



ANNUAL REQUEST FOR PILOT RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSALS

The San Diego State University/ UC San Diego **Cancer Research and Education to Advance Health Equity (CREATE) Partnership** is soliciting applications from SDSU and UCSD faculty co-researchers for pilot research projects for the 2025-2026 grant cycles. **Pending continued CREATE funding from NCI, pilot awards are up to \$240,000 in Direct Costs (\$120,000 total direct per year, or \$60,000 direct per institution per year, for a project period of up to two years).**

The overarching goal of CREATE is to advance cancer health equity in underserved communities throughout the southern California border communities of San Diego and Imperial Counties. CREATE aims to further increase SDSU's cancer research capacities and expand SDSU's and UCSD's emphasis on cancer health disparities research, while also developing cancer research opportunities and pathways for undergraduate, graduate, and medical students as well as early-stage investigators (ESIs). We are interested in funding projects that are consistent with the goal of the Partnership.

AWARD INFORMATION

Pilot project funding is intended to support a two-researcher team of Co-Leaders, one from SDSU and one from UCSD, who will develop a mid-scale (R21-like) hypothesis-driven research proposal including data collection and analysis; implementation, scale-up, or new applications of developed protocols; further development of existing partnerships; etc., with the expectation that preliminary findings will support proposals for additional funding.

Pilot projects may be in any research discipline - basic, clinical, translational, and/or all areas of population science (epidemiology, behavioral science, etc.). Projects must have a focus on one or more of CREATE's priority cancer areas: lung, breast, prostate, cervix, gastrointestinal (colorectal, liver, pancreas). Research may focus on socioeconomically disadvantaged populations in San Diego and/or Imperial Counties. Partnerships and subawards for community partner organizations are especially encouraged. Pilot awards must include one Co-Leader from SDSU and one from UCSD, as well as a Community Co-Leader when applicable.

Pending continued CREATE funding from NCI, pilot awards are up to \$120,000 total direct costs per year, or \$60,000 direct per institution per year, for a project period of up to two years. No indirect costs are allowed. For projects including community partners, a subaward will be required using funding from the \$120,000 annual total. In this case, allocations to each institution may be adjusted. Funds are anticipated to be disbursed by end of calendar year 2025, after proposal reviews. When applicable, human or animal subjects research must have obtained IRB/IACUC approval prior to disbursement of funds.

Awardees will be required to submit annual and final reports and prepare and deliver short presentation(s) at internal and/or external committee meeting(s) as requested by CREATE leadership. Awardees will also need to cite the CREATE grants in all presentations and publications:

"Research is supported by the National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health under award numbers: U54CA285117 (SDSU) & U54CA285115 (UC San Diego)."

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

A completed Partnership Application Package (attached) needs to be submitted by **5:00pm Pacific on May 12, 2025**, and meet the criteria below.

1. Includes one Co-Leader from SDSU and one Co-Leader from UCSD, as well as a Community Co-Leader if appropriate and relevant to the proposed work. SDSU and UCSD Co-Leaders must be faculty members (Assistant Professor and higher) eligible to apply for NIH research grants as PI. In case of ambiguity, eligibility will be determined by CREATE's Executive Committee. For assistance, please contact Jill Nery at jnery@sdsu.edu.
2. Is in any area of basic, clinical, translational, or population science research (i.e., epidemiology, behavioral science, etc.), and must address one or more of CREATE's priority cancer areas: lung, breast, gastrointestinal (colorectal, liver, pancreas), prostate, cervical.

3. Advances cancer and/or cancer disparities research, and/or contributes to training of under-represented minority (URM) students or [Early Stage Investigators \(ESIs\)](#) in cancer research. Projects that focus on cancer disparities among San Diego and Imperial County populations are particularly encouraged.
4. Consistent with the goals of the Partnership, the project should reflect a true inter-institutional collaboration, where the strengths and synergies between the collaborating institutions and investigators are clearly highlighted.
5. Includes all components described in the Application Instructions, below.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

The full Application Package is available via email (please see below). Complete applications will include the following:

1. **Face Page**
2. **Abstract (up to 500 words)**
3. **Project Narrative/ Layperson's Summary**
 - a. Plain language, 2-3 sentence abstract to describe the relevance of the project to our catchment area (San Diego and/or Imperial Counties)
 - b. Include any particular health disparities or communities experiencing health disparities addressed in the proposal
 - c. This narrative will be reviewed by our Community Advisory Board and may be shared with community members
4. **Specific Aims Page**
 - a. Include hypothesis/ study question
5. **A 5-page Research Plan write-up, containing the components below:**
 - a. Background and significance (*please include any preliminary data or collaborative work, if available*)
 - b. Study design and methods (*include details on which aspects of the work will be done at UCSD and which aspects at SDSU*)
 - c. Subjects and procedures
 - d. Measurements
 - e. Analysis
6. **A 1-Page Addendum including:**
 - a. Project timeline
 - b. Plan for community engagement/relevance/interaction as discussed with CREATE Outreach Core (please see below for details)
 - c. Publication plan
 - d. Plan for leveraging pilot for extramural R01 or R01-type funding
7. **References (not included in Research Plan)**
8. **Detailed Budget and Justification** (*budget form attached; separate for each institution*)
 - a. Expenses must be directly related to the aims of the pilot project, and may include:
 - i. Investigator effort
 - ii. Purchase of lab supplies or other materials
 - iii. Local travel and/or mileage

- iv. Participant incentives or other recruitment/retention related costs (with approved IRB)
 - v. Services including analysis, data cleaning, translation, shared resource, etc.
 - vi. Publication costs for joint SDSU-UCSD manuscripts resulting from collaboration
 - vii. Hosting costs if needed for data collection (i.e. costs associated with focus groups, etc.)
- b. The following expenses are not allowable:
- i. Travel to conferences
 - ii. Out of state travel
 - iii. Purchase of equipment

For other expenses or for additional clarification, please email jnery@sdsu.edu.

9. Biographical Sketches and Other Support Documents for Key Personnel

IMPORTANT DATES

1. **March 10, 2025:** RFA released.
2. **March 19, 2025:** Informational webinar/ Outreach Core Consultation. *Webinar will be recorded and is not mandatory. However, as part of the webinar, applicants will have the opportunity to meet with the CREATE Outreach Core to discuss community engagement and relevance. This meeting with Outreach Core is required, and will need to take place by the end of April for applicants who did not attend the webinar. Please email vlargaespada@health.ucsd.edu to schedule.*
3. **April 14, 2025, at 5pm:** Letters of intent are due. *LOIs are not mandatory, but are requested to facilitate reviewer expertise. Please send an email to jnery@sdsu.edu and include a tentative grant title, names of all project leads and co-investigators, and confirmation of meeting with Outreach Core (if meeting has not yet taken place, it should already be scheduled to take place by end of April.*
4. **May 12, 2025, at 5pm:** Proposals are due as a single combined PDF. *Please submit the completed application to jnery@sdsu.edu (you will receive a confirmatory email reply, please retain this as evidence of submission, if you do not receive this email please email jnery@sdsu.edu).*
5. **July 15, 2025:** Funding decisions and short written feedback provided to Co-Leaders of all applications. Selected proposals may be provided with specific suggestions or requirements prior to funding.
6. **July – September 2025:** Selected investigator teams will be scheduled for initial advisory and support meetings with CREATE leadership and Internal Advisory Committee members.
7. **October 1, 2025:** Anticipated earliest start date, pending funding, team preparation, and IRB/IACUC approvals as needed.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. Fulfillment of the requirements and eligibility criteria noted above.
2. Relevance of the proposed project to cancer disparities and/or contribute to training of under-represented minority (URM) students and/or Early Stage Investigators (ESI).
3. Relevance of the proposed research to the community, as evidenced by study of a priority cancer and plan for community engagement/relevance/interaction as discussed with CREATE Outreach Core.
4. Scientific merit.
5. Strength of the proposed inter-institutional research collaboration as evidenced in Background and Design/Methods.

6. Feasibility of the collaboration to execute funded research.
7. Potential to generate publishable data for peer reviewed publications.
8. Potential of the project to lead to successful proposals for extramural funding.

TO APPLY:

Please request an Application Package via email to Jill Nery, MPH, SDSU Project Manager at jnery@sdsu.edu. In the email, please include the names of the SDSU and UCSD co-leads, and a tentative project title.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Please direct questions to Jill Nery, MPH, SDSU Project Manager at jnery@sdsu.edu and Valesca Largaespada, MPH, UCSD Project Manager at vlargaespada@health.ucsd.edu.