

Scientific Discoveries Research Request for Proposals

Approximate Date Available: January 6, 2025

Scientific Discoveries Research	
Purpose	<p>This grant opportunity seeks to support innovative and meritorious cancer researchers, at all levels, and teams pursuing scientific discoveries and breakthrough ideas in the fight against cancer.</p> <p>This opportunity will not only catalyze the next breakthroughs in cancer research, but for some may help bridge between early discoveries and commercialization of therapeutics, devices, and tools to lessen the burden of cancer.</p>
Overview & Scope	<p>This funding opportunity seeks to support the next generation of breakthroughs in cancer research that aims to significantly advance one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve cancer prevention and early detection (e.g., novel screening methods, risk reduction strategies); • Address cancer diagnosis and treatment (e.g., development of more precise diagnostics, effective therapies, personalized medicine approaches); or • Improve patient outcomes and quality of life (e.g., treatment efficacy, including reduced side effects, enhanced patient well-being). <p>CARE Fund encourages research projects that aim to address issues across the cancer care continuum, from etiology to survivorship, that have high potential to ultimately advance cancer care, lessen the burden of cancer, and improve health outcomes.</p>
Application Deadline	March 5, 2025 (4:00 p.m. PT)
Project Period	Up to 2 years, expected start date October 1, 2025.
Award Amount	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$250,000 to \$1,500,000 for project duration, inclusive of direct and indirect costs. • Grant requires a one-to-one (1:1) non-state match to grant award.
Eligible Applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible organizations may apply for and receive grants for cancer research to be conducted in Washington. Eligible organizations include but are not limited to companies, higher education institutions, research institutions, local health jurisdictions, tribal governments, tribal entities, nonprofit institutions, and Urban Indian Organizations. Applicants must have a substantial presence in Washington, as determined by the CARE Board. • Applicant organizations may submit up to five (5) applications for this funding opportunity, but a Principal Investigator may not submit more than one application.

ANDY HILL CANCER RESEARCH ENDOWMENT

The Andy Hill Cancer Research Endowment (CARE) Fund was established in 2015 by the state legislature as a bold public-private partnership to promote cancer research in Washington. With the establishment of the CARE Fund, the state is making a commitment to support the cancer research ecosystem with sustained investment to promote cancer research aimed at improving the quality of life of the people of Washington.

The objectives of the Andy Hill CARE Fund (from RCW 43.348.005) include the following:

- 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; and
- Create jobs and encourage investments that will generate new tax revenues in our state, advance the biotech, medical device, and health care information technology industries in Washington.

I. OVERVIEW AND SCOPE

This Scientific Discoveries Research grant opportunity seeks to support innovative and meritorious cancer researchers, at all levels, and teams pursuing scientific discoveries and breakthrough ideas in the fight against cancer.

This opportunity will not only catalyze the next breakthroughs in cancer research, but for some may help bridge between early discoveries and commercialization of therapeutics, devices, and tools to lessen the burden of cancer.

This funding opportunity seeks to support the next generation of breakthroughs in cancer research that aims to significantly advance one or more of the following:

- Improve cancer prevention and early detection (e.g., novel screening methods, risk reduction strategies);
- Address cancer diagnosis and treatment (e.g., development of more precise diagnostics, effective therapies, personalized medicine approaches); or
- Improve patient outcomes and quality of life (e.g., treatment efficacy, including reduced side effects, enhance patient well-being).

Proposed Scientific Discoveries Research projects may be seeking to develop knowledge of basic principles or mechanisms related to cancer, validating potential applications of novel interventions or a novel approach with an established intervention, or developing technologies/therapies or demonstrating its proof-of-concept or feasibility. Projects best supported by this funding opportunity would be in the basic research, discovery, or validation phase rather than in the implementation phase. By contrast, translation of a therapeutic, diagnostic tool, or intervention to the clinic may be better suited to other opportunities, such as the Implementation and Outcomes Research RFP. Projects supported by this Scientific Discoveries Research opportunity may be high risk but must have the potential for high impact breakthroughs in cancer research and care that will extend understanding or uncover new pathways beyond the span of the project.

CARE Fund encourages research projects that aim to address issues across the cancer care continuum, from etiology to survivorship, that have high potential to ultimately advance cancer care, lessen the burden of cancer, and improve health outcomes.

Population-based projects that will contribute to the understanding of how biological, behavioral, environmental, social, and structural factors affect cancer-related health; or contribute to the understanding of how addressing social determinants of health (or health-related social needs) impact cancer care and outcomes are eligible and encouraged. A hypothesis must be proposed and explored by specific research aims. Therefore, proposals aimed solely to collect data to document health and cancer disparities in populations or solely provide or expand services are NOT eligible.

Projects generally better suited to the Implementation and Outcomes Research RFP may include those focused on testing a new or improved intervention/diagnostic/therapeutic in a clinical setting, research related to a community-wide screening campaign, or manufacturing a product for market approval and launch.

II. APPLICATION CHARACTERISTICS

Eligibility

- Organizations eligible to apply for and receive grants include but are not limited to Washington State companies, higher education institutions, research institutions, local health jurisdictions, tribal governments, tribal entities, nonprofit institutions, and Urban Indian Organizations. **Applicants must have a substantial presence in Washington**, as determined by the CARE Board, after consideration of relevant factors such as the number and type of staff in Washington; state of incorporation; location of headquarters, research, or manufacturing facilities in Washington; or any combination of such factors. The majority of the proposed research activities must be conducted in Washington State.
- Organizations may submit up to five (5) applications for this funding opportunity, but a Principal Investigator may not submit more than one (1) application.
- Applicants should ensure their submission follows their organization's internal processes on limited submissions. If more than five applications from an organization are submitted, then only the first five submitted will be accepted and considered for review.

Grant Matching Fund Requirements

- Applicants must submit proof of their secured minimum one-to-one (1:1) match of non-state of Washington funds to requested grant funds. Applicants must also demonstrate that the required matching funds will be available and dedicated for use during the grant period. At CARE Fund's sole discretion, applications that fail to sufficiently demonstrate the non-state match funds requirements (e.g., nonstate source, availability of the match for grant period, etc.), may be determined ineligible and not advanced for review.

Grant Award and Use of Funds

- The project period may be up to two years (24 months). Budget expenses may be allocated over the project period as needed, commensurate with the timeline and milestones.

- The total grant request (direct and indirect costs) over the project period may not exceed \$1,500,000 and may not be less than \$250,000. The total grant request is the CARE Fund grant portion only. The total *project budget*, including the non-state matching contributions, will be at minimum two times the total grant request amount. **Grant payments will be made as reimbursement for actual expenditures. At CARE Fund's discretion, grant payments may be made more frequently than annually in accordance with the Grant Award Agreement.**
 - The amount of funding requested should reflect the scope of the project and the appropriate budget for a two-year project period. The maximum award amount is not an indication of the ideal project size, rather it is an award size limit. CARE Fund is interested in innovative projects of all sizes. Requests for smaller grants are allowed and encouraged.
 - Grant funds may be used to purchase capital equipment, but the equipment must be essential to achieve the research or product development aims as detailed in the project research plan.
 - Indirect costs are allowed at the federally negotiated rate. If the applicant does not have a federally negotiated rate, the indirect cost rate may not exceed 30%.
- Projects with collaborations outside of Washington State are allowed; however, the majority of the CARE Fund grant award and required non-state match contribution must be allocated to research activities conducted in Washington State. Only a minority of the CARE Fund grant funds awarded may be provided to out-of-state researchers and entities as required to complete the project.
- All grants will be made in accordance with the CARE Fund's policies and applicable laws, including the CARE Fund statute (Chapter 43.348 Revised Code of Washington).

III. TIMELINE AND APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications must be submitted through the CARE Fund grants management system, which can be accessed via the CARE Fund website. The grant application is scheduled to be available to applicants by **Monday, January 6, 2025**, and the application must be submitted by **Wednesday, March 5, 2025, 4:00 p.m. (PT)**.

The application prompts and questions are available on the Scientific Discoveries Research opportunity page on the CARE Fund website (www.wacarefund.org).

Award decisions for this opportunity are anticipated to be made in August 2025. Applicants will be notified of award decisions via email.

Estimated Timeline

Call for Proposals Announced	January 6, 2025
Question & Answer Period	January 6, 2025–February 13, 2025. Final Q&A Posted February 19, 2025.
Application Deadline	March 5, 2025
Independent Scientific Peer Review	May–July 2025
CARE Board Award Decision	August 31, 2025
Award Agreements Executed	September 30, 2025
Anticipated Start Date	October 1, 2025

Project Support	Up to 2 years (24 months) from award agreement effective start date
-----------------	---

CARE Fund reserves the right to revise the above schedule.

Application Review Process

Stage1: Application Review

CARE Fund and/or contractors will screen the applications to assess the following:

- Is the application within the submission limit by organization or PI?
- Does the application contain all required elements?
- Is the applicant eligible to apply under this funding opportunity?

If all questions above are answered “Yes,” the application will move to Stage 2: 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 2: Peer Review

Independent 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 independent, expert, scientific reviewers with expertise in the relevant areas of cancer research. Reviewers will initially evaluate the merit of the applications against the review criteria listed below. The review panel will then meet to discuss the initial review findings, taking into consideration 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 the applications in the cohort.

The CARE 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 3: CARE Board Assessment and Award Decision

The CARE Board will make award decisions based on the scores and recommendations made by the independent scientific reviewers and will ensure that reviews align with the CARE Fund objectives and priorities. When deciding between applications of similar merit, the CARE Board may also consider program objectives and priorities, including but not limited to cancer research discipline, type of cancer, or geographic distribution of grantee organizations. The CARE 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 conflict of interest.

IV. APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA

Eligible applications will be evaluated against each of the following criteria for an Overall Impact Score. All three factors will be considered in arriving at the overall impact score. The criteria factors serve to focus reviewers on three central questions when evaluating the application:

1. How important is the proposed research?
2. How rigorous and feasible are the methods?
3. To what degree do the investigator(s) and institution have the expertise and resources necessary to successfully carry out the project?

Overall Impact

Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, major influence on the cancer research field(s) involved, in consideration of the following review criteria and additional review criteria (as applicable for the project proposed).

Review Factors

Reviewers will evaluate Factors 1, 2 and 3 in the determination of scientific merit, and in providing an overall impact score. In addition, Factors 1 and 2 will each receive a separate factor score. An application does not necessarily need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have a major scientific impact.

Factor 1. Importance of the Research (Score 1-9)

Significance

- Evaluate the importance of the proposed research in the context of current scientific challenges and opportunities, either for advancing knowledge within the field, or more broadly.
- Assess whether the application addresses an important gap in knowledge in the field, would solve a critical problem, or create a valuable conceptual or technical advance.
- Evaluate the rationale for undertaking the study, the rigor of the scientific background for the work (e.g., prior literature and/or preliminary data) and whether the scientific background justifies the proposed study.

Innovation

- Evaluate the extent to which innovation influences the importance of undertaking the proposed research. Note that while technical or conceptual innovation can influence the importance of the proposed research, a project that is not applying novel concepts or approaches may be of critical importance for the field.
- Evaluate whether the proposed work applies novel concepts, methods or technologies or uses existing concepts, methods, and technologies in novel ways, to enhance the overall impact of the project.

Factor 2. Rigor and Feasibility (Score 1-9)

Approach

- Evaluate the scientific quality of the proposed work.
- Evaluate the likelihood that compelling, reproducible findings will result
- Assess whether the proposed studies can be done well and within the timeframes proposed (feasibility).

Rigor

- Evaluate the potential to produce unbiased, reproducible, robust data.
- Evaluate the rigor of the experimental design and whether appropriate controls are in place.
- Evaluate whether the sample size is sufficient and well-justified.
- Assess the quality of the plans for analysis, interpretation, and reporting of results.
- Evaluate whether the application includes adequate plans to address relevant biological variables, such as sex or age, in the design, analysis, and reporting.
- For applications involving human subjects or vertebrate animals, also evaluate:
 - the rigor of the intervention or study manipulation (if applicable to the study design).
 - whether outcome variables are justified.
 - whether the results will be generalizable or, in the case of a rare disease/special group, relevant to the particular subgroup.

- whether the sample is appropriate and sufficiently diverse to address the proposed question(s).
- For applications involving human subjects, including clinical trials, assess the adequacy of inclusion plans as appropriate for the scientific goals of the research. Considerations of appropriateness may include:
 - disease/condition/behavior incidence, prevalence, or population burden, population representation, and/or current state of the science.
 - ability to offer trial participants information in a language other than English.
 - ability to provide culturally specific recruitment materials alongside general enrollment materials.
 - ability to provide electronic consent when not prohibited by other granting entities or federal regulations.
 - other evidence of outreach and engagement to increase participation of underrepresented communities in clinical trials of drugs and medical devices.

Feasibility

- Evaluate whether the proposed approach is sound and achievable, including plans to address problems or new challenges that emerge in the work. For proposed studies in which feasibility may be less certain, evaluate whether the uncertainty is balanced by the potential for major advances.
- For applications involving human subjects, including clinical trials, evaluate the adequacy and feasibility of the plan to recruit and retain an appropriately diverse population of participants. Additionally, evaluate the likelihood of successfully achieving the proposed enrollment based on age, racial, ethnic, and sex/gender categories.
- For clinical trial applications, evaluate whether the study timeline and milestones are feasible.

Factor 3. Expertise and Resources (not scored) - Sufficient/Insufficient

Investigator(s)

- Evaluate whether the investigator(s) have demonstrated background, training, and expertise, as appropriate for their career stage, to conduct the proposed work. For Multiple Principal Investigator (MPI) applications, assess the quality of the leadership plan to facilitate coordination and collaboration.

Environment

- Evaluate whether the institutional resources are appropriate to ensure the successful execution of the proposed work.

V. RATING

Rating	Description of Rating	Overall Impact Score
Highly Recommended	Demonstrates high potential to impact the field of cancer research or cancer care and strong scientific merit and approach. Meets the stated goals and objectives of the funding opportunity. Extremely well-constructed Proposal.	1–3
Recommended	Demonstrates potential to impact the field of cancer research or cancer care and strong scientific merit and approach. Meets the stated goals and objectives of the funding opportunity. Well-constructed Proposal.	4–6

Not Recommended	Demonstrates major weaknesses that will likely decrease the potential for successful completion of the proposed project and impact in the field of cancer research or cancer care. Limited potential to meet the stated goals and objectives of the funding opportunity. Unsatisfactorily constructed Proposal.	7–9
-----------------	---	-----

VI. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Grantees must certify that they have policies in place regarding ownership and management of intellectual property and its protection. Grantees must report all inventions, whether or not patented or patentable or copyrighted or copyrightable, that are developed through CARE grant-funded activities or research projects to the CARE Fund in a timely manner. 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 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 “Andy Hill Cancer Research Endowment (CARE) Fund” must be listed as a funder in all presentations, publications, and patent applications.

VII. CONFIDENTIALITY

Information in grant 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 applications confidential in accordance with CARE Fund’s confidentiality practices, subject to public disclosure laws of the state of Washington and other applicable laws. 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 under RCW 42.56.270(29), to the extent applicable in the CARE Board’s sole discretion.

The CARE Fund may make use of information contained in applications 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 or as otherwise required by law. 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 investigators or collaborating organizations.

The CARE Fund reserves the right to publicly disseminate information about a grantee's activities through public reports, online, social media, press releases, speaking engagements, and other public venues. To the extent allowable under Washington State law or other applicable 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.

VIII. CONTACT INFORMATION

Please email any questions regarding this grant announcement to: grants@wacarefund.org. Questions regarding this RFP will be accepted after the RFP is issued through 9:00 a.m. (PT) February 13, 2025. As applicable, an Addendum addressing answers to questions will be posted to the RFP page approximately weekly through February 19, 2025. As applicable, the final Addendum addressing questions will be posted on or about February 19, 2025. **CARE Fund is not able to respond to questions received after the close of the Questions and Answers period.**