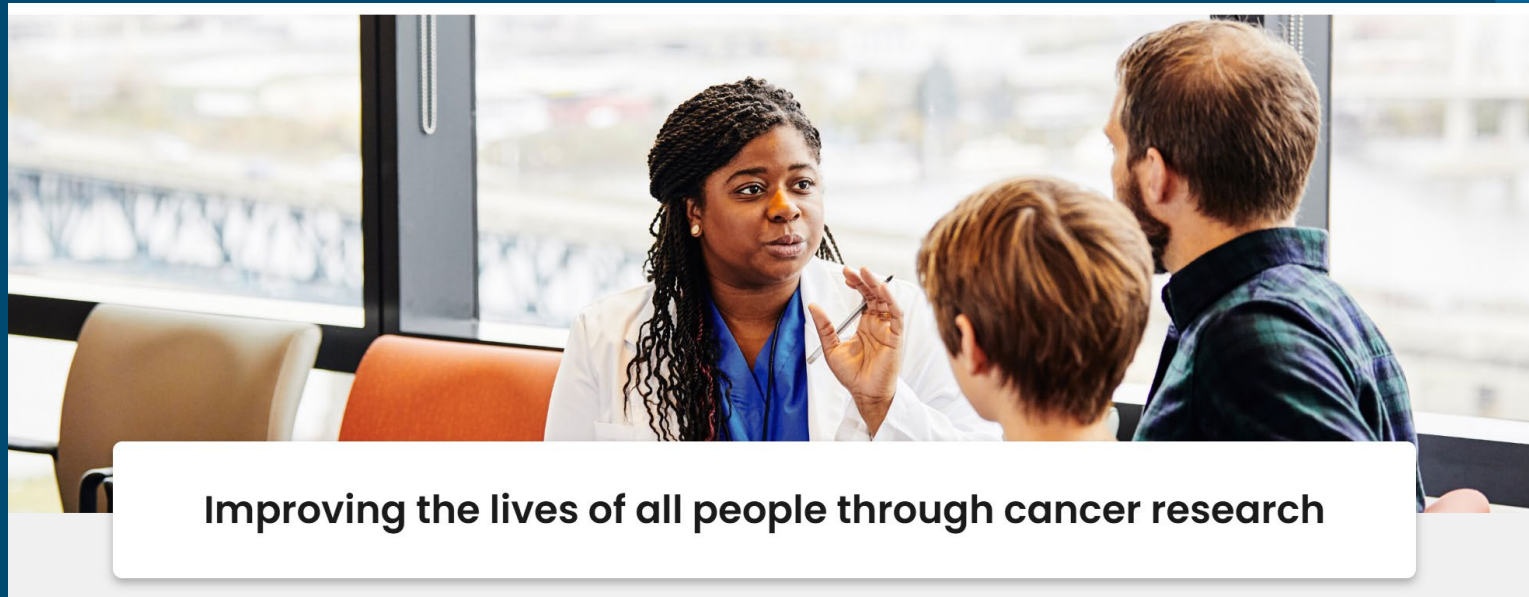


*RFA-CA-24-026:
NCI R25 Youth Enjoy Science (YES)
Pre-Application Webinar*

*Jessica Calzola, PhD
Shadab Hussain, PhD
NCI Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities*

NCI leads, conducts, and supports cancer research across the nation to advance scientific knowledge and help all people live longer, healthier lives.

<https://www.cancer.gov/about-nci/overview>



NCI Supports Funding for Training in All Areas of Cancer Research

CANCER RESEARCH CONTINUUM



NCI 2026 Bottom Line Blog: Commitment to Training

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NCI Remains Committed to Cancer Research Training

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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>

Agenda

- R25 YES Overview
- Application components and parameters
 - New applications
 - Resubmissions and Renewals
- Additional Guidance from Program Officials
- Active Award Examples
- Q&A

R25 YES Overview

R25: Cancer Research Education Grants Program

Goal of R25 program: support educational activities that complement and/or enhance the training of a cancer workforce.

- Support innovative **educational** projects
- Promote appreciation for/interest in biomedical research
- Provide additional education in specific areas
- Develop ways to disseminate scientific discovery into public health and community applications

R25 applications submitted to NCI should propose innovative, state-of-the-art programs that address the cause, diagnosis, prevention, or treatment of cancer, rehabilitation from cancer, or the continuing care of cancer patients and the families of cancer patients

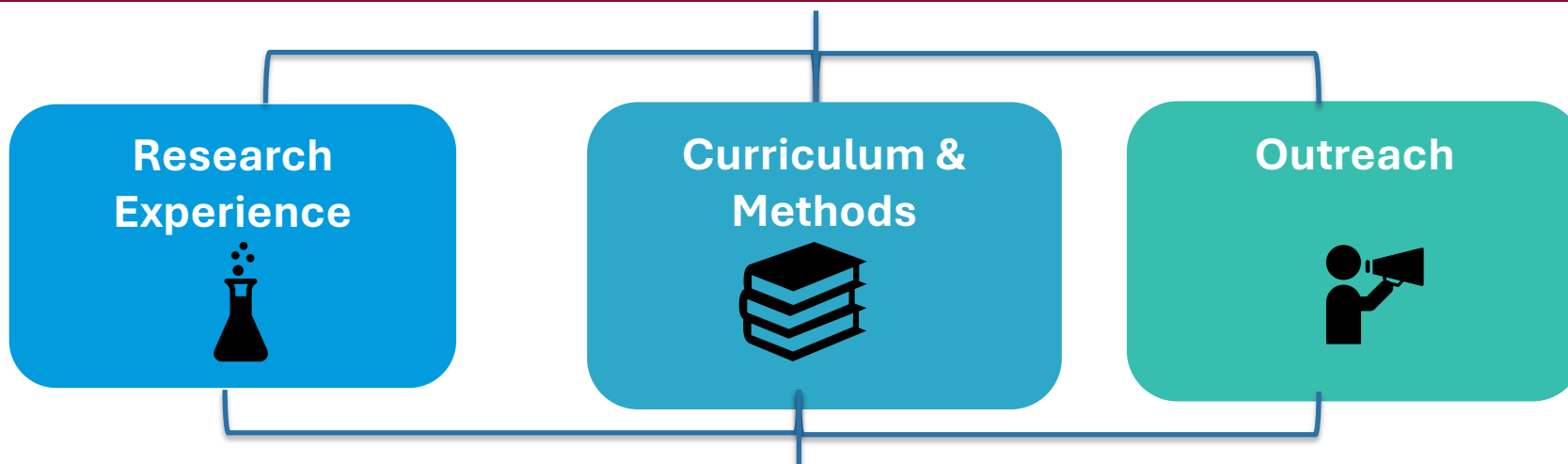
Not for Research or Training projects, e.g., R01, R21, T32, etc.



R25 YES Purpose & Objectives



YES (Youth Enjoy Science) promotes effective **early intervention strategies** to engage students and their teachers in active cancer research environments, and to help prepare students for a career in biomedical research.



Inspire interest in biomedical sciences and cancer research, **help envision** cancer research as a **career path**, **strengthen** practical research and **career skills**



R25 YES Overview

- **Use early intervention strategies** to actively engage students who have not substantial biomedical research experience, as early as middle school years, including teachers.
- Goal of **improving recruitment and retention** of these students in biomedical research to foster creativity and engage in scholarship.
- Research activities may include but not limited to bench research, bioinformatics or computational research, community-based research, behavioral intervention research, among others.
- R25 YES applicants are expected to develop **holistic approaches & sustain student retention in biomedical research pipeline**
- **Cancer focus: all education should be tied to cancer relevance**
- Strongly encouraged to **track** student participants for at least 15 years



Research Experiences

- Individual, mentored research experience for grades 6-12 and undergraduate students, and grades 6-12 teachers and undergraduate faculty
- **Strong mentoring support**
- Not limited to the bench, but **includes all aspects of the cancer research** enterprise, such as basic, behavioral/population, clinical and translational
- Research may take the form of bench research, bioinformatics or computational research, community-based research, behavioral intervention research among others



Curriculum or Methods

- If students only, then education tools to enhance student experience
- Teacher/faculty participants develop activities to bring back to classroom
- **Cancer focus: all education should be tied to cancer relevance**





Outreach

■ To students:

- Introduce middle school students to cancer research in organized and systematic fashion
- Increase awareness of the YES and facilitate recruitment
- Enhance understanding of significance of Research Experiences
- Strengthen career skills



■ By students:

- Education and dissemination of cancer-related information to family and community
- **Meaningfully engage families, teachers, and communities**



R25 YES Application Components and Parameters

R25 YES: Key Elements

Proposed Research Education Program	• May complement ongoing research training and education occurring at the applicant institution but must be distinct from those research training and research education programs currently receiving federal support.
Program Director/Principal Investigator	• Faculty should have research expertise & experience relevant to the proposed program (e.g., training, cancer- research) • Demonstrate a history of/or potential for intended roles.
Program Participants	• Must be US citizens, non-citizen nationals or permanent residents • Middle school, high school and undergraduate students and teachers and faculty • An application does not need to include all career levels
Institutional Environment & Commitment	• Evidence of institutional commitment is required. • A letter of institutional commitment must be attached as part of Letters of Support • Description of the institutional environment is required.

R25 YES: Key Elements Continued

Advisory Committee	• Advisory Committee is required. • Provide a plan for the appointment of an Advisory Committee to monitor progress of the research education program. • Renewal applications with Advisory Committees should include the names of all committee members during the past project period
Plan for Instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research	• Plan must address the five required instructional components: Format, Subject Matter, Faculty Participation, Duration of Instruction, Frequency of Instruction
Evaluation Plan	• Must include a plan for evaluating the activities and baseline metrics should be specified (e.g., numbers, educational levels, and demographic characteristics of participants) • Must specify measures to gauge the short or long-term success of the research education award



Budget for R25 YES RFA

- Maximum budget is \$400,000 in **direct costs/year**. Indirect costs are 8%.
- **Total allowable personnel** (including consultants) is proportional to the number of participants in the program.
- **For each participant, up to \$4,500 (Direct Costs)** is allowed for personnel (including consultant) costs per year.
- The budget request for a given application needs to be **adequately justified and reflect the actual needs of the proposed project**. Should not be duplicative of items currently available at institution.
- Review NOFO for more specific budget information including allowable costs.



R25 YES Renewal Applications

- For Renewals, the committee will **consider the progress made** in the last funding period
- **Advisory Committee:** Renewal applications with Advisory Committees should include the names of all committee members during the past project period.
- **Responsible Conduct for Research:** describe any changes in formal instruction over the past project period and plans to address any weaknesses in the current instruction plan. All participating faculty who served as course directors, speakers, lecturers, and/or discussion leaders during the past project period must be named in the application.



R25 YES Resubmission Applications

- A **resubmission/amended application** is an unfunded application that has been modified following initial review and resubmitted for consideration.
- Select "Resubmission" in Type of Application field (box 8) on the SF424 R&R form.
- You **may include a cover letter**, though not required.
- You **must include an introduction** that:
 - Summarizes substantial additions, deletions, and changes to the application.
 - Do not markup changes within application attachments (e.g., do not highlight, color, bold or italicize changes in Research Strategy).
 - Responds to the issues and criticism raised in the summary statement.
 - R25 applications can have an introduction that is **3 pages max**.

Ref Link: [Resubmission Applications | Grants & Funding](#)

Additional Guidance from Program Officials

- **Read the NOFO [\(RFA-CA-24-026\)](#) before you apply**
- Scope: be realistic and focused with a program-specific budget
- **Cancer focus:** all education should be tied to cancer relevance
→ Ex: DNA alone – no; DNA followed by its role and impact in cancer – yes!
- Outreach: need to include activities that support the student participants
→ tied to meaningful engagement of family and community
- Teachers – be aware of how program will benefit teachers
- Components should **integrate** with each other
- **Letters of support** from institution and collaborators (e.g., school leaders)
- Plan ahead and meet with NCI Program Directors. Emphasize core aspects of the application.



[Application
Guide
\(SF424\)](#)



Address the Review Criteria

Significance:

- Does the proposed program address a **key audience and an important aspect or important need in research education**? Is there convincing evidence in the application that the proposed program will significantly advance the stated goal of the program?

Investigator

- Is the **PD/PI capable of providing both administrative and scientific leadership** to the development and implementation of the proposed program? Is there evidence that an **appropriate level of effort** will be devoted by the program leadership to ensure the program's intended goal is accomplished?
- If the project is collaborative or multi-PD/PI, **do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise**; are their leadership approach, governance, and organizational structure appropriate for the project?

Innovation:

- Taking into consideration the nature of the proposed research education program, does the applicant make a strong case for this program **effectively reaching an audience** in need of the program's offerings? Where appropriate, is the proposed program **developing or utilizing innovative approaches and latest best practices** to improve the knowledge and/or skills of the intended audience?

Approach:

- Does the proposed program **clearly state its goals and objectives**, including the educational level of the audience to be reached, the content to be conveyed, and the intended outcome? Is there evidence that the program is **based on a sound rationale, as well as sound educational concepts and principles**?
- Is the plan for **evaluation** sound and likely to provide information on the **effectiveness of the program**?
- If the proposed program will recruit participants, are the planned recruitment, retention, and follow-up (if applicable) activities adequate to ensure a **highly qualified participant pool**?

Environment

- Will the scientific and educational environment of the proposed program contribute to its intended goals? Is there a plan to take advantage of this **environment to enhance the educational value of the program**? Is there tangible evidence of **institutional commitment**?
- Is there evidence that the **faculty have sufficient institutional support** to create a sound educational environment for the participants? Where appropriate, is there **evidence of collaboration and buy-in** among participating programs, departments, and institutions?

Active Award from NIH Reporter: Example #1

- **Students and Teachers Achieving Cancer Research Experiences Together (START) Program**
 - Aim 1: Engage secondary students in cancer biology science experiences that expose them to new career pathways while building their engagement and identity in science and research
 - Aim 2: Transform local science education by engaging science teachers in mentored cancer biology research experiences, providing high quality professional development, and supporting development and delivery of biomedical science curricula
 - Aim 3: Provide community engagement and outreach opportunities for the neighboring community to learn about cancer research, cancer prevention, and cancer disparities through interactions with AMC scientists. All three aims include curriculum development and implementation components.

Active Award from NIH Reporter: Example #2

- **Appalachian Career Training in Oncology (ACTION) Program**
 - Aim 1: Develop students' cancer research knowledge and skills through cross-disciplinary faculty- and peer-mentored research training experiences
 - Aim 2: Enhance students' career preparation by providing cancer education and career development curriculum through faculty- and peer-led courses, workshops, seminars, and career coaching and mentoring
 - Aim 3: Increase the understanding of the research and clinical aspects of cancer and the importance of science education among students and teachers, parents/caregivers and families of ACTION students, and the general public through impactful outreach activities in students' counties.
- Renewal – included new aspects (e.g., virtual research education)

R25 YES applications should have...

- **Clearly identified and justified need – specific to application**
- Cohesive and **integrated** program design
 - An overall central theme
 - Solid connections between the different components
 - Feasibility for implementation
- **Clear cancer focus**
- Convincing recruitment plan for target population
- Strong support activities, especially for pre-college participants
- Consider engagement of alumni participants
- Evaluation plan that corresponds with the program goals (including long-term tracking)

Helpful Resources

- NCI Funding Priorities - <https://grants.nih.gov/policy-and-compliance/policy-topics/nih-fiscal-policies/ico-funding-policies-and-considerations/NCI>
- CRCHD website - <https://www.cancer.gov/about-nci/organization/crchd>
- YES NOFO (RFA-CA-24-026) - <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-CA-24-026.html>
- NIH RePORTER - <https://report.nih.gov/>

Applications are Due September 28, 2026

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-CA-24-026.html>

Thank you for listening. We welcome your questions!

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