

PICK4Kids–VEDA STAR AWARDS 2026

MOLECULAR INNOVATION AWARD

Creating and validating what is possible

Endorsed by the Pediatric Hematology Oncology (PHO) Chapter of IAP | Supported by Veda Star Foundation

PURPOSE

The Molecular Innovation Award supports novel or emerging molecular approaches that address an important unmet need in childhood cancer and related disorders. It recognises scientific or technological innovation with the potential to improve diagnosis, molecular classification, risk assessment, treatment selection, response monitoring or prediction of relapse. The emphasis is on a new and clinically relevant question, rather than routine use of an advanced test.

Core principle: INNOVATE → VALIDATE → TRANSLATE

WHAT THE AWARD WILL RECOGNISE

Criterion	What will be recognised	Indicative evidence / outcomes
1. Innovation & originality	A genuinely novel molecular concept, biomarker, assay, analytical approach or innovative clinical application.	Clear statement of what is new and how it advances current practice.
2. Important pediatric oncology unmet need	A well-defined clinical/scientific problem in childhood cancer or a related disorder.	Need supported by clinical rationale, existing evidence or a clearly defined knowledge gap.
3. Scientific merit & feasibility	Sound hypothesis, appropriate methodology and an achievable plan.	Preliminary data where available; suitable samples/data; robust laboratory, bioinformatics or statistical plan.
4. Translational & patient potential	A credible pathway to influence diagnosis, classification, risk, treatment selection, monitoring or outcomes.	Defined clinical use-case and measurable translational endpoint.
5. Future potential	Potential for larger validation, multicentre study, clinical implementation or broader pediatric relevance.	Next-step plan, scalability and relevance to Indian/resource-constrained settings where appropriate.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Every application must include at least one current PHO Chapter member in good standing with a substantive role in the project.
- The PHO member may be Principal Applicant, Co-Investigator, clinical lead or substantive pediatric oncology collaborator.
- Eligible collaborators may include molecular scientists, pathologists, geneticists, bioinformaticians, researchers, academic institutions, laboratories and technology developers.
- A non-PHO investigator may lead or initiate a proposal only after establishing meaningful collaboration with an eligible PHO member before submission.
- The project must be directly relevant to childhood cancer or related disorders and have a credible pathway towards clinical translation.
- Proof-of-concept, development, validation and early translational projects are eligible; completed clinical implementation is not mandatory.
- Projects involving patients, samples or patient data require appropriate institutional and Ethics Committee approvals before commencement.

WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED: Routine NGS or molecular testing; descriptive molecular profiling without an innovative question; routine diagnostic services; simple retrospective reporting of alterations; replication of established approaches without meaningful advancement; or predominantly basic work without a clear pediatric clinical/translational pathway.

APPLICATION FORM

A. Applicant and project information

Project title (maximum 25 words)	
Principal Applicant: name, designation, department, institution	
Email / mobile	
PHO membership status & membership number	If Principal Applicant is not a PHO member, provide the eligible PHO clinical collaborator below.
PHO clinical collaborator: name, institution, membership number	Mandatory where Principal Applicant is non-PHO.
Key collaborators and roles	List name, institution, expertise and specific contribution.
Proposed project duration	Normally 12–18 months.

B. Project summary

Scientific abstract (maximum 300 words)	Background/unmet need; objective/hypothesis; methods; expected outcomes; potential impact.
Lay summary (maximum 150 words)	Explain the project for families and non-specialists.
Principal innovation (maximum 100 words)	Complete: "The principal innovation of this proposal is..."

C. Detailed proposal

1. Unmet need (max 500 words)	Define the clinical/scientific problem and why it matters.
2. Innovation and originality (max 500 words)	What is new compared with current knowledge/practice?
3. Preliminary work / supporting evidence (max 500 words)	Include pilot data or rationale; preliminary data desirable but not mandatory.
4. Specific aims	Maximum three clearly measurable aims.
5. Research plan (max 1,500 words)	Design; population/samples/data; inclusion/exclusion; molecular methods; processing; bioinformatics/statistics; endpoints; quality assurance; challenges/alternatives; ethics.
6. Clinical translation / patient impact (max 500 words)	How could results change diagnosis, monitoring or treatment?
7. Scalability and relevance to India (max 300 words)	Potential beyond one institution and relevance to pediatric oncology practice.
8. Collaboration / capacity building (max 300 words)	Roles and expertise of PHO and other collaborators.
9. What will this ₹5-lakh Award enable? (max 250 words)	State the concrete milestone that cannot currently be achieved without this grant.

D. Timeline and milestones

Months 0–3	
Months 4–6	
Months 7–9	
Months 10–12	

Months 13–18, if applicable	
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BUDGET FORM

Maximum Award Grant requested: ₹5,00,000. The budget should be directly linked to the proposed objectives and must not duplicate funding already available for the same activity.

Budget head	Amount requested (₹)	Other funding / co-funding (₹)	Justification	Linked objective / activity
Molecular / genomic testing				
Laboratory reagents / consumables				
Sample processing / storage				
Bioinformatics / data analysis				
Software / database				
Research personnel / technical assistance				
Patient/sample-related research costs				
Training / capacity building				
Statistical support				
Publication / dissemination				
Other (specify)				
TOTAL	₹			

Budget justification

For each major item, state: what will be purchased or supported; why it is necessary; unit cost × quantity where applicable; and how it contributes to a specific project objective. Declare all existing or anticipated co-funding.

DOCUMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED

- Completed category-specific application form.
- Completed budget form and budget justification.
- Principal Applicant CV (maximum 3 pages).
- CV of principal collaborator / PHO clinical collaborator where applicable (maximum 2 pages).
- Institutional support / permission letter, as applicable.
- Ethics Committee approval, or declaration that approval will be obtained before commencement of patient/sample/data-related work, where applicable.
- Declaration of existing funding, competing interests and any relevant industry relationship.
- Supporting publications, figures or preliminary data, if relevant.
- To check the checklist for completeness of the documents

DECLARATION

Principal Applicant name	
PHO member name & membership number	

Institution	
Applicant signature / date	
PHO collaborator signature / date	

By signing, the applicants confirm that the information provided is accurate, the proposed collaboration is substantive, required approvals will be obtained, and the same or substantially identical project has not been submitted as an unchanged proposal to another STAR Award category.