

Richard
King
Mellon
Foundation

Aging as a Disease

Request for Proposals

Application Deadline

Friday, September 9, 2022. Noon (12:00 PM). Eastern Standard Time.

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Introduction to the Richard King Mellon Foundation

The Richard King Mellon Foundation's mission is to improve the competitive position of the region; strengthen the vitality of southwestern Pennsylvania, particularly the City of Pittsburgh and its neighborhoods; and protect important habitats and amenities in western Pennsylvania and other key landscapes across the nation. Founded in 1947, the Foundation is the largest foundation in southwestern Pennsylvania, and one of the 50 largest in the world. The Foundation's 2021 year-end net assets were \$3.4 billion, and its Trustees in 2021 disbursed \$152 million in grants and program-related investments. The Foundation focuses its funding on six mutually reinforcing funding programs, delineated in [its 2021-2030 Strategic Plan](#). These funding programs are Conservation; Economic Development; Economic Mobility; Health and Well-Being; Organizational Effectiveness; and Social-Impact Investments. All six programs invest in bold, evidence-informed solutions that align with the Foundation's mission and contribute to positive change.

Health and Well-Being Funding Program

[Health and Well-Being](#) is one of the six programs defined in the Foundation's 2021-2030 strategic plan. The Health and Well-Being program serves children, youth and adults who reside in Allegheny or Westmoreland counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. Through the Health and Well-Being program, the Foundation seeks to support individuals in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties who are unable to live a healthy life due to conditions in their communities, lack of integration across sectors, and differences in the availability of quality supports and services. The Foundation organizes its Health and Well-Being program into three areas: Healthy People, Healthy Communities, and Advancing Science. Each investment area contains priorities and outcomes that further describe the Foundation's funding interests and the changes that the Foundation hopes to create.

Background: Aging as a Disease

In recent years, a field of research has emerged showing the potential to treat aging as a disease. While much of the knowledge from this research has been obtained through animal and yeast models, its implications for human health and quality of life are profound. By finding interventions that slow the rate of aging, researchers and physicians would be better equipped to delay the onset of chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's, and diabetes; reduce mortality rates; and improve quality of life. Such interventions also would challenge the notion that our quality of life is likely to decline beginning at a certain age. This will be particularly important as researchers from the Stanford Center for Longevity predict that as many as "half of today's five-year-olds can expect to live to the age of 100." While more immediate interventions are needed to support the health and well-being of the current aging population, new research and the commercialization of science and technology offers the promise to reduce the burden of aging on individuals and society in the years ahead. At the same time, considerable thought must be given on how to make those interventions available across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic lines.

To offer a few examples:

1. Research is identifying the genetic and epigenetic factors that contribute toward the aging of cells and organisms
2. Research is exploring the factors that contribute toward the health of individuals living in "Blue Zones," or those geographies where individuals are more likely to live beyond 100 years
3. Research is exploring the role of basic interventions such as diet, caloric restriction, exercise, cryotherapy and oxygen therapy to slow the progression of aging
4. Biotechnology companies are developing interventions to destroy senescent, or "zombie" cells, that are believed to contribute toward disease.

Request for Proposals

The Richard King Mellon Foundation is issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) that aims to promote basic and translational research on aging as a disease, and the commercialization of science and technology to reduce the progression of aging.

The Foundation strongly encourages collaborative proposals that engage multiple partners across social services, healthcare, social mission for-profits, and university research. All applicants must address how their project will help the most at-risk populations. Nonprofits and for-profits that are not located in Pittsburgh are eligible to apply but must demonstrate how their research or company will impact individuals living in Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties.

Eligibility Criteria

The Foundation's general eligibility criteria apply to the RFP. Please review the Funding Policies on the [Apply](#) page of the Foundation's website and the [General FAQs](#) found on the Foundation's Nonprofit and Public Sector Partners webpage.

Funding Guidelines

The Foundation expects to provide two types of support through this RFP.

Planning and Innovation grants:

- Will provide up to \$250,000 for new and translational research

Scalability grants:

- Commercialize promising science and technology interventions (social impact investments).
- Will provide up to \$400,000 and funded activities should be completed 24 months after the grant award

Grant funds awarded through this RFP may be used for a variety of expenses such as program and service delivery, consultant fees, evaluation, or "overhead" or administrative expenses. A limited amount of capital expenditures for equipment and lab infrastructure that are essential to accomplish the outcomes of the proposal may be included.

If an application is truly exceptional, the Foundation may consider providing more than \$250,000 for Planning and Innovation grants or more than \$400,000 for Scalability grants. Successful grantees may be invited to apply for follow-on funding or additional capacity-building funding opportunities at the conclusion of the grant.

What the Foundation Will Not Fund

The Foundation will not fund the following through this RFP:

- Endowments
- Advocacy, political causes, or events
- Existing deficits or retroactive funding
- Event sponsorships

Application Timeline

Funding is expected to be awarded in the fall of 2022.

Schedule	
Friday, September 9, 2022. Noon (12:00 PM) EST.	Applications submitted. https://www.grantrequest.com/SID_5499?SA=SNA&FID=35046
October 14, 2022	Funding Status Notification
October 28, 2022	Funds Issued for Awarded Grants

Inquiries

Please contact Nikki Pirain (npirain@rkmf.org) at the Foundation to discuss questions regarding this RFP. However, a discussion is discretionary and not a requirement.