

KEY DATES

LETTERS OF INTENT DUE  
November 6, 2020  
5:00 PM EST

FULL PROPOSAL INVITATIONS  
November 16, 2020

FULL PROPOSAL DEADLINE  
January 22, 2021  
5:00 PM EST

NOTIFICATION OF AWARDS  
May, 2021

AWARD START DATE  
July 1, 2021

# Kornfeld Scholars Program Award

2020

Request for Applications

## KORNFELD SCHOLARS PROGRAM AWARD

### Program Description

One of the major barriers to the growth of the field of palliative care is the lack of a pipeline for the development of scientific investigators. Given the low levels of support for research focusing on the care of people with serious and complex illness, new investigators are at a significant disadvantage in competing for larger, externally funded projects and career development awards because of an absence of pilot data to support their grants and the absence of a publication track record in research. Historically, externally funded research by senior investigators has cross-subsidized mentoring and pilot studies for their mentees, however, downwardly negotiated budgets, the expectation of contributed time on the part of funders, reduced indirect costs, and the reluctance of institutions to support contributed time, have all made such cross-subsidization increasingly difficult.

The National Palliative Care Research Center (NPCRC) is providing Kornfeld Scholars Program Awards to allow junior faculty to have the protected time required to develop and conduct the pilot research necessary to be competitive for larger, extramurally funded awards. This Program is currently requesting electronic applications for its 2021 funding cycle.

The NPCRC was established in July 2005 with a grant from the Emily Davie and Joseph S. Kornfeld Foundation. The Center was developed in response to a shortage of palliative care funding structures; a shortage of palliative care investigators; and a need for an organizational home for palliative care research in the United States. The primary goal of the NPCRC is to improve care for patients with serious illness and their caregivers by promoting palliative care research and rapidly translating these research findings into clinical practice.

This request for applications (RFA) is limited to applications that support palliative care research for seriously ill patients and their families in three specific areas:

1. *Exploring the relationship of pain and other distressing symptoms to quality and quantity of life, independence, function, and disability and developing interventions directed at their treatment in patients with advanced and chronic illnesses;*
2. *Studying methods of improving communication between persons living with serious illness, their families and their health care providers;*
3. *Evaluating models and systems of care for patients living with serious illness and their families.*

\*Of note, research focused on dementia; children, adolescents, and young adults; and on addressing disparities in access and receipt of palliative care are high priority areas for NPCRC. Research focused on advance care planning or advance directives will not be considered.

The Kornfeld Scholars Program Award provides two years of support for salary and/or research activities to junior faculty in the amount of \$90,000 per year (direct costs), plus 10% allowable indirect costs. (Total award not to exceed \$198,000.) Awards are not renewable.

## Award Information

To be eligible for a Kornfeld Scholars Program Award under the NPCRC Program, applicants must meet the following requirements:

## Eligibility

- *Applicants must hold a doctorate degree (M.D., Ph.D., or equivalent);*
- *Applicants must have a full-time faculty position or equivalent at a college, university, medical or nursing school, or other fiscally responsible organization within the United States by the time of the award start date;*
- *Applicants must be citizens or permanent residents of the United States;*
- *Applicants must be NO MORE THAN 5 years out of their post-doctoral or post-graduate fellowship training. Exceptions to this policy will be made on an individual basis and potential applicants who would like to request consideration should contact the NPCRC;*
- *Applicants must be able to commit a minimum of 60% of full-time professional effort conducting patient-oriented research and relevant career development activities;*
- *Applicants must NOT be current or past recipients of a career development award (e.g., NIH K-Award, VA career Award, foundation-funded career award). If an active recipient of a NPCRC career development award is selected to receive—and accepts—a career development award from another source during his/her grant period, then the individual must relinquish salary and research support from the NPCRC. The NPCRC will continue to support the investigator's travel to the Annual Kathleen Foley Palliative Care Retreat and Research Symposium in order to allow him/her to attend and present at this meeting;*
- *Applicants should have a mentor or co-mentors who together have extensive palliative care research experience. If the applicant is unable to identify a palliative care researcher for his/her mentor, then he/she should contact the NPCRC prior to submitting an application.*

Funding priority will be given to qualified and promising junior investigators early in their faculty careers who wish to establish themselves in areas that reflect the NPCRC mission goals. Applicants uncertain about their eligibility are strongly advised to contact the NPCRC before preparing an application.

**Mentoring**

Recipients of the Kornfeld Scholars Program Award will work with a mentor/co-mentor who has extensive palliative care research experience. The goal of the advisor is to ensure that funded junior investigators receive appropriate mentoring, that projects move forward in an efficient and timely manner, that projects continue to address the core mission of the Center, and to connect junior faculty with other investigators in the field of palliative care.

**Grantee Requirements**

Each recipient of a NPCRC grant, as a condition of accepting the award, will agree to the following:

- *To attend the Annual Kathleen Foley Palliative Care Retreat and Research Symposium meeting with their primary mentor in a location to be determined each year;*
- *To present results of the funded research at the required annual meeting;*
- *To prepare annual progress reports for each year of funding and a final report at the conclusion of the award period;*
- *To acknowledge NPCRC funding in presentations and publications.*

**How to Apply**

Online application forms and complete instructions for the Kornfeld Scholars Program Award are available on the Center's web site at <http://www.npcrc.org>. Applications must be submitted electronically via NPCRC's online system by the close of business (5:00 PM EST) on the specified deadline date. If the deadline falls on a weekend or holiday, applications will be accepted the following business day.

***The NPCRC has a two-step application process:***

- STEP 1:** Eligible candidates are required to complete online an application data sheet and then upload a letter of intent (LOI) along with their biosketch using the NIH 5-page format, no later than November 6, 2020, 5:00 PM EST. The LOI should not exceed 800 words and should briefly describe the applicant's previous experience, research plan, training plan, resources, and career potential.
- STEP 2:** *Full proposals are by invitation only.* If an applicant is selected for further consideration by NPCRC, then he/she will be asked to submit a full proposal online no later than January 22, 2021, 5:00 PM EST. Only applicants who are requested to submit full proposals will have access to the complete NPCRC online application system.

Full proposals must include all of the items and sections outlined below. Items are either entered directly through the NPCRC website or uploaded in a PDF file and attached to the online application. The Application Data Sheet, Applicant's Biosketch, and Letter of Intent are all submitted during Step 1 of the application process, while the remaining documents are submitted in Step 2. The project abstract is entered directly online while all remaining documents should be uploaded to the site as one PDF file.

## Proposal Preparation

1. **Biosketch** | *Upload applicant's and mentors' biosketches in the new NIH 5-page format.*
2. **Project Abstract** | *Submit online a concise statement of no more than 300 words describing the proposed project.*
3. **Introduction to Application** | *(For Resubmissions only). In one page or less, please describe major changes to the resubmitted application and how you have addressed the prior reviewers' concerns.*
4. **Specific Aims (maximum 1 page)** | *State concisely the goals of the proposed research and summarize the expected outcome(s), including the impact that the results of the proposed research will exert on the research field(s) involved. List succinctly the specific objectives of the research proposed and your career development.*
5. **Investigator Qualifications and Career Development (maximum 2 pages)**
  - *Include the investigators commitment to a career in palliative care;*
  - *Provide evidence of the applicant's potential to become an independent investigator;*
  - *Describe how the award will contribute to the applicant's career objectives;*
  - *Provide a summary of career development activities that will facilitate the candidate's development as a palliative care researcher;*
  - *Include a statement on the applicant's commitment to a minimum of 60% effort towards the research program.*
6. **Research Plan (maximum 6 pages)** | *The research plan and section on investigator's qualifications and career development plan should follow the NIH font and format specifications (i.e., font size of 11 points or larger; single-spaced; no more than 15 characters per inch; no more than 6 lines per inch, and at least one-half inch margins for all pages), and should include a page number and the applicant's name on each page. The following sections must be included:*
  - a. *Background and Significance;*
  - b. *Innovation;*
  - c. *Preliminary Studies (if applicable);*
  - d. *Research Design and Methods;*
  - e. *Human Subject Research (if applicable and not included in page limit);*
  - f. *References (not included in page limit).*

Proposal Preparation  
*continued*

7. **Budget** | Applicants should follow the online directions on how to submit the budget for their proposed project. Project expenses should be in accordance with the NPCRC budget guidelines and justified, if necessary.
8. **Letters of Support** | 3 letters that assess the applicant's scientific ability and potential:
  - 1 letter should come from the applicant's proposed mentor/co-mentors confirming their role, outlines and addresses scientific ability and potential. Please include a grid that lists past mentees, their position when mentored and their current position and their mentor's role in their career development.
  - 1 letter should come from the Chair of the applicant's department indicating the sponsoring institution's commitment of 60% protected research time for the applicant, if funded. Additionally, the letter must provide assurance that the applicant will have adequate space and facilities to conduct his/her research.
9. **Appendix** | Appendix items are not included in the page limit, but should be kept to a minimum.

No supplemental materials will be accepted after the deadline unless requested by staff for administrative purposes or when needed for the reviewers. If an applicant has difficulty converting documents into one PDF file and/or uploading it online, then please contact the NPCRC well in advance of the submission deadline.

**Protection of  
Human Subjects**

If the research involves human subjects, please provide a section immediately following the research plan that addresses:

1. **Risks to Human**
  - Describe and justify the proposed involvement of human subjects in the work outlined in the Research Strategy section.
  - Describe the characteristics of the subject population, including their anticipated number, age range, and health status, if relevant.
  - Describe and justify the sampling plan, including retention strategies and the criteria for inclusion or exclusion of any subpopulation.
  - If relevant, explain the rationale for the involvement of special vulnerable populations, such as fetuses, neonates, pregnant women, children, prisoners, institutionalized individuals, or others who may be considered vulnerable populations. Note that 'prisoners' includes all subjects involuntarily incarcerated (for example, in detention centers) as well as subjects who become incarcerated after the study begins.
  - If relevant to the proposed research, describe procedures for assignment to a study group. As related to human subjects protection, provide



*details about all planned interventions such as dose, frequency, and administration.*

- *List any collaborating sites where human subjects research will be performed, and describe the role of those sites and collaborating investigators in performing the proposed research. Explain how data from the site(s) will be obtained, managed, and protected.*

## **2. Sources of Materials**

- *Describe the research material obtained from living individuals in the form of specimens, records, or data.*
- *Describe any data that will be collected from human subjects for the project(s) described in the application.*
- *Indicate who will have access to individually identifiable private information about human subjects.*
- *Provide information about how the specimens, records, and/or data will be collected, managed, and protected, as well as whether any individually identifiable private information will be collected specifically for the proposed research project.*

## **3. Potential Risks**

- *Describe all the potential risks to subjects posed by participation in the research (physical, psychological, financial, legal, or other), and assess their likelihood and seriousness to the human subjects.*
- *Where appropriate, describe alternative treatments and procedures, including the risks and potential benefits of the alternative treatments and procedures, to participants in the proposed research. When alternative treatments or procedures are possible, the rationale for the proposed approach should be clear*

## **4. Recruitment and Informed Consent**

- *Describe plans for the recruitment of subjects (where appropriate) and the process for obtaining informed consent. If the proposed studies will include children, describe the process for meeting requirements for parental permission and child assent.*
- *Include a description of the circumstances under which consent will be sought and obtained, who will seek it, the nature of the information to be provided to prospective subjects, and the method of documenting consent. When appropriate, describe how potential adult subjects' capacity to consent will be determined and plans for obtaining consent from a legally authorized representative for adult subjects not able to consent.*

Protection of Human Subjects

*continued*

Protection of Human Subjects  
*continued*

- *If a waiver of some or all of the elements of informed consent will be sought, provide justification for the waiver. Informed consent document(s) need not be submitted unless subsequently requested by NPCRC.*

**5. Protections Against Risk**

- *Describe planned procedures for protecting against or minimizing all potential risks identified, including risks to privacy of individuals or confidentiality of data, and assess their likely effectiveness.*
- *Where appropriate, discuss plans for ensuring necessary medical or professional intervention in the event of adverse effects to the subjects.*
- *Where appropriate, describe plans for handling incidental findings that may be uncovered as a result of the research, such as incidental findings from research imaging, results of screening tests, or misattributed paternity.*

**6. Potential Benefits of the Proposed Research to Human Subjects and Others**

- *Discuss the potential benefits of the research to research participants and others.*
- *Discuss why the risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits to research participants and others.*
- *Please note that financial compensation of subjects should not be presented as a benefit of participation in research.*

**7. Importance of the Knowledge to be Gained**

- *Discuss the importance of the knowledge to be gained as a result of the proposed research.*
- *Discuss why the risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the importance of the knowledge that reasonably may be expected to result.*

**Peer Review  
of Applications**

The NPCRC Scientific Review Committee (SRC) will review the proposals. The SRC is composed of internationally prominent scientists with expertise in palliative care, patient-oriented research, health services research, communication, epidemiology, research design and biostatistics.

**Award Criteria**

Applications will be scored and reviewed based upon the Candidate’s qualifications and career development plan; the research plan; mentor(s) and mentorship plan; and the institutional environment using the following review criteria:

**1. Candidate:**

- *Quality of the candidate’s academic and clinical record;*
- *Potential to develop as an independent researcher in palliative care; and*
- *Commitment to a career in palliative care research.*

**2. Career Development Plan:**

- *Likelihood that the career development plan will contribute substantially to the scientific development of the candidate;*
- *Appropriateness of the content and duration of the proposed didactic and research phases of the award; and*
- *Consistency of the career development plan with the candidate's career goals and prior research experience.*

**3. Research Plan:**

- *Scientific and technical merit of the research question, design and methodology;*
- *Relevance of the proposed research to the candidate's career objectives; and*
- *Appropriateness of the research plan to the stage of research development and as a vehicle for developing the research skills as described in the career development plan.*

**4. Mentor/Co-Mentors:**

- *Appropriateness of mentor(s) research qualifications in the area of this application;*
- *Quality and extent of mentor's proposed role in providing guidance and advice to the candidate;*
- *Previous experience in fostering the development of more junior researchers;*
- *History of research productivity and support; and*
- *Adequacy of support for the proposed research project.*

**5. Environment and Institutional Commitment:**

- *Adequacy of research facilities and the availability of appropriate educational opportunities;*
- *Quality and relevance of the environment for scientific and professional development of the candidate;*
- *Applicant institution's commitment to the scientific development of the candidate and assurances that the institution intends for the candidate to be an integral part of its research program; and*
- *Applicant institution's commitment to an appropriate balance of research and clinical responsibilities including the commitment of 60 percent of the candidate's effort to research and research related activities.*

**6. Budget:**

- *Justification of the requested budget in relation to career development goals and research aims.*

Award Criteria

*continued*

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**Resubmission**

Applications that are not funded may be revised and resubmitted for the next NPCRC funding cycle. However, *only two resubmissions* are allowed. Resubmitted applications will be reviewed in the same detail and will compete on an equal basis with all other new applications. Please see online instructions on how to reapply.

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**Contact**

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