2026 NETRF Request for Applications

Accelerator Award Application Guidelines

LOI Due: March 16, 2026

Application Due: June 22, 2026

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NETRF Summary

The Neuroendocrine Tumor Research Foundation (NETRF) is the largest global funder of neuroendocrine cancer research. Our mission is to accelerate scientific discovery that improves the lives of people affected by these cancers. Our Research Roadmap guides our grantmaking across three broad areas of emphasis: early detection, new therapies, and precision medicine, alongside other high-impact opportunities across the field.

NETRF invites investigators and teams worldwide to study neuroendocrine cancers in new ways. We primarily support transformative basic and translational research that addresses critical questions, advances understanding of tumor biology, removes roadblocks to therapeutic development, and applies innovative technologies and strategies. We also fund select clinical research when it is especially compelling and positioned to accelerate progress for patients.

Since its founding, NETRF has awarded more than $42 million in research grants worldwide to advance research on neuroendocrine tumors (NETs) and neuroendocrine carcinomas (NECs) arising in the gastrointestinal tract, pancreas, lung, adrenal system, and other sites. Despite important progress, key questions remain about the unique characteristics and behavior of these complex tumors. Continued investment in innovative research is essential to enable earlier diagnosis, develop more effective treatments, and deliver more personalized care for patients.

NETRF Accelerator Award Program

The Accelerator Awards represent NETRF's largest and most prestigious grant category, designed to fund groundbreaking projects with the potential to transform neuroendocrine cancer research and treatment. We seek proposals that push the boundaries of innovation and foster synergistic collaboration across diverse scientific disciplines.

These awards provide $800,000 over four years ($200,000/year) to support ambitious research efforts. Each proposal must include substantial aims that necessitate a four-year timeframe for completion. Given their scope and impact, Accelerator Awards are often multi-disciplinary and comparable to an NIH R01 grant.

We strongly encourage applications that bring together investigators from diverse scientific backgrounds to drive cutting-edge discoveries and accelerate progress in the field.

Application Timeline and Review

The NETRF request for applications uses a two-step process. First, applicants submit a competitive Letter of Intent (LOI). Only one LOI may be submitted per applicant, per program. Applicants selected to advance will be invited to submit a full application.

- An LOI must be submitted, and all eligibility criteria must be met to be considered for the full application stage. LOIs that do not meet these requirements will be administratively rejected.
- If invited, applicants must submit a full application that meets all program guidelines. Applications that do not meet these requirements will be administratively rejected.

- LOIs and full applications will be peer reviewed by an independent panel of scientific experts.

APPLICATION TIMELINE	
LETTER OF INTENT DUE	March 16, 2026 by 5PM ET
INVITATION TO SUBMIT FULL PROPOSAL	Early May 2026
FULL PROPOSALS DUE	June 22, 2026 by 5PM ET
AWARD NOTIFICATION	Oct/Nov 2026
PROJECTED START DATE	January 2027

Applicant Eligibility

- Applicants must have an MD, PhD, MD/PhD or equivalent degree and be appointed as faculty at the Assistant Professor level or above (or equivalent position). Research track faculty are eligible to apply.
- Applicants must have the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research.
- Eligible organizations include public or private institutions, such as universities, colleges, hospitals, and laboratories, both in and outside of the United States. Applications from the biotech, pharmaceutical industry, or for-profit life sciences companies are not eligible.

Grant Budget and Restrictions

The requested budget should be proportional to the scope of the proposed project and should be at or below $800,000 USD over four years. A maximum of $200,000 in total costs may be requested per year. Awarded funds are directed to the institution.

- For Accelerator Awards, up to 10% in indirect costs may be requested. Indirect costs are included in the $800,000 budget.
- NETRF adheres to the NIH salary cap for principal investigator(s) and personnel. However, NIH salary scale requirements do not apply to graduate students or postdoctoral fellows.
- Funds may be used for personnel salaries, supplies, small equipment, and/or research-related services only.
- Funds must not be used entirely for salaries and may not be applied to costs covered by other sources.
- Funds should be allocated to attend the Annual NETRF Research Symposium held in Boston, MA, USA.

Tumor Types In Scope

NETRF funds research on neuroendocrine neoplasms (NENs) across sites and stages, including well-differentiated neuroendocrine tumors (G1–G3) and poorly differentiated extrapulmonary neuroendocrine carcinoma (epNEC), encompassing unknown primary, metastatic disease, and hereditary contexts (e.g., MEN1, VHL, NF1, SDHx) when NEN biology is central. MiNEN are eligible when the neuroendocrine component is biologically or clinically driving, but neuroendocrine features within other primary cancer types are out of scope for funding.

Eligible NEN types and clinical contexts supported by NETRF include:

- GEP-NET (small intestine, pancreas, appendix, colon, duodenum, rectum, stomach, hepatobiliary)
- Lung NET (typical/atypical carcinoid), DIPNECH
- Thymic NET
- Pheochromocytoma/Paraganglioma
- Pituitary NET (PitNET)
- NENs within hereditary syndromes (e.g., MEN1, VHL, NF1, SDHx)
- MiNEN
- Medullary thyroid carcinoma (MTC)
- Extrapulmonary NEC (e.g., GI, pancreatic, esophageal, genitourinary, Merkel cell carcinoma)

The Foundation may consider supporting work on other NEN types, subject to available funding, provided they are not specifically listed as out of scope.

Tumor Types Out of Scope

Out-of-scope tumors include small cell lung cancer (SCLC), pulmonary large-cell neuroendocrine carcinoma (LCNEC), treatment-emergent neuroendocrine prostate cancer (NEPC) and other prostate NEC variants, neuroblastoma, adrenocortical carcinoma, and non-neuroendocrine carcinomas, including lung adenocarcinoma/squamous, mesothelioma, poorly differentiated non-NE NSCLC, thymic carcinoma, acinar cell carcinoma, and appendiceal carcinomas.

Research Areas of Interest

NETRF's research strategy is guided by a clear, focused Research Roadmap built around three integrated pillars:

- **Early Detection**
- **New Therapeutic Development**
- **Precision Medicine**

These pillars are designed to work together as a coordinated system to change the trajectory of neuroendocrine cancer, from earlier diagnosis to better treatments to care tailored for each individual patient.

Pillar focus areas

- **Early Detection** supports work that identifies neuroendocrine cancer sooner, when the disease is more localized and treatment options are more effective. Areas of interest include, but are not limited to, biomarker and assay development, imaging, radiomics and functional approaches, and risk prediction or clinical decision-support models.
- **New Therapeutic Development** supports the discovery and advancement of innovative treatment approaches, including targeted therapies, immunotherapies, and novel modalities.
- **Precision Medicine** supports approaches that match the right therapy to the right patient at the right time, based on tumor biology, biomarkers, and individual disease characteristics.

What we will fund through this RFA

NETRF welcomes strong science across the full spectrum of neuroendocrine cancer research, provided the proposed work advances at least one pillar of the Research Roadmap.

This RFA also includes a dedicated funding allocation to accelerate translational immunotherapy within the New Therapeutic Development pillar. Within this allocation, NETRF places special priority on immunotherapy approaches, including but not limited to:

- Vaccines
- Cell therapies
- Bispecific antibodies
- Oncolytic viruses
- Immunomodulating strategies
- Rational combination strategies

Immunomodulating strategies may include approaches that enhance anti-tumor immune activation, relieve immune suppression, or favorably reprogram the tumor microenvironment. Particular emphasis will be placed on approaches with a clear line of sight to the clinic.

Additional illustrative research topics

The Roadmap pillars above define NETRF's strategic framework. The topics below are offered as illustrative examples of promising opportunities and are not a separate set of required categories. Proposals may address these or other topics, as long as they align with at least one Roadmap pillar. These examples are not exclusive nor are they in order of preference.

- **Uncovering the molecular and genetic basis of NENs**: processes underlying initiation, progression, and stage-specific monitoring; mechanistic drivers of resistance and toxicity.
- **New or optimized experimental models**: cell lines, mouse models, spheroids/organoids, patient-derived xenografts, and approaches that improve model utility and proliferation characteristics.
- **Application of existing or new technologies to target NENs**: targeted delivery systems, designer or nano-based drugs, novel tumor-specific targets, oncolytic viruses or cancer vaccines, nanoparticles that promote efficient delivery, and AI-enabled strategies for therapeutic development.
- **Cancer metabolism**: understanding and manipulating how neuroendocrine cancer cells process energy to survive.
- **Cell invasion and metastasis**: drivers and therapeutic targets of metastasis, small non-coding RNAs, adhesion molecules and epithelial-to-mesenchymal transition, metastasis-initiating or stem-like cells, organotropism, and triggers that stimulate invasive behavior in indolent tumors.
- **Tumor microenvironment**: tumor–environment interactions, immune effector functions and the metabolic landscape of the microenvironment, angiogenic processes, and effects on progression, metastasis, and treatment response.
- **Immunotherapy**: studies of immune phenotypes in NENs (e.g., "cold" vs "hot" tumors), cell-based therapies for solid tumors, and engineered or immunomodulating approaches that activate,

redirect, or reprogram anti-tumor immunity.

- **Diagnostics and biomarkers**: predictive and prognostic markers; biomarkers of metastasis and treatment response; imaging biomarkers; approaches to earlier diagnosis; and liquid biopsy approaches (e.g., circulating tumor cells, cell-free DNA, extracellular vesicles/exosomes).
- **Big data, registries, and digital health**: use of large-scale datasets (omics, imaging, pathology, registries, EHR-derived data, digital health streams) to study NEN biology, treatment patterns, and outcomes, including AI/ML approaches for prediction, stratification, and clinical decision support.
- **Clinical research**: exceptional clinical and correlative studies, proof-of-concept Phase I trials, innovative combination therapies, adaptive designs, and sequencing studies.
- **Nuclear medicine, theranostics, and imaging**: innovative studies of novel imaging agents or therapies, new delivery and targeting systems, radiomics/radiogenomics, and computational strategies (including AI-based image analysis) to improve detection, response assessment, and treatment planning.
- **Epidemiology, risk prediction, and health disparities**: incidence and prevalence patterns, genetic/environmental/lifestyle risk factors, natural history, drivers of outcome disparities, and tools to identify individuals at high risk for NEN development or progression.
- **Survivorship and patient-reported outcomes**: symptom burden, treatment-related toxicities, endocrine and metabolic sequelae, psychosocial impact, and quality of life; development and validation of PRO measures and interventions to improve long-term survivorship.
- **Host and hereditary factors**: germline predisposition, hereditary syndromes, host immune and endocrine milieu, and microbiome–tumor interactions that influence development, progression, and treatment response, with attention to rare and understudied subgroups.

Commitment to understudied NEN populations

Across all Roadmap-aligned areas, NETRF is dedicated to advancing research in understudied NEN populations. NETRF specifically encourages proposals focused on pediatric and adolescent/young adult patients, extrapulmonary neuroendocrine carcinomas, rare or unusual primary NEN sites, and other groups historically underrepresented in NEN research.

Resource and Data Sharing

Grant recipients who create unique research resources, including but not limited to model organisms, cell lines, plasmids, protocols, software, and data using NETRF funds, are required to share such resources within the scientific community. NETRF expects that, where available, resources will be deposited and archived in standard repositories (e.g., Addgene for plasmids). Resources should be shared openly with the research community no later than the date of publication or within twelve months after the end of the grant funding, whichever comes first.

NETRF is committed to sharing research information to ensure research transparency and enable unrestricted access to research results. Recipients must submit all publications, excluding non-research articles such as review articles, that were in part or fully funded by NETRF as a preprint to bioRxiv, medRxiv, or a similar preprint sharing service prior to or at the time of initial journal submission.

Applicants must provide a resource sharing plan in the full application. 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.

Grant Reporting and Other Requirements

- Collaborative efforts are encouraged; however, a single principal investigator and institution must be selected to receive an award.
- Progress and financial reports are required every six months throughout the duration of the grant. The progress reports track milestones, research progress, and the use of the funds. Future funding is contingent upon review and approval of progress and will be paid in six-month installments in US dollars. A final report is required at the conclusion of the project detailing study findings and project expenditures.
- Post-award outcomes of the funded research must be reported at one, three, and five years after the completion of funding.
- It is mandatory for Awardees to attend and present at the annual NETRF Research Symposium whether in person, or virtual, for the duration of their grant and upon completion. NETRF grant funds may be used to pay for NETRF conferences travel, if held in person.

Letter of Intent (LOI) Instructions

The purpose of the LOI is to ensure that the proposed research is within the scope of the Accelerator Award and merits a full application. LOIs should outline research with the potential to transform our understanding of NENs and/or lead to improved treatments for patients. LOIs may focus on basic, translational, or clinical research. All LOIs are peer-reviewed by NETRF's Scientific Advisory Board and other leaders in the field, and a limited number of applicants whose LOIs are deemed most meritorious will be invited to submit a full proposal.

LOI Section Descriptions

Letters of intent must be submitted through the Proposal Central platform. Once you create or log into your account, click on the "Grant Opportunities" tab and search for the Neuroendocrine Tumor Research Foundation. Click on the "Apply Now" button to begin.

The LOI content will be entered directly into Proposal Central. You will be asked for the following information:

1. Title Page
2. Enable Other Users to Access This Proposal – Optional. Enter an email address for an individual if you would like to grant them access to your LOI.
3. Applicant/PI Information
4. Organization/Institution Information
5. Co-Investigators and Collaborators
6. Abstract & Keywords
    a. Scientific/Clinical Impact Statement (1,500 characters max)
    b. Scientific Abstract (3,000 characters max)
        - Format the Abstract to include the following sections:
            a) Background – the background and significance to NEN research;
            b) Specific Aims – what the research proposed in this application is intended to accomplish;
            c) Methods – the proposed experimental approach to be used in the research project;
            d) Significance – the significance of your proposed project with respect to NEN research.
        - Include citations as needed.
    c. Lay Summary (2,000 characters max)

The LOI Submission Deadline is Monday, March 16, 2026, at 5PM ET.

Full Application Instructions

Full applications are by invitation only. Full applications are due by **Monday, June 22, 2026, by 5PM ET**. All of the information submitted for the LOI will be copied to the full application and available for editing. To access the full application, log in to Proposal Central, click on your proposals tab to find the full application, and click edit to begin.

The full application content will be entered directly into Proposal Central. You will be asked for the following information:

1. **Title Page**
2. **Download Templates and Instructions** – download instructions and templates for required uploads. Use the Research Proposal Template to create your proposal.
3. **Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal** – optional. Enter an email address for an individual if you would like to grant them access to your proposal.
4. **Applicant/PI Information**
5. **PI Data Sheet**
6. **Organization/Institution**
7. **Key Personnel**
8. **Milestones and LOI Recommendations**
9. **Abstract & Keywords**
    a. Scientific/Clinical Impact Statement (1,500 characters max)
    b. Scientific Abstract (3,000 characters max)
    c. Lay Summary (2,000 characters max)
10. **Budget Period Detail**
11. **Budget Summary**
12. **Organization Assurances** – human subjects and vertebrate animal approvals
13. **Upload Attachments** – these items will be uploaded directly to Proposal Central
    a. **Research Proposal**. *Download and use the Research Proposal Template in "Download Templates and Instructions" for this.* The proposal sections include:
        i. **Title**
        ii. **Proposal Narrative (limit eight pages)**
            1. Introductory Statement – include objectives as they relate to the NETRF mission
            2. Background and Preliminary Data
            3. Rationale and Hypothesis
            4. Specific Aims
            5. Research Design and Methods
            6. Potential Problems and Contingencies
        iii. **Significance (limit one page)**
            1. Significance: Describe the key question or therapeutic roadblock being addressed by your proposal and why it is important to our understanding of NENs and/or its treatment.

2. Statement of Innovation: describe how the proposed study employs a new idea and/or innovative approach.
3. Potential for translational application and patient benefit.

iv. **Facilities (limit two pages)**
v. **Plan for Sharing Research Data and Resources**
vi. **Plan for Access to Patient Tumor Samples, if applicable**
vii. **References Cited** – use Vancouver or NIH style (numbered citations within text) format

b. **PI Biosketch(es) –** limited to five pages, including references
c. **Collaboration Letter(s) and Biosketches** – if applicable
d. **Letter of Institutional Commitment** – the letter(s) must be written by the department head, dean, or other senior member of the institution on behalf of the applicant, on institution letterhead. The letter(s) should confirm that the institution has the infrastructure required to support the project. The letter(s) must critically address the scientific merit and novelty of the proposed research, the requisite scientific expertise demonstrated by the applicant in previous work, and the dedication of the applicant to NET research.
e. **Other Support** – list other sources of support and amounts, including funds that may be contributed by the Sponsoring Institution.

14. **Signature – IMPORTANT:** the PI and an institutional signing official must sign before the application can be submitted.

Formatting Instructions

Applicants must adhere to the following instructions for the research proposal:

- Must use 12-point Times New Roman for the text, and no smaller than 9-point type for figures, legends, and tables.
- Single-spacing is acceptable, and space between paragraphs is recommended.
- The page margins must be no less than 0.75 inches on each side.
- The Research Proposal must be numbered consecutively.

Use of AI writing tools (including LLMs):

Applicants may use AI tools to assist with writing or editing their application. Applicants are solely responsible for ensuring the accuracy, completeness, and appropriate attribution of all submitted content, including any AI-assisted text. NETRF does not require applicants to disclose the use of AI writing tools. Reviewers are prohibited from uploading, pasting, or otherwise entering any portion of submitted proposals into AI/LLM tools, consistent with NETRF's Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality policy.

Contact

If you have any questions regarding this grant mechanism, contact Anna Greene, PhD, Chief Scientific Officer at grants@netrf.org.