PAVILION

Partnership to **A**ssess **V**iral and **I**mmune **L**andscape **I**nterceptions with **On**cology for People Living with HIV

Pilot Funding for Research on Infection-Related Cancers among People Living with HIV

The Partnership to Assess Viral and Immune Landscape Intersections with Oncology for People Living with HIV (PAVILION) is working to increase the capacity of institutions and investigators to research understudied, virus-associated tumors that disproportionately impact men and women living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. In support of this goal, PAVILION is pleased to announce the availability of pilot funds for junior investigators to conduct innovative pilot studies which align with the PAVILION theme.

Research Focus and Scope

- Seeking innovative and rigorous infection-related cancer research pilot projects across the cancer continuum among PLWH. Areas of research to include but not limited to: 1) prevention, education/awareness, screening and early detection; 2) etiology, molecular epidemiology; 3) basic, mechanistic or translational; 4) diagnosis, treatment and quality of life outcomes; and 5) survivorship and end of life outcomes including patient reported outcomes (PROs). Previously funded projects include:
    - Recurrent respiratory papillomatosis – a forgotten disease
    - The molecular classification and HPV testing of histopathological specimens from HIV-infected and uninfected women with vulvar cancer are a tertiary hospital in a LMIC
    - Empowering Women, Enhancing Care: Knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs that impact health seeking-seeking behaviors among women living with HIV with vulvar precancer and cancer in Zimbabwe
    - Determinants of late presentation of conjunctival squamous cell carcinoma (cSCC) at a tertiary eye hospital in Harare, Zimbabwe
    - Differences in expression levels of PIK3CA and TP53 in patients with conjunctival squamous cell carcinoma stratified by HIV infection
    - The impact of HPV positivity on the presenting clinic-pathological features in the penile cancer population in Zimbabwe
    - Clinical performance of DNA methylation markers for molecular triage in cervical cancer screening among women living with HIV
- Scope to include exploratory, developmental or interventional work that can be completed in 1 year (12 months)
- Transdisciplinary or team science work is allowable if within the above scope
- Proposals should relate to the PAVILION theme and have the potential to lead to peer-reviewed external funding and/or scientific presentations (conference), or publications.

Award Information

- Applicants may request up to $10,000 (total costs). The PI's institution will be responsible for managing the funds for the project.
- Pilot funding support for one year (12 months) only. The 1 year period will begin once full IRB approval is received.
- Projects are not renewable, and investigators can only be PI on one project. A onetime, 1-year no cost extension (NCE) may be requested and approvable with strong justification (no new funds can be requested).
- Allowable expenses include:
    - Personnel: PI effort/stipend, effort for research assistants/lab technicians directly involved
    - Research supplies (e.g., project specific supplies, participant stipends, etc.)
    - Purchased services (e.g., translation, surveys, graphics, laboratory assays, etc.)

  - IRB review
  - Travel specific to implementing the study (e.g., mileage and/or gas related to this pilot project data collection & dissemination, etc.)
- Non-allowable expenses include:
  - Indirect costs/overhead
  - Administrative staff salary not directly related to the project
  - Graduate student tuition
  - Equipment (over $500)
  - Conference Travel (or mileage not related to data collection, etc.)
- If, after the award period, findings from the study will be published in a peer-reviewed journal, investigators may request additional funds for publication fees from PAVILION.

Eligibility Requirements

- Junior investigator employed by or affiliated with a PAVILION site (Moffitt Cancer Center, Vanderbilt University, Stellenbosch University, and University of Zimbabwe)
- **Junior investigator**: An investigator with doctoral level degree (MD/physician degree or PhD) and subsequent advanced training (postdoctoral fellowship, residency, etc.), who may be at a junior faculty level (such as instructor, senior lecturer, assistant professor, assistant member or equivalent) but is not a fully independent researcher. It should be less than 10 years since MD or PhD was obtained, and the investigator cannot have received major peer-reviewed funding as PI or MPI/Co-PI.
- Projects proposed by a U.S.-based junior investigator must meet the following additional criteria: a) include a junior investigator counterpart from either Stellenbosch University or University of Zimbabwe, and b) be implemented at or involve materials (e.g., data or specimens) from either Stellenbosch University or University of Zimbabwe or an affiliated site.
- Junior investigators must be mentored throughout the development and implementation of the project. The mentor should be an associate or senior level faculty member with expertise relevant to the proposed project. The PAVILION program will connect investigators with potential mentors if this is needed.
- During project implementation, junior investigator and mentor must meet (in-person and/or virtual) regularly (at least once a month) to address scientific, regulatory or administrative project related progress and/or challenges, timelines, and resource needs. This mentoring process will also be guided by the junior investigator mentoring plan (see application document) to ensure that both scientific and career development needs are addressed.

Proposal Submission

- **Email a Letter of Intent (LOI) by 30 March 2026**, to Julie.Rathwell@moffitt.org. LOIs are non-binding; their purpose is to ensure scientists with the necessary expertise will review the applications. The LOI should include:
  - Name of PI
  - Institution
  - Title of Pilot
  - Name of Mentor(s) and/or expertise you would like a mentor to have so you can be matched
  - Brief (2-3 sentence) summary of the goal(s)
- An electronic copy of the proposal application should be sent as a single PDF file attachment by 5pm EST, **30 April 2026.**
- Scientific Proposal must not exceed 5 pages and include the following components:
  - Technical Abstract (NOT to exceed ½ page)
  - Narrative: 2-3 sentences describing the project. If the pilot is awarded this will be posted on the PAVILION website along with the PI and mentor names and the title of the study.
  - Specific Aims and hypothesis, where relevant (NOT to exceed ½ page)

- Research Strategy (4 pages) to include background and significance/rationale or/relevance, preliminary data (not required), methods and procedures including data analysis plan, and timeline.
  - Investigators are encouraged to work with a biostatistician at their institutions to ensure methods and data analysis plan are appropriate.
    - Stellenbosch University: Innocent Maposa, imaposa@sun.ac.za
    - University of Zimbabwe: Vasco Chikwasha, vchikwasha@gmail.com
    - Moffitt Cancer Center: Michael Schell, Michael.schell@moffitt.org
- References or literature cited (not included in page limits)

Other proposal requirements:

- Proposals must include a one-page career and professional development plan for the PI.
- Proposals must include an NIH biosketch for the PI and the mentor.
- Proposals must be novel.
- Proposals must include a letter of support/recommendation from PI's mentor or department chair (one-page limit)
- Proposals must include a detailed budget and justification. Clearly state total costs of this project and describe how funds requested will be allocated. Funds will be distributed to collaborating sites as specified in the budget justification.

Review Criteria and Process

The Developmental Core Co-Leaders will screen the proposals for 1) significance, 2) investigators [junior investigator and mentor(s)], 3) innovation, 4) investigational approach/feasibility, 5) potential for the project to progress to scientific presentations, publications or extramural funding, and 6) relevance and alignment with the PAVILION research theme. Applications that pass screening will be sent for scientific review.

- Accepted applications are evaluated for the following:
  - Scientific merit
  - Potential for the proposal to lead to peer reviewed external funding and publications, or other competitive intra/extramural funding
  - Relevance to the PAVILION theme
  - Appropriateness of the career development plan
  - Appropriateness of budget for the proposed work
  - Feasibility to complete work in 12 months

- Pilot funding applications will be reviewed by a panel of scientists which may include the PAVILION Developmental Core Co-Leaders, the PAVLION Multiple Principal Investigators, Project Leaders, External Advisory Panel Members, and/or *ad hoc* expert reviewers (if needed) based on scientific expertise. The NIH scoring scale will be used, and the scores will guide the selection of awardees.
- After the review process, written reviews will be provided to the Principal Investigators. Feedback will include whether or not the project represents a good match to the research pilot funding award mechanism. Promising proposals not selected for an award will be provided with specific suggestions to enhance the competitiveness of the research project. Resubmissions of revised proposals are encouraged (after thoroughly addressing reviewer concerns).
- Review and notification will be completed no later than 30 July 2026.

Awardees' Obligation

The PAVILION pilot funding award carries several important obligations and responsibilities. Specifically, award recipients agree to the following:

- Awardees must have appropriate institutional regulatory approvals before funds will be allocated. IRB approvals are not required at the time of submission.
- After award, the PI (awardee) must work jointly with mentor to develop, approve and submit an individual development plan (IDP) document. An example template of IDP will be provided by the PAVILION

coordinator as part of the award notification process. The IDP serves as a critical operational tool to guide career development and mentoring goals and activities during the project award period (and beyond). The completed IDP must be submitted to the Developmental Core as part of project activation and initiation.

- Awardees must submit progress reports during and after completion of the grant award. The first report is due 6 months after IRB approval, the second no later than 90 days after the completion of the project, and a follow-up report is due one year after completion of the project. These reports are submitted via email and should describe the following, as applicable: 1) pilot project progress and results, 2) all publications, presentations, and funding resulting from the project, and 3) future directions.
- Awardees must provide all documentation (e.g., lab notebooks, etc.) that supports research outcomes at the time the final report is submitted.
- These funds are for one year. It is expected the grantee will completely utilize the full amount of funding during the one-year term of the award. A one-time, one year no cost extension (NCE) may be requested with strong justification.
- Awardees must acknowledge the PAVILION award in any publications or presentations related to their award by including the statement below:

  Funding Acknowledgment Statement: Research reported in this publication was supported by the National Cancer Institutes of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number U54CA277834. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

Please email completed pilot funding application, including proposal, budget, letter of support, and biosketch, to the PAVILION Developmental Core Coordinator, Julie.Rathwell@moffitt.org.

Questions: Please direct all questions, including regarding the program, eligibility, or identifying a mentor, to Julie Rathwell (Julie.Rathwell@moffitt.org).