



**SPORE in Leukemia Career Enhancement Program (CEP)  
2026 Request for Applications (RFA)**

**A. Deadlines**

**Application due:** Wednesday, May 1, 2026 (by 5:00pm)  
**Earliest possible start:** July 1, 2026

**B. Purpose**

The goal is recruit and support new investigators in the field of translational leukemia/MDS research. A human endpoint is required for each project, which is defined by the NIH as one of the following:

- Early phase clinical trials of new investigational drugs, biologics, experimental procedures, medical devices, or combinations;
- Early phase clinical trials of new combinations or new uses of Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved agents and devices;
- Discovery and development of biomarkers, only when measurements are made in human specimens, or directly in human subjects;
- Laboratory studies that begin with an observation in the clinic and use human specimens to generate new clinical hypotheses;
- Population, behavioral, or psychosocial studies, when these studies address and measure mechanistic aspects of the biology of the disease;
- Investigational new drug (IND)-directed toxicology studies conducted following a pre-IND meeting with the FDA in which the plan proposed by the investigators is acceptable to the FDA.

Experiments using cell lines, xenografts, patient-derived xenografts (PDX), organoids, paired germline samples, or engineered tissues may be important to the translational studies proposed and are encouraged but are not sufficient to meet the human endpoint requirement.

**C. Eligibility**

Junior faculty (Instructor or Assistant Professor) without RO1 or equivalent grant or senior post-doctoral fellows (PhD, MD, or MD-PhD) who have a written commitment from their department chair indicating promotion to Instructor or Assistant Professor by the time of the award will be eligible.

**D. Amount**

Up to two awards will be made up to \$75,000 (*direct cost*) for the funding period from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. A second year of funding (amount to be determined) is contingent upon adequate progress.

## E. Submission Guidelines

*These are internal awards and are NOT submitted through the Office of Sponsored Research Services (OSRS).*

**Full application:** Combine all sections noted below into one PDF document and email your submission by the deadline, **Wednesday May 1, 2026 5:00 p.m.**, to Michelle Callahan at [mecallahan@wustl.edu](mailto:mecallahan@wustl.edu). Late submissions will not be accepted.

**Required documents:** Face page, budget, budget justification, NIH Biosketch, Other Support, Career Development Plan, Specific Aims, Research Plan, and Appendix materials as needed.

**Please type your name (last name, first initial) in the header of each page. Use Arial 11 point font for all text.**

- 1) **Face Page**
- 2) **Budget & Justification:** (1 page maximum). Use continuation page as needed. (See allowable expenditures below)
- 3) **NIH Biosketch:** Please use NIH guidelines; biosketches are required for all key personnel. Include PMID numbers on publications.
- 4) **NIH Other Support:** Please use NIH guidelines.
- 5) **Career Development Plan:** (2 page maximum). Should directly address how the applicant plans to establish an independent research program, including: 1) mentorship and advisory committee meetings; 2) plan for didactic training; 3) plan to obtain research skills; 4) plan to obtain extramural funding; 5) plan to obtain presentation and publication skills; 6) plan to gain mentoring skills; 7) clinical duties; 8) timeline, and other relevant plans can be included.
- 6) **Specific Aims:** (1 page) State concisely the hypothesis to be tested and the specific aim(s) to be achieved during the grant period. The aims must be reasonable to achieve during the two- year period of the grant.
- 7) **Research Plan** (4 page maximum) All tables and figures are included in the 4-page limit.  
*The following headings should be used.*
  - a. **Significance to Leukemia Research:** State the relevance of the proposed project to the planning, conducting, and facilitating the discovery and development of anti-leukemia interventions and novel therapeutics. Indicate how the project meets a human endpoint, as defined by the NIH.
  - b. **Background and Preliminary Investigations:** Discuss the pertinent research findings that have been described in the scientific literature and how this proposal will add to these results. Also discuss any preliminary data you have that is relevant to this proposal.
  - c. **Experimental Design and Methods:** Concisely present the experimental design and the methods to be used to accomplish the specific aims. Also indicate how the results will be interpreted and how they will lead to future investigations. Well-known methods and standard procedures may be described very briefly or referenced, but novel experimental approaches should be outlined in detail.
  - d. **Potential For Progression to Full Scale Translational Studies:** Discuss plans to move this pilot project into a larger and explicitly translational or clinical research study.

## 8) Appendix

- a. References
- b. Mentor letter (2 page maximum). Each applicant will be required to identify a clinical and a basic research mentor at Washington University or other SPORE institution to provide mentoring concerning research, manuscript preparation, grant writing. The mentor letter should be co-signed by both mentors. The letter should include details regarding how the mentors will facilitate the Career Development Plan outlined by the applicant, including the frequency of meetings between the applicant, mentors and mentoring committee members.
- c. If applicant is a post-doctoral fellow, a letter of support is required from his/her Department Chair indicating their promotion to Instructor or Assistant Professor by the time of the award.
- d. If the project requires a sponsor, consultant, or collaborator, this individual should write a letter of support for the application, including an explanation of how any overlap in effort will be reconciled if the project is funded.

### Expenditures Allowed

- Salary and fringe benefits up to a maximum of 50% effort per year
- Research materials, laboratory supplies, fees for core services
- Tuition reimbursement for coursework taken at the WU Clinical Research Training Center
- Travel to annual SPORE CEP meeting and national meetings

### Expenditures NOT Allowed

- Secretarial/administrative personnel salary support
- Office equipment and supplies
- Major Equipment
- Computer/equipment maintenance fees
- Indirect institutional costs

## F. Terms of the Award

- Up to \$75,000 dollars will be provided in the first “year” funding period (July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027). The awardee will be eligible for a second year of funding (amount to be determined) contingent upon adequate progress. It is expected that the grantee will completely utilize the full amount by end of each funding period. Up to 25% of unused funds in year 1 may be rolled over to year 2 with administrative approval. Larger roll-over amounts will require CEP review committee approval. No-cost extensions of one year may be granted with the approval of the CEP Review Committee. Requests must be made 30 days prior to the end of the funding period. All unspent funds at the end of the grant period (unless you have requested and been granted a no-cost extension) will be returned.
- IRB & IACUC approvals are not required at the time of submission. However, all awards must have appropriate institutional regulatory approvals before funds will be allocated.
- CEP awardees will present their findings once per year at a SPORE steering committee meeting. An annual progress report is required to be submitted by April 1, 2027.
- CEP awardees will present their findings during their second year at an outside SPORE in Leukemia academic center as part of our SPORE CEP Collaboration program.
- CEP awardees are expected to submit an application for extramural funding of their research prior to the end of the funding period. The SPORE Biostatistics Core and CEP committee members are available to assist with grant submission.

- An annual progress report is required on April 1 of each funded year.

## G. Review Process

All applications will be reviewed by members of the CEP Review Committee with the statistical review conducted by personnel in the Biostatistics Core (if needed) and scored for merit according to the following criteria.

- Candidate
  - Quality of the candidate's academic and clinical record.
  - Commitment and potential to develop as an independent and productive translational researcher focused on leukemia.
- Research Plan
  - The degree of relevance of the research plan to developing an independent research program focused on translational leukemia research.
  - Usefulness of the research plan as a vehicle for enhancing existing research skills as described in the career enhancement plan.
  - Scientific and technical merit of the research question, design and methodology judged in the context of the candidate's previous training and experience.
- Career Enhancement Plan

If you have questions, please contact Michelle Callahan, [mecallahan@wustl.edu](mailto:mecallahan@wustl.edu).