Request for Proposals (RFP)

2027 MRFBC Team Science Award

GRANT OVERVIEW: The Melanoma Research Foundation's Breakthrough Consortium (MRFBC) is seeking to fund one **two-year team science award for $250,000 to focus on translational melanoma research**. Details about deadlines, applicant eligibility, the review process, award administration, and application materials are provided below.

BACKGROUND:
The MRF Breakthrough Consortium (MRFBC) is committed to accelerating melanoma translational research through multi-institutional collaboration and fostering the growth of early-career scientists and clinical investigators to drive sustained innovation and future leadership in the field. Successful applications will emphasize novel, innovative proposals designed to address the mission of the MRFBC- to accelerate research and treatment development for melanoma patients.

Please visit our website for additional information on the MRFBC and the MRF's Research Grant Program. All questions regarding this RFP and the can be directed to research@melanoma.org.

TIMELINE AND KEY DATES:

- Application Deadline: January 14, 2027 at 11:59 PM ET
- Notification of Funding Decisions: By February 24, 2027
- Anticipated Award Period: June 1, 2027 – May 31, 2029

ELIGIBILITY & REQUIREMENTS:

- The PI must be from an MRFBC member institution. Co-PIs and other collaborators may be from either an MRFBC member institution or a non-MRFBC institution.
    - Please note: A list of the MRFBC member institutions can be found on the MRF website.
- Applicants must hold a PhD, MD, or equivalent at the time of the application submission.
- Applications must include both a Principal Investigator (PI) and at least one co-Principal Investigator (co-PI).
- Applicants may not be the PI or co-PI on more than one submitted application for the MRFBC Team Award.
    - Please note: Applicants may apply to multiple MRF RFPs, as long as the proposed research is significantly different.
- Application submissions must involve collaborations from ***at least two different institutions***.
    - Please note: For this RFP, the Harvard Network (Harvard Medical School, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital, and the Broad Institute) is considered one institution.

- Senior investigators are eligible to apply for this grant opportunity; however, at least one co-PI must be a junior faculty member.
  Please note: A junior faculty member is defined as either a postdoctoral fellow (within 5 years of receiving their terminal degree at the time of application) OR a faculty member with a title of Research Associate/Scientist, Staff Scientist, Instructor, Assistant Professor, or similar who is within 10 years of receiving their terminal degree.
- Applicants must show evidence of strong department or institutional support and commitment.
- Applications must be focused on translational melanoma research.
- Proposed research may focus on cutaneous melanoma or rare subtypes such as ocular, mucosal, and/or pediatric melanoma.
- Proposed research cannot be identical to a currently awarded MRF grant.
- Proposed research must not overlap with any other active funding to the PI or Co-PI.
- Proposed research must comply with all applicable National Institutes of Health (NIH) animal and human welfare guidelines.
- Applicants are encouraged to discuss any eligibility questions with the MRF prior to submitting an application.

REVIEW PROCESS:

The MRF's Research Grant Program emphasizes research that explores innovative approaches to understanding critical problems pertaining to prevention, diagnosis, staging, and treatment of melanoma. All proposals undergo rigorous peer review, where reviewers are selected based on their expertise in diverse areas of basic, translational, and clinical melanoma research. Reviewers include members of the MRF's Scientific Advisory Committee, the Breakthrough Consortium, the Community United for Research & Education of Ocular Melanoma (CURE OM), and the Dermatology Advisory Council (DAC) as well as members of the scientific and clinical melanoma community who are not in conflict with the application. Applications with the highest scores will be assessed by a panel of representatives from the initial review group, and ultimately one application will be recommended for funding, based on availability of funds.

AWARD ADMINISTRATION AND REPORTING:

Upon acceptance of an award, the selected recipient PI and Institution will be required to sign an award agreement accepting the MRF's terms and conditions. Recipients must return the signed agreement by March 24, 2027. The institution of the primary investigator will be the prime recipient and will be the only institution required to sign the award letter, as the MRF is not involved with the administration of subawards or disbursement of funds to subrecipient institutions. The lead site (prime recipient) will be solely responsible for administering any subawards and disbursing any funds to any participating team sites.

Awards will cover research conducted over a two-year period. Funds are disbursed according to the following schedule, which will be documented in the award agreement:

- First payment: On or before June 30, 2027
- Second payment: On or before October 31, 2027
- Third payment: On or before February 28, 2028

- Fourth payment: On or before June 30, 2028
- Fifth payment: On or before October 31, 2028
- Sixth payment: On or before February 28, 2029

If the PI needs more time beyond the base award period to complete the proposed research, the MRF may consider a no-cost extension request. The award agreement will include the requirements for no-cost extension requests. Such requests generally must be well justified, made before the base award period ends, and are subject to MRF approval.

Awardees will be expected to provide status updates at the biannual MRFBC meetings typically held in conjunction with SMR and ASCO. Interim financial and scientific progress reports are to be submitted to the MRF no later than 30 days after the end of the grant's first year. Final financial and scientific reports, detailing all activities during the award period, are to be submitted to the MRF within 60 days of the end of the award period (even if a no-cost extension is requested).

Acknowledgment of support from the MRF must accompany any published report using data or findings from research conducted under this award and use the MRF's approved logo. Any intellectual property identified pursuant to this work remains solely within the institution.

SCIENTIFIC DATA SHARING:

To expedite melanoma research, the MRF encourages the sharing of data and model organisms/ resources generated from its funded awards whenever possible. The MRF follows the NIH Policies on Scientific Data Sharing as applicable; specifically:

- A Data Management and Sharing Plan using the NIH DMS Plan format must be submitted as part of the MRF grant application. Information on the format page is available via this link: Data Management and Sharing Plan Format Page | Grants & Funding.
- It is anticipated that the Data Management and Sharing Plan will include information on the sharing of scientific and genomic data, as well as model organisms/ resources stemming from MRF funded work.
- The MRF requires journal articles resulting from MRF funding be submitted to PubMed Central immediately upon acceptance for publication. We recommend these manuscripts be published in open-access journals or that they be made freely available.
- Costs related to data and specimen sharing (e.g. open-access publication charges, data storage, etc.) can and should be included in the proposed budget.

STEP-BY-STEP APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS:

The MRF will accept applications until January 14, 2027 at 11:59 PM ET. **There are no grace periods.** All submissions, notifications and critiques will be completed entirely online through Proposal).).

Please read the instructions carefully prior to beginning the online application submission process.

Step 1: Title Page
The project title should not exceed the space provided (75 characters, including spaces).

The research period is for two years. The award period begins June 1, 2027 and ends May 31, 2029.

Please specify if this is a new application or a resubmission. Applications that represent resubmission of previously proposed studies, in whole or in part, may be submitted for consideration only twice; however, there is no restriction on the timing of the resubmissions. A one-page letter referencing the project title and a summary of changes to the application from the previous submission, plus a one-page response to reviewers' criticisms must be uploaded as an attachment during Step 11: Upload Attachments.

Enable Other Users to Access This Proposal: You have the option to allow other individuals to access your application. You can choose from three different levels of permission.

Step 2: Applicant/PI
Profile information is pre-loaded in this section. You may update your profile information here as well.

Step 3: Additional Applicant/PI Information
Additional applicant/PI information is requested in this section. All answers for this step are optional. This information will only be used for internal MRF purposes.

Step 4: Institution and Contacts
Institution information and contact information can be updated and/or changed here. Institution Signing Official and Financial Officer contacts are required.

Step 5: Key Personnel
Key personnel, other than the applicant, who will provide support to the project must be listed here. NIH Biosketch and Other Support Page (both active and pending) for the PI/co-PI and all mentors (if applicable – mentors are not required) will be required to be uploaded in section 12. The Other Support page must include information about all types of available research support (including costs and percent effort).

Step 6: Environment
Please provide a description of your institutional environment in which the research will be conducted. Please describe how this environment will contribute to the probability of success (e.g. institutional support, physical resources including laboratory, office space, and common use facilities contributing to the proposed work, etc.). Please also provide an overview of the institutional investment in the success of the investigator (e.g. travel, training, collegial support including the availability of organized peer groups, logistical support such as administrative management/oversight and financial support such as protected time for research with salary support) as well as a description of your career goals/ objectives including any career development/training activities that will occur during the grant period. The total length of this section may not exceed 3,000 characters (including spaces).

Step 7: Abstracts
Scientific Abstract
In the space provided, include a summary of the proposal that gives a brief description of the

objectives, rationale, methods, and expected results. The total length of the summary may not exceed 3,000 characters (including spaces) and should be written in scientific terms.

Lay Abstract
In the space provided, include a brief (<3,000 characters, including spaces) summary of the proposal. The lay level abstract needs to be written so that the everyday person can understand the significance, impact, and innovation of the proposed research.

Summary Quote
In 100 characters or less, describe the anticipated impact of your research on the melanoma community. As this will be used for promotional purposes, please write this so that the lay community can understand.

Keywords
Please select up to six appropriate keywords (from the list provided) that characterize the proposed research project.

If the project is awarded, portions of the abstracts be used in the MRF's various publications, press releases, fundraisers, and educational events.

Category
Please make one selection for each category that best describes your research proposal.

Step 8: Budget Period Detail
Awards will be made over a two-year period. Please fill out the budget information for **both years**. Please note that for **all applications:** Only **direct** costs are allowed.

Personnel Costs

- Cost of living adjustments for personnel or non-personnel costs are not allowed.
- When calculating salaries, please use actual costs – not the salary allowed by the NIH salary cap. The salary and fringe benefits included in the budget are calculated based on total of salary and fringe benefits multiplied by the % effort. Salary distribution of supporting personnel is up to the discretion of the PI.
- No more than 25% of the grant should go towards the salaries plus fringe benefits of the PI or co-PI.

Non-Personnel Costs

- All budgeted expenses such as consumable supplies, animal costs, service fees, and consultant fees must be itemized.
- Requests for major equipment will be closely scrutinized, should be carefully justified, and should not exceed 15% of the total (two year) budget.
- Indirect institutional costs are not allowed.
- Allowable travel expenses for meetings and research purposes – including international meetings – are capped at $2,000 per project year.

Step 9: Budget Summary
This is a summary of the Budget Period Detail. Please give a brief justification for each budget

item here.

Step 10: Organization Assurances
Information regarding human subjects, vertebrate animals, and/or recombinant DNA will be entered here (if relevant). If an application has just been submitted, please note that as well.

Step 11: Upload Attachments
All attachments must be in PDF form. Uploaded documents should fall under one of the following descriptions:

Letter of Support - A letter of support from your institution is required. This letter should be from the department chair or other leader at the institution with direct knowledge of the applicant's value to the department and institution. A research laboratory head may write a letter of support for a postdoctoral fellow applicant; however, for all other applicants, it is anticipated that the letter of support will come from a departmental chair or other institutional leader. Additional letters of support (e.g. letters confirming access to resources) are allowed.

Biosketch - A NIH Biosketch is required for the PI, co-PI, and all mentors. Applicants should use the NIH Biosketch Common Form.

Other Support - A NIH Current and Pending (Other) Support form is required for the PI, co-PI, and all mentors. The Other Support page must include information about all types of available research support (including costs and percent effort).

Data Management and Sharing Plan - A Data Management and Sharing Plan using the NIH DMS Plan format is required.

Resubmission Information - If the application is a resubmission of a previously proposed study, a summary of changes to the application from the previous submission (up to 1-page in length), and responses to reviewers' criticisms (up to 1-page in length) must be uploaded here.

Research Plan - The research plan is limited to **6 pages, Arial font, at least 11pt font with ½ inch margins**; single line spacing is acceptable. The text of the Research Plan should contain sufficient information for the evaluation by the reviewer panel and should cover:

1. Specific Aims
2. Background, rationale and significance
3. Preliminary Data
4. Experimental design and procedures
5. References (References ARE NOT counted in the 6-page limit)

Step 12: Validate
Click the 'Validate' button here to check for any missing required information or files. All missing required information will be listed on the screen. Please correct any missing information before proceeding to the next step.

Step 13: Signature Page(s)
You may print the signature page(s) after you have completed all the proposal sections.

Signatures from the applicant and Signing Official are required.

Step 14: Submit
Submit your application. You will be unable to submit if you have not provided all the required information. We encourage you to submit your application as early as possible so that we can assist you with any issues that may arise. **The deadline is January 14, 2027 at 11:59 PM ET.**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

How do I apply for a grant?
The grant application will be available ONLY during the time applications are being accepted. During that time, you can apply for a research grant online at http://proposalcentral.altum.com/.

Do I need to be a U.S. citizen?
No. However, the proposed research must be conducted in a non-profit research organization, a medical institution or an educational institution located in the United States.

Am I eligible?
Please read all eligibility requirements. Should you have questions not answered here, please contact the MRF at research@melanoma.org.

How long is the research plan section of the application?
The research plan is limited to 6 pages, not including references.

What information is included in the project plan?
The text of the research plan should contain sufficient information for evaluation by the review panel. The plan should cover specific aims, background, rationale, significance, results of previous research directly related to the project title, experimental design and procedures and references.

Can an award be transferred to a new institution?
A grant can be transferred upon approval by the MRF. For detailed criteria and instructions, please contact the MRF at research@melanoma.org.

Term	Definition
Key Personnel	The PI and other individuals who contribute to the scientific development or execution of a project in a substantive, measurable way, whether or not they receive salaries or compensation under the grant. Typically, these individuals have doctoral or other professional degrees, although individuals at the masters or baccalaureate level may be considered key personnel if their involvement meets this definition. Consultants also may be considered key personnel if they meet this definition.
Principal Investigator (PI)	This is the main applicant and the person responsible for all activity being supported by the grant. He or she is responsible and accountable to the MRF for the proper conduct of the project or activity.

Other Support	Includes all financial resources, whether Federal, non-Federal, commercial or organizational, available in support of an individual's research endeavors, including, but not limited to, research grants, cooperative agreements, contracts or organizational awards. Other support does not include training awards, start-up funds, prizes or gifts.
Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC)	Established at institutions in accordance with the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals with broad responsibilities to oversee and evaluate the institutions' animal programs, procedures and facilities. IACUC review and approval is required for all PHS supported activities involving live vertebrate animals prior to funding.
Institutional Review Board (IRB)	IRBs are set up by research institutions to ensure the protection of rights and welfare of human research subjects participating in research conducted under modifications in or disapprove research protocols based on whether human subjects are adequately protected, as required by federal regulations and local institutional policy.