Canadian Cancer Society

CCS Breakthrough Team Grants – 2025
Evaluation Criteria & Rating Scales

Overall Scoring:

Criteria (weight)
Merit (50%) • Proposal (25%) • Team and Environment (25%)
Relevance & Potential Impact (50%)

There are two rating scales reviewers will use to score applications. A Merit rating and a Relevance & Potential Impact (RPI) rating should be provided separately, resulting in two scores. Ratings should be given on a scale of 0-5. Only applications with final scores for **each** rating (Merit and RPI) of **>3.0** will be eligible for funding. Once these scores are submitted into EGrAMS (CCS's grants management system), an overall score will be automatically calculated as an average of the two scores.

Preliminary overall scores (pre-panel meeting) will be used to rank order applications to allow for sorting applications to be discussed at the panel or triaged (not discussed). Applications with an average Merit and/or RPI score of <3.0 will be triaged. For more details, please refer to the reviewer handbook. **The final overall score for a given application (post-panel meeting)** will be used in the rank ordering of applications within each panel.

Note: Initial/preliminary scores given during the review process may not be the final scores, as reviewers may need more information to evaluate certain aspects of an application. **Reviewers are free to assess based on their own personal/intersectional expertise/experience and are expected to take into consideration the panel discussion in order to** evaluate the application holistically **to determine their final scores.**

Score Descriptions

Descriptor	Score range	Definition	Outcome
Outstanding	4.5 - 5.0	All scoring criteria have been met and some exceeded. Each item has been appropriately and thoroughly addressed. Very minor improvements are recommended.	Priority for funding
Excellent	4.0 - 4.5	The majority (>80%) of scoring criteria have been met and some exceeded. The majority of items have been appropriately addressed. Some minor changes are recommended.	
Good	3.0 - 4.0	Many (60-80%) scoring criteria have been met. Most items have been appropriately addressed. There are several minor or one moderate areas for improvement, but no major weaknesses.	Fundable
Fair	2.0 - 3.0	Some (40-60%) scoring criteria have been met. Some items have been addressed but there are notable gaps. There is at least one major weakness **or** many moderate weaknesses.	Not fundable
Poor	1.0 - 2.0	Not enough (20-40%) scoring criteria have been met. Some items have been addressed but there are notable gaps. There is at least one major weakness **and** many moderate weaknesses.	
Incomplete	Below 1.0	Few (<20%) scoring criteria have been met. Multiple major weaknesses. The proposal needs significant development before being competitive in this program.	

Merit – Criteria

The Breakthrough Team Grants **Merit** rating scale is to be used by reviewers to assess the merit of an applicant's proposed research project. The lists below show the criteria to be evaluated, and reviewers are asked to use these criteria to help them holistically assess each application. For example, weaknesses in some areas may be compensated for by strengths in other areas.

Reviewers are asked to use this scale to assess each application, assign a preliminary **Merit** score (0-5) comprised of 50% "Proposal" criteria and 50% "Team and Environment" criteria below, and **record this score in EGrAMS prior to the panel meeting**.

Merit – Proposal Criteria (50% of Merit score)	Scientific	PSC
Research question, rationale, and evidence for the proposed work are thorough, balanced, and compelling *(where relevant, evidence-based interventions are underpinned by randomized efficacy trials and effectiveness studies, are cited in systematic reviews and/or meta-analyses, or are included in evidence summaries, such as clinical practice guidelines).*	x	
Methods/approach are justified, clearly described, and feasible.	x	
Key milestones and timelines are realistic.	x	
Aims are clearly articulated, and strategies are in place to mitigate any potential issues related to interdependency of aims that may affect project feasibility.	x	x
Theories and/or frameworks guiding the research are clearly described and justified.	x	x
Sex, gender, and other dimensions of diversity and determinants of health (e.g., race, ethnicity, education, economic status) and their intersectionalities are appropriately <u>addressed</u> and <u>incorporated</u> in the design, methods, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination/implementation of findings/outcomes.	x	x
Feasibility of the project is well-articulated, including identification of potential challenges and how they will be addressed, including mitigating strategies and alternative approaches.	x	x
Level of risk is appropriate for the level of breakthrough possible if research is successful.	x	x
The term and amount of support requested is appropriate. Relevant costs are accounted for.	x	x
The public summary is written in non-technical language and clearly describes the aim of the project and alignment with the CCS goals/priorities, methodology, relevance and potential impact of the proposed project, methods and approach and the process for engaging patient, caregivers, end-users and other stakeholders in design, implementation and results dissemination.	x	x

Merit – Team and Environment Criteria (50% of Merit score)	Scientific	PSC
The applicant(s) demonstrate(s) a good level of productivity in their research program: broad research outputs (i.e., not only publications) in accordance with previous funding and human resource capacity, while considering context (e.g., career stage, discipline/pillar, institution/location, leave history).	x	
Research team (including patient/survivor/caregiver and implementer/decision-maker team members) possesses all the relevant/appropriate expertise and experience needed for the success of the proposed work, and have the capacity (i.e. time) to carry out the research.	x	x
The environment where the research will take place is appropriate.	x	x
Meaningful and relevant involvement (i.e. co-creation) has been demonstrated with all members of the research team, in particular affected populations (patient/survivors/caregivers) and community partners. There is evidence that patients/survivors/caregivers have been and will be engaged throughout the life of the research project – or an acknowledgement of deficits and how they will be addressed.	x	x
Terms of Reference are clear and appropriate. Roles and responsibilities are clear, including time commitment and remuneration (where eligible).	x	x
Accessibility, equity, diversity and inclusion principles are evident in team composition.	x	x
Implementers/decision-makers have demonstrated a commitment to uptake/implementation and/or sustainability (as relevant).	x	x
For projects involving First Nations, Inuit, Métis or Urban Indigenous communities – there is evidence of alignment with Indigenous principles of self-determination and self-governance such as the First Nations Principles of OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession), the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance, or other relevant principles of Indigenous self-determination in research.	x	x

Note: The goal of varying types of reviewers is to bring multiple perspectives and balance to the review process, so this is why there are a few criteria you will see on one scale and not the other.

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Relevance & Potential Impact – Criteria

The Breakthrough Team Grants **Relevance & Potential Impact** (RPI) rating scale is to be used by reviewers to assess the relevance and potential impact of an application. The table below shows the criteria to be evaluated, and reviewers are asked to use these criteria to help them holistically assess each application. For example, weaknesses in some areas may be compensated for by strengths in other areas.

Reviewers are asked to use this scale to assess each application, assign a preliminary **Relevance & Potential Impact** score (0-5), and **record this score in EGrAMS prior to the panel meeting**.

Relevance & Potential Impact (RPI) Criteria	Scientific	PSC
Application is relevant to one of the following scientific objectives in the funding call: • To develop a better understanding of the biology of and mechanisms associated with cancer cell dormancy. • To better support people living with advanced or metastatic disease throughout the course of their disease.	x	x
The proposed project is visionary in scope, aspirational in impact, and appropriate for the Breakthrough Team Grants program goals and expectations.	x	x
Scope and limitations to applicability (i.e. relevance) of results have been described.	x	x
Application describes intended or logical next steps if the research is successful. In other words, the team has thought about how the research would progress beyond this project.	x	x
The knowledge translation and mobilization plan is well described, integrated into the proposed project, and involves relevant parties at the outset to ensure utility of the proposed solution. Public and/or patient engagement strategies are evident. Equitable access to results is considered.	x	x
Training and mentorship plan reflects a vision and core values that support the next generation of researchers in this field of research, equitable access for each team member, outlines skills to be developed (formal/informal, soft/technical) and type of mentorship to be provided adapted to the career stage, and an evaluation plan. Trainees' compensations are in line with CCS policy (found in application guide).	x	x
Impact on patients/affected communities has been appropriately considered - project will not exacerbate or place undue hardship and/or mitigating strategies have been described.		x
High likelihood that the project, as described, will generate outcomes that will be meaningful to people affected by cancer in the mid- to long-term future (i.e. that will fundamentally transform our understanding of cancer metastasis and/or enhance support for those living with advanced or metastatic disease).		x

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