



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

2026 ACGT Investigator Award in Cell and Gene Therapy for SOLID TUMOR CANCERS

RFA Opens: APRIL 1, 2026
Abstract Deadline: May 15, 2026, at 11 am (EST)
Invitation to Submit Application: July 1, 2026
Deadline for Invited Applications: September 1, 2026, at 11 am (EST)
Finalists Selected: November 2026
The awardee will be announced in December 2026

Date of Issue: April 1, 2026

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

Alliance for Cancer Gene Therapy, Inc. (ACGT) funds breakthrough research that is transforming cancer treatment through cell and gene therapy. This ACGT grant award is for those conducting translational **cell and gene therapy research** specifically in **solid tumor cancers**.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Cell and gene therapy for solid tumors poses major challenges driven by antigen heterogeneity, physical exclusion, immunosuppressive microenvironments, genomic instability, and safety limitations. This RFA seeks innovative, translational cell and gene therapy strategies that directly address these barriers.

Proposed approaches should demonstrate the capacity to: (1) overcome antigen escape through multi-targeted designs that broaden patient populations and account for heterogeneity and resistance due to antigen loss; (2) enhance trafficking, infiltration, and persistence within solid tumor sites; (3) resist or reprogram the immunosuppressive tumor microenvironment; and (4) incorporate built-in safety and controllability mechanisms suitable for clinical translation. Successful proposals will integrate these elements to enable durable, precise, and scalable therapeutic impact in solid tumors.

Building on the priorities outlined above, this RFP encourages proposals spanning a broad range of **cell and gene therapy (CGT) platforms and rational combinations**, including but not limited to:

Engineered T Cell Approaches

- Chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T cells (including multi-specific, logic-gated, armored, or regulatable designs)

- T cell receptor (TCR)-engineered T cells targeting intracellular antigens and neoantigens
- Tumor-infiltrating lymphocyte (TIL) therapies enhanced through genetic modification or functional optimization

Innate and Alternative Immune Cell Platforms

- CAR NK cells or engineered NK cell therapies
- $\gamma\delta$ T cells, iNKT cells, macrophage-based (CAR-M), or other emerging immune effector platforms

Gene Editing & Synthetic Biology Strategies

- CRISPR- or base-editing approaches to enhance persistence, prevent exhaustion, or confer resistance to immunosuppressive signaling
- Synthetic circuits, inducible cytokine expression, or logic-gated control systems
- Allogeneic or *in vivo*-engineered cell platforms designed for scalability and broader access

Microenvironment-Modulating Strategies

- Armored cells secreting cytokines, expressing cell surface cytokines, secreting bispecific or trispecific antibodies, or checkpoint inhibitors
- Resistance to TGF- β , hypoxia, or metabolic stress
- Stromal-targeting or matrix-modifying strategies to enhance infiltration

Combinatorial Approaches

- Integration with checkpoint blockade, bispecific antibodies, or tumor-targeted cytokines
- Combination with vaccines, oncolytic viruses, or radiation to enhance antigen spreading and immune priming
- Regional delivery strategies to improve local efficacy and reduce systemic toxicity

Proposals that integrate multiple strategies to overcome trafficking, suppression, antigen escape, and safety barriers in a coordinated manner are strongly encouraged. Preference will be given to approaches with clear mechanistic rationale and a credible path toward clinical translation in solid tumors.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Candidates for the **ACGT 2026 Investigator Award in Cell and Gene Therapy for Solid Tumor Cancers** must hold an MD, PhD, or equivalent degree and **must** be tenure-track or tenured faculty or equivalent. ACGT will also consider applications from biotechnology companies with an early-stage cell and gene therapy clinical asset for solid tumors. The biotech company must have a formal relationship with an academic investigator at an accredited institution to work on the proposed project. ACGT recognizes that there may be other excellent researchers who are not on a tenure-track or at medical schools or research centers, **but this is an eligibility requirement for the application**. The investigator must be conducting original research as an independent faculty member. ACGT has no citizenship restrictions; however, research supported by the award must be conducted at academic medical centers or research centers located in the United States or Canada.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The award provides up to \$500,000 distributed over 2-3 years, including up to 10% indirect costs. The funds may be used at the recipient's discretion for salary, technical assistance, supplies, animals, or capital equipment, but may not support staff who are not directly related to the project, e.g., secretaries or administrative assistants. Equipment purchases are not allowed in the final year of the grant. Continued support is contingent upon submission and approval of a comprehensive progress report each year.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

There is a two-step process for submitting applications electronically via **proposalCENTRAL**, an outside service provider hosted by Altum. Access is available via links on the ACGT website, www.acgtfoundation.org, or directly through the proposalCENTRAL website at: <https://proposalcentral.altum.com/Login.asp>.

A candidate must submit the following by the required deadlines:

- **Step 1:** A pre-application Letter of Intent (LOI) that includes an abstract of the proposed research and a current biographical sketch must be submitted by the **May 15, 2026, 11 am EST** deadline through the proposalCENTRAL platform. The LOI/abstracts will then be reviewed by the ACGT Scientific Advisory Council and its approved reviewers. Those selected will be invited to submit full applications by **July 1, 2026**.
- **Step 2:** For those invited to submit full applications, a completed electronic application, including templates and Signed Administrative and Signature Page(s), scanned and attached to the front of the completed application template, must be submitted by the deadline of **September 1, 2026, at 11 am EST** through the proposalCENTRAL platform.

NOTE: A paper copy submission is NOT required.

INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions for completing the application are available on ACGT's website under Research Grants and through the proposalCENTRAL website.

CUSTOMER SUPPORT

If you have any questions regarding the online application, please contact proposalCENTRAL Customer Support by email at pcsupport@altum.com or by phone at (800) 875-2562 x 227 (toll-free) or (301) 916-4557 x 227.

REVIEW PROCESS

Each applicant's LOI/abstract of the proposed project is reviewed by members of the ACGT Scientific Advisory Council and its approved reviewers. All applicants will be evaluated on the basis of scientific and technical merit and alignment with the grant's research objectives. Based on the review of the LOI/abstracts, certain applicants will be invited to submit a full application for consideration. These applications are then peer reviewed by two to three experts in the field, with the highest scores

determining the pool of finalists from which the ACGT Scientific Advisory Council and its approved reviewers make their final recommendations to ACGT's Board of Directors for approval.

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

Grant funds will be disbursed following execution of a grant agreement between the grantee institution and ACGT. The following items will be covered in ACGT grant agreements with grantee institutions:

- Up to 10% overhead is included in the awarded amount. The **2026 Investigator Award in Cell and Gene Therapy for Solid Tumor Cancers** research grant will support research projects with two to three-year time frames for completion, with annual non-competitive renewal applications.
- Grantees and their affiliated institutions are required to submit periodic progress reports to ACGT. In addition, they are expected to share their research findings with the scientific community in a timely manner through presentations at professional meetings and publications in scientific journals.
- ACGT requires acknowledgment of the grant in all presentations and/or publications by the investigators and/or institutions.
- **ACGT will receive a reasonable royalty return, including, but not limited to, license fees on inventions and improvements made by investigators on research supported by its grants and/or investments.**
- The grantee institution will agree (i) to indemnify ACGT solely with respect to claims relating to the award of a grant and (ii) that all research supported by ACGT will be conducted in accordance with all applicable state and Federal laws, rules, and regulations.
- Awards to an institution will terminate when the principal investigator departs from the grantee institution and can be re-initiated at an alternate institution, subject to ACGT approval.
- Should grantees and/or their affiliated institutions fail to meet policies, procedures, and/or ongoing requirements of the grant, ACGT reserves the right to rescind annual follow-on grant awards.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GRANTEE INSTITUTION

An application for a grant must bear the signature of an official authorized to sign on behalf of the institution, **acknowledging the above policies.**

PROGRAM INQUIRIES

For application information, policies and procedures, and general information, please contact blavery@acgtfoundation.org.