





concerns you may have about a proposal or the 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 necessary to review a proposal, you should not solicit it yourself, but instead notify AAAS to make arrangements for outside assistance. 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 participation in the review of LSDF proposals.

**2. Conflict of Interest (COI).** A perceived or actual COI in scientific peer review exists when reviewers have an interest associated with a grant proposal that may bias their evaluation of it. The basis for a COI may be: employment, financial arrangements, personal or professional relationships or other personal interests. Any one condition may serve to disqualify a reviewer from participating in the review of a proposal. If you believe there may be even a perception of conflict you should notify AAAS who will make the determination about a reviewer's ability to review a proposal without conflict. You are expected to sign a declaration(s) that you have disclosed all conflicts of interest that you may have with the proposals.

**Revisions to Reviewer Guidelines.** LSDF will post any necessary revisions and/or additions to the first phase Reviewer Guidelines on its website and send them to reviewers through AAAS.

## B. General Proposal Review

**Proposal Rating Process and Evaluation.** The proposal evaluation process has four phases. The first, an individual preliminary review of proposals, is followed by a consensus evaluation developed during an expert reviewers' panel discussion. Second, the LSDF Board of Trustees, informed by the first phase review, selects candidates to be interviewed. Third, the proposals of those candidates being interviewed undergo a second expert review in preparation for the interview panel with participation from the LSDF Board of Trustees. Fourth, the LSDF Board of Trustees selects the awardees from among the interviewed candidates.

Your objective, in this first or "mail review" phase, is to place the proposals into one of three rating categories. This placement will reflect your collective recommendation for advancing the proposal to the interview stage.

You will first review and evaluate proposals individually, according to your assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. Once all of the proposal reviews are complete, you and the other expert reviewers will participate in a phone meeting and a consensus evaluation will be written. If any member of the review panel has an opinion that diverges markedly from the consensus, that divergence will be noted and explained.

Applicants will receive the consensus reviews of their proposals, so these evaluations must be constructive and written with care, accuracy, and respect. You should provide sufficient feedback and detail to assure applicants that their proposals were reviewed thoroughly, to be of constructive use to help formulate a resubmission, and to inform the board in making its



decisions. Neither applicants nor LSDF will receive individual reviewers' preliminary comments on proposals.

### C. Proposal Review Criteria

**Note:** Read Sections 2, 3.4.4 and 3.4.5 in the RFP for further context at:

<http://www.lsdfa.org/grants/current/08-02/RFP%2008-02--final--22Feb08.pdf>

LSDF 08-02 is a "program" competition. "Programs" are strategic research initiatives, which are broad in scope. Programs address problems within a specific field of study and position an organization or organizations for future competitiveness and leadership. In a separate RFP process, LSDF also funds "projects," which are typically individual scientific studies and investigator-initiated. Projects, relatively limited in scope with a sharply-defined research focus, are accomplished during the term of the grant.

**What is a fundable program?** All proposed research must be scientifically rigorous. Programs are evaluated according to their scientific, technical and organizational merit and their potential to benefit life sciences competitiveness, health and health care, and the economy in Washington State. A fundable proposal will be innovative, address relevant important issues, and generate confidence that the proposed research will make a significant impact. [More information on anticipated returns on the state's investment in life sciences research is included in the 2006 LSDF Report to the Washington State Legislature found on the LSDF website at: [http://www.lsdfa.org/about/files/12-01-06\\_Report\\_to\\_the\\_Legislature.pdf](http://www.lsdfa.org/about/files/12-01-06_Report_to_the_Legislature.pdf).]

- **Proposed programs must be built upon an applicant organization's strengths and have clear strategic importance for the applicant organization.** Applicants must describe their plans to launch and build the program, the ways the program will advance their strategic direction, and the resource commitments that will be in place to support and sustain the program's growth and development. LSDF expects that applicant organizations will make significant resource commitments to support the proposed programs. Such resource commitments demonstrate that the proposed program is of strategic importance to the applicant organization and that the organization is invested in helping the program grow to sustainability.
- **Proposed programs must have a long-term vision and be designed to endure.** The program must not be structured around research questions that will be answered within a few years, or without a long-term plan for expanding program activities or evolving to meet new challenges.
- **New synergies will be created among participating researchers and organizations.** This is essential to a program, but sometimes difficult to measure. Synergy results from the interchange among researchers with complementary strengths and perspectives who are able to develop new programmatic research directions because of the collaboration. In this context, the opposite of synergy would be an assembly of research projects operating in parallel with no added value.



- **LSDF desires to fund teams that show a commitment to translating the results of their research into widespread use.** “Translation” means transitioning from the laboratory into clinical practice (bench-to-bedside) or expanding clinical practice into broad acceptance and use. Translation can also involve intra- or inter-organizational dissemination of knowledge, public policy initiatives and commercialization.
- **Proposals with the potential to have near-term impact on improving health and health care and/or the capacity to attract additional resources to enable broader implementation of the research are especially desirable.** Such additional resources may include follow-on research funding and/or investor funding; commitments to commercialization of research discoveries through the formation of a new company or licensing to an existing company; and commitments from research partners or other interested parties to adopt a successfully demonstrated strategy or technology.

Restructuring of existing resources within an organization does not constitute a new “program,” as that term is used within the 08-02 RFP; nor is an applicant’s need for infrastructure development a sufficient basis for a program proposal. Rather, LSDF support is meant to assist with the launch of new initiatives that represent innovative thinking within the participating organizations and the field.

A program to implement an innovation (e.g., an improved clinical method) or to train a cadre of professionals in the absence of a research question is not fundable. Translation of an innovation to broader practice must be accompanied by testing of a hypothesis.

**Proposals Must Serve the LSDF Mission.** The Life Sciences Discovery Fund is an investment made on behalf of the citizens of Washington State. 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 with clarity and persuasion the specific benefits their research is designed to produce.

**Specific Criteria for LSDF 08-02.** 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, you will be asked to specifically evaluate the applicant’s justification for LSDF funding. Where possible and appropriate, please organize your discussion of the three principal review criteria into sections that individually describe the proposal’s strengths and weaknesses. Do not describe the investigator’s plans in detail, but briefly describe the overall goals of the proposal.

#### **Review Criteria in Detail.**

##### *Scientific and Technical Merit*

The proposed program must be of high scientific and technical merit. These will be judged by how well the proposed program demonstrates the following qualities:



- it is innovative, with scientific and technical originality;
- it meets LSDF's definition of a "program" and offers the likelihood of synergistic outcomes;
- it builds upon the established strengths of the applicant organization;
- its objectives are consistent with the strategic priorities of the applicant organizations;
- it focuses on a significant problem or complex set of problems and provides promising new approaches or ways of thinking;
- it establishes a research framework with strong potential to achieve novel and important results;
- it has the potential to establish the applicant organization and any co-applicants as leaders in the field;
- it has the potential to increase the life sciences competitiveness of the applicant organization and of Washington State;
- its proposed research outcomes are clearly defined and realistic;
- it has the potential to generate significant outcomes;
- the principal investigator and any co-investigators demonstrate the experience and ability to execute the proposed program successfully;
- the applicant organization commits resources to enhance the probability of the proposed program's success;
- the budget is appropriate to the scope and goals of the proposed program; and
- the applicant makes a clear case for why an investment from LSDF (as compared to other potential sources) is appropriate and necessary to the success of this program.

### *Organizational Merit*

The proposed program must be of high organizational merit. "Organization" refers to the program itself, not the applicant organization. Merit will be judged by how well the proposed program demonstrates the following qualities:

- it is organized in a clear way that facilitates communication among participants, decision-making and future growth;
- investigators demonstrate a history of effective collaboration and an appropriate plan to manage the collaborative process;
- procedures exist to coordinate and prioritize the work of the program to resolve roadblocks; and
- a coherent decision-making structure (governance) exists.

### *Importance to Health and Health Care*

The proposed program must have the potential to benefit health and health care of Washington residents. The program's importance to health and health care will be judged by how well the proposal demonstrates that it possesses the following qualities:



- it addresses a significant issue in health or health care in Washington State;
- it will move the current state of knowledge in health or health care forward;
- it has the potential to make substantial, beneficial and measurable contributions to improving health and health care in Washington;
- its research results will be translatable to a larger population and a translation plan will be evident; and
- it will achieve benefits such as:
  - improved diagnosis, treatment, prevention or management of disease;
  - better management of health-care delivery environments and systems;
  - promotion of healthy patient behaviors and patient compliance with care-givers' recommendations;
  - better integration of care-givers, patients, and health-care systems; or
  - accomplishing any of the above in a more cost-effective manner.

The range of possible proposed improvements in health or health care is understood to be broad, and the intended impact of the proposed program may be near- or long-term, with near-term benefit being especially desirable. Priority will be given to programs that address widespread health and health-care problems and that provide compelling evidence that they have the potential to yield benefits for the greatest number of Washington State citizens.

#### *Future Economic Returns*

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

- providing direct economic activity through the conduct of program research and operations;
- producing measurable gains in cost-effective health care due to the application of research results;
- contributing to future economic gains through program-induced improvements in health;
- fostering new training and employment opportunities through program research;
- attracting life sciences researchers, companies, and jobs to Washington;
- creating new Washington companies and jobs and attracting investment capital to Washington;
- creating intellectual property that presents attractive licensing opportunities;
- obtaining future life sciences research funding enabled by the LSDF grant.

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. However, your review must also address the following question directly.



*Necessity for LSDF funding (i.e., “Why is LSDF funding appropriate and necessary for this program?”) (See Section 1.2 of the RFP.)*

Reviewers should assess how well the applicants established the particular appropriateness and necessity of LSDF funding for their proposals. 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 various areas of research. Proposals should clearly detail why the program is not necessarily appropriate for other funding opportunities. They should explain how their program’s purpose and scope make LSDF a particularly appropriate source of funding.

#### D. Clarification of Issues That May Arise During Review

Following are issues that you are not required to comment on, but that may arise as you evaluate proposals.

**Budget.** If any changes in the budget are recommended, explain what changes should be made and why.

**Indirect costs.** LSDF is willing to pay the full costs of doing research (i.e., including what are typically called “indirect” costs, and noted on the LSDF budget as “Administrative Costs” and “Facilities Charges”) when expressed as direct costs. Applicants are not supposed to apply their Federally-negotiated indirect cost rate to their “direct” costs to derive facilities and administration (F & A) charges. You are not expected to determine how the applicant arrived at the F & A charges. Awardees will be required to provide a detailed breakdown of all costs.

**Eligibility.** You may assume that organization eligibility has been reviewed by LSDF staff, but you may raise concerns with AAAS if you feel strongly that an organization is ineligible.

**Innovation.** LSDF wishes to support innovative programs, especially within the context of a portfolio of funded programs that spans the spectrum of risk.

**LSDF participation in consensus review.** An LSDF program staff person may listen in during the consensus review phone calls. The program staff person is not acting as a reviewer.

#### E. Overall Scoring and Rating

**Funding.** Sixty-four letters of intent were received for the LSDF 08-02 competition, and funds available will be sufficient for no more than four to six awards. The Board of Trustees will take the consensus reviews into account in choosing interviewees, 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 economic return and health-care categories could have outstanding scientific innovation. As reviewers prepare



consensus reviews, LSDF asks them to make special note of compelling opportunities within proposals that might otherwise be considered ordinary or overly risky.

**Rating.** Note that you should rate the proposal as presented by the applicant and not on the basis of its theoretical potential, e.g. in the absence of its likelihood of success. For example, an applicant may propose to cure a devastating disease affecting many Washingtonians but have a poor approach to doing so. In the "Importance to Health and Health Care" criterion, even though this disease is very important and its cure would be extremely valuable, if the proposal's approach is flawed, the rating for this criterion should not be high.

Please use the following general guidelines to rate proposals:

**Highly Recommended:** outstanding, deserves highest priority for an interview

**Recommended:** good, worthy of consideration for an interview

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