



Application Guidelines for the 2026 Innovation Grant

Letter of Intent Due: October 15, 2025 (by 8:00 p.m. Eastern)
Full Application Due: March 18, 2026 (by 8:00 p.m. Eastern)



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About Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation

Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation (ALSF) emerged from the front yard lemonade stand of 4-year-old Alexandra “Alex” Scott, who was fighting cancer and wanted to raise money to find cures for all children with cancer. Her spirit and determination inspired others to support her cause, and when she passed away at the age of 8, she had raised \$1 million. Since then, the Foundation bearing her name has evolved into a national fundraising movement. Today, ALSF is one of the leading funders of pediatric cancer research in the U.S. and Canada, funding research projects and providing programs to families affected by childhood cancer. ALSF has been given the NCI peer-reviewed funder designation for rigorous selection of research grants. The mission of ALSF is to change the lives of children with cancer through funding impactful research, raising awareness, supporting families, and empowering everyone to help cure childhood cancer.

Innovation Grant Program Description

ALSF is committed to creating opportunities for new and innovative research into treatments and cures for childhood cancers. The Innovation Grant is designed to provide critical and significant seed funding for established researchers with a novel approach to pediatric oncology scientific investigation. Proposals should have clinical translation in view. This may represent a change in research direction and/or an innovative new idea that moves away from an investigator's prior research but for which a strong case is made for the potential impact on childhood cancers.

Application Timeline and Review

- A letter of intent (LOI) must be submitted, and all eligibility criteria met to be considered for the full proposal stage; otherwise, LOIs will be administratively rejected.
- Upon invitation a full proposal must be submitted that meets all guideline criteria as well as all eligibility criteria; otherwise, applications will be administratively rejected.
- LOIs and full proposals will be reviewed by an independent panel of experts according to the NIH recognized peer-review process.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

LETTER OF INTENT DUE	OCTOBER 15, 2025 BY 8:00 P.M. ET
INVITATION TO SUBMIT FULL PROPOSAL	JANUARY 15, 2026
FULL PROPOSAL DUE	MARCH 18, 2026 by 8:00 p.m. ET
NOTIFICATION	JULY 2026



Applicant Eligibility: must be met at the time of application

- Applicant institutions must be based in the United States or Canada. Applicants need not be United States citizens. Funds must be granted to nonprofit institutions or organizations.
- Applicants must have an MD, PhD, or MD/PhD (or equivalent) and be appointed as faculty (or equivalent) at an academic institution.
- Applicants must have a track record of publication with at least one publication as a Senior Corresponding Author and funding productivity that demonstrates the project can be accomplished by the investigators.
- Applicants must have a track record of research grant productivity with at least one NIH R01 equivalent awarded. Please read the ALSF [R01 equivalency policy](#) for more details.
- Applicant must propose a new research direction, not a continuation of ongoing funded research.

Scope of Proposal

- Proposals must fall within the scope of Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation's mission, focused on childhood cancers. Proposals with a sole/primary focus on patients >19 years of age will not be considered.
- Proposal must be hypothesis driven and mechanistic.
- Innovation must be clearly presented.
- Potential for major scientific and/or clinical impact in pediatric oncology is critical.
- While preliminary data are not required, the applicant must demonstrate feasibility of the research plan.

Budget

The requested budget should be in proportion to the scope of the proposed project and should be for direct costs of \$250,000 USD or below over two years. A maximum of \$125,000 in total direct costs may be requested per year.

Restrictions:

- ALSF adheres to the NIH Salary Cap for principal investigator(s).
- Indirect costs are not allowed.
- The grant may not be renewed; one no-cost extension request is allowed with the Final Report.
- Other budget items may include fringe, travel, supplies and small pieces of equipment. ALSF funds cannot be used for tuition remission. View ALSF's complete [budget policy](#).



- If utilizing a subcontract or subaward, you must include this expense in the budget.
 - No indirect costs will be paid.
 - The PI's institution is responsible for disbursing funds for subawards and/or subcontracts.

Resource and Data Sharing

Grant recipients are expected to share unique resources developed under this funding award, and as part of the application, applicants are required to submit a Resource Sharing Plan using [ALSF's Resource Sharing Form](#). Applicants should describe their track record of generating resources that are broadly re-used, the specific resources that will be generated in this proposed project, and the mechanisms by which those resources will be shared. To demonstrate a commitment to sharing that will be actualized, applicants should provide information in their sharing plan that clearly states the type of resource that will be shared, the method, characterization and timing of such sharing, and the anticipated resources (budget, personnel, etc.) required by the applicant and the resource user. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the dissemination of resources produced under the award will enhance or diminish the impact of the proposed work. For a full description and an example, see [the Resource Sharing Form](#). For the full Resource Sharing Policy visit our [Resources for Grant Applicants](#) page.

Resubmissions

One resubmission of a full application previously reviewed by ALSF's Innovation Grant Review Board is permitted. Applicants should respond to the prior ALSF critique of the proposal in the Resubmission section of the application. The response to critique will be scored in the review process, and resubmissions compete with new applicants for funding.

Restrictions

- ALSF does not fund proposals for research utilizing human embryonic or fetal stem cells, or non-human primates. Research with human induced pluripotent stem cells is permissible.
- Proposals focused on social determinants of health with an emphasis on oncologic outcomes (rather than psychosocial outcomes) are permitted.
- Investigators may only submit one LOI as a PI or Co-PI per cycle.
- Researchers may not have active ALSF grants that are more than or equal to \$125,000/year at the time of award, including concurrent Innovation grants.

Grant Policies & Reporting Requirements

- Please review ALSF's Grant Policies, including Budget Expenditures, Resource Sharing and Grant Agreement with IP, found on the [Resources for Grant Applicants](#) page.
Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation | Grants@AlexsLemonade.org | ALSFgrants.org



- Annual progress reports: each year of funding is contingent upon demonstration of satisfactory progress toward the completion of proposed research objectives and appropriate budget expenditures.
- Minor carry-over of funds (25% or less) is permitted each year with justification. Each year's budget will be approved subsequent to the review of project progress and milestones.
- ALSF may elect to partially fund or to hold new funds if carry-over is excessive.
- A final report is required at the conclusion of funding. Report must state findings, expenditures, as well as publications and presentations which acknowledge ALSF funding.
- The grant may not be renewed; one no-cost extension may be requested in the final report. Maximum NCE request is 12 months.
- Publications, presentations, and posters featuring results of the experiments funded by this grant mechanism should acknowledge "Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation" and include the award number. Copies should be sent via email to Grants@AlexsLemonade.org.

Application Package Instructions

- All sections described below should be combined into one PDF (max 20 MB) and uploaded to the ALSF online application form ([see application submission instructions](#)).
- All templates mentioned can be found on ALSF's [Resources for Grant Applicants](#) page.

Letter of Intent (LOI) Instructions

LOIs are required to ensure the proposed research is within the Innovation grant's scope. LOIs will be reviewed by members of the scientific review committee. **Submission of a LOI that does not follow the content guidelines provided (LOI Section Descriptions) will result in administrative rejection of the application by ALSF.**

Format Instructions

- PAGE HEADER: PI name, institution and project title must appear at the top of the page.
- FORMAT: Follow NIH format guidelines: Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype, or Georgia fonts with a font size of 11 points or larger with a minimum of ½ inch margins.
- ORDER & LENGTH: The order of the LOI should be followed, adhering to the maximum length allowed for each subsection indicated in parentheses, **not to exceed 1 page for Sections I – V.**
- No appendices allowed.



LOI Section Descriptions

- I. **Abstract** (300 words)
Must include subsections: Rationale, Hypothesis, Specific Aims, Research Design
- II. **Impact Statement** (two sentences)
State how this project will impact childhood cancer patients.
- III. **Innovation Statement** (two sentences)
State how this project is a novel approach to childhood cancer research.
- IV. **Resource Sharing** (two sentences)
State how this project's impact will be enhanced by sharing outputs.
- V. **Resubmission** (100 words)
Has a full application for this project been reviewed by ALSF before and not been funded? If so, please describe what has changed (data, design, aims etc.) in response to the prior critique. If not, skip this section.
- VI. **Literature Citations** (Maximum 1 Page)
Please use Vancouver style: numeric references within the text
- VII. **Biosketches** (NIH page limit)
Please use the [NIH 5-page biosketch form](#) for PI and Co-PIs only (no other key investigators at LOI stage) with relevant funding listed.

Full Application Package Instructions (by invitation only)

- All sections described below should be combined into one PDF (max 20 MB) and uploaded to the ALSF online application form ([see Application Submission Instructions](#)).
- All templates mentioned can be found at ALSF's [Resources for Grant Applicants](#) page.

Format Instructions

- **PAGE HEADER:** All pages of the application should be numbered; the name of the principal investigator should appear in the upper right-hand corner of each page.
- **FORMAT:** Follow NIH format guidelines: Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype, or Georgia fonts with a font size of 11 points or larger with a minimum of ½ inch margins.
- **ORDER & LENGTH:** The order of the application should be followed, adhering to the maximum number of pages allowed for each subsection indicated in parentheses.

Section Descriptions

1. Project Information

- a. **Cover Page (1 page):** Download and complete the [Cover Page Template](#).
- b. **Table of Contents (1 page):** Provide a Table of Contents with page numbers to the corresponding sections.
- c. **Scientific Abstract (0.5 page):** Summarize the research objectives and rationale.



- d. **Impact Statement (0.5 page):** ALSF considers the impact of the project on the childhood cancer community an important factor in the application. Please describe the potential impact that this project could have on children with cancer.

2. **Budget/Justification (3 pages):**

- a. **Budget Template (1.5 pages):** Complete the [ALSF budget template](#). The signature from an institutional representative on the cover page of this grant application specifically acknowledges and accepts this budget and acknowledges that no indirect costs will be paid.

- i. The award amount is \$250,000 over two years.
- ii. ALSF adheres to the [NIH Salary Cap](#) for Principal Investigator(s)/Co-Investigator(s).
- iii. Indirect costs are not allowed.
- iv. If utilizing a subcontractor, you must include their budget. No indirect costs may be paid to the subcontractor.
- v. Reasonable travel expenses to national/international research meetings to disseminate findings may be budgeted.

- b. **Budget Justification (1.5 pages):** Include a narrative for the following. Use N/A in sections as needed:

- vi. Personnel
- vii. Subcontractors/Subawards/Consultants
- viii. Equipment (for equipment costs above \$5000)
- ix. Travel
- x. Computer and Software
- xi. Other

3. **Biographical Sketch(es):** Use the [NIH five-page biographical sketch \(SF424\) format](#) for the principal investigator and all key personnel.

4. **Research Plan**

- a. **Resubmissions (1 page, if applicable):** If this proposal was previously submitted to ALSF and did not receive funding, describe any changes in response to the reviewer critiques (e.g., changes in experimental design, scope, new data)
- b. **Specific Aims (1 page):** List the goals, long-term objectives and what the specific research proposed in this application is intended to accomplish. State the hypothesis to be tested and relevance to childhood cancer research.
- c. **Significance (0.5 page):** Describe the relevant background that supports the current research plan. State the significance and importance of your proposed project with respect to childhood cancer research. Relate the specific aims to the goals and long-term objectives. Include potential impact in the clinic for children battling cancer.



- d. **Innovation (0.5 page):** Describe how the proposed research challenges and shifts paradigms, or introduces a novel concept, approach, or technology and how this could potentially translate to the clinic in the near or long term.
 - e. **Approach (4 pages):** Describe the experimental approach to the research question and how the research will be realistically accomplished within the proposed funding period. Images, graphs, and charts that are critical to the project should be included within this section, not in the appendix. They will count against the page limit. This section must include but is not limited to:
 - i. Feasibility of the approach to reach project goals; if available, include PI's preliminary studies pertinent to the project.
 - ii. Key milestones with expected outcomes, details of potential problems, and plans to address these issues.
 - iii. A timeline.
5. **Resource Sharing (1-2 pages):** Use the [Resource Sharing Form](#) to complete this section of the application to describe the outputs from the proposed project and how they will be shared. Reviewers will be asked to consider the manner in which outputs from this project will be shared and the extent to which this plan will increase or decrease the impact of the proposed project.
 6. **Literature Cited (no limit):** Use Vancouver or NIH style (numbered citations within text) format.
 7. **Human Subjects (1 page):** If approved, include the IRB approval letter or equivalent. If approval is pending, indicate the expected approval date. If IRB approval is not applicable, include a note in this section.
 8. **Vertebrate Animals (1 page):** If approved, include the IACUC approval letter or equivalent. If approval is pending indicate the expected approval date. If IACUC approval is not applicable, include a note in this section.
 9. **Letters of Support (no limit):** Include any appropriate letters from individuals confirming their roles in the project. Institutional letters of support are not required but can be included, especially if there are feasibility issues that can be addressed.
 10. **Appendix:** A brief appendix is allowed for Innovation Grants. Appendices should be included only if essential to the understanding of the application. Appendices are limited to one accepted but not yet published manuscript OR two pages of additional information such as a summary of the protocol and supplementary figures. (*Reminder: tables and figures noted in the text should be embedded in the body of the proposal.*) **Reviewers are not required to read the appendix.**



Application Submission Instructions

1. To start an application, navigate to Proposal Central and select “I am an Applicant.”
 - a. **ORCID Registrants:** you can login using your ORCID. If you don't have one, please obtain one by registering through the link <https://orcid.org/register>. An ORCID is **required** for this application.
2. After you’ve logged in to Proposal Central, navigate to the Grant Opportunities tab and search Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation in the search bar to find our active grant application cycles or click [here](#) to see the ALSF’s Grant Opportunities currently open. Click the “Apply Now” button to start an application.
3. The application document must be uploaded as one PDF (maximum of 20 MB), in the Attachments tab. Please see the guidelines for specific format and section instructions.
4. You may save your application to finish later. Just click “Save”.
 - a. When you return to Proposal Central, click the “Proposals” tab at the top to navigate to your applications. You can filter your application based on Proposal Status in the upper right-hand corner. Click “In Progress” to return to your existing applications.
5. Once completed, click “Submit”. Within 10 minutes you will receive a confirmation email. As long as the deadline has not passed, you may unsubmit your application to make changes by clicking the “Unsubmit” button on the “Proposals” tab.
6. If you have any questions regarding your Proposal Central account, please contact pcsupport@altum.com.

Contact

- If you have any questions regarding the ALSF Innovation Grant, please contact Katy Estes-Smargiassi, Grant Coordinator, at 866-333-1213 ex. 143, or by email at K.Esmargiassi@AlexsLemonade.org.