

The Wisconsin Head & Neck Cancer SPORE Grant is soliciting applications:

Developmental Research Program (DRP)

The ultimate objective of the Wisconsin Head and Neck SPORE Grant (PI: Paul Harari, MD) is to advance translational research to improve the outcome for Head and Neck Cancer (HNC) patients. The University of Wisconsin holds one of the few [H&N SPORE Grants](#) in the United States. HNC is the sixth most common cancer worldwide with over 1.1M new cases diagnosed annually. The US alone has over 66,000 newly diagnosed HNC patients each year, resulting in over 15,000 yearly deaths (Cancer TODAY | IARC – <https://gco.iarc.who.int>). These patients frequently bear a disproportionate burden from their cancers based on the critical anatomic location of their disease. HN tumors and treatment often compromise speech, swallow and breathing function, in addition to creating significant changes in physical appearance and social interactions. Efforts to improve cure rates must be carefully balanced with efforts to reduce treatment morbidity to enable improved overall outcome for HNC patients.

Please visit our [website](#) to find more information regarding HNC SPORE research projects, [previously awarded HN SPORE pilots](#), and unique resources available from the HN SPORE Biostats and Pathology/Biospecimen Cores.

The **Developmental Research Program** of the Wisconsin Head and Neck SPORE seeks to **fund pilot project applications** that will:

- Attract experienced investigators to the field of Head and Neck Cancer (HNC)
- Promote basic, clinical, and translational HNC research
- Result in preliminary data to support successful competitive national grants (R01 or equivalent)

Proposed **translational research** is expected to address one or more of the following:

1. Diagnosis, prevention and/or treatment of HNC
2. Improved understanding of underlying biological mechanisms of HNC
3. Identification of novel biomarkers and/or imaging modalities in HNC

PROJECT PERIOD: Aug. 1, 2026 – Jul. 31, 2027 (with potential for competitive renewal)

DEADLINES: **LOI:** Feb 1, 2026
Application: Mar 1, 2026

FUNDING LEVELS: \$25,000-\$50,000 for 1 year

ELIGIBILITY: Funds from this program will support faculty (including tenure-track, CHS and research Assistant, Associate and full Professor titles) who have not received a prior HN SPORE pilot within 2 years (except in cases of competitive renewal).¹

Final recommendations for funding will be made by the DRP leadership and HN SPORE executive committees.

¹ Prior recipients of H&N SPORE pilot funding are welcome to reapply, however there must be a 2 year gap between completion of prior funding and new application. For example, a 2022 pilot award recipient who earned a 2023 renewal is funded through 2024 and would therefore become eligible for new HN SPORE application in 2026.

LETTER OF INTENT ([submit online](#))

Please provide a 1-2 sentence description of your proposal theme to help SPORE group identify appropriate reviewers and mitigate conflicts of interest. Your full title and list of collaborators can be revised in the final application.

APPLICATION FORMAT ([submit application](#) online)

- **Scientific Abstract**
- **Lay Abstract**
- **NIH Biosketch** for PI(s) and key personnel
- **Protocol Assurances (Biosafety, Vertebrate Animals, & Human Subjects):**
 - Indicate the status of protocols for vertebrate animals, human subjects and research involving recombinant DNA technologies.
 - **IRB protocol is required** for human subjects research not already covered by an HN SPORE related IRB protocol.
 - If you are proposing research using vertebrate animals or human subjects, please contact Shari Piaskowski well before application deadline, since additional forms are needed.
- **Budget** (please use [Budget template](#))
- **Budget Justification** (Please use example [template](#))
 - Specific description of how the \$25K or \$50K award will be used.
 - If full project costs exceed \$50,000, please indicate how you will cover remaining costs (matching funds or otherwise).
- **Research Strategy** (limit 4 pages)
 - Specific aims
 - Background and significance
 - **Renewal applications** should include a copy of their interim progress report.
 - Innovation and approach
 - Strongly advised to reach out to HN SPORE Biostats Core for biostatistical support
 - Anticipated results and implications
- **Bibliography**
- **Description of Project Structure** and how it will fulfill the HN SPORE mission*, including anticipated timeline for completing the project within project period (1 year, with some exceptions)
- **Verifications**
 - **Resources and Environment:** Checkbox verification noting your project has ready access to all necessary equipment and resources to complete the project aims as described.
 - **Department Support:** Checkbox verification noting your home department is aware of and supports your application with the appropriate resources and protected time to fulfill the aims of the project
- **Letter(s) of Support** (optional)

**The Wisconsin Head and Neck SPORE seeks to identify and translate new scientific discoveries into significant and durable treatment advances for patients with HNC. These advances strive to increase HNC cure rates and diminish normal tissue toxicities.*

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

The HN SPORE Developmental Research Program targets applications that:

- Attract experienced investigators to the field of Head and Neck Cancer (HNC)
- Promote basic, clinical, and translational HNC research
- Result in preliminary data to support successful competitive national grants (R01 or equivalent)

Proposals must be focused on H&N Cancer to be eligible for funding support. Proposals will be scored based on the following criteria:

- 1) Overall Impact
- 2) Significance
- 3) Innovation
- 4) Approach
- 5) Environment
- 6) Investigator
- 7) Potential for Translation

AWARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

Upon receipt of an award, awardees will receive an overview of program obligations and agree to the terms of the program. Specifically, applicants will be required to:

- Attend relevant HNC SPORE meetings, such as
 - monthly HNC SPORE translational research meeting
 - normally schedule the **2nd Thursday of each month, 4pm (WebEx)**
- Submit an **interim (Feb 1) and annual (May 1) progress report.**
- Present a research project update at the Wisconsin H&N SPORE annual retreat.

Thank you for your interest and involvement with the Wisconsin H&N SPORE Grant. For more information regarding the goals of the Wisconsin H&N SPORE grant projects, programs, and cores, please see <https://hn-spore.wisc.edu/>.

Inquiries should be directed to:

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HN SPORE Administrator
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