WashU Public Health

Ryan Institute for
Interdisciplinary Health Solutions

Call for Proposals

1. Overview

The Ryan Institute for Interdisciplinary Health Solutions is launching its inaugural Call for Proposals to identify the first Ryan Institute Faculty Scholars. Consistent with the vision of the WashU Bursky School of Public Health, the Institute exists to advance transformative solutions to the world's most pressing health challenges. The Institute's mission is to develop actionable, scalable solutions to complex public health challenges through solution-oriented interdisciplinary research, high-level dialogue, and stakeholder collaboration and partnerships. Accordingly, the Institute focuses on work that bridges disciplines, moves with intent from idea to practice, and aspires to engage in consequential science and make durable improvements in health and well-being. This call is an invitation to our faculty to help execute the Institute's mission.

2. Structure

The selected team will be named Ryan Institute Faculty Scholars and will receive $150,000 in seed funding to advance the proposed work over a two-year period beginning September 1, 2026. The award is intended to help the team build toward solutions, to pilot approaches, generate data, and create the foundation for larger-scale support and durable impact.

Beyond the financial award, the Institute will work closely with the Faculty Scholars to shape and refine the approach to solutions. This includes ongoing engagement with Dean Sandro Galea and Lisa Klesges, Special Advisor for Interdisciplinary Initiatives, as well as access to the school's broader action-oriented resources in translation, economic analysis, communications, and policy support. Where alignment of interests and timing permits, Ryan Institute postdoctoral fellows may also collaborate on elements of the awarded work.

Separately, and in addition to the seed funding, the Institute will fund a high-level summit organized around the awarded team's topic. The summit is designed to bring together leaders from academia, industry, government, and civil society to elaborate on, road-test, and refine the ideas at the heart of the proposal, and to produce a state-of-the field report ensuring that the work does not end with conversation but moves toward application.

3. What we are looking for

We invite proposals that articulate a defined public health problem and offer concrete, solution-oriented ideas that can be advanced with focused investment, partnerships, mentorship, and convening over a two-year period. We are looking for ideas in a generative middle space: problems where the gap between what we know and what we do is clear, where promising approaches can be

defined, scoped and proven, and where seed support paired with high-level engagement can meaningfully accelerate the path from idea to impact.

Strong proposals will identify a problem of consequence for population health, articulate one or more candidate solutions, describe the challenge (constraints, gaps, limitations, compromised approaches, etc.) that currently prevent the optimal solutions from being implemented or scaled, and sketch the work the team would undertake during the funded period to close those gaps. Proposed solutions must be grounded in practicality, and crafted to succeed in practice. Solutions should generate a positive return on health and offer demonstrable progress against defined key performance indicators. Areas of focus should fall broadly within the strategic directions of the school, ensuring that the Institute's work strengthens and elevates the school's intellectual and action agenda.

4. **Eligibility and team composition**

To reflect the Institute's commitment to interdisciplinary science, every proposal must include at least one primary faculty member of the WashU Bursky School of Public Health and at least one secondary faculty member. Larger teams are welcome but not required. The proposal should make plain the contribution each collaborator brings to the proposed work and why the partnership is necessary to address the problem at hand.

5. **Proposal format**

Proposals should be no longer than two pages, single-spaced, in an 11-point font. Within those two pages, the proposal should detail:

- The problem being addressed
- Proposed solution or set of solutions
- The gaps that prevent current implementation
- A brief outline of the work the team would undertake over the two-year period.
- Team composition and the role of each collaborator should be included highlighting the interdisciplinary partnership.

References, if any, do not count against the two-page limit but should be kept concise.

6. **Review and selection**

Proposals will be reviewed by a panel convened for this purpose, drawing on subject-matter expertise relevant to the proposals received. Review will weigh the significance of the problem, the

promise and clarity of the proposed solution, the strength and genuine interdisciplinarity of the team, and the feasibility of meaningful progress within a two-year horizon. Preference will be given to proposals that articulate a credible path from idea to action and that make good use of the convening and translation resources the Institute is positioned to offer.

7. **Timeline**

Proposals are due by end of business on July 15, 2026. The selected Faculty Scholars will be notified in August, and the funded project period will begin on September 1, 2026, running through August 31, 2028.

8. **Submission**

Proposals should be submitted as a single PDF to Caitlin Bristow, bristow@wustl.edu. Questions about the call, eligibility, or the proposal format are welcomed and may be directed to Caitlin Bristow in advance of the deadline.

We look forward to learning what our faculty believe needs solving, and to working alongside the awarded team over the next two years to help good ideas become solutions to population health challenges.