Counterpoint to RFA Marketing

Carole C. Wegner, PhD, HCLD
Senior VP, Research and Grants Administration
2020 Spring HRA Meeting, March 31, 2020
V Foundation Grant Portfolio-priorities

- Research ALL TYPES of cancer at ALL STAGES of life
- Early Career V Scholar Awards: $100,000 per year for 2 years. V Scholar Goal: R01 or similar large grants.
- Translational Awards: $200,000 per year for 3 years. Goal: set the stage for a new clinical trial in 3-5 years.
- Designated grants- Responsive to new priorities; varied every year

SINCE 1994
FUNDED MORE THAN
$250 MM
in nearly 1000 CANCER RESEARCH GRANTS
How we identify priorities and new areas

- **Formal strategic process** between V Foundation Board and V Foundation Scientific Advisory Committee to identify overall strategic goals
- **Tracking impacts** from the grant portfolio to decide which legacy programs to keep
- **Identify new opportunities arising** from designated funds (donors, Pharma, and event proceeds) that align with strategic initiatives
- New ideas arising from **co-funders** at other foundations
Our Grant Process

A rigorous and competitive process implemented to identify and fund breakthrough research. We fund all types of cancer at all life stages.

Invitation only RFAs—primarily to NCI Designated cancer centers

Institutions nominate one applicant to apply

Nationally recognized scientific advisory committee reviews and ranks proposals

Annual reporting of scientific outcomes and financial expenditures
Benefits of Direct RFA Invitation to Set list, rather than Marketing RFA

• You can **pre-vet** institutions that perform high quality research in your area of interest.
• You have **zero costs** of sending your RFA to contacts by email
• You can ask invited institutions to nominate a defined number of applicant(s) which allows you to **anticipate reviewers** needed.
• The nomination process creates a **first layer of competition** at the institution for the opportunity to apply.
• The nomination process allows you to **collect applicant information** that can inform reviewer expertise needed, names of other contacts for payment or future marketing of the grant outcomes.
• You can **cut down on nuisance applications** that are out of scope.
• You can develop a **research relationship** with these institutions that receive annual invitations over time.
Funds for Specific Focus Areas

- **Cancer Survivorship** research - Robin Roberts Thrivership Research Fund.
- **Cancer Disparities** cancer research - the Stuart Scott Memorial Cancer Research Fund.
- **Adolescent and Young Adult** Cancer Research - Tyler Trent Fund
- Collaborative research between Veterinarians and Oncologists for **better treatments for pets and people** - Canine Comparative Oncology Research Fund
Stuart Scott Memorial Cancer Research Fund

A means to Encourage Applicant Diversity

• Each NCI designated cancer center can **nominate two applicants if at least one** is an applicant from an underrepresented minority.

• Under-represented: Self-identified as African American, Hispanic American, Native American or Alaskan Eskimo, **Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders**
Elements of a Well Written RFA

- Establish eligibility criteria for applicants, *and* institutions
- Scope should be clearly written and align with Foundation’s focus
- Dates for deadlines should be Tues-Thursday so staff don’t have to deal with panicked last-minute applicants on weekends
- Make next steps clear and track applicant questions for improving clarity next time
- Consider what a good application will include for reviewers to assess and ask for those elements in the scope
- Provide overall info about grant: amount, duration, support of indirect costs, overall timeline of grant making process
Our Advice to Applicants

Please don’t:

• Wait until the last 24 hours to ask questions about completing the application or using the application software.

• Submit a 6 page application with 200 pages of supporting materials, including a 100 page CV. No one will read it.

• Ignore sections of the application to do with patient advocacy or statistical analysis. They are there because we think they are important.
Our Advice to Applicants

Please do:

- Review the funders website to understand their priorities and read the RFA carefully.
- Reach out to the grants officers to clarify application requirements well in advance of the deadline.
- Treat reviewers as you would like to be treated: be concise, clear and anticipatory (of pitfalls) in your research plan.
- Respect eligibility guidelines provided in the RFA.
- If you are awarded a grant, please provide timely and well-written progress reports, and stay in touch with the funder.
- Learn to write high quality lay summaries- your future funding may depend on it!
DON’T GIVE UP...
DON’T EVER GIVE UP.

—JIM VALVANO
THANK YOU