



## Interview Stage Reviewer Guidelines

### LSDF 07-02: Innovative Programs to Advance Health Research

#### A. Introduction and Background

**Introduction.** The following guidelines apply to LSDF 07-02 and are for AAAS expert reviewers to follow in conducting the interview stage of expert review (also known as a reverse site visit). If you have not already done so, please read the request for proposals (RFP) for this grant competition before starting your reviews. This RFP can be accessed via the "Grants" section at [www.lsdfa.org](http://www.lsdfa.org).

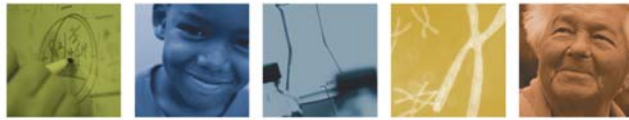
**Contact Information.** If you have questions at any point prior to or during the interview panel meeting, please contact:

Ed Derrick  
AAAS Research Competitiveness Program  
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**Expectations of Reviewers.** LSDF achieves its mission by funding proposals through a competitive granting process, the success of which depends upon superb expert review. As a reviewer considering LSDF proposals, you are expected to protect the confidentiality of the applicants' proposals and of the review process itself and to abide by a strict standard in avoiding any conflict of interest. Any concerns you may have about a proposal or your ability to review it impartially should be communicated in confidence to AAAS.

1. *Confidentiality.* The proposals and the review process are confidential. If you believe that additional scientific expertise is needed to review a proposal, you should not solicit it yourself, but instead notify AAAS to make arrangements for outside assistance. Outside of the actual interview itself, you must not contact applicants or the LSDF Board of Trustees under any circumstances. You will be asked to sign a nondisclosure agreement prior to your engagement to review LSDF proposals.

2. *Conflict of Interest.* A perceived or actual conflict of interest in scientific expert review exists when a reviewer has an interest associated with a grant proposal that may bias his or her evaluation of it. There are several bases for a conflict of interest: employment, financial arrangements, personal or professional relationships or other personal interests. Any one condition may serve to disqualify you from participating in the review of a proposal. If you feel that there may be a perception of conflict, notify AAAS, who will make the determination about your ability to review a proposal without conflict. As part of your duties as an LSDF expert reviewer, you will be expected to sign a declaration(s) that you have disclosed all conflicts of interest that you may have with the proposals.



## B. Interview Stage Purpose and Process

**Mail Review:** The interviews you will be conducting complete a two stage expert review process convened by AAAS for LSDF. The first stage, or “mail review,” resulted in consensus summaries of individual proposals prepared by three member panels.

**Purpose of the Interview:** The applicants proceeding to the interview stage were chosen by the LSDF Board of Trustees. The purpose of the interview stage is to expand on the proposal review and to gather information that is possible only through direct interaction with the proposal team. The outcome is a set of recommendations that the LSDF Board of Trustees will consider in making awards in this competition.

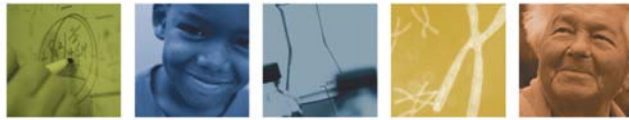
**Preparation for the Interview.** Through AAAS, you have received proposals and comments from the mail review stage. Applicants are preparing a limited amount of supplementary information: a response to the mail review, an update on the development of their programs and an updated budget showing how LSDF funding is to be allocated. The deadline for applicants to submit supplementary information to LSDF is February 6. Supplementary information will be forwarded by LSDF to AAAS for distribution to reviewers. Please review all assigned proposals, review comments, and supplementary information thoroughly.

**Composition of the Review Panel.** The panel is composed of expert reviewers chosen by AAAS to represent the expertise required to review the proposals and interview the teams. Most of the reviewers will have participated in the mail review stage. Additionally, LSDF Board of Trustees members may participate in the interviews. Board members will typically ask questions that relate to the impact of the proposal within Washington State but may ask any question that will help the board make its funding decisions.

**Interview Logistics.** You will separately receive information on arranging your travel. The panel meeting will start with dinner on the evening of March 16, followed by interviews on March 17 and ending on March 18. It will be held at the Watertown Hotel near the University of Washington ([www.watertownseattle.com](http://www.watertownseattle.com)).

**Interview Process:** Interviewees will receive a panel roster and short biographies, so introductions of the review panel will not be necessary. Your identity will not be confidential, but applicants are not allowed to contact you before or following the interview. Please be objective and respectful of applicants during the interview, as the interview process reflects on LSDF and AAAS. Panelists will receive a list of applicant team members attending the interview in advance. Following brief introduction of the applicant team, applicants will have a maximum of 15 minutes to summarize key points regarding their program, including:

- Making an optional PowerPoint presentation;
- Answering questions raised in the consensus mail review comments; and
- Addressing any new results or developments since the proposal was originally submitted.



Following this, the review panel will have a maximum of 45 minutes to:

- Question the team about the proposal's scientific and technical features, organizational structure and function, and contributions to health and health care and the economy within Washington state;
- Question the team about issues raised in the comments from the mail stage reviewers (if not already or sufficiently addressed);
- Evaluate the strength of the research team, as suggested by their interactions during the interview; and
- Ask any questions that will help the panel in making its recommendation for funding. In particular, the criteria in "Detailed Proposal Review Criteria," reproduced below from the mail-review stage, should be the basis for your questions.

The review panel will then meet privately for a maximum of 15 minutes to discuss the interview and assign preliminary ratings for each proposal using a standard form.

LSDF board and staff members in attendance will meet separately to summarize their own impressions of the interview.

Applicants may bring tangible objects to show the panel during their interview, but cannot assume that they will be passed among the panelists. Applicants are not to bring reprints or other materials to pass out at the interview. AAAS will intervene if applicants bring excessive material.

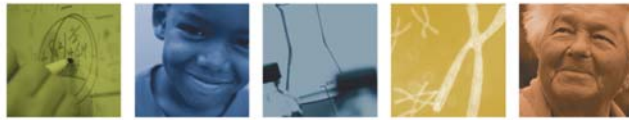
After all interviews have been conducted, the review panel will finalize its ratings and reviews of the proposals in a closed-door session. Applicants' PowerPoint presentations will be available to the review panel during the interview and in the final closed door session.

### C. Overall Scoring and Rating

**Proposal Rating and Evaluations.** Your objective, in the interview stage, is to place each proposal into the rating category that reflects your collective recommendation for funding.

Following the competition, applicants will receive the panel's consensus reviews of their proposals (not to include the comments of LSDF board members). Thus, these evaluations must be constructive and written with care, accuracy, and respect. Neither applicants nor LSDF will receive individual reviewers' comments on proposals.

The overall evaluation should consider all aspects of the proposal but does not need to repeat points made during the mail review stage. Summarize how the interview informed the rating of the proposal according to each of the three core review criteria of the LSDF: (1) scientific, technical, and organizational merit, (2) the potential to improve health and health-care, and (3) the future economic potential. Weigh each of the criteria equally. Put strengths and weaknesses in perspective by indicating their relative magnitude. A very strong proposal will be innovative, address important issues, generate confidence that the proposed research will



make a significant impact, and contribute significantly to LSDF's core goals of improving health and health-care, fostering economic development and enhancing the competitiveness of the life sciences sector in Washington State.

The Board of Trustees will take the consensus reviews into account in making award decisions, but will have state-specific interests to consider as well.

**Outliers.** LSDF understands that proposal quality will vary across the core review criteria. For example, a proposal that may not be scientifically innovative may offer a major opportunity to impact health-care cost effectiveness. Similarly, a mid-level proposal in the scientific and health-care categories could have outstanding economic potential. As reviewers prepare consensus reviews, LSDF asks them to make special note of compelling opportunities within proposals that might otherwise be considered ordinary.

**Rating.** Please use the following general guidelines to rate proposals:

**Highly Recommended:** outstanding, deserves highest priority for funding

**Recommended:** good, worthy of consideration for funding

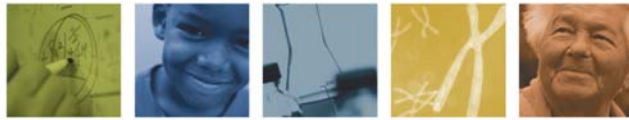
**Not Recommended:** poor, lacking in one or more critical areas; funding not recommended

## Appendix

Detailed reviewer instructions are provided below. These instructions are identical to those from the mail review, except the questions at the end regarding qualification as a program, institutional resource commitment and interview queries have been deleted. Please note that there is one new section at the end of the appendix regarding the program budget. **The information below is essential to review, particularly if you did not participate during the mail-review stage.**

**Background of the Life Sciences Discovery Fund.** LSDF was created by the Washington State Legislature to receive \$350M in tobacco settlement bonus payments over a period of 10 years to invest in life sciences research. The mission of LSDF is to support innovative research in Washington State to promote life sciences competitiveness, enhance economic vitality, and improve health and health care.

**LSDF 07-02 Goals.** This competition will award approximately \$20 million to programs that will be innovative within their fields, build upon established strengths within the participating organization(s), have the potential for growth and sustainability over time, and benefit their organizations, their communities, and the state. All funded proposals will support the LSDF's mission to support innovative research in Washington State to promote life sciences competitiveness, enhance economic vitality, and improve health and health care. Knowledge generation is not the primary desired outcome of LSDF grants.

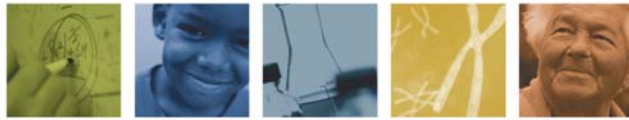


### Proposal Requirements

Programs proposed for LSDF 07-02 funding must be based on a rigorous scientific and organizational rationale. In establishing that rationale, all proposals will be expected to describe:

- the proposed program and the innovations it brings to the field;
- the problem or area of study to be addressed and its importance;
- the strategic importance of the program to the applicant organization;
- the roles of the participating organizations and how their activities will be coordinated;
- the potential for the program's research to benefit the health of the state's citizens or to beneficially impact the state's health-care systems, as well as the time frame for doing so;
- how the proposed program builds upon the organizations' and investigators' prior research and experience, and capitalizes on their established strengths and excellence;
- the facilities in which the program will be housed and the major equipment and other tangible resources that will be made available to the program;
- the scientific personnel who will be involved in the program, their roles and any plans for expansion of personnel;
- the support personnel and their roles;
- how the program will be structured, managed, funded, and developed during its first five years, including milestones, budgets and sources of funding;
- how the program will increase the future competitiveness of the Washington life sciences sector;
- the economic benefits that have the potential to flow from the new program;
- expected outcomes, clearly articulated and capable of being documented;
- how and at what intervals the program will be evaluated; and
- tangible commitments from the participating organizations to support the proposed program that are commensurate with the strategic importance of the program to the participants.

LSDF intends to provide grant support that is not readily available from other sources. Its purpose is to play a catalytic role in helping investigators and their organizations apply their strengths in new areas of research. Proposals should clearly detail why the program is not necessarily eligible for other funding opportunities. They should explain how their program's purpose and scope make the LSDF a particularly appropriate source of funding. At the time of application, it is not necessary for the applicant to have secured all of the funding and resource commitments upon which the program proposal is predicated. LSDF may make an award contingent upon the applicant's ability to secure the additional resources necessary to launch the initiative. The period reserved to satisfy any contingencies shall be specified by the LSDF. In order to be selected for a contingent award, the proposal must detail convincingly how, from whom, and by when the remaining commitments will come. Programs in which LSDF dollars can be used to leverage those from other entities in building a new initiative will be regarded as especially strong.



Programs funded by LSDF 07-02 grants will be expected to demonstrate sustained institutional commitment to long-term results. Therefore, although the duration of grants is not limited, the RFP asks applicants to describe program operations, growth projections, and funding plans for five years or the grant period, whichever is longer.

**What is a program?** This competition provides seed money to launch programs that have the following characteristics: multiple investigators working under a common theme; the potential to be enduring; the ability to attract funding from a variety of sources; and where the whole of the program's activities are greater than the sum of its parts.

Innovation in funded programs may take many forms. Programs may formulate research problems in original ways, reframe issues in a field, and advance new experimental approaches. They may accelerate the development of answers to important questions—creating new collaborations within and outside the applicant organization, creating cross-disciplinary perspectives that have the potential to make life sciences inquiry more productive.

Program proposals may request support for many kinds of activities, including:

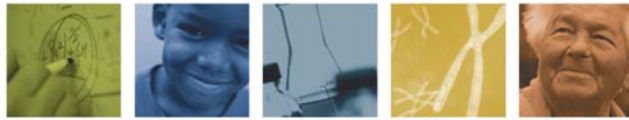
- establishing new centers for research;
- creating new multi-institutional consortia;
- recruiting outstanding scientists to lead new research programs; and
- acquiring major equipment to accelerate advances within a new research program.

The benefits derived from programs in this competition are varied, including:

- enhancing the ability of the state's life sciences sector to solve important problems in health and health care;
- attracting additional financial resources to life sciences research;
- advancing the scientific leadership position of Washington research organizations;
- promoting the training of the state's workforce, particularly in an emerging industry;
- drawing new scientific talent to Washington in the form of students, post-doctoral fellows, researchers, and companies; and
- developing opportunities for new intellectual property creation and commercialization.

Examples of areas of research expected to improve health and health care include:

- new approaches to 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.



### Detailed Proposal Review Criteria

In particular, please read sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 in the RFP for further context.

**Proposals Must Serve the LSDF Mission.** The Life Sciences Discovery Fund is an investment on behalf of the citizens of Washington State. Competitive proposals will serve all three principal review criteria (below). As a reviewer, you will not be expected to be familiar with the particular environment of Washington State. It is the applicants' responsibility to articulate that environment clearly and to define convincingly the specific benefits their research is designed to produce.

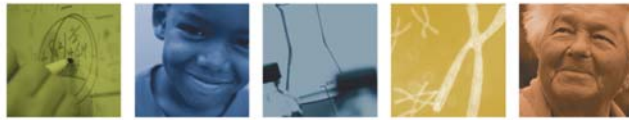
**Specific Criteria for LSDF 07-02.** The principal review criteria for this grant competition are derived from the Fund's mission. You will evaluate proposals with regard to their (1) scientific, technical, and organizational merit, (2) importance to health and health-care, and (3) future economic returns. In addition, there are several related criteria you will be asked to specifically address in your reviews.

**Review Criteria in Detail.** Each criterion, paraphrased from section 4.3 of the RFP, is intended to guide you in evaluating and rating proposals.

#### *Scientific, Technical, and Organizational Merit*

First and foremost, the proposal must meet LSDF's definition of a program. The scientific, technical and organizational merit of the proposal will be judged by how well it demonstrates the following qualities of the proposed program:

- the proposed program is innovative, with scientific and technical originality;
- it focuses on a significant problem or complex set of problems and provides promising new approaches or ways of thinking;
- it proposes innovative hypotheses or addresses critical barriers to research progress in the field;
- it establishes a research framework with strong potential to achieve novel and important results;
- the program has the potential to make a substantial contribution to its field of research;
- it has the potential to establish the applicant organization and any co-applicants as leaders in the field;
- its proposed research outcomes are clearly defined;
- the principal investigator and team have the scientific and organizational competence to ensure the program's success;
- the program is demonstrably superior to alternate approaches in achieving its scientific outcomes;
- where collaboration is required, investigators demonstrate a history of effectively working together and an appropriate plan to manage the collaborative process;
- the proposed program builds upon the already established strengths of the applicant organization;
- the proposed program has the potential to increase the life sciences competitiveness of the applicant organization and of Washington State;



- the objectives of the program are consistent with the strategic priorities of the applicant and co-applicant organizations;
- the applicant and co-applicant organizations demonstrate strategic alignment by committing resources to enhance the probability of the proposed program's success; and
- the budget is appropriate to the scope and goals of the proposed program.

#### *Importance to Health and Health Care*

The program's importance to health and health care will be judged by how well the proposal demonstrates that it possesses the following qualities:

- the program has the potential to make a substantial and measurable contribution to improving health and health care in Washington;
- it will move the current state of knowledge in health or health care forward; and
- it will achieve one or more of the following benefits: improved diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and management of disease and improved delivery of health-care services.

The range of possible proposed improvements is understood to be broad, and the intended health results of the proposed program may be near- or long-term. Priority will be given to proposals that address significant health and health-care problems and that provide compelling evidence that they have the potential to yield the greatest benefits for Washington citizens.

#### *Future Economic Returns*

The proposed program must have the potential to benefit Washington's economy. Applicants must clearly state the proposed economic benefits of the program and how those benefits improve the state's economic environment. Benefits may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- direct economic activity entailed in the operations of the program and the conduct of its research;
- measurable savings in the cost of health care due to the application of program research results;
- future economic consequences of program-induced improvements in health;
- new training and employment opportunities fostered by the program's research enterprises;
- success in attracting life sciences researchers, companies, and jobs to Washington;
- success in creating new companies and jobs and attracting investment capital to Washington;
- creation of intellectual property, presenting attractive licensing opportunities for start-up and existing companies; and
- future life sciences research funding.

Your evaluation of proposals is expected to be based on your judgment of the extent to which a proposal meets each of the criteria listed above.



*Program Budget*

Applicants have been asked to submit an updated budget. The budget is expected to show the sources of revenues for the first five years of the program and how those revenues will be allocated. The updated budget is expected to also show how LSDF funds will be allocated during the term of the grant. Reviewers are urged to review the budgets carefully and suggest any modifications that they think appropriate, and indicate if any of the suggestions are essential in an award.



## Interview Comment Form

### LSDF 07-02: Innovative Programs to Advance Health Research

Proposal Title:

Principal Investigator:

Applicant Organization:

Request ID:

#### Rating Scale

Please use the following scale in your ratings. Comments will be shared with applicants, but individual reviewers will not be identified.

**Highly Recommended:** outstanding, deserves highest priority for funding

**Recommended:** good, worthy of consideration for funding

**Not Recommended:** poor, lacking in one or more critical areas; funding not recommended

Overall proposal rating:  Highly Recommended  
 Recommended  
 Not Recommended

Please briefly describe the main strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. Include any recommendations for changes to the budget.

Comments:

Please rate the proposal's responsiveness to the following key criteria and provide constructive comments:

#### Scientific, Technical, and Organizational Merit

Highly Recommended  
 Recommended  
 Not Recommended

Comments (Include your assessment of the organizational and scientific competency of the principal investigator and team):



Importance to Health and Health-care

- Highly Recommended
- Recommended
- Not Recommended

Comments (Include whether near-term benefits are likely):

Future Economic Returns

- Highly Recommended
- Recommended
- Not Recommended

Comments:

Does the budget seem appropriate to the scope of the program?

- Yes
- No

Comments. Please also note any areas or issues regarding the budget that should be explored if the applicant is selected for an award. Please note any budgetary conditions you recommend the Board place on the applicant if an award were made.