



CANCER PREVENTION & RESEARCH
INSTITUTE OF TEXAS

Geographic Diversity Advisory Committee Annual Report

Sarah Williams-Blangero, Ph.D., Chair
Min Kang, Pharm.D., Co-Chair

CPRIT Geographic Diversity Advisory Committee

- CPRIT support has primarily been awarded for cancer research projects at institutions with or near NCI designated cancer centers.
- As CPRIT has recognized, this pattern has implications for rural and medically underserved populations and for scientific workforce development.



NCI-Designated Cancer Centers



NCI-Designated Cancer Centers in Texas



NCI Designated Cancer Centers

Houston:

Dan L. Duncan Comprehensive
Cancer Center, Baylor School of
Medicine

UT MD Anderson Cancer Center

Dallas:

Harald C. Simmons
Comprehensive Cancer Center,
UT Southwestern

San Antonio:

Mays Cancer Center at UTSA



CPRIT Geographic Diversity Advisory Committee

- First Texas Regional Excellence in Cancer (TREC) Awards made in 2021
- The GDAC was established in 2021.



Building Cancer Research Across Texas

TREC Awards were designed to catalyze cancer research recruitment, projects, and infrastructure at institutions located 100 miles or more away from the traditional cancer research institutions in San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas. The first two TREC awards were made to UTEP and TTUHSC.



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Expanding TREC Awards in 2023



TTHSC
El Paso



In 2023, TREC Awards were made to Texas A&M, UTRGV, and TTUHS at El Paso.



UTRGV



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TREC –ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

TREC-ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

El Paso:

University of Texas El Paso
Texas Tech University Health
Science Center at El Paso

Rio Grande Valley

University of Texas Rio Grande
Valley

Lubbock:

Texas Tech University Health
Science Center
Texas Tech University

College Station

Texas A&M University

Waco

Baylor University

Tyler

University of Texas at Tyler



CPRIT Geographic Diversity Advisory Committee

- Charged with advising on how to grow cancer research capacity in locations 100 miles or more distant from an NCI designated Cancer Center.



Geographic Diversity Advisory Committee

Member	University
Joseph Heppert, Ph.D.	Texas Tech University
Min Kang, Pharm.D.	Texas Tech University Health Science Center
Mark B. Cox, Ph.D.	The University of Texas El Paso
Raj Lakshmanaswamy, Ph.D.	Texas Tech University Health Science Center, El Paso
Ken Ramos, M.D., Ph.D.	Texas A&M University
Kevin Pinney, Ph.D.	Baylor University
Sarah Williams-Blangero, Ph.D.	The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Dr. Rob Kirken from UTEP retired and Dr. Dan Romo from Baylor rotated off the committee.



Texas Regional Excellence in Cancer Award

- TREC Awards have a transformational impact on cancer research at resource-limited TREC-eligible institutions.
- CPRIT invested ~\$30 million in establishing five TREC Centers.



TREC-RELATED PROGRAMS

- GDAC recommended several new funding mechanisms to support expansion of research and training at TREC-Eligible Institutions.
- Five of the recommended programs were implemented in FY23 and FY25, resulting in a total of \$8.6 million awarded to TREC-Eligible Institutions to support major instrumentation, pilot studies, postdoctoral training, Core facilities and targeted Innovative Individual Research Awards



TREC-RELATED PROGRAMS

- A total of \$38.6 million in CPRIT funding has been awarded to TREC-Eligible Institutions through targeted programs since 2021.
- On average across years, approximately 4.5% of the Academic Research Program funding is awarded through TREC-related programs.



FUNDING OF TREC-ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

- Funding Received by TREC-Eligible Institutions since 2021:
 - ~\$39M from TREC-Related Mechanisms
 - ~\$43M from Non-TREC-Related Mechanisms
 - ~\$26M from Prevention Program Awards
 - ~108M Total



FUNDING OF TREC-ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

2021-2025

On average about 10% of funding from 2021 to 2025 Academic Research Program and the Prevention Program went to TREC-Eligible Institutions.



TREC-RELATED PROGRAMS

- Need to balance research project funding, support of training programs, instrumentation and core facility support, and pilot study funding.
- All elements are critical to growing research at TREC-Eligible Institutions where we want to increase the numbers of scientists engaged in cancer research, develop a pipeline for future scientists who will focus their research on cancer in these geographic areas, foster new ideas in research, and provide the infrastructure necessary to conduct research.



TREC-ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Impacting cancer in Texas by:

- Addressing cancer health disparities.
- Conducting research with underserved populations that are underrepresented in biomedical research.
- Increasing the scientific workforce devoted to cancer research.
- Building capacity for cancer research in Texas



INCREASING SUPPORT FOR TREC-ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Rural Oncology Trials Accelerator Award (ROTAA)

Targeted to TREC-Eligible Institutions and organizations in rural areas, this award is an expansion of a mechanism that the GDAC recommended to help establish or enhance clinical trial capacity in rural and underserved communities by supporting infrastructure, staffing and operations.

Applications are due on December 2, 2025.

First awards will be made in May, 2026.



INCREASING SUPPORT FOR TREC-ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

At its February meeting, the GDAC will develop a recommendation that CPRIT develop a mechanism to support collaborations between TREC-Eligible Institutions and institutions that have or are near an NCI designated cancer center for research that will be focused on medically underserved populations. The leveraging of strengths available at TREC-Eligible Institutions will broaden the impact of cancer research.



INCREASING SUPPORT FOR TREC-ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Considerations that might allow more rapid expansion of cancer research at TRECS.

- Allowing multiple applications per TREC-eligible institution for targeted RFAs that have limited submission.
- Supporting the transition of outstanding investigators already working at TREC-Eligible Institutions in other areas disease areas to work on cancer.



NCI – Leading Funder of Cancer Research

- NCI has 1053 active grant awards in Texas
- 854 active NCI grants are at one of the institutions with an NCI-designated cancer center
- 35 active NCI grants are at one of the seven TREC-Eligible institutions.
- CPRIT funding is critically important to TREC-Eligible Institutions



CPRIT PROVIDES STABILITY IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

Information for the NIH Extramural Community During the Lapse of Federal Government Funding

Notice Number:

NOT-OD-26-004

Key Dates

Release Date:

October 01, 2025

NCI Among Top 5 NIH Institutes With the Most Terminated Grants

May 9, 2025
Cancer Therapy Advisor



TREC Funding Mechanisms

- CPRIT now has six grant mechanisms supporting the transformation of cancer research at TREC-eligible institutions.
- To make TREC-Eligible Institutions competitive for both CPRIT and NIH funding, investment in research, infrastructure, and training is required.



CPRIT Investment in TREC Eligible Institutions

CPRIT funding awarded to TREC-eligible institutions is transformational rather than incremental for under-resourced universities, facilitating:

Expanded research on cancer;

Growth of the Texas workforce focused on cancer research;

Inclusion of underserved populations in basic and clinical research; and

Positive impact on the health of the local population.



GDAC

The GDAC will continue to meet quarterly, with an in-person meeting at the *Innovations Conference* in 2026.

Questions?

