STEP Program™ Submissions: Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you for your interest in submitting a proposal for potential funding through the STEP (Solutions to Empower Patients) Program™. Please use the following information to help you prepare the submission form and other required supporting materials. All completed proposals must be submitted here by 11:59 pm on [insert date], 2019.

About the STEP Program and Proposal Submission Process

1. What is the STEP Program?
The STEP Program is a signature Novartis initiative that was created in 2017 to fund projects from United States (US)-based patient advocacy organizations that help address gaps in care or unmet patient needs. This year’s STEP Program will recognize and fund proposals from these organizations that demonstrate innovation in awareness and education, self-advocacy and policy improvement to provide cancer patients and their caregivers increased understanding of the importance of biomarker testing.

2. Who is eligible to submit a proposal?
US-based 501(c)(3) national patient advocacy organizations complying with applicable laws, regulations, codes and guidelines that support awareness of biomarker testing in the cancer community are eligible to apply, though local chapters of national organizations are ineligible.

Organizations must provide a Letter of Determination from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) documenting your 501(c)(3) status as part of the submission.

3. What are the proposal eligibility requirements?
The Biomarker Testing STEP Program calls for proposals for programs, services or tools that promote awareness and education, self-advocacy and policy improvement for biomarker testing in oncology.

   • Awareness and Education: There is an opportunity to increase awareness and understanding of biomarker testing among patients and care teams. Novartis will recognize proposals for educating either patients or their care teams about the importance of biomarker testing to aid in treatment planning.

   • Self-advocacy: Many patients may not realize that they can request biomarker testing. Novartis will recognize proposals for empowering patients and caregivers to advocate for themselves or their loved ones with health care providers about biomarker testing.

   • Policy Improvement: Biomarker testing is not currently the standard of care for most cancer patients. Novartis will recognize proposals toward empowering patients to lobby for and influence policy change to make this comprehensive testing routine and more easily accessible.

4. Can my organization submit a proposal to expand or improve on an existing program?
Yes, you may submit a proposal that seeks to expand or improve on an existing program.

5. How much money can be requested to fund the proposal?
The maximum funding amount per organization is $75,000.
6. What cannot be covered as part of the funding?
Funding provided through the STEP Program cannot directly support the below items, should they be a part of your project:
• Personal travel and housing (i.e., hotel stays)
• Entertainment aspects of events or promotional exhibit and display fees
• Activities held in lavish venues/resort locations or requests that include spa or resort activities
• Capital campaigns, building funds and fundraising
• Standard operating expenses (i.e., fringe benefits, overhead and indirect costs); personnel time and costs directly related to the program CAN be covered
• Branded treatment-specific education

7. Can my organization submit multiple proposals?
We are only accepting one proposal per organization.

8. What if my organization’s proposal doesn’t fit into one of the three specific categories?
The STEP Program calls for proposals for innovative programs, services or tools that promote awareness and education, self-advocacy and policy improvement for biomarker testing in oncology. However, you are welcome to submit other proposals that may not fit within these categories to Novartis for consideration through the Novartis Grant Central Station portal.

9. How long must the proposed project last?
Your proposed project does not need to last for any specific amount of time. However, you must begin work on the project in the 2020 calendar year.

10. When are the proposals due?
All proposals are due by 11:59 pm on [insert date].

11. How does my organization submit a proposal for consideration?
Please complete the submission form and upload all supporting materials here.

Submission Materials Package

12. What must be included in the submission materials package?
• Completed submission form
• Project timeline
• Detailed budget
• IRS determination letter (verification of 501(c)(3) status)
• W-9 form
• Organizational letter of intent
• Partner letter(s) of support, as appropriate

For additional information regarding the submission form, budget and letters of intent, please see questions 13-24.
Submission Form

13. Does my organization need to use the provided submission form to offer a proposal?
Yes, you must use the STEP Program submission form when submitting a proposal for funding consideration.

14. What is considered “doing business with” Novartis?
An organization is considered to be conducting or have conducted business with Novartis if Novartis has provided it with grants or sponsorships to support educational programs over the past 12 months or will do so over the next 12 months. Please include any relevant details surrounding these circumstances in your answer.

15. Is there a preferred font or font size for supportive materials shared as part of my organization’s STEP Program proposal?
There is no preferred font required, though Times New Roman and Arial are easy to read. Please ensure you use an 11-point font size or higher in all materials.

16. Is there a limit to the number of characters or words used in each response field?
Some response fields do have word limits. Please see the submission form for word limits on specific responses.

Detailed Budget

17. Is there a preferred budget template of which my organization should be mindful?
No, you may use your own budget template, but please make sure it is detailed.

Letters of Intent and Support

18. What is a partner organization?
A partner organization is any organization with which you would be working to execute your program, service or tool together.

19. What is the letter of intent? What should my organization plan to include in it?
The letter of intent for your STEP Program submission is a formal request for funding and should include an intent statement that your organization will carry out the program should it be selected to receive funding. The letter should be no more than one page in length and include a very brief overview of your proposed project and the unmet need(s) it will address.

20. Does my organization need to submit a letter of support from our partner organization?
Yes, if your proposal requires one or more partner organizations, please submit a letter of support from each partner.
21. Can my organization submit a proposal and be listed as a partner organization in another organization’s proposal?
Yes, your organization may also provide letters of support to any other organizations that are applying for funding. As such, the submission of your partner organization’s own letter of intent and/or letter of support will not have a negative impact on the proposal review process.

Additional Submission Package Questions

22. Can my organization provide supplemental information about our proposal such as screen shots, videos or case studies?
Yes, you may provide supplemental information with your proposal.

23. Can my organization submit references for consideration?
Yes, please include any references you’d like to share along with all of your other required materials.

24. My organization’s application might be a large file, even when zipped. Can our proposal be sent via another delivery method? If I send via email, how will I know it was received?
It’s best if you can upload your application as a zipped file. You will receive a confirmation email once we receive your submission package.

Recipient Selection Notification Process

25. How will the funding decision be made?
Submissions will first be reviewed by Novartis to ensure compliance with all relevant rules and regulations, as well as STEP Program requirements. All compliant submissions will then be reviewed and considered by the external review committee, who will collectively evaluate each proposal for innovation, feasibility, potential to fill unmet needs, impact and sustainability.

26. Who is on the external review committee?
A panel of experts outside of Novartis in fields including oncology, advocacy and biomarker testing, as well as a health care practitioner and patient, will review the submissions and collectively evaluate and identify the four most innovative proposals that have the greatest potential to make a positive impact on the cancer community.

27. How many recipients will there be this year?
There will be a maximum of four recipients.

28. How long should my organization expect to wait to learn about the funding decision?
All organizations will be notified of the review committee’s decision by [insert timing].

29. If my organization is identified as a funding recipient, when should we expect to receive the funds?
Funding will be provided at [insert timing] to execute proposals that begin in the 2020 calendar year.
30. Will my organization hear from Novartis if our proposal is not chosen for funding through the STEP Program?
Yes, we will inform all organizations as to our funding decision, though we are unable to provide specific feedback regarding our decision to applicants.

Additional Questions

31. If my organization is unable to participate in the STEP Program this year, can we submit a proposal next year?
Novartis is only able to confirm the STEP Program for this year.

32. Can my organization submit the same proposal for consideration of a Novartis grant at the same time we submit for the STEP Program?
No, you cannot submit the proposal for a Novartis grant or sponsorship at the same time as submitting for the STEP Program. Additionally, if your program is not selected for STEP Program funding, you cannot submit the same project for any future Novartis funding.

33. Is this STEP Program the same as the STEP International Development Program?
No, the STEP International Development Program is a different, unrelated international career program for recent university graduates seeking employment opportunities with Novartis.

34. Who do I contact if I have any additional questions?
Please feel free to email any additional questions to STEP.Program@Novartis.com.