

**US ARMY MEDICAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMAND (USAMRDC)
CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS (CDMRP)
FISCAL YEAR 2024 (FY24) PEER REVIEWED CANCER RESEARCH PROGRAM
(PRCRP)**

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW PROCEDURES

The FY24 PRCRP called for applications in response to program announcements (PAs) for five award mechanisms released in May-June 2025:

- Advancing Cancer Care Through Clinical Trials Award
- Convergent Science Cancer Consortium Award
- Idea Award
- Impact Award
- Virtual Cancer Center Director Award

The PRCRP received pre-applications for the Idea Award and Impact Award in June 2024 and screened them in July 2024. The screening followed the pre-application evaluation criteria specified in the PAs to determine which applicants would be invited to submit full applications. The PRCRP received full applications in September 2024, and they underwent peer review in November 2024. The PRCRP conducted programmatic review in January 2025.

The PRCRP received pre-applications for the Advancing Cancer Care Through Clinical Trials Award, the Convergent Science Cancer Consortium Award and the Virtual Cancer Center Director Award in July 2024 and screened them in August 2024. The screening followed the pre-application evaluation criteria specified in the PAs to determine which applicants would be invited to submit full applications. The PRCRP received full applications in October 2024, and they underwent peer review in December 2024. The PRCRP conducted programmatic review in January 2025.

In response to the Advancing Cancer Care Through Clinical Trials Award PA, the PRCRP received 51 pre-applications and invited 39 of these to submit a full application. The PRCRP received 27 compliant applications and recommended funding 5 (18.5%) for a total of \$19.3 million (M).

In response to the Convergent Science Cancer Consortium Award PA, the PRCRP received 12 pre-applications and invited 3 of these to submit a full application. The PRCRP received 3 compliant applications and recommended inviting 1 (33.3%) to Stage 2 programmatic review (oral presentation).

In response to the Idea Award PA, the PRCRP received 440 pre-applications and invited 245 of these to submit a full application. The PRCRP received 213 compliant applications and recommended funding 29 (13.6%) for a total of \$17.9M.

In response to the Impact Award PA, the PRCRP received 315 pre-applications and invited 180 of these to submit a full application. The PRCRP received 148 compliant applications and recommended funding 12 (8.1%) for a total of \$18.7M.

In response to the Virtual Cancer Center Director Award PA, the PRCRP received 2 pre-applications and invited 2 of these to submit a full application. The PRCRP received 2 compliant applications and recommended inviting 2 (100.0%) to Stage 2 programmatic review (oral presentation).

Table 1 shows submission and award data summarized for the FY24 PRCRP.

Table 1. Submission/Award Data for the FY24 PRCRP*

Mechanism	Pre-Applications Received	Pre-Applications Invited (%)	Compliant Applications Received	Applications Recommended for Funding (%)	Total Funds
Advancing Cancer Care Through Clinical Trials Award	51	39 (76.5%)	27	5 (18.5%)	\$19.30M
Idea Award	440	245 (55.7%)	213	29 (13.5%)	\$17.92M
Impact Award	315	180 (57.1%)	148	12 (8.1%)	\$18.72M
Total	806	464 (57.6%)	388	46 (11.9%)	\$55.94M

*These data reflect funding recommendations only. Pending FY24 award negotiations, final numbers will be available after September 30, 2025.

Table 2. Submission/Invitation Data for the FY24 PRCRP from Stage 1 Programmatic Review

Mechanism	Pre-Applications Received	Pre-Applications Invited (%)	Compliant Applications Received	Applications Recommended for Stage 2 Programmatic Review (%)
Convergent Science Cancer Consortium Award [†]	12	3 (25.0%)	3	1 (33.3%)
Virtual Cancer Center Director Award [‡]	2	2 (100.0%)	2	2 (100.0%)
Total	14	5 (35.7%)	5	3 (60.0%)

[†]3 applications representing 9 potential awards

[‡]2 applications representing 4 potential awards

Table 3. FY24 PRCRP Application Data by Topic Area

Topic Area	Compliant Applications Received	Applications Recommended for Funding (%)	Total Funds
Bladder Cancer	34	6 (17.6%)	\$6.77M
Blood Cancer	46	4 (8.7%)	\$11.19M
Brain Cancer (excluding glioblastoma)	9	1 (11.1%)	\$1.59M
Colorectal Cancer	65	7 (10.8%)	\$5.36M
Endometrial Cancer	10	2 (20.0%)	\$2.12M
Esophageal Cancer	14	4 (28.6%)	\$4.46M
Germ Cell Cancer	4	1 (25.0%)	\$1.48M
Liver Cancer	31	1 (3.2%)	\$1.55M
Lymphoma	32	3 (9.4%)	\$1.62M
Mesothelioma	8	1 (12.5%)	\$0.68M
Metastatic Cancer	11	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Myeloma	5	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Neuroblastoma	20	2 (10.0%)	\$2.37M
Pediatric Brain Tumors	36	3 (8.3%)	\$2.60M
Pediatric, Adolescent and Young Adult Cancers	23	3 (13.0%)	\$5.48M
Sarcoma	16	2 (12.5%)	\$3.87M
Stomach Cancer	13	2 (15.4%)	\$1.16M
Thyroid Cancer	11	4 (36.4%)	\$3.64M
Totals	388	46 (11.9%)	\$55.94M

THE TWO-TIER REVIEW SYSTEM

The USAMRDC developed a review model based on recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences report *Strategies for Managing the Breast Cancer Research Program: A Report to the Army Medical Research and Development Command*. The report recommended a two-tier review process that reflects not only the traditional strengths of existing peer review systems but is also tailored to accommodate program goals. The Command adheres to this proven approach for evaluating competitive applications. An application must be favorably reviewed by both levels of the two-tier review system to be funded.

THE FIRST TIER—Scientific Peer Review

The PRCRP conducted peer review of Idea Award and Impact Award applications in November 2024 utilizing 27 panels of researchers, clinicians and consumer advocates. The panel members based their evaluations on the criteria specified in the PAs.

The PRCRP conducted a peer review via teleconference for the Idea Award and Impact Award Award utilizing 27 panels (287 scientists and 50 consumer reviewers).

Each peer review panel included a Chair, an average of nine scientific reviewers, an average of two consumer reviewers and a nonvoting Scientific Review Officer. The panelists' primary responsibility was to review the technical merit of each application based upon the evaluation criteria specified in the relevant PA.

The PRCRP conducted peer review of the Advancing Cancer Care Through Clinical Trials Award, the Convergent Science Cancer Consortium Award and the Virtual Cancer Center Director Award applications in December 2024 utilizing seven panel(s) of researchers, clinicians and consumer advocates. The panel members based their evaluations on the criteria specified in the PAs.

The PRCRP conducted peer review for the Advancing Cancer Care Through Clinical Trials Award utilizing five panels (36 scientists and six consumer reviewers) and for the Convergent Science Cancer Consortium Award utilizing a single panel (eight scientists and one consumer reviewer). The Virtual Cancer Center Director Award utilized a single panel (three scientists and one consumer reviewer) via teleconference.

Each peer review panel included a Chair, an average of six scientific reviewers, an average of one consumer reviewer and a nonvoting Scientific Review Officer. The panelists' primary responsibility was to review the technical merit of each application based upon the evaluation criteria specified in the relevant PA.

Individual Peer Review Panels

The Chair for each panel presided over the deliberations. The panels discussed each individual application. The Chair called on the assigned reviewers for an assessment of the merits of each application using the evaluation criteria published in the appropriate PA. Following a panel discussion, the Chair summarized the strengths and weaknesses of each application, and the panel members then rated the applications confidentially.

Application Scoring

Evaluation Criteria Scores: Panel members rated each application based on the peer review evaluation criteria published in the appropriate PA. The panel members used a scale of 10 to 1, with 10 representing the highest merit and 1 the lowest merit, using whole numbers only. The purpose of obtaining the criteria ratings was to (1) place emphasis on the published evaluation criteria and provide guidance to reviewers in determining an appropriate overall score and (2) provide the applicant, the Programmatic Panel and the Command with an informed measure of the quality regarding the strengths and weaknesses of each application. The evaluation criteria scores were not averaged or mathematically manipulated in any manner to connect them to the global or percentile scores.

Overall Score: To obtain an overall score, panel members used a range of 1.0 to 5.0 (1.0 representing the highest merit and 5.0 the lowest merit), with scoring permitted in 0.1 increments. The PRCRP averaged the panel member scores and rounded them to arrive at a two-digit number (1.2, 1.9, 2.7, etc.) that corresponds to the following adjectival equivalents used to

guide reviewers: Outstanding (1.0–1.5), Excellent (1.6–2.0), Good (2.1–2.5), Fair (2.6–3.5) and Deficient (3.6–5.0).

Summary Statements: The Scientific Review Officer on each panel was responsible for preparing a Summary Statement reporting the results of the peer review for each application. The Summary Statements included the evaluation criteria and overall scores, peer reviewers' written comments, and the essence of panel discussions. The PRCRP staff used this document to report the peer review results to the Programmatic Panel. In accordance with USAMRDC policy, Summary Statements are available to each applicant after completion of the review process.

THE SECOND TIER—Programmatic Review

The FY24 Programmatic Panel conducted programmatic review in January 2025. The panel included a diverse group of civilian, active duty, and retired military scientists, clinicians, and consumer advocates, each of whom contributed special expertise or interest in the congressionally directed PRCRP Topic Areas in cancer research. Programmatic review is a comparison-based process that considers scientific evaluations across all disciplines and specialty areas. Programmatic Panel members do not automatically recommend funding applications that received high scores in the technical merit review process; rather, they closely examine the eligible applications to allocate as wisely as possible the limited funds available. The programmatic review criteria published in the PAs were as follows: ratings and evaluations of the scientific peer review panels, programmatic relevance to the FY24 PRCRP military health focus area(s) and overarching challenges, program portfolio composition, adherence to the intent of the award mechanism, relative impact or near-term impact (Convergent Science Cancer Consortium Award, Virtual Cancer Center Director Award and Impact Award only), and relative clinical care and patient impact (Advancing Cancer Care Through Clinical Trials Award only). After programmatic review, the PRCRP sent the applications recommended for funding to the Commanding General, USAMRDC, for approval.