

Background Information

Origins. Washington is investing in the leveraging power of life sciences research. Building on the recommendations of a citizens planning initiative called Bio 21, the Life Sciences Discovery Fund Authority (LSDF) was created in 2005 by the Washington State Governor and Legislature. The Fund’s enabling legislation directs it to “enhance the competitive position of Washington State and improve the quality and delivery of health care for the people of Washington.” Accordingly, LSDF supports innovative research to promote life sciences competitiveness, enhance economic vitality, and improve health and health care.

Returns on Investment. The Fund inaugurated its granting programs with philanthropic funding from several different organizations—the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, Amgen, Microsoft, Group Health Cooperative, Safeco Insurance Foundation, and Regence Blue Shield. During its ten-year lifetime, it will receive a portion of Washington’s State’s share of tobacco settlement payments. Research entities from across the state compete for these dollars as they propose innovative projects, programs and technology commercialization plans to improve health and health care in Washington State. Substantial returns on these grant investments are expected in the form of new jobs, the flow of non-state dollars to the economy, the commercialization of scientific innovation, and improvements in health-care quality and cost effectiveness. The proposed returns are detailed in the Fund’s 2006 Report to the Washington State Legislature, which is available on the LSDF website (www.lsdfa.org).

Eligibility and Areas of Research. LSDF supports innovative research by Washington nonprofit organizations, singly or in collaboration either with other nonprofits or with for-profit companies. Areas of research expected to produce the most promising results include the following: new approaches to the diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and management of disease; translation of basic science discoveries to health-care practice; implementation of predictive and preventive health-care strategies; advances in human nutrition; scale-up of effective health-care practices from individuals to populations; demonstrations of improved efficiencies and outcomes in health-care delivery; and innovations in health-care cost effectiveness.

Types of Grant Competitions. Four different kinds of competitions are deployed by LSDF: project, program, commercialization, and opportunity grants. Projects are individual research studies having a sharply defined focus. Programs are strategic research initiatives, designed to more broadly address problems within a field of study and to position an organization or organizations for future competitiveness and leadership. Commercialization grants support small-scale, highly targeted studies that move technologies along the commercialization pathway. Opportunity grants support compelling proposals having an urgency or nature that cannot be aligned with LSDF’s annual competition cycles.

Promise. The Life Sciences Discovery Fund is in the midst of an unprecedented ten-year grant-making enterprise. Thanks to the citizens whose ideas gave it shape, to the vision of the legislature that passed

it into law, and to the generosity of its private donors, the Fund is launching programs to support innovative research. The science it promotes will have the potential to provide better health for Washington's citizens and future economic growth for our communities.

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