

Route 66 Endometrial Cancer SPORE: Career Enhancement Program

APPLICATION GUIDELINES – CYCLE 3 – 2025-2026

The Career Enhancement Program within the Route 66 Endometrial Cancer SPORE seeks applications from early career faculty or established investigators seeking to develop a translational research program in endometrial cancer.

Award Details:

- Award amount up to \$50,000 in direct costs for one year. Budget requests up to \$75,000 will be considered only with a unique scope of work and a strong budget justification.
- Project period: August 1, 2025 – July 31, 2026
- Award may be renewed for another year contingent on adequate progress, availability of funds, and strategic priorities. Maximum award duration is limited to 2 years.
- The number of awards and the award amount may increase or decrease depending on funding available. Amount requested should reflect what is needed to achieve study objectives, not to maximize amount awarded.

Eligibility:

- Early career faculty or established investigators who wish to develop or refocus their careers on translational research in endometrial cancer with emphasis on etiology, prevention, diagnosis, early detection, treatment, endometrial cancer disparities, or population science.
- Senior level post-doctoral or clinical fellows who provide a letter from their Department Chair or Division Director stating that candidate will join its faculty by the time of the award.
- Awardees must be faculty members from one of the partner institutions: Washington University, University of New Mexico, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.
- Faculty from groups underrepresented in biomedical research and all individuals are encouraged to apply.
- Projects that utilize SPORE or institutional shared resources (Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Core, Biospecimen, Metabolomics, and Pathology Core, [Gynecologic Oncology Tissue Bank](#), etc.) are specifically encouraged.

SUBMISSION

Electronic copy of the proposal must be submitted via email as a single .pdf document and sent to Veronica Davé, PhD, SPORE Administrator (vdave@wustl.edu) by **May 1, 2025, by 5pm CST**.

FORMAT SPECIFICATIONS

- Use Arial 11 font; minimum 0.5 inch for all margins for all pages.
Figures, Graphs, Diagrams, Charts, Tables, Figure Legends, and Footnotes: You may use a smaller type size, but it must be readily legible.
- Include the Principal Investigator's name at the top of each page and consecutively number all pages in the application at the bottom of each page.

GUIDELINES

Please include the following:

1. NEW APPLICATIONS:

- **CEP Application Cover Page**
 - Please use PHS 398 Form Page 1. The form can be found at:
<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>.

- Institutional signing official signature is **not** required
- **Project Narrative (intended for patient research advocates, 200-500 words):** Please explain in plain language why this research is important to patients. Outline why this project is an important next step to advance our understanding of endometrial cancer prevention/treatment.
- **NIH-style Biosketch**
- **Career Enhancement Plan** (limited to 1 page)
 - Plan for establishing independent research program in endometrial cancer
 - Plan for didactic training (if applicable)
 - Plan for obtaining extramural funding for endometrial cancer research
 - Clinical duties (if applicable)
- **Research Plan** (limited to 5 pages, 6 pages for resubmissions)
 - Introduction to application (for resubmissions only, optional and limited to 1 page): Summarizes substantial additions, deletions, or changes to the application. Responds to issues or criticisms raised in previous cycle review
 - Specific aims
 - Significance to endometrial cancer research
 - Innovation
 - Approach
 - Plans for subsequent external funding
 - Description of how this work addresses endometrial cancer disparities
- **Budget**
 - Please use PHS 398 Form Page 4. The form can be found at: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>
 - NIH salary cap applies. This award does not support equipment purchases with unit value of \$5,000 or more. Allowable expenses:
 - Investigator's salary and fringe benefits, up to a maximum of 50% effort per year. Investigator must devote a minimum of 15% of their time. If this minimum required effort level is inaccessible, please write to Veronica Davé (vdave@wustl.edu) to discuss an exception.
 - Research personnel salary support, laboratory supplies, and core service fees
 - Tuition for coursework at WUSTL, UNM, or OUHSC
 - Travel to one national scientific conference and/or SPORC-related meeting
- **Budget Justification** - describing the use of the funds
- **Appendix**
 - References/literature cited
 - Mentor letters (for early career candidates): letters from a clinical and a basic science research mentor indicating that they will mentor the applicant in research, manuscript preparation, and grant writing
 - Letter of reference: letter describing the candidate's potential to pursue an independent career in endometrial cancer research
 - Regulatory and consortium approvals: project specific but will likely consist of IRB approval for human subjects research, IACUC approval for animal research, or relevant approvals to access samples or data from databases/repositories
 - Letter of support: If the applicant is a postdoctoral fellow or junior faculty member (Instructor level), a departmental letter of support will be necessary to ensure the applicant's eligibility and commitment
 - Authentication of key biological and/or chemical resources

2. RENEWAL APPLICATIONS

- **CEP Application Cover Page**
 - Please use PHS 398 Form Page 1. The form can be found at: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>
 - Institutional signing official signature is **not** required
- **Updated NIH-style Biosketch**
- **Project Narrative (intended for patient research advocates, 200-500 words):** Please explain in plain

language why this research is important to patients. Explain progress made and outline why this renewal application is an important next step to advance our understanding of endometrial cancer prevention/treatment.

- **Career Enhancement Plan** (limited to 1 page)
 - Summary of career development activities during award period
 - Plan for establishing independent research program in endometrial cancer
 - Explanation of significant changes in Career Enhancement Plan (if applicable)
- **Research Plan** (limited to 5 pages)
 - Progress report on specific aims
 - Explanation of significant changes in the research plan (if applicable)
 - Future directions
 - List of abstracts, presentations, or publications supported by this award
 - List of grant applications related to this award and plans for subsequent funding
- **Budget**
 - Please use PHS 398 Form Page 4. The form can be found at:
<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>
 - NIH salary cap applies. This award does not support equipment purchases with unit value of \$5,000 or more. Allowable expenses:
 - Investigator's salary and fringe benefits, up to a maximum of 50% effort per year. Investigator must devote a minimum of 15% of their time. If this minimum required effort level is inaccessible, please write to Veronica Davé (vdave@wustl.edu) to discuss an exception.
 - Research personnel salary support, laboratory supplies, and core service fees
 - Tuition for coursework at WUSTL, UNM, or OUHSC
 - Travel to one national scientific conference and/or SPORE-related meeting
- **Budget Justification** - describing the use of the funds
- **Appendix**
 - References/literature cited

REVIEW PROCESS

Your application will be reviewed by the SPORE CEP Selection Committee, 1-2 external scientific reviewers, and 1-2 patient research advocates involved in our Endometrial Cancer Equity Group. Awardees will be determined based on application reviews by the Selection Committee. Applicants will be notified of their application status following the Selection Committee review.

Review Criteria: All reviewers will be asked to provide written critiques. Applications will be scored on an NIH 1-9 scale in each of the following categories and be given an overall score.

- a) Candidate
 - i) Quality of the candidate's academic and clinical record
 - ii) Commitment and potential to develop an independent academic career in endometrial cancer
- b) Research Plan
 - i) Significance of the research plan for developing an independent research program in translation endometrial cancer
 - ii) Ability of the research plan to enhance the candidate's research skills as described in their Career Development/Enhancement plan
 - iii) The scientific merit of the research question, design, methodology and the overall strength of the research question
 - iv) The degree to which the project addresses issues important to endometrial cancer patients
- c) Career Enhancement Plan
 - i) Likelihood that the research plan will contribute to the candidate's scientific development and independence, as assessed by the candidate's prior training and research experience
 - ii) Appropriateness of the goals and scope of the plan considered in the context of the candidate's prior research training and stated research and training objectives
 - iii) Qualifications of the mentor, e.g., publications, honors, awards, track record for mentoring junior

- faculty, and collaborative research
- d) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
 - i) Applications from women, minorities, or individuals with disabilities or those that address disparities in endometrial cancer will be highly considered.
 - e) Renewals (Second year only)
 - i) Progress for the research in year 1
 - ii) Collaboration with other investigators
 - iii) Submission of abstracts and/or manuscripts
 - iv) Submission of an extramural grant application (or near final draft of a grant proposal submitted for Committee review) and potential for future funding

CONTACTS

Please direct any application questions to:

Veronica Davé, PhD, SPORE Administrator (vdave@wustl.edu)

Scientific Leadership:

David Mutch, MD; CEP Co-Director – Washington University (mutchd@wustl.edu)

Doris Benbrook, PhD; CEP Co-Director – University of Oklahoma (Doris-Benbrook@ouhsc.edu)

Carolyn Muller, MD; CEP Co-Director – University of New Mexico (KKLeslie@salud.unm.edu)

Projects may be discussed with leadership to determine interest level and eligibility in advance of submitting a full application. Projects using tissue samples from national repositories requiring regulatory agreements and approvals (MTAs, DTUAs, approvals to use specimens, etc.) should be discussed with leadership during the application phase to determine feasibility of completing the project during the award timeline.

TERMS OF AWARD

All CEP awardees will be expected to:

- Devote at least 15% of their time to translational endometrial cancer research. If this minimum required effort level is inaccessible, please write to Veronica Davé (vdave@wustl.edu) to discuss an exception.
- Provide a written annual progress report
- Consistently attend Endometrial Cancer SPORE Working Group meetings
- Complete one of these activities during the award period:
 - Present to the SPORE Internal and External Advisory Boards
 - Present poster at the annual NCI Translational Science Meeting or equivalent
 - Make at least one presentation per year at a SPORE or Cancer Center research meeting
- Fully develop at least one extramural grant application (any level)
- Submit an extramural research grant in endometrial cancer at the end of CEP funding
- Serve as a CEP application reviewer in future cycles