

Summary of Responses to RFIs

September 26, 2022

Background

In July 2022 the CARE Fund issued the following five Requests for Information (RFIs) to help inform its grantmaking framework:

- Enhancing Life Science Start-ups and Companies in Washington State
- Supporting Cancer Disparities Research in Washington State
- Increase Participation and Improve Inclusion and Diversity in Cancer Clinical Trials in Washington State
- Enhance Infrastructure and Resources in Support of Cancer Research in Washington State
- Establishing Statewide Data and Specimen Acquisition Program(s) in Washington State

The open period for the RFIs was from July 13–August 15, 2022.

RFI respondents will neither be prohibited from nor given any preference in applying for future CARE Fund funding opportunities.

RFI Responses

Below is a summary of the responses to the RFIs received by the CARE Fund. They have been synthesized by the CARE Fund staff and are not meant to represent every response verbatim. Select verbatim responses are included for illustrative purposes and are indicated in quotes, without attribution. Responses submitted after the RFI deadline or through other methods not indicated in the RFI (such as by phone or email) are not included in the summaries below; however, feedback in any form may be considered by the CARE Board in developing the grantmaking framework.

Enhancing Life Science Start-ups and Companies in Washington State RFI Responses

Number of Responses: 4

Responses by Organization Type: Company (2); Trade Organization (1); University (1)

Summary of Responses: Life science start-ups and companies face barriers to translating research to commercialization in several areas, which can be broadly categorized under funding, support services, and workforce capacity.

Needs identified by respondents included early-stage funding to demonstrate proof of concept and to navigate the regulatory and administrative processes of translating their research.

Responses also noted the need for funding and resource support for securing additional funding (e.g., grant writing, pitching investors); business services (e.g., legal, intellectual property, accounting); entrepreneur mentorship and an ecosystem of entrepreneurship to encourage and support researchers to start and build companies.

Lastly, talent was mentioned in the responses, including the need for mentors, in-house staff, and contracted services.

Supporting Cancer Disparities Research in Washington State RFI Responses

Number of Responses: 6

Responses by Organization Type: Research Institution (3); University (2); Anonymous (1)

Summary of Responses: Responses identified many patient characteristics that are often linked to health disparities, including but not limited to race/ethnicity, language, insurance status, and socioeconomic status.

Critical barriers of cancer disparities research identified in the responses varied and included the following:

- The need for more data regarding the social determinants of health linked to patient outcomes to advance cancer disparities research
- The need to increase the workforce capacity at community health centers so that they can adapt, implement, and test proven/best practice interventions for their target population
- The need to include, and support local organizations and community health centers, as these organizations “are the most well positioned to serve underserved populations”
- The need for a critical mass of scientists who focus on cancer disparities research

Responses also noted that cancer disparities research could be advanced through funding of the following purposes: support of scientists focused on cancer disparities, increasing workforce capacity, improved population-level databases, data collection on social determinants of health and health outcomes, testing interventions that address social determinants of health, and improving access to care.

Increase Participation and Improve Inclusion and Diversity in Cancer Clinical Trials in Washington State RFI Responses

Number of Responses: 3

Responses by Organization Type: Research Institution (1); University (1); Anonymous (1)

Summary of Responses: Access and patient support were identified as the critical barriers to improve inclusion and diversity in clinical trials. Physical distance between a patient’s home and the clinical trial site was one access barrier identified by a respondent. One response noted that the use and importance of clinical trials is not always well-understood by patients, and sometimes there is mistrust of health systems. When patients have an opportunity to participate in clinical trials they may face additional barriers, including but not limited to financial, language, health literacy, and transportation barriers.

Supporting collaborations between academic and research centers with local health facilities was identified as a need, as well as workforce capacity to conduct clinical trials, including staff and resources needed to enroll and support diverse patient populations.

Responses noted that providing better access to clinical trials sites, simplifying the clinical trials enrollment process, and addressing the patient's basic needs (e.g., language services, financial support, transportation, etc.) could increase participation and inclusion in the near-term.

Enhance Infrastructure and Resources in Support of Cancer Research in Washington State RFI Responses

Number of Responses: 3

Responses by Organization Type: Health Care Facility (1); Research Institution (1); University (1)

Summary of Responses: Responses to this RFI identified different critical needs to advance their research programs, including the following:

- The importance of clinical trials in developing therapies, and the limiting factor of the lack of staff to conduct the clinical trials
- An investment in local educational institutions could help develop a clinical trials workforce pipeline to support and bring on new clinical trials at research and/or health care institutions
- Resources that could be shared among institutions in eastern Washington, including an inpatient research unit, a cell therapy program, a biospecimen repository, and a traveling clinical research coordinator service
- The need for specific pieces of equipment needed for specific types of cancer research

Establishing Statewide Data and Specimen Acquisition Program(s) in Washington State RFI Responses

Number of Responses: 3

Responses by Organization Type: Research Institution (1); University (1); Anonymous (1)

Summary of Responses: Responses to this RFI noted the benefits and importance of accessible databases and specimens to advance cancer research. One response noted that for the focus of their research, a cancer with many subtypes, a statewide registry might help researchers pursue a multidisciplinary approach for diagnosis and treatment. It was also noted that for biospecimens to be useful they need to be paired with good demographic and clinical data, and that molecular datasets would also be useful.

Several critical barriers to a statewide program were identified, including the number of institutions that would need to be involved, the technical capacity for data sharing, the regulatory elements for acquiring and sharing specimens, the quality of the data available to pair with biospecimens, and the capacity of non-research hospitals to participate in a program. Responses noted that a statewide program would require a multidisciplinary team with stakeholders from the major research institutions to operationalize a statewide program, and identified outreach and engaging local hospitals, tribal partners, federally qualified health centers, and communities as important to establishing a statewide program that is representative of the state population.



Follow Up

The CARE Fund staff have reviewed all RFI responses. The CARE Board of Directors have reviewed a summary of RFI responses to inform the CARE Fund's grantmaking framework for future investment. The CARE Fund sincerely thanks respondents for their thoughtful feedback on the subjects presented here.