

# ORDE "KNOW YOUR AGENCY" SERIES: AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY (ACS)

ACS Website: <http://www.cancer.org>

## OVERVIEW

The American Cancer Society (ACS) is the largest non-governmental cancer research sponsor in the US. Their mission is to eliminate "cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives and diminishing suffering from cancer through research, education, advocacy and service (Source: ACS Organizational Outcomes 2013, p. 2). In addition to cancer research, ACS provides patient support services, prevention/education services and detection/treatment services. Founded by 15 influential physicians and business leaders in 1913 as the American Society for the Control of Cancer (ASCC), the goal was to raise professional and public awareness about cancer. The ASCC was reorganized and renamed the American Cancer Society in 1945 and today has more than 3 million volunteers. Philanthropists helped ACS start the cancer research program in 1946 with \$1 million.

## *Specific Interests/Approach*

The ACS research program focuses in 7 areas: Biology, Cause/Etiology, Treatment, Prevention, Early Detection/Diagnosis/Prognosis, Cancer Control/Survivorship/Outcomes and Scientific Model Systems. Within these areas, ACS encourages research to address and eliminate cancer disparities and increase quality of life for cancer patients, survivors and their families. Research programs primarily target early career investigators.

## ACS ORGANIZATION

The corporate office is located in Atlanta, Georgia with 12 regional and 900 local offices nationwide. The Board of Directors consists of medical experts and lay people, all volunteers. The President and Board Chair are also volunteer positions; the President is the medical and scientific leader while the Board Chair is the lay leader. The CEO position is a paid position that reports to the Board (Source: ACS 2013 Stewardship Report, pp. 14-15).

## GRANT INFORMATION

Since 1946, ACS has spent more than \$4 billion on cancer research (Source: ACS 2013 Stewardship Report, p. 32). As a testament of the quality of research funded

by the organization, 47 ACS-supported researchers have gone on to win Nobel Prizes.

ACS funds intramural and extramural research programs. Intramural research concentrates on surveillance, health services, tobacco control, behavioral and evaluation research and comprises 12% of the research budget. The Extramural Program funds investigator-initiated, peer reviewed grants – most aimed at beginning investigators. The Extramural Grant function is divided into six Scientific Programs, each with its own Scientific Director:

- Health Professional Training in Cancer Control
- Molecular Genetics and Biochemistry of Cancer
- Cancer Cell Biology and Metastasis
- Preclinical and Translational Cancer Research
- Clinical Cancer Research and Immunology
- Cancer Control and Prevention Research

Within these Scientific Programs, ACS supports grant mechanisms for independent and mentored investigators, health professional training and requests for applications.

- 1) The **current RFA topic is palliative care**. Pilot projects provide \$60,000/year for 1 or 2 years with April 1 or October 15 due dates.
- 2) **Research Scholar Grants** support investigator-initiated research projects for those within 6 years of independent research careers or faculty appointments who have less than 12 years of research experience beyond terminal degree. It provides up to \$165,000/year for 4 years. Applications are due April 1 and October 15.
- 3) **Mentored Research Scholar Grants** support those within 4 years of a full-time faculty appointment who have had clinical training or a background in cancer control research. This is a 5-year award supported at up to \$135,000/year. Applications are due April 1 or October 15.
- 4) **Cancer Control Career Development Awards for Primary Care Physicians** are mentored awards targeting academic primary care physicians at instructor or assistant professor rank who will become cancer control leaders in primary care practice. It provides \$100,000/year for up to 3 years with a deadline of October 15.

Common eligibility criteria across programs include that principal investigators (PIs) be US citizens, permanent residents or non-citizen nationals; hold doctoral degrees; have assistant professor rank and full-time faculty status at US institutions.

ACS currently funds over 850 grants (new and continuing) at a cost of \$448 million. About 2000 grant applications are submitted each year (Source: Current Grants by Cancer Type, 03/01/14). Success rates were not available.

**Additional Funding Mechanisms:**

ACS offers postdoctoral fellowships, research professor and clinical research professor grants and training grants.

**Contact with AGENCY Program Staff:**

Applicants are encouraged to contact Scientific Directors before, during and after the application process.

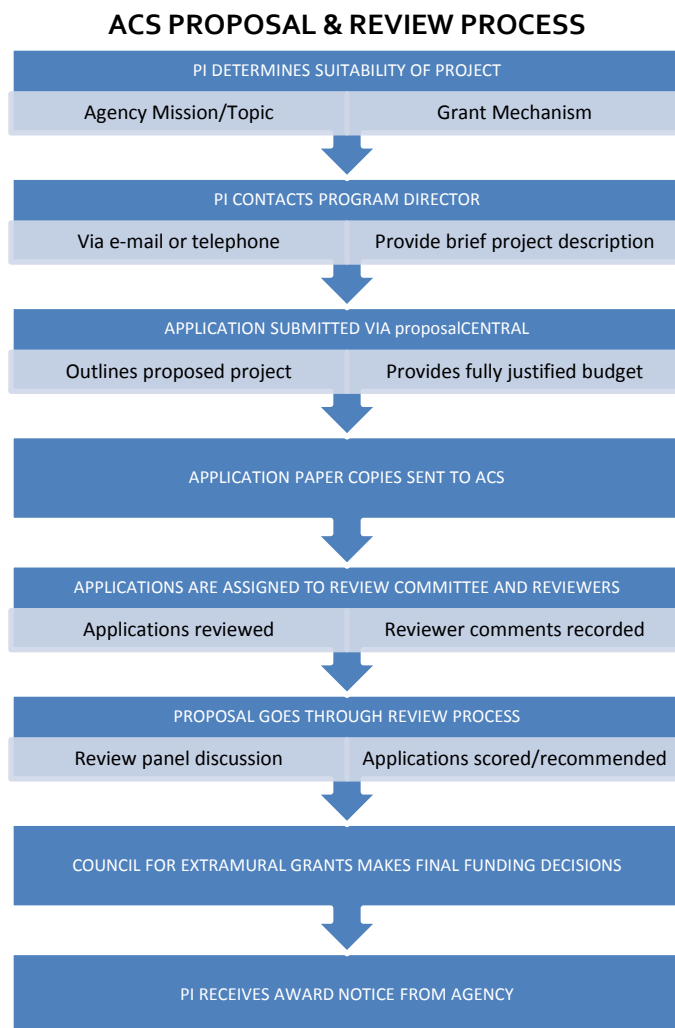
**Typical ACS Application Process:**

- 1) PI determines suitability of proposed project to ACS mission and specific topic area(s)
- 2) PI contacts appropriate Scientific Director for assistance and questions about project
- 3) Application is submitted on-line through proposalCENTRAL
- 4) Required paper copies of application are due to ACS one day later
- 5) Scientific Directors distribute applications to Peer Review Committees
- 6) Reviewers use on-line management system to enter review comments
- 7) Applications are discussed at peer reviewer meeting and priority funding scores are assigned
- 8) Written evaluations and review committee funding recommendations are forwarded to Council for Extramural Grants for final decisions
- 9) Grants are made by Chief Executive Officer on behalf of the ACS Board of Directors
- 10) Successful PI receives award notice

**Proposal Review Process:**

Peer Review Committees at ACS have both subject matter experts and stakeholders, defined as reviewers with a personal interest in advancing cancer research. Applications are assigned to a standing review committee by Scientific Directors. Each reviewer evaluates 6-10 applications. Review criteria include scientific merit,

originality and feasibility; qualifications of research team; facilities and resources available to the project and likely benefit. Applications are discussed at the peer review meeting, and reviewers assign funding priority scores. Scores and written recommendations are then forwarded to the Council for Extramural Grants, a multidisciplinary panel of senior scientists and stakeholders. The Council sets the payline and determines grants to be awarded. The Council's decisions are forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer for action on behalf of the Board.



**What Happens Next?**

Awardees receive notice of funding and begin work on their project once finalized. Applicants who do not receive funding may revise and resubmit applications twice (note the Postdoctoral Fellowship Program allows only one resubmission). Detailed reviewer comments are provided to all applicants. Those contemplating resubmission are strongly encouraged to follow up with Scientific Directors to understand how best to approach resubmission.