

CALL FOR LETTERS OF INTEREST

Build your skills in transforming care with LHS training & mentorship

What is the Washington LHS E-STAR Center?

The Washington Learning Health System Embedded Scientist Training and Research (LHS E-STAR) Center provides an **exciting opportunity for early-career scientists to receive training and mentorship** to build their skills and experience in transforming primary care. Visit us online at act-center.org/lhs-e-star

Early-career scientists who become Washington LHS E-STAR scholars will receive multidisciplinary, didactic, and experiential training in LHS core competencies. They will also have a mentoring team who will provide guidance and support, share knowledge and experiences to build new LHS research skills, and connect scholars with professional networks.

The Washington LHS E-STAR Center is a collaborative effort by the University of Washington, the Veterans Affairs Puget Sound Health Care System, Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute (KPWHRI), and diverse primary care organizations (PCOs) across Washington state. These organizations are working together to **train the next generation of independent scientists** to help integrated health systems and community health centers meet the challenges of providing equitable, high-quality primary care.

Our goal is to build long-term partnerships to sustain and advance LHS research while supporting Washington LHS E-STAR scholars as they conduct research projects that serve the priorities of our partner PCOs and their patients. Specifically, the Center will:

- **Train and mentor a diverse group of early-career scientists** to conduct LHS research in partnership with primary care leaders and clinical teams.
- **Build infrastructure to support ongoing research-health care partnerships** that help PCOs become learning health systems.

Who is eligible to apply?

You are eligible to apply to be a Washington LHS E-STAR scholar if you:

- Hold a full-time faculty position at the University of Washington or Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute as of September 30, 2024. People in acting faculty positions are also eligible. OR
- Are a postdoctoral scholar or PhD student at the University of Washington.

In a learning health system (LHS), researchers and health care organizations work in partnership to continually improve care and health across diverse populations in real-world care settings.

The Washington LHS E-STAR Center is **1 of 16 LHS research training centers nationwide** funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI).

Led by faculty with expertise in LHS research and training, the Center **brings together researchers and primary care organizations to conduct LHS research** focused on rapidly developing and implementing evidence to improve care and equity.

If you have questions about the LHS E-STAR Center or this call for letters of interest, please email Monica Fujii at monica.m.fujii@kp.org.

What are the timeline and funding expectations?

- Scholars will start their projects in October 2024. Projects will last 2 years, which includes a 6-month planning phase and a 1.5-year execution phase.
- Each project will receive an annual budget of \$75,000 in direct costs, for a total of \$150,000 in direct costs over the life of the project. The budget is intended to support the LHS scholar at approximately 25% FTE and provide the partnering PCO a stipend of \$10,000. The remaining budget will support research staff (based at KPWHRI) and other support needed to conduct the research project (e.g., participant incentives, survey administration).
- Minor staffing plan adjustments can be made within the \$150,000 total project budget to account for the variety of projects expected.

How to apply

Early-career scientists interested in becoming a Washington LHS E-STAR scholar should **complete an [online form](#) and send the following 3 documents by email to LHS-ESTAR@kp.org by 5 p.m. PST on May 29, 2024:**

1. Curriculum vitae (CV)

2. Letter of interest

In no more than 2 single-spaced pages, describe the following:

- Your interest in one or both PCOs and their identified research priorities. Refer to “[Get to know our partner organizations](#)” for information about the PCOs.
- Your proposed contribution to the research-health care partnership with the PCO.
- How the project, training, and mentoring will advance your research and career goals.
- Your proposed mentoring team, including a primary mentor. If you haven’t yet formed a mentoring team, please identify and reach out to potential mentors early. Mentors may include faculty from KPWHRI, University of Washington, or the [list of LHS E-STAR mentors](#).
- Your current responsibilities, including clinical, teaching, research, and other duties you will continue during your time as a scholar.

3. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) statement

In one single-spaced page:

- Describe how your research, teaching, and/or service activities reflect DEI principles and/or how you plan to advance excellence in DEI in your future research, teaching, and/or service activities.
- To the extent you feel comfortable, please include how your identities and lived experiences have shaped your approach to DEI in your research, teaching, and/or service activities.

Key dates

Informational webinar

10:30 AM PST May 14, 2024

Letter of intent deadline

5:00 PM PST May 29, 2024

Notice of invitation to apply

By July 8, 2024

Application deadline

5:00 PM PST August 16, 2024

Awardees notified

By October 1, 2024

Project timeline

October 2024 – June 30, 2026

The Washington LHS E-STAR Center is committed to improving health equity in primary care and diversifying the LHS research workforce. We are interested in recruiting **scholars with identities and lived experiences** that AHRQ describes as [underrepresented in health services research \(see Part 2, Section 1\)](#). Some examples of underrepresented populations include people:

- from racial and ethnic groups underrepresented in health-related sciences, including Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, and American Indian and Alaska Native;
- with disabilities;
- who have experienced homelessness;
- who were in the foster care system;
- who were eligible for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program;
- who have no parents/guardians who completed a bachelor's degree;
- who were eligible for Federal Pell grants;
- who received support from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) either as a parent or as a child;
- who grew up in a U.S. rural area or a CMS-designated low-income or health professional shortage area.

Scholar Selection Process

Based on submitted letters of interest and DEI statements, we will select a group of candidates to move forward in the application process. Selected candidates will be notified in early July.

Next, these candidates will meet with PCO leaders to inform the content and scope of a full proposal, which is **due on August 16, 2024**. Full applications will require documentation of institutional and mentor support, verification of program eligibility, and a description of research plans.

The Washington LHS E-STAR Center Steering Committee and our partner PCOs will review the full proposals and select 2 scholars to invite into the program. Formal invitations will go out to selected scholars **by the week of September 30, 2024 — with a project start date in October 2024**.

The WA LHS E-STAR Center will recruit a total of seven LHS scholars over the next five years. We are seeking two scholars during this first of three rounds of scholar selection. For each round, the Center will collaborate with our partner PCOs to identify their research priorities and select LHS scholars interested in conducting research projects addressing these priorities. For this first round of scholar selection, CHCW and Neighborcare have identified the priorities listed above. In the next two rounds of scholar selection, the WA LHS E-STAR Center will be collaborating with our other partner PCOs to identify their own research priorities. We encourage early-career scientists who do not apply for this first round of scholar selection to review subsequent Calls for LOIs to determine whether the PCOs' research priorities align with the scientists' own research interests and expertise.

Get to know our partner organizations



[Community Health of Central Washington](#) (CHCW) is an federally qualified health system located in Central Washington, a region with the state's largest Latino and Native American communities. CHCW's mission aims to ensure that all people in its region enjoy access to affordable and appropriate health care. They provide comprehensive care for all ages, regardless of the ability to pay. CHCW operates 5 clinical facilities and provides services to a current patient population of approximately 30,000 people, over 65% of whom are insured by Medicaid or Medicare. CHCW's community-based residency program trains patient-centered, culturally-sensitive, compassionate family medicine physicians to provide quality care to the diverse patient population in Central Washington and beyond.



[Neighborcare Health](#) is a federally qualified health care system that provides a wide array of healthcare services in the greater Seattle area. They aim to provide comprehensive health care to families and individuals who have difficulty accessing care; respond with sensitivity to the needs of culturally diverse patients; and advocate and work with others to improve the overall health status of the communities they serve. Each year they care for 60,000 patients at nearly 30 non-profit medical, dental and school-based clinics. Most of their patients have Apple Health Medicaid or do not have health insurance, and 70% are in racial and ethnic groups that are often underserved by the health care system..

As part of a long-standing commitment to quality improvement and evidence-based care, CHCW and Neighborcare are partnering with the Washington LHS E-STAR Center. Each health system will work with a scholar on one of the following potential projects:

- 1) **Childhood Immunization.** Both health systems aim to improve performance measures related to childhood immunizations for patients under 2 years of age. At **Neighborcare**, MMR and flu vaccine have the largest number of missed doses. There are also disparities in immunization coverage for specific racial and ethnic groups. At **CHCW**, they've identified increasing attendance of well-child visits as an opportunity to also improve vaccination rates. Possible drivers of low immunization rates to explore include social determinants of health and barriers to accessing care. **Both Neighborcare and CHCW** are interested in using qualitative and/or quantitative methods to learn more about barriers and facilitators to immunizations and identifying intervention strategies for increasing immunization rates in their clinics.
- 2) **Adult patients with hypertension.** **Neighborcare** has a high prevalence of patients with hypertension and aims to improve their performance measures related to hypertension management. With assistance from UW biostatistics students, they have used patient data to identify hypertension disparities by socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic group, and language. The health system would like support in interpreting the findings and understanding what may be contributing to disparities. Based on further analysis, they would like to identify intervention strategies for improving care and hypertension outcomes.

- 3) **Colorectal cancer screening.** **CHCW** aims to improve rates of colorectal cancer screening, especially among Latino men. They are interested in analyzing newly harmonized electronic health record data to better understand screening gaps and examine barriers and facilitators for colorectal cancer screening completion. They also want to identify intervention strategies for increasing colorectal cancer screening rates in their population.

Informational webinar

Please [register for an informational webinar](#) on May 14th from 10:30 AM to 12 PM PST. A recording will be available online 1-3 business days after the webinar online, act-center.org/lhs-e-star/apply.

Who to contact with questions

For more information about this opportunity, please contact Monica Fujii at monica.m.fujii@kp.org.