

**DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT-MEDICAL  
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMAND (DHA R&D-MRDC)  
CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS (CDMRP)  
FISCAL YEAR 2025 (FY25) BREAST CANCER RESEARCH PROGRAM (BCRP)**

**DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW PROCEDURES**

The FY25 BCRP called for applications in response to program announcements (PAs) for three award mechanisms released in April 2025 and June 2025:

- Breakthrough Award Levels 1 and 2 (June 2025)
- Breakthrough Award Level 3 (April 2025)
- Clinical Research Extension Award (June 2025)

The BCRP received pre-applications for the Breakthrough Award Level 3 in June 2025 and screened them in July 2025. The screening followed the pre-application evaluation criteria specified in the PA to determine which investigators to invite to submit full applications. The BCRP received applications in September 2025, and they underwent peer review in November 2025. The BCRP conducted programmatic review in January 2026.

The BCRP received applications for the Breakthrough Award Levels 1 and 2 and the Clinical Research Extension Award in September 2025, and they underwent peer review in November 2025. The BCRP conducted programmatic review in January 2026.

In response to the Breakthrough Award Level 3 PA, the BCRP received 105 pre-applications and invited 50 of these to submit a full application. The BCRP received 42 compliant applications and recommended funding 3 applications (7.1%) for a total of \$19.6 million (M).

In response to the Breakthrough Award Levels 1 and 2 PA, the BCRP received 355 compliant applications and recommended funding 16 applications (4.5%) for a total of \$24.1M.

In response to the Clinical Research Extension Award PA, the BCRP received five compliant applications and recommended funding zero applications (0.0%) for a total of \$0.0M.

Tables 1 and 2 show submission and award data summarized for the FY25 BCRP.

**Table 1. Submission/Award Data for the FY25 BCRP Breakthrough Award Level 3\***

<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Pre-Applications Received</b>	<b>Pre-Applications Invited (%)</b>	<b>Compliant Applications Received</b>	<b>Applications Recommended for Funding (%)</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>
Breakthrough Award Level 3 <sup>†</sup>	105	50 (47.6%)	42	3 (7.1%)	\$19.6M

\* These data reflect funding recommendations only. Pending FY25 award negotiations, final numbers will be available after September 30, 2026.

<sup>†</sup> 42 applications received representing 74 potential awards; and 3 applications recommended for funding representing 5 potential awards.

**Table 2. Submission/Award Data for the FY25 BCRP Breakthrough Award Levels 1 and 2 and Clinical Research Extension Award\***

<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Compliant Applications Received</b>	<b>Applications Recommended for Funding (%)</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>
Breakthrough Award Levels 1 and 2 <sup>†</sup>	355	16 (4.5%)	\$24.1M
Clinical Research Extension Award <sup>‡</sup>	5	0 (0%)	\$0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>\$24.1M</b>

\* These data reflect funding recommendations only. Pending FY25 award negotiations, final numbers will be available after September 30, 2026.

<sup>†</sup> 355 applications received representing 493 potential awards; and 16 applications recommended for funding representing 23 potential awards.

<sup>‡</sup> 5 applications received representing 7 potential awards.

## **THE TWO-TIER REVIEW SYSTEM**

The CDMRP 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 CDMRP 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 BCRP conducted peer review online for the Breakthrough Award Levels 1 and 2, Breakthrough Award Level 3 and Clinical Research Extension Award applications in November 2025 utilizing 22 panels of researchers, clinicians and consumer advocates. The panel members based their evaluations on the criteria specified in the PAs.

Each peer review panel included a Chair, an average of eight 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.

### **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 CDMRP 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 BCRP 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 BCRP staff used this document to report the peer review results to the Programmatic Panel. In accordance with DHA R&D-MRDC policy, Summary Statements are available to each applicant after completion of the review process.

### **THE SECOND TIER—Programmatic Review**

The FY25 Programmatic Panel conducted programmatic review in January 2026. The panel included a diverse group of basic and clinical scientists and consumer advocates, each of whom contributed special expertise or interest in breast cancer. 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 Breakthrough Award Levels 1 and 2 PA were as follows: ratings and evaluations of the peer reviewers; adherence to the intent of the funding opportunity; program portfolio composition; relative impact; and relative innovation (Breakthrough Award Level 1 only).

The programmatic review criteria published in the Breakthrough Award Level 3 PA were as follows: ratings and evaluations of the peer reviewers; adherence to the intent of the funding opportunity; program portfolio composition; and relative impact.

The programmatic review criteria published in the Clinical Research Extension Award PA were as follows: ratings and evaluations of the peer reviewers; adherence to the intent of the funding opportunity; program portfolio composition; and relative impact.

After programmatic review, the BCRP routed the applications recommended for funding to a designated official for review and approval.