CBCRP LOI INSTRUCTIONS: INNOVATIVE, DEVELOPMENTAL, & EXPLORATORY AWARD (IDEA)

KEY DATES

Submission deadlines:

Letter of Intent – **October 16, 2026, 12pm Noon PT**

Application – **March 4, 2027, 12pm Noon PT**

Funding decisions will be announced by July 1, 2027. Funded Project Start Date: August 1, 2027

See http://www.cbcrp.org/funding-opportunities/index.html for additional instructions.

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Overview

If you have not already reviewed our program's background, funding philosophy, or existing portfolio, then please do so by visiting our website (www.cbcrp.org). CBCRP's mission is to prevent and eliminate breast cancer by leading innovation in research, communication, and collaboration in the California scientific and lay communities. CBCRP is dedicated to supporting and amplifying the voices of people who have historically been underrepresented in breast cancer research in our funded projects. We are interested in funding novel topics and we are deeply committed to advocate involvement in all aspects of our portfolio and our program.

CBCRP offers the IDEA Award to encourage researchers to pursue new, innovative projects specific to breast cancer and to think beyond the incremental advances that are typical of most grant

applications. Thus, we wish to inspire research that, although untested, may reveal **breakthroughs or new avenues of investigation**. For this purpose, we define "innovative" as:

- Applying **novel methods and approaches** to breast cancer research.
- Challenging existing paradigms or developing **new paradigms**.
- Considering an existing problem from **a new perspective.**

In addition, we **encourage new investigators** to initiate their own innovative projects and researchers new to breast cancer to enter the breast cancer field.

The intent of the IDEA is to support speculative, exploratory, "high-risk/high-reward" projects with a primary focus on breast cancer. Applications for this award type should either: (i) challenge existing paradigms, or (ii) encourage innovation by the incorporation of techniques, approaches, and collaborations not yet well represented in mainstream breast cancer research. We encourage researchers to attempt breakthroughs that, if successful, could be leveraged into more substantial funding. Preliminary data in breast cancer is not required for an IDEA application, but we encourage PIs to include sufficient data (obtained in their laboratory or research group) to demonstrate feasibility for the proposed research. It is not an absolute requirement for an IDEA project to be hypothesis-driven, and we consider correlative and data-gathering projects to be responsive to this award type. However, **to be maximally responsive** to the IDEA funding mechanism **the applicant must either be previously trained and have published in breast cancer *or* collaborate with an established breast cancer researcher**. The Program and peer review committees will consider applications from researchers outside of breast cancer who propose novel research, but we require them to establish breast cancer relevance as the primary aim and to describe the "critical path" that links their research to breast cancer.

Examples of research that are **not responsive** to the IDEA are projects that: (1) propose incremental advances for the underlying topic, (2) duplicate the aims of completed or funded research to the PI derived from non-breast cancer studies without incorporating detailed breast cancer-specific justification, (3) overlap in topic and aims with current grant support to the applicant, or (4) represent portions of existing grants or are derived from cut-down larger, R01-type projects.

IDEAs are open to **both established and new investigators**. The purpose of making IDEAs available to new investigators is to allow them to initiate their own innovative research projects. To qualify as a new investigator, the PI should be at a career level **on the submission date** past postdoctoral fellowship (or equivalent) and less than three years as an independent investigator (e.g., Assistant Professor or equivalent). This category is not intended for career development. If the applicant is working in a common facility or research group and under the direction of a senior researcher, then the proposed research must be distinct from the grant support to the supervisor. Thus, the application cannot contain duplicate aims or overlap with the supervisor's other grant support.

Submission of a Letter of Intent

Submission of an electronic Letter of Intent (LOI) is required to apply for the following award mechanisms for the CBCRP 2026-27 Cycle 33 IDEA Award is **October 16, 2026 at 12pm Noon Pacific Time**

All LOIs must be submitted through our grants management system, SmartSimple. Step-by-step instructions for the online SmartSimple submission process, including setting up an account and registering your institution are available in a separate SmartSimple Application Instructions document. Please make sure to allow enough time in your submission process to enter all of the required information into SmartSimple as described in these instructions. This supplemental programmatic instruction document provides guidance for the content of your LOI.

LOIs must be submitted in **SmartSimple** and may be submitted at any time until the deadline. There is no grace period. You will not be able to submit an LOI after the deadline. Upon submission of your LOI, you will receive an automatic confirmation of receipt. Please keep this for your records. If you do not receive an automatic confirmation notice, your LOI will not be deemed received by Research Grants Program Office (RGPO) and will not be reviewed. All applicants who have submitted the LOI in a timely manner will also receive a second email indicating the status of the LOI (approved/denied) after the LOI has been reviewed. If your LOI is approved, then you will be able to submit a full application in SmartSimple.

An LOI is required for new submissions and all resubmissions. If you have an approved LOI from a previous cycle, you are still required to submit an LOI in Cycle 33 in order to submit a full proposal. Please refer to the call for applications on CBCRP's website for policies pertaining to resubmissions and multiple submissions.

You will have access to the full application web pages when the LOI is approved in **SmartSimple**, at which time you will receive a notification email. To be accepted for a full application, a Letter of Intent (LOI) must meet all eligibility requirements for the award type as described in the Funding Opportunities page on CBCRP's website and be judged to be responsive to program priorities by the CBCRP Council as defined by the criteria on the following pages.

Please review the CBCRP 2027 Call for Applications carefully before applying.

To ensure that you submit the LOI before the deadline, review these instructions in their entirety along with the corresponding web pages as soon as possible.

For a description of CBCRP award types, eligibility, funding caps, application review criteria and other information, see our call for applications or CBCRP website. If you have any questions, see the call for applications for appropriate contact information.

All application materials are required to be uploaded in formats accessible to individuals with disabilities, including those using assistive technologies. Applicants are required to prepare and review their application materials for accessibility, and ensure all submitted application materials comply with document-relevant Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA standards. Please contact your institution for information and resources on digital accessibility tools, or refer to the UCOP Electronic Accessibility website for tips and links to useful accessibility resources.

Letter of Intent (LOI) Content

Section 1: Title Page

- **Project Title:** Enter a title that describes the project in lay-friendly language. (Max 100 characters)
- **Project Duration:** Enter a project duration for up to 2 years. (The Project Duration counts the number of budget years, so those intending to pursue an 18-month IDEA award, for example, should enter 2 years.)
- **Proposed Project Start Date:** The project start date of August 1, 2027 will auto-populate and is not editable.
- **Proposed Project End Date:** Enter a project end date of July 31, 2028 for a 1-year award and January 31, 2029 for an 18-month award.
- **Application History:** If this project is a resubmission from a previous CBCRP cycle, select "Yes" and enter the grant number and title of the original application.
- **New Investigator (Y/N):** Applicants who are applying for the IDEA award as a New Investigator, select "Yes". All other applicants select "No". New Investigators are defined as researchers at a career level beyond postdoctoral training and less than three years as an independent investigator.

Section 2: Applicant/PI

You must complete all the required information on your Profile page. If your application is accepted for submission you will also be required to complete the "ORCID ID" field. ORCID provides a persistent digital identifier that distinguishes you from every other researcher and, through integration in key research workflows such as manuscript and grant submission, supports automated linkages between you and your professional activities ensuring that your work is recognized. If you have not already obtained an ORCID ID number, you may do so here: http://orcid.org/. Once you have done so, please enter your 16-digit identifier in the space provided on your profile page in the following format: xxxx-xxxx-xxxx-xxxx.

Section 3: Project Information

CBCRP provides a template to allow you to work on your LOI offline, but in order to complete the LOI, you must respond to the following categories and discussion points using the online fields in SmartSimple:

- **Specific aims** (Max 2400 characters/approx. 350 words) – list the proposed aims of the project.
- **Project summary** (Max 400 characters/1-2 sentences) – in approximately two sentences provide an overview of the topic being studied and its specific connection to breast cancer.
- **Innovative elements** (Max 2700 characters/10-20 sentences)– describe the project's innovative qualities (paradigms being challenged, new concepts being tested, novel topics brought to bear on breast cancer, application of new research tools, or a high risk-high reward approach that will allow a breakthrough in knowledge specific to breast cancer). What innovative strategy will be employed to overcome barriers to success?
- **Critical path** (Max 2700 characters/10-20 sentences)– describe the need for the project specific to breast cancer, previous work on the topic, and what additional work would be required to achieve practical application at either the patient (risk reduction/prevention or treatment) or community level? What eventual impact may there be on public health outcomes?

- **Investigative team** (Max 1200 characters/4-6 sentences) – describe the PI's background and qualifications specific to breast cancer, the topic being studied, or collaborations planned to support the research project.
- **Involvement of advocates** (Max 1200 characters/4-6 sentences) – name the advocacy organization that you plan to work with on the full application, why the organization is appropriate for your proposed research project, and who you have communicated with at that organization. If applicable, describe how the advocate will provide a perspective that is historically underrepresented in breast cancer research. Describe the role of advocate(s) in the project design, implementation, interpretation, and dissemination of the study results. You may involve multiple advocates in your project, but at least one needs to be based in California. If you need assistance identifying an appropriate organization, contact the CBCRP staff.

Health and medical research projects greatly benefit from being directly informed by the experiences and knowledge of those affected: namely, those who have or had the disease, those who care for people with the disease, or those who represent a specific community impacted by the disease. CBCRP is dedicated to supporting and amplifying the voices of people who have historically been underrepresented in breast cancer research in our funded projects. Therefore, CBCRP requires breast cancer or other appropriate community advocates be actively involved in the research we fund.

Applicants are expected to work with California-based advocate(s) affiliated with an organization. CBCRP encourages applicants to work with advocates and advocacy organizations that bring perspectives that are not currently well-represented in breast cancer research. LOIs and applications are evaluated on the extent to which advocates are substantively involved in the project. Advocates from outside California participate in the peer review of every application, and California-based advocates represent one-third of the CBCRP council membership. CBCRP staff can assist applicants with meeting the advocacy involvement requirement.

- **CBCRP Research Priorities** – name the CBCRP priority issue that the research addresses (Community Impact of Breast Cancer; Etiology and Prevention; Biology of the Breast Cell; or Detection, Prognosis and Treatment).
- **CSO Research Type(s) and Sub-Type(s)** – see SmartSimple submission instructions for more details
- **Subject Area(s)** – see SmartSimple submission instructions for more details
- **Focus Areas (s)** -- see SmartSimple submission instructions for more details

Section 4: Budget

Enter an estimate of the direct costs for the project distributed across the grant years. If your project is invited to full application, you will have an opportunity to revise this estimate. Make estimates for up to:

- $150,000 in total direct costs for an IDEA project that does not involve human subjects and is exempt from IRB review and does not require a vertebrate animal assurance.
- $200,000 in total direct costs for an IDEA project that involves human subjects IRB approval or vertebrate animal assurance

Section 5: Documentation:

- **Advocacy Commitment Letter (1-pg maximum):** Upload an email or letter from the advocate or representative of the advocacy organization demonstrating their willingness to participate in the research application, should the LOI be approved.

- **PI biosketch (5-pg maximum):** Upload the biosketch for the PI only. It should include a list of the most recent, relevant publications and of current grant support. Identify any existing grants on the proposed research topic, and discuss any overlap issues. Please use the current NIH form.

Section 6: Signature Page:

Certify that the statements you have made are accurate and true by checking the box and entering your full name and the date.

LOI Evaluation:

LOI will be evaluated for programmatic relevance by the CBCRP Council using the criteria described below.

- **Aims and specificity to breast cancer:** Are the aims consistent with an IDEA-level project. Are the aims specific to breast cancer?
- **Innovation:** The degree of innovative aspects of the proposed project. Is the project distinct from incremental (R01-type) research? Does it challenge paradigms? Does it propose and test novel concepts? Is it high risk with potential high reward? Are innovative techniques or strategies employed?
- **Critical Path:** Is the path to implementation of something of practical value at the patient (risk reduction/prevention or treatment) or community level clear and well-described?
- **Investigative team:** Does the PI have demonstrated expertise in breast cancer research, or are collaborations proposed to address this issue? Does the PI have other grant support in the topic/aims of the project?
- **Involvement of advocates:** Has the PI contacted a California-based advocate in an appropriate advocacy organization about the proposed research question? Will the advocate provide a perspective that is historically underrepresented in breast cancer research? Are advocates adequately involved in the design, implementation, interpretation, and dissemination of the results?

LOIs that lead to invited applications score well on all of the criteria. If an LOI is turned down the most common reason are:

- The project is described in technical language. It is critical to describe your project in a way that makes its relevance and potential impact clear to anyone regardless of whether they are experts in your field of research.
- A lack of demonstrated breast cancer expertise or focus. If breast cancer research expertise isn't clear from the materials submitted for the PI, emphasize the qualifications in the description of the investigative team. If the research can be applied to other types of cancers, explain why it is particularly important to conduct the investigation on breast cancer.
- An unclear description of the critical path.

- An appropriate advocate has not been identified and/or has not acknowledged a willingness to participate in the project.

Notification of Decisions

You will receive notification of whether the LOI is accepted in December 2026. If invited to submit, you will have access to the full set of application forms and instructions.

Minimal feedback will be provided to PIs who have not been invited to submit a full application.

Contact Information

- **Technical support and questions about application instructions and forms should be addressed to the Research Grant Programs Office Contracts and Grants Unit:**
  RGPOGrants@ucop.edu

- **For scientific or research inquiries, please contact:**
  Katherine McKenzie PhD, Senior Program Officer
  Katherine.McKenzie@ucop.edu

The California Breast Cancer Research Program is part of the Research Grants Program Office in the Research and Innovation Department of the University of California, Office of the President.