportunities!