Distinguished Researchers Program Cycle 5 Reissue Request for Proposals (May 17, 2021)

Cycle 5 of this program was originally announced 9/30/20 and reissued 5/17/21.

Andy Hill Cancer Research Endowment

Created in 2015, the Andy Hill Cancer Research Endowment (CARE) Fund enables Washington State to match up to $10 million annually to fund cancer research initiatives. The CARE Fund is built on a public-private partnership model and incentivizes additional investment by requiring private or other non-state resources to match state funds. With the establishment of the CARE Fund, the state is making a commitment to enrich the cancer research ecosystem with sustained investment to promote cancer research, aimed at improving the quality of life of the people of Washington.

Distinguished Researchers Program Overview

Cancer research breakthroughs occur through the work of talented and well-resourced scientists. The Distinguished Researchers Program aims to bolster cancer research in Washington by providing matching funds to Washington organizations, institutions, and companies to recruit best-in-class talent to Washington State from around the globe and support these newly recruited researchers to lead advances in addressing cancer disparities, including cancer care access and outcomes. Top scientists also move the research economy forward, creating laboratory and other jobs, raising awareness of cancer research, and bringing additional research funding into the state.

The Distinguished Researchers Program will match, dollar for dollar, commitments by Washington research companies, organizations, universities, and research institutions, up to $500,000 per researcher, to add value to recruitment/start-up packages that bring early-career and established cancer researchers to Washington to conduct leading research in cancer, including healthcare and prevention. Applicant organizations must apply under one of two tracks, early-career investigator (i.e., no more than 10 years since terminal degree in biomedical science was conferred) or established investigator. The CARE Fund grant may be used for purposes that advance the candidate’s research program (e.g., salaries, equipment, etc.).

Program Objectives

The objectives of the CARE Fund and the primary review criteria by which applications will be evaluated are to:

- Optimize the use of public funds by giving priority to research utilizing the best science and technology with the greatest potential to improve health outcomes;
• Increase the value of our public investments by leveraging our state's existing cancer research facilities and talent, as well as clinical and therapeutic resources;
• Incentivize additional investment by requiring private or other non-state resources to match public funds;
• Create jobs and encourage investments that will generate new tax revenues in our state; and
• Advance the biotech, medical device, and health care information technology industries in Washington.

CARE Fund Priorities and Considerations
The CARE Fund is committed to supporting researchers that aim to address disparities in cancer care access and outcomes.

Cancer Disparities
According to the Washington State Department of Health (DOH), in 2017, over 42,000 new cases of cancer were diagnosed in Washington, and cancer was the leading cause of death. While cancer affects all populations, some are disproportionately impacted. Adverse differences in cancer incidence, prevalence, mortality, morbidity, survivorship, screening rates, stage at diagnosis, treatment services, access to discoveries, and financial toxicity have been identified as cancer disparities seen among differing groups. These groups may be characterized by geographic location, race, ethnicity, ability, gender, sexual identity, income, education, and other characteristics. For example, according to Washington DOH cancer data, overall cancer mortality rates were significantly higher for non-Hispanic blacks, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans/Alaska Native than non-Hispanic whites. Additionally, lung cancer incidence and mortality rates were highest in southwestern and several eastern Washington counties. The causes of these cancer disparities are complex, often resulting from an interplay of factors, such as biology, socioeconomic status, environment, and behavior. As such, effective solutions must combine creativity, acuity, and resources of willing and capable players in the cancer-related fields. The Andy Hill CARE Fund Distinguished Researchers Program seeks to support highly skilled researchers to advance Washington in its ability to address cancer disparities in the state and nationally.

In addition to the CARE Fund objectives, consideration for funding will be given to Distinguished Researcher applications that demonstrate:
• A focus on cancers that disproportionately burden populations in Washington State;
• Efforts to address cancer disparities (e.g., cancer care access, treatment outcomes, advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in the cancer research field, etc.); and
• Evidence of collaborative and/or cross-disciplinary or multi-sector approach.
The CARE Fund Board will also take into consideration the variety in cancer-related disciplines represented within Washington State, as well as the geographic distribution of grantee organizations.

**Eligibility Requirements**
Applications that do not include a research plan with elements to address a cancer disparity are ineligible for the award and will not be reviewed.

**Applicant Organization**
- Organizations in Washington State, including companies, universities, research institutions, local health jurisdictions, tribal governments, tribal entities, and Urban Indian Organizations are eligible to apply. Applicants must have a substantial presence in Washington, as determined by the CARE Fund based on factors including, but not limited to: number and compensation of full-time equivalent employees who are residents of Washington relative to the applicant’s other sites; having research and development, administrative, or manufacturing facilities located in Washington; and payment of Washington Business and Occupation or other taxes in the state, or any combination of such factors.
- Applicant organizations may submit up to a maximum of three applications during the same funding round.
- Applicant organizations must meet one-to-one (1:1) non-state matching fund requirement.
- Applicant organizations must be willing to agree to all terms and conditions set forth in the CARE Fund Grant Award Agreement.

**Distinguished Researcher Candidate**
- All cancer-related researchers recruited to Washington State are eligible, including basic, translational, clinical, and population-based cancer researchers.
- Early career cancer-related researchers currently on a fellowship or post-doctoral position at a Washington-based organization are eligible for an in-state recruitment award.
- The start date of the researcher candidate must be on or after May 1, 2020.
- The Distinguished Researcher candidate must devote a minimum of 50% effort to overall cancer research activities.
- Distinguished Researcher candidates that have active peer-reviewed funding and/or sponsored research agreements will be favored, irrespective of the ability to transfer such funding to Washington State.
Grant Award and Matching Fund Requirements

- Grant awards are up to $500,000 per researcher.
- All grant awards are two years.
- The grant may be used for purposes that advance the candidate’s research program (e.g., salaries, equipment, etc.). Expenditures related with community service, teaching, or clinical activities beyond those required for performing the proposed research activities are not allowed.
- Applicant organizations, including commercial entities, must secure a minimum 1:1 match of requested grant amount with private contributions or other non-state of Washington sources for its recruitment/start-up package (considering all costs budgeted in the recruitment/start-up agreement).
- A minimum of 1:1 non-state match must be secured at the time of the application submission. Proof of private or other non-state matching contributions may be accomplished by providing a written, binding, enforceable agreement from the contributor that commits an equal or greater amount of non-state or private contributions to meet the CARE Fund’s matching requirement, and that acknowledges that the CARE Fund grant is contingent upon this contribution.
- In the grant application budget, applicants should include all non-state match amounts committed to the Distinguished Researcher candidate, even if the total match exceeds the minimum 1:1 non-state match requirement.

Timeline and Application Process

Organizations that intend to submit a full application must submit a letter of intent (LOI) by 5 p.m. (PT) on July 21, 2021. LOIs will be reviewed on a rolling basis as they are received, and only approved applicants will be invited to submit a full application. Full applications must be submitted by September 8, 2021, 5:00 p.m. (PT). Full details for submitting an LOI and application are available on the Distinguished Researchers page of the CARE Fund website (www.wacarefund.org). Award decisions for this cycle are anticipated to be made in December 2021. Successful applicants will be notified via email.

Submissions:
A Distinguished Researcher candidate may not appear in more than one submitted application. An institution may submit up to three applications per cycle, but each application must be for a different Distinguished Researcher candidate. Distinguished Researcher applications submitted but not funded in previous cycles may be resubmitted in this cycle, provided that the eligibility criteria are met for this application cycle.
Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call for Proposals Announced</td>
<td>May 17, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letter of Intent Deadline</td>
<td>July 21, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal Application Deadline</td>
<td>September 8, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Award Decision</td>
<td>December 8, 2021</td>
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Application Review Process

**Stage 1: Letter of Intent Review**
CARE Fund staff will review Letters of Intent (LOI) on a rolling basis to determine if they should be invited to submit a full application according to the following questions:

1. Does the LOI contain all required elements?
2. Is the applicant eligible to apply under the Distinguished Researchers Program?
3. Does the distinguished researcher candidate’s research plan address a cancer disparity?

CARE Fund staff will then approve or disapprove the applicant’s LOI. Approved applicants will be invited to submit a full application.

**Stage 2: Full Application Eligibility Screening**
CARE Fund staff or contractors will screen submitted full applications for eligibility and completeness according to the following questions:

1. Is the applicant organization eligible to apply under this grant program (per the eligibility requirements listed above)?
2. Is the application responsive to the Distinguished Researchers Program RFP?
3. Does the proposal contain all required elements of the application?
4. Does the application appear to meet non-state fund matching requirements?

If all questions above are answered ‘Yes,’ the application will move to Stage 3: Peer Review. An application may be returned to the applicant for completion or clarification, then re-submitted, per the judgment of the CARE Fund Executive Director.

**Stage 3: Peer Review**
Stage 3 peer review will be conducted by the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), or a comparable organization. AIBS, or a comparable organization, will recruit a panel of highly-qualified reviewers with expertise in relevant areas of cancer research. Each reviewer will evaluate the merit of each application in a cohort against the review criteria listed below. The review panel will then discuss the initial review findings, taking into consideration the CARE Fund program objectives and priorities, to arrive at final scores and ratings for each application. Reviewers will summarize the review results for each application in a final review, which will
include a justification of the final scoring, rating, and ranking (when applications are ranked) of applications within the cohort.

The CARE Fund Board will be provided with the final reviews, the cohort’s ranked scores (when available) and associated ratings, and a narrative summary of the review panel’s funding recommendations.

**Stage 4: CARE Fund Board Assessment and Funding Decision**

The CARE Fund Board will make funding decisions based on the scores, rankings, and recommendations made by the external reviewers and will ensure that reviews align with the CARE Fund objectives and priorities. When deciding between applications of similar merit, the CARE Fund Board may also consider program objectives and priorities, variety in cancer-related disciplines, and diversity of applicant organizations in making funding decisions. The CARE Fund Board will act in accordance with its Conflict of Interest Policy as well as Chapter 42.52 RCW (Ethics in Public Service) to avoid actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.

**Review Criteria**

Eligible proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

**Criterion 1. Scientific Significance, Innovation, and Merit (15 points)**

- Significance of the proposed research focus to address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the cancer field.
- Strength of the scientific premise for the research plan.
- Potential for the novelty of the concepts, methodologies, or interventions to refine, improve, or shift current research or clinical practice paradigms.
- Degree to which the research approach and methodologies are appropriate to meet the proposed goals and objectives.

**Criterion 2. Cancer Disparities Focus (10 points)**

- Degree to which successful completion of proposed research activities will reduce disparities along the cancer care continuum, including but not limited to one of the following:
  - Improving cancer care access and participation (e.g., access to treatments, clinical trial participation, increased healthcare education and awareness, etc.) among underserved groups in and beyond Washington State.
  - Reducing disparities in cancer treatment outcomes and survivorship.
  - Increasing understanding of the pathology underlying cancer(s) that affect disparities populations.
  - Addressing financial toxicity resulting from accessing cancer care.
• Evidence of organizational commitment to address cancer disparities and advance cancer disparities research.

**Criterion 3. Broader Impacts (10 points)**

• Potential for longer term impacts in the field of cancer research and clinical intervention.
• Potential to improve health outcomes overall, in Washington State, and nationally.
• Potential to increase and diversify research funding in Washington State through additional extramural funding.
• Feasibility of the plan for disseminating research progress to the public and the cancer research community.

**Criterion 4. Researcher Qualifications and Applicant Organization Commitment (15 points)**

• Quality and scope of the researcher’s technical capability and management capacity (e.g., education, employment history, funding record, research portfolio, publication record, students trained, lab size, service, intellectual property, etc.).
• Evidence of cross-disciplinary and/or multi-sector collaborations that have potential to strengthen the research approach.
• Capacity to generate return on investment, measured by the researcher’s current and completed peer-reviewed funding and/or sponsored research agreements, the creation and commercialization of intellectual property, etc. (i.e., all years, including direct and indirect costs).
• Demonstrated commitment of the applicant organization to support the researcher’s success (e.g., facilities, financial support, and other aspects of the institutional research environment).

**Criterion 5. Workforce Development (5 points)**

• Potential to grow the life science industry in Washington State.
• Potential to stimulate employment in Washington State (e.g., new compensated positions, including post-docs, fellows, research assistants, etc.).
• Degree to which proposed research activities will advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in the cancer research field, including mentoring and increasing the number of scientists from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds. (See the National Science Foundation data and the “Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering” Report, as well as the National Institutes of Health statement on populations underrepresented in the extramural scientific workforce).
In addition to the criteria listed above, reviewers will take into consideration the CARE Fund objectives and priorities when assigning final scores and ratings to each application and ranking the applications within a cohort.

**Review Scores and Ratings**

The following table summarizes the review criteria and scores:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review Criteria</th>
<th>Maximum Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Significance, Innovation, and Merit</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cancer Disparities Focus</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broader Impacts</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Qualifications and Applicant Organization Commitment</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workforce Development</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Score</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
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Applications will be rated using the rating rubric shown below. The rating will concur with the total score and will reflect the overall funding recommendation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description of Rating</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly Recommended</td>
<td>Extremely well-organized and well-constructed application demonstrating excellent scientific merit, potential for impact, potential to address cancer disparities, and potential for job creation. Distinguished Researcher candidate of impressive professional qualifications with high potential to meet the stated program goals and objectives.</td>
<td>50–55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended</td>
<td>Well-constructed application demonstrating strong scientific merit, potential for impact, potential to address cancer disparities, and potential for job creation. Distinguished Researcher candidate of high qualifications with potential to meet the stated program goals and objectives.</td>
<td>40–49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthy of Consideration</td>
<td>Sufficiently constructed application demonstrating good scientific merit, potential for impact, potential to address cancer disparities, and potential for job creation, but with some weaknesses. Distinguished Researcher candidate with potential to meet the stated program goals and objectives.</td>
<td>30–39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Recommended</td>
<td>Application demonstrating major weaknesses that will likely decrease the potential for scientific significance, impact, addressing cancer disparities, and job creation. Distinguished Researcher may have limited potential to meet the stated program goals and objectives.</td>
<td>0–29</td>
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**Overall Application Ranking within Cohort**
Applications within each track of the cohort may be ranked numerically (1 = highest ranked) based on the (i) final score, (ii) rating, and (iii) the CARE Fund objectives and priorities for funding decisions (listed above). When applications are ranked, rankings will concur with the ratings assigned to all applications within each track of the cohort and will reflect the review panel’s funding recommendations.

**Intellectual Property**
Grantees must report all inventions developed through CARE grant-funded activities or research projects to the CARE Fund. The CARE Fund does not intend to assert ownership of any invention that is derived from CARE funded research. However, if the grantee organization, or any subcontractor, decides not to take title and file an application for intellectual property protection, the CARE Fund would then have the option to take title. The grantee must notify the CARE Fund prior to any publication of the invention so as to allow the CARE Fund sufficient opportunity to take title and pursue or maintain intellectual property protection.

The CARE Fund does not expect to require payback of grants awarded based on income generated from sale or commercialization of any inventions resulting from CARE grant-funded activities or research. This approach is intended to minimize intellectual property-related barriers for potential applicants and encourage pursuit of transformational research. Successful projects will stimulate economic development through job creation and infusion of additional research funds to Washington. Products derived from these inventions will then be available to the public, with the expectation that it will improve health outcomes for the people of Washington and globally.

The CARE Fund must be listed as a funder in all presentations, publications, and patent applications.

**Confidentiality**
Information in grant LOIs and applications is received by the CARE Fund with the understanding that it shall be used or disclosed for the evaluation of applications or as required by law. The CARE Fund holds all submissions confidential in accordance with its confidentiality procedures and subject to the public disclosure laws of the state of Washington. All applicants are advised that information provided to the CARE Fund, including an applicant’s proprietary and confidential information, are considered public records under Washington’s Public Records Act, Chapter 42.56 RCW. Generally, public records are subject to disclosure unless an exemption to disclosure applies. Information provided to the CARE Fund may be protected from potential Public Records request disclosure to the extent provided under RCW 42.56.270(29).
The CARE Fund may make use of information contained in submissions for purposes of transparency and publicity, including, but not limited to: applicant name; applicant organization; project title; funding amount requested; and applicant profile. For unfunded applications, the CARE Fund will not publicly release the abstract or narrative of the proposed work, budget details, or any identifiers regarding co-applicant organizations, to the extent disclosure of this information might reasonably be expected to result in private loss to the applicant organizations, and as is consistent with public disclosure laws of the state of Washington. If a proposal is funded, the CARE Fund may make public additional information from the application, including, but not limited to: project abstract; funding amount; names and profiles of the distinguished researcher, principal investigator, co-investigators, or collaborating organizations.

The CARE Fund reserves the right to publicly disseminate information about a grantee’s activities through public reports, its website, press releases, speaking engagements, and other public venues. To the extent allowable under Washington State law, the CARE Fund shall not publicly disclose information that has been marked as proprietary or confidential if such information has not been previously disclosed to the public, or other information to the extent that provision of such information would reasonably be expected to result in private loss to the providers of such information.

Contact Information
For questions regarding this announcement or application, please contact Peter Choi, at peter@wacarefund.org.