

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

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW PROCEDURES

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

- Convergent Science Cancer Consortium Award (CSCCA)
- Virtual Cancer Center Director Award (VCCDA)

The PRCRP received pre-applications for the CSCCA and VCCDA in July 2024 and screened them in August 2024. The screening followed the pre-application evaluation criteria specified in the PAs to determine which investigators to invite to submit full applications. The PRCRP received applications in October 2024, and they underwent peer review in December 2024. The PRCRP conducted programmatic review in March 2025.

In response to the CSCCA PA, the PRCRP received 12 pre-applications and invited 3 of these to submit a full application. The PRCRP recommended inviting 1 to Stage 2 Programmatic Review. The PRCRP received 3 compliant applications and recommended funding 1 (33.3%) for a total of \$ 32.65 million (M).

In response to the VCCDA PA, the PRCRP received 2 pre-applications and invited both to submit a full application. The PRCRP recommended inviting 2 to Stage 2 Programmatic Review. The PRCRP received 2 compliant applications and recommended funding 1 (50.0%) for a total of \$2.92M.

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 Invited for Stage 2 Programmatic Review (%)	Applications Recommended for Funding (%)	Total Funds
Convergent Science Cancer Consortium Award	12	3 (25.0%)	3	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%, 3 awards)	\$32.65M

Mechanism[±]	Pre-Applications Received	Pre-Applications Invited (%)	Compliant Applications Received	Applications Invited for Stage 2 Programmatic Review (%)	Applications Recommended for Funding (%)	Total Funds
Virtual Cancer Center Director Award	2	2 (100%)	2	2 (100%)	1 (50.0%, 2 awards)	\$2.92M
Total	14	5 (35.7%)	5	3 (60%)	2 (40%, 5 awards)	\$35.56M

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

±The CSCCA and VCCDA had a Partnering Option. The CSCCA had 1 application recommended for funding, representing 3 total awards. The VCCDA had 1 application recommend for funding, representing 2 total awards.

Table 2. FY24 PRCRP Application Data by Topic Area

Topic Area	Compliant Applications Received	Applications Recommended for Funding (%)	Total Funds
Bladder Cancer	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Blood Cancer	2	1 (50.0%)	\$32.65M
Brain Cancer (excluding glioblastoma)	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Colorectal Cancer	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Endometrial Cancer	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Esophageal Cancer	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Germ Cell Cancer	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Liver Cancer	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Lymphoma	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Mesothelioma	1	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Metastatic Cancer	2	1 (50.0%)	\$2.92M
Myeloma	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Neuroblastoma	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Pediatric Brain Tumors	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Pediatric, Adolescent and Young Adult Cancers	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Sarcoma	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Stomach Cancer	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Thyroid Cancer	0	0 (0.0%)	\$0.00M
Totals	5	2 (40%)	\$35.56M

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 CSCCA and VCCDA applications in December 2024 utilizing two panel(s) of researchers, clinicians and consumer advocates. The panel members based their evaluations on the criteria specified in the PAs.

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 March 2025. The panel included a diverse group of basic and clinical scientists and consumer advocates, each of whom contributed special expertise or interest 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 for Stage 1 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 and relative impact or near-term impact. The programmatic review criteria published in the PAs for CSCCA applications invited to Stage 2 review were as follows: articulation of how the consortium will have a profound positive impact on the lives of cancer patients or those at risk for cancer, articulation of how the consortium will take a team-based, convergent science approach to research, articulation of how the consortium's fundamental goals and expected outcomes will advance research and address the consortium's Focal Point, articulation of the consortium's potential to foster cross-disciplinary and multi-institutional collaboration and encourage innovation. The programmatic review criteria published in the PAs for VCCDA applications invited to Stage 2 review were as follows: the ability of the Virtual Cancer Center to integrate different disciplines and cancers into one cohesive unit to successfully incorporate Scholars from different cancer research backgrounds into convergent networks. After programmatic review, the PRCRP sent the applications recommended for funding to the Commanding General, USAMRDC, for approval.