

RETURN ON INVESTMENT in Cancer Research

An Evaluation and
Assessment of the
New Jersey
Commission on
Cancer
Research

June 2026





*Advancing Discovery
Improving Outcomes
Delivering Value*

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Executive Summary

Cancer remains a major public health challenge in the United States, and New Jersey faces a particularly high burden, with cancer incidence rates exceeding national averages and a historic lag in per capita research funding. The New Jersey Commission on Cancer Research (NJCCR) program was established in 1983 to address these disparities by providing funding to both pre-doctoral and post-doctoral investigators across a diverse array of cancer research domains.

This study evaluates the effectiveness and impact of NJCCR grants awarded between 2015 and 2019. Specifically, it examines the ability of grant recipients to secure subsequent national research funding, the benefits reported by the grantees, and the broader outcomes for cancer research and workforce development within New Jersey. Two primary data sources were used. First, data was collected from the New Jersey System for Administering Grants Electronically (SAGE) to assess the impact and outcomes of grants awarded by NJCCR. Second, we conducted a systematic internet search to confirm whether the investigator or sponsor has received grants from the National Institute of Health (NIH) following their NJCCR funding.

Between 2015 and 2019, five (5) Qualified Research Institutions (QRIs) applied for NJCCR grants. A total of 209 applications were received, of which 94 and 115 were pre-doctoral and post-doctoral respectively. These applications were received, evaluated, and reviewed using the NIH grant review process.

A total of 99 applications were funded by the NJCCR in the amount of \$7.65M. During this period, 55 post-doctoral researchers received \$5.5M in NJCCR support and 44 pre-doctoral grantees were funded in the amount of \$2.15M.

Regarding the impact of the NJCCR fellowship award, there were 54 NJCCR funded fellows that received NIH funding between 2015-2019. Twenty (20) pre-doctoral researchers were awarded \$1.2M in NJCCR funding and raised \$40,357,520 from NIH sources, with a leverage ratio of \$34, in contrast to 34 post-doctoral fellows with \$3.6M of NJCCR funds receiving \$57,772,934 in NIH monies reflecting a leverage ratio of \$16, meaning each NJCCR dollar invested in post-doctoral researchers returned more than \$16 in NIH monies.

Introduction

Cancer is a significant public health concern in the United States and New Jersey. In New Jersey, it is the second most frequent cause of death after heart disease [1]. In 2025, an estimated 2,041,910 new cases of cancer and 618,120 deaths are projected to occur in the US, and for the same year, an estimated 59,840 new cases of cancer and 15,180 deaths from cancer are projected in New Jersey [2].

Since 1983, the New Jersey Commission on Cancer Research (NJCCR) has aimed to fund promising cancer research conducted by the state's most innovative scientists. Early on, the best strategy for success, given limited funding, was to invest in the most talented researchers. Utilizing the National Institutes of Health system for scientific merit review, the NJCCR supports emerging researchers as they enter the competitive field of cancer research. Additionally, NJCCR also provides support to experienced investigators who are exploring new research directions.

Funding for cancer research in New Jersey comes from state appropriations, donations via tax checkoffs, specialty license plate sales, and public contributions. The NJCCR funds research into the causes, prevention, treatment, and cure of cancer. Its programs include the New Jersey Breast, Prostate, Lung, Childhood, and Ovarian Cancer Research initiatives. Funding comes from state-level and private sources such as the Rowan University Foundation's Innovation Venture Fund as well as national organizations like the Cancer Research Institute.

The importance of funding programs in stimulating cancer research has been demonstrated internationally. Studies show that fellowship grant recipients can leverage significant additional funding; one prior study from New Jersey found that recipients leveraged \$10.10 for every dollar of seed grant funding they received [3].

A 2024-2025 update of the United for Medical Research report found that every \$1 of NIH funding generates \$2.56 in economic activity nationwide. Specifically, in the update, the NIH \$36.94 billion investment not only supported 407,782 jobs but also resulted in \$94.58 billion in economic activity by fueling research institutions, biotech startups, and a range of ancillary industries [4].



The current political situation has not improved research funding nationally. “The proposed final FY 2026 federal budget contains \$4.531 billion for the NCI. This represents a cut of almost \$2.7 billion, or approximately 37.2%, from the current fiscal year.” “This proposal slashes the NIH budget, and in some cases eliminates funding for groundbreaking research initiatives, public health programs, and essential support systems that have contributed to advancements in cancer prevention, early detection, and more effective treatment options. Returning to funding levels from two decades ago – and three decades ago when accounting for biomedical inflation – will set this nation and the states back dramatically in our ability to reduce death and suffering from a disease that is expected to kill more than 618,000 Americans this year alone.” [5]

Using data from the New Jersey Commission for Cancer Research grant recipients, this study evaluates the success of the grant program by addressing the following research questions:

- 1) What national research funding, particularly from the NIH do recipients of the NJCCR grant typically receive following their NJCCR award?
- 2) What proportion of pre-doctoral and post-doctoral investigators obtained NIH funding after they received the NJCCR grant?

Since 1983, the New Jersey Commission on Cancer Research (NJCCR) has aimed to fund promising cancer research conducted by the state’s most innovative scientists. Early on, the best strategy for success, given limited funding, was to invest in the most talented researchers.

Methods

In this study, data was extracted from two sources. First, data was collected from the New Jersey System for Administering Grants Electronically (SAGE) of the prior grant recipients to identify the grant Primary Investigator (PI), Sponsor, the research title, institution, proposal narrative, and funding period between 2015-2019. The target population consisted of all principal investigators who received NJCCR grants during the study period. This population was identified through NJCCR organizational records, ensuring complete coverage of all funded investigators during the specified timeframe. The sampling group included both pre-doctoral and post-doctoral researchers across various cancer research domains to capture the full spectrum of NJCCR's funding impact. All principal investigators who received direct funding from NJCCR during the study period were eligible for inclusion, regardless of their current institutional affiliation.

Secondly, a systematic internet search was conducted to confirm whether the investigators received grants from the National Institute of Health (NIH) after they received their NJCCR funding. Information from SAGE such as the PI, sponsor, research title, and proposal narrative was compared with the NIH Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools (RePORT) information [6]. A comprehensive database was compiled by integrating internet-derived information to create a complete picture of the post-NJCCR funding outcomes. Descriptive statistics were used to identify funding outcomes that impact the NJCCR grants.

In FY 2019, the NJCCR funded four (4) Bridge grants totaling \$850,000. Two (2) of these Bridge grants were awarded a combined \$1,798,024 in NIH funds. To maintain consistency in our evaluation, Bridge grants were excluded from the study.

The study did not consider other funding sources (post-NJCCR funding), e.g., pharmaceutical companies, the American Cancer Society, Susan G. Komen, or other public or private organizations that may have supported other grantees with their research.



The New Jersey Commission on Cancer Research (NJCCR) received a total of 210 grant applications between 2015-2019, of which 94 (44.7%) were pre-doctoral and 116 (55.2%) were post-doctoral fellows. There were five (5) QRI's that applied for funding, most of which were from Rutgers University (n= 158, 75.2%), with 32 pre-doctoral and 39 post-doctoral Rutgers fellows receiving NJCCR funding [Table 1].

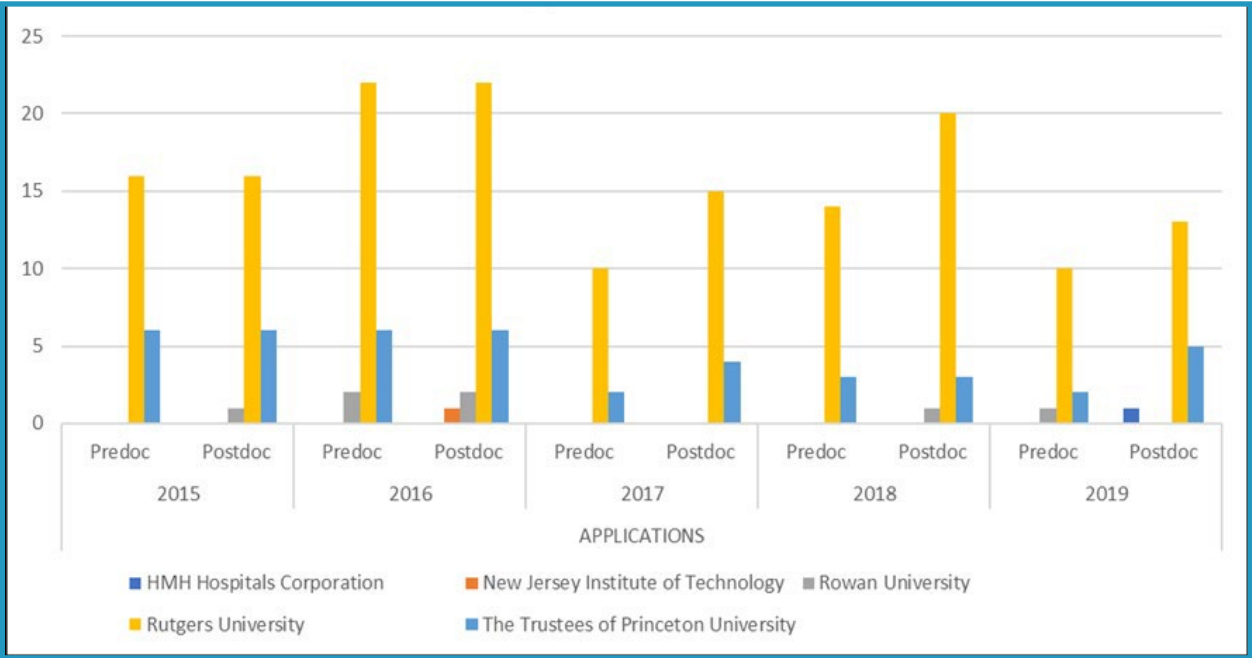
Table 1. NJCCR Applications by Organization and Number of Funded Grants

<u>2015-2019</u>	<u>Applications</u>		<u>Funded</u>	
Organization	Predoc	Postdoc	Predoc	Postdoc
HMH Hospitals Corporation		1		1
New Jersey Institute of Technology		1		
Rowan University	3	4	1	1
Rutgers University	72	86	32	39
The Trustees of Princeton University	19	24	11	14
	94	116	44	55

Results

For all funding years (FY), Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey continues to be the predominant applicant for both pre-doctoral and post-doctoral categories between 2015 – 2019. The average annual applications for the evaluated period for pre-doctoral and post-doctoral categories were 19 and 23 respectively; with FY2016 having the highest number of applicants (n=61), and FY2017 having the lowest number of applicants (n=31). Rutgers, the state university of New Jersey averaged 32.0 applications annually, with Princeton University averaging 9.0 [Chart 1].

Chart I: NJCCR Grant Applications 2015 to 2019



The NJCCR approved funding for 99 research grant applications for FY2015-FY2019. Of this total, 44 pre-doctoral and 55 post-doctoral were approved for funding and received \$2.15M and \$5.5M, respectively [Table 2].

Table 2: NJCCR Research Grants and Funding Amount between 2015-2019

Category	NJCCR Funds	# of Funded Research
All Research	\$7,650,000	99
Pre-doctoral	\$2,150,000	44
Post-doctoral	\$5,500,000	55

Of the 99 NJCCR grantees, 54 (54.5%) NJCCR-funded grants received a total of \$98,130,454 in NIH funding. The NJCCR-funded grants leveraged a ratio of one (1) dollar to \$20 of NIH funding for all grants; with pre-doctoral research leveraging \$33.6, while the post-doctoral grants leveraged \$16.0 [Table 3].

Table 3: NJCCR Research Funding Amount and NIH Funds Received between 2015-2019

Category	NJCCR Funds	NIH Funds	# of NIH Funded Research	Leverage Ratio
All Research	\$4,800,000	\$98,130,454	54	\$20
Pre-doctoral	\$1,200,000	\$40,357,520	20	\$34
Post-doctoral	\$3,600,000	\$57,772,934	34	\$16

Moreover, the return on investment (ROI) on the funded NJCCR grants (\$4.8M) that received NIH funding (\$98.13M) is 1,944% using the calculation and formula below.

$$\text{ROI} = [(\text{Profit} - \text{Cost of Investment}) / \text{Cost of Investment}] \times 100$$

$$\text{ROI} = [(\$98,130,454 - \$4,800,000) / \$4,800,000] \times 100$$

Results

The New Jersey state appropriations varied annually, ranging between \$1.35M and \$1.65M, with decreases in FY 2017 and FY 2019 state appropriations. To offset these decreases, the NJCCR used its 'revenue' accounts (funds from tax donations and cancer license plate receipts) to supplement some NJCCR-approved grants during this period. In the context of these funding fluctuations, the leveraged amount based on the State and NIH funds varied annually. Budget year 2018 had the highest leveraged amount, with \$1 of state funds corresponding to \$18 of NIH monies. Over the 5-year period, the leveraged amount was \$1 of state to \$13 of NIH monies [Table 4].

Table 4: NJCCR State and NIH Funds 2015-2019

Budget Year	State Funds	*NIH funds	Leverage Ratio
2015	\$1,650,000	\$17,651,137	\$11
2016	\$1,600,000	\$20,994,089	\$13
2017	\$1,350,000	\$13,102,773	\$10
2018	\$1,600,000	\$28,707,080	\$18
*2019	\$1,450,000	\$17,675,375	\$12
Total Funds	\$7,650,000	\$98,130,454	\$13

When compared to neighboring Mid-Atlantic states, New Jersey funded grants received less NIH funding per approved grant for the period between 2015-2019, averaging \$437,685 in NIH funds per funded NJCCR grant (n=2,959). Although a lesser number of New Jersey grants were funded by the NIH, the funding amounts per grant from NIH were marginally close to other states i.e. New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia [Table 5].

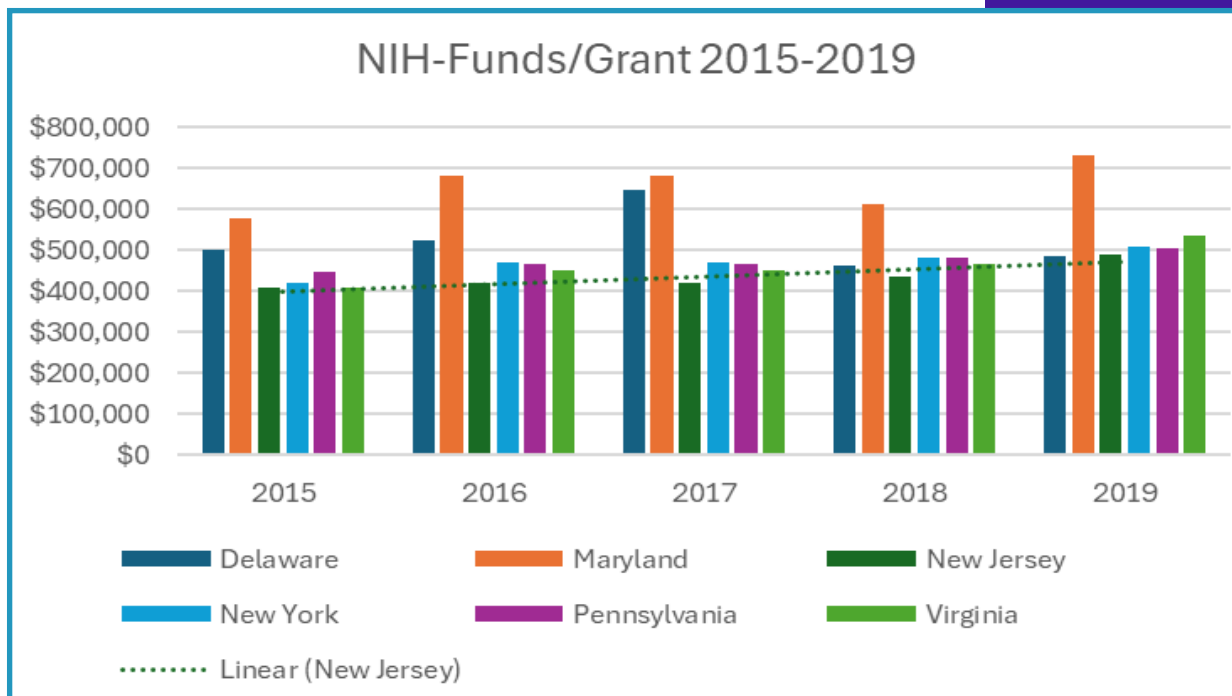
Table 5: Mid-Atlantic States NIH-Funds/Grant 2015-2019

2015-2019	#Grants	NIH-Funding/Grant
Delaware	459	\$519,078
Maryland	12102	\$658,439
New Jersey	2959	\$437,685
New York	26115	\$472,654
Pennsylvania	18122	\$474,581
Virginia	4285	\$466,186

Source: <https://report.nih.gov/award/index.cfm>

The NIH funding per grant identified Maryland and Delaware being funded at \$658,439 and \$519,078 respectively; with New Jersey funding having an improvement in its funding annually as seen by the linear trend [Chart 2].

Chart 2: NIH Funding Across the Mid-Atlantic States 2015 to 2019



Source: <https://report.nih.gov/award/index.cfm>

Results

According to the United for Medical Research (UMR) for the period 2024-2025, the NIH awards created over 3,600 intrastate jobs in NJ or roughly 9 jobs per 1M of NIH funding. The economic impact of the NIH awards has shown New Jersey garnering the highest economic activity growth (338.3%) when compared to the other Mid-Atlantic states and the US (256.1%) [Table 6].

Table 6: Mid-Atlantic States NIH-Funds/Grant 2015-2019 Economic Impact of NIH Research on Mid-Atlantic States FY2024

STATE	NIH AWARDS (\$M)	Jobs Created per \$1M NIH Awards	Intrastate Jobs	TOTAL EMPLOYMENT	ECONOMIC ACTIVITY (\$M)	ECONOMIC ACTIVITY GROWTH (%)
Delaware	84.0	5.6	473.3	649.9	200.8	239.0%
District of Columbia	219.3	1.7	378.9	492.3	425.9	194.2%
Maryland	2,432.1	8.8	21,346.9	22,567.1	5,304.0	218.1%
<i>New Jersey</i>	<i>405.1</i>	<i>9.0</i>	<i>3,639.9</i>	<i>5,411.4</i>	<i>1,370.6</i>	<i>338.3%</i>
New York	3,548.1	7.3	26,062.7	30,521.9	8,269.2	233.1%
Pennsylvania	2,204.3	8.9	19,517.1	21,740.0	5,311.3	241.0%
Virginia	594.9	8.7	5,172.3	6,827.6	1,651.6	277.6%
West Virginia	54.1	8.0	433.3	704.5	147.6	272.8%
United States	36,938	9.2	339,833	407,782	94,585	256.1%

Source: https://www.unitedformedicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/UMR_NIH-Role-in-Sustaining-US-Economy-FY2024-2025-Update.pdf

There were 305 research organizations in New Jersey between 2015-2019 that received NIH funds totaling 2,959 NIH awards with over \$1.29 billion in funding, with an average annual funding/grant of \$258,846,460 with funding year 2019 having the highest number of funded organizations and funding amount per grant [Table 7]. It should be noted that some of the organizations that were funded between 2015 and 2019 may have also applied for additional funding in subsequent years.

Table 7: New Jersey Organizations Receiving NIH funds between 2015-2019

NIH Funding Year	Org/Award	Funding
2015	54/552	\$225,123,222
2016	58/571	\$240,135,510
2017	62/572	\$241,011,762
2018	58/598	\$261,268,222
2019	73/666	\$326,693,586
Total	305/2959	\$1,294,232,302

Source: <https://report.nih.gov/award/index.cfm>

Evaluation

A core objective of the NJCCR grants is to develop the talents of new cancer researchers and to strengthen cancer research in New Jersey by increasing the growth of national research funding in the state and supporting investigators into emerging issues of significant concern to New Jersey.

Applicants from an undergraduate-based or post-graduate research program at QRIs working under the guidance of a sponsor applied for NJCCR funded fellowships ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually for pre-doctoral and post-doctoral applications respectively. A total of five (5) QRIs represented most of the applications, totaling 210 of which 116 were post-doc and 94 pre-docs. Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, had 158 applications for the five-year period, followed by Princeton University in second with 43. Overall, there were 116 post-doctoral applicants, 55 of which were approved for \$5.5M in NJCCR funding; with 34 NJCCR funded post-doctoral fellows receiving over \$57M of NIH funds between 2015-2019. In contrast, 94 pre-doctoral applications were received with 44 receiving \$2.15M in NJCCR funds, of which 20 fellows obtaining \$40.3M in NIH funding.

A previous study found that NJCCR grantees leveraged \$10.44 in new research funding for New Jersey laboratories for every dollar (\$1) of NJCCR (state) money received [4]. The New Jersey Commission on Cancer Research grantees use the data and knowledge gained from their NJCCR grants to strengthen proposals to federal or national funding agencies. As a result, between FY2015-FY2019, on average, grantees brought back more than 13 times the amount of their original NJCCR grant in new research dollars to New Jersey. Pre-doctoral fellows without a track record or grant history were especially successful, with 20 of 44 NJCCR funded applications receiving over \$40M in NIH funding effectively leveraging \$1 of NJCCR funding to \$34 of NIH monies, while post-doctoral fellows leveraged \$16.



Applications for fellowships increased in 2016 and 2018 by 26% and 24% respectively, mostly in the post-doc category. The average annual applications for the 5-year period were 19 and 23 for pre-doc and post-docs respectively. Moreover, the five-year average was less than the anticipated high of 61 applications in 2016 and 41 in 2018.

The NIH supports and funds meritorious research applications nationally, and within the Mid-Atlantic states, New Jersey received a lower amount per funded grant with an average amount of \$435,739 in a five-year period, with Maryland and Delaware having a higher average of \$656,528 and \$524,386 per funded grant respectively. However, this does not compare to the number of awards funded by the NIH to New Jersey, which has seen an increase annually through the five-year period from 552 in 2015 to 666 in 2019.

Federal funding does impact on the economic growth of each state when research is involved. The most recent data from the NIH (2024-2025) showed that New Jersey received over \$405M in NIH awards that supported nine jobs per million dollars of funding and 338.1% in economic activity growth, which is the highest amongst Mid-Atlantic states at both levels.

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Assessment

Cancer research has had a tremendous impact when measured in lives saved. According to the American Cancer Society, from 1991 to 2022, cancer research saved an estimated 4.5 million lives including parents, spouses, grandparents, children, siblings and friends. Decades of groundbreaking discoveries by thousands of researchers have enabled people with cancer to live longer and enjoy a better quality of life. Continued progress is being made when it comes to identifying healthier lifestyle choices, better diagnostic tools and tests, and better treatments

Cancer research funding comes from multiple sources. Academic institutions work in partnership with federal agencies, private foundations, pharmaceutical companies and biotechnology start-ups. If any one of these groups falters, the whole system is affected [7].

New Jersey has demonstrated an effective strategy of using state funding to stimulate national cancer research funding. The state's success must be seen, however, against the backdrop of historically low national investment in the state for its size, based on population [3].

Between 2015 and 2019, over 300 New Jersey organizations were funded by the NIH, which included both for-profit and non-profit organizations. The number of organizations that applied for the NJCCR grant funds for the same period was five (5) QRIs. The NJCCR would benefit by addressing the definition of the QRIs, allowing for more eligible institutions that provide advanced cancer research within New Jersey. In addition, expanding grant categories, e.g., Fellowship Training Program could stimulate broader participation and advance cancer research. Furthermore, increasing the public awareness of the NJCCR accomplishments through outreach, social media engagement (e.g., Facebook, TikTok, etc.) and partnerships with the industry could further strengthen revenue streams, including the state's tax check-off programs. NJCCR could also pursue federal grant opportunities that support cancer research fellowships and training initiatives.

Training Fellowships play a vital role in cultivating a technically skilled workforce. They enhance laboratory competitiveness, generate new research ideas and strengthen biomedical training statewide. The fellowships also ensure a highly trained scientific workforce for New Jersey's pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries [4].

While our study provides valuable insights into New Jersey's cancer research funding landscape, several limitations and challenges remain. First, available data are limited to NIH investigators, which may underestimate the overall effect of NJCCR grants since funding information is from NIH investigators. Because of that we may be underestimating the effect of the grant program in generating total extramural fundings as noted earlier. Second, we do not know what percentage of the NIH funds received by the grantees are truly attributable to the NJCCR funded research. In addition, the current funding environment also presents significant challenges for maintaining research momentum, as evidenced by recent disruptions in national cancer research funding. Reports indicate that 25% of cancer researchers have faced delays or cancellations in clinical trials due to funding uncertainties [8].

Cancer research is essential to improve cancer prevention efforts, diagnosis, and treatment. According to recent data from New Jersey,



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Assessment

the age-adjusted cancer incidence rates are higher in the state than the national average [9]. New Jersey ranks 4th fourth in five-year (2016-2020) invasive cancer incidence nationwide, with prostate, breast, and colorectal cancer incidence rates being significantly higher than the U.S. average [10]. Additionally, while the state ranked 10th in the total population size, it ranked 39th in the National Cancer Institute grant dollars per state resident [11]. More recent data shows that ten (10) New Jersey institutions collectively received \$405.1 million in grants and contracts for biomedical research from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in FY24, directly supporting 5,411 jobs and \$1.37 billion in economic activity in the state [12].

Building on this momentum from this report several opportunities emerge to strengthen the impact of NJCCR grant programs and their associated professional development initiatives. To maximize effectiveness, policymakers should establish federal initiatives that incentivize the state-level funding models, and prioritize underrepresented research areas, such as health disparities, AI-driven diagnostics through dedicated budget allocations.

The New Jersey Commission on Cancer Research grants act as “seed money” enabling researchers to attract substantially larger federal grants from agencies like the NIH and NCI. This funding is crucial for sustaining long-term research projects. Merit-based grants help fund promising new scientists through fellowships and pilot research grants, providing critical validation and helping foster the next generation of scientific leaders in the state. By funding academic research, the NJCCR strengthens the state’s talent pipeline and supports scientific breakthroughs that can be commercialized reinforcing New Jersey’s position as a hub for the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. Increases in funding, such as the rise to \$4 million in fiscal year 2024, have enabled the NJCCR to fund more projects, including additional fellowships for basic research and “bridge grants” for promising investigators who experience short-term interruptions in funding [13].

To further expand impact, public-private matching mechanisms, such as tax credits for philanthropic contributions, could broaden the funding base while maintaining the ethical standards. State and federal agencies should also mandate inclusive reporting metrics to assess career development outcomes, particularly for early-career and underrepresented researchers, ensuring equitable access to innovative ecosystems. Finally, sustained investment in collaborative platforms, such as an expanded statewide annual symposium would help bridge translational gaps and align regional strengths with state and national cancer research priorities.



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Summary of Effectiveness and Economic Impact of NJCCR Funding

Introduction

Cancer remains a major public health burden in New Jersey, which has incidence rates higher than the U.S. average and historically receives less federal cancer research funding per capita. The New Jersey Commission on Cancer Research (NJCCR) was established in 1983 to address these disparities through state-funded pre-doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships. This study evaluates the effectiveness of NJCCR grants awarded between 2015 and 2019, focusing on their impact in helping researchers secure subsequent national funding i.e., National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Key Findings

- 209 applications were received from Qualified Research Institutions (QRIs).
- 99 applications (44 predoctoral, 55 postdoctoral fellows) were funded by the NJCCR in the amount of \$7.65 M.
- Return of Investment (ROI) of 1,994%.

Significant Leverage of State Dollars

- NJCCR invested \$4.8 M in fellows who later secured \$98 M in NIH grants.
- Overall leverage ratio of \$34 for every NJCCR dollar invested (Pre-doctoral).
- Overall leverage ratio of \$16 for every NJCCR dollar invested (Post-doctoral).

Economic Impact

- NIH support in New Jersey (FY24) generated 3,639 jobs and \$1.37 B in economic activity.
- New Jersey economic activity growth attributable to NIH research was 338%, the highest in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Assessment

- NJCCR grants effectively serve as seed funding, enabling early-career researchers to build competitive NIH portfolios.
- Pre-doctoral fellows typically with no prior funding showed strong success in securing NIH funding.
- Funding volatility (i.e., national cuts to NIH and others) poses real risks to cancer research.

Recommendations

- Expand eligibility beyond the five current QRIs to engage more research institutions statewide.
- Broaden program categories such as Training Fellowships, Childhood Cancer and Rare Cancer to
- diversity funding opportunities.
- Increase outreach and visibility (social media, community partnerships, bio-tech industry engagement).
- Support statewide collaborative platforms such as an expanded annual cancer research symposium (CINJ).
- Enhanced outreach can increase revenue through tax checkoffs and awareness campaigns.



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*There's always
hope beyond
what you see.*

Cora Connor
Caregiver



*Drive Hope
Forward*

