

**F. M. KIRBY FOUNDATION SOLICITATION EVALUATION FORM**

**DATE:** August 2, 2024  
**Program Area:** Health  
**Grant Type:** Board Grant

**REQUEST DATE:** July 19, 2024

**APPLICANT:**  
American Cancer Society, Inc./Northeast Region  
270 Peachtree Street, Suite 1300  
Atlanta, GA 30303

**CONTACT:** Ms. Jamie McCann, Principal, Philanthropy

**AMOUNT REQUESTED:** \$300,000  
**BUDGETED AMOUNT:** \$250,000

**NATURE OF REQUEST:** Support of cancer research and New Jersey patient support programs.

**GRANT HISTORY**

**SUPPORT:** 1967-2023

**# OF APPROVED GRANTS:** 57

**TOTAL DOLLARS:** \$5,428,405

**LAST GRANT DATE:** 09/15/2023

**LAST GRANT AMOUNT:** \$250,000

**FYE DATE:** 12/31

**AFS DATE:** 06/19/2024

<b>Year Approved</b>	<b>Approved Amount</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Grant Purpose</b>
2023	\$250,000	09/15/2023	Support of programs in the Northwest New Jersey Region - \$30,000; Support of the National Home Office Extramural Research early career investigators - \$220,000
2022	\$250,000	09/12/2022	Support of programs in the Northwest New Jersey Region-\$30,000; National Home Office-Extramural Research support for early career investigators-\$220,000
2021	\$250,000	09/13/2021	Programs in the Northwest New Jersey Region-\$30,000; National Home Office-Extramural Research support in immunotherapy-\$220,000
2020	\$250,000	09/14/2020	Programs in the Northwest New Jersey Region-\$30,000; National Home Office-Extramural Research support in immunotherapy-\$220,000
2019	\$250,000	12/16/2019	Programs in the Northwest New Jersey Region-\$30,000; National Home Office-Extramural Research support in immunotherapy-\$220,000

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**LAST SITE VISIT DATE:** June 15, 2020

**ENDORSEE:** N/A

**FINANCIAL ANALYSIS COMMENTS:** The ACS FY24 budget is projecting a \$48M deficit. Revenue is expected to decrease by 10% (\$87M) over the prior year, while expenses are budgeted to remain relatively flat. Salaries and related costs represent the single largest percentage of expenses (44%) followed by grants and awards (18%). The FY24 patient support budget for New Jersey is \$727K, with Hope Lodge expenses representing 43% of this total. Considering that ACS anticipates serving over 26,000 New Jersey residents in 2024 with these services, this programming has a high impact with a relatively low cost. The budget for extramural discovery science is \$126.4M. The audit for the national organization shows \$1.88B in total assets as of 12/31/23, \$790M of which was investments. Net assets without donor restrictions totaled \$600M. FY23 saw a \$55M surplus (compared to a budgeted deficit of \$25M). Interestingly, costs related to patient support represented the lion's share of expenses, 64%, while discovery represented only 28% **(JJK: Would not have been my assumption; important point of clarification)**. ACS has \$602M in liquid assets available for expenditure within one year. Endowment assets total \$146M.

**ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION:** Founded in 1913, the American Cancer Society (ACS) is the preeminent cancer-fighting organization with a vision of ending cancer as we know it for everyone. ACS is a national organization that works in every state, and every community. Thanks partly to our contributions, 3.8 million cancer deaths have been averted in the US since 1991, when cancer rates were highest.

Our advocacy, research, and patient support pillars create a solid foundation in the fight against cancer. The American Cancer Society's Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) improves the lives of cancer patients and their families through public policy advocacy. Working to pass legislation and advance policy changes at every level of government, we empower advocates nationwide to make their voices heard and influence evidence-based public policy change and legislative and regulatory solutions to reduce the cancer burden while supporting policies that focus on prevention and early detection. ACS is the largest nonprofit, nongovernmental funder of cancer research in the US. Since 1946 we have invested more than \$5 billion in research, provided more than 33,700 grants to academic research institutions across the US, and supported over 25,000 investigators making critical contributions to important discoveries in cancer as we continue to refine our approach and deepen our commitment to ending cancer as we know it, for everyone. Patient support programs and services touch more than 79 million lives annually providing no-cost information and support to cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers. Resources include the Cancer Helpline, where anyone can contact trained staff ready to answer questions about cancer and connect with resources 24/7. Cancer Survivors Network is a safe online community where survivors and caregivers share their stories. Reach To Recovery® connects people facing breast cancer with trained volunteers who are breast cancer survivors. Road To Recovery® is our volunteer-supported transportation program providing people with cancer no-cost rides to and from treatment. Hope Lodge® communities provide free temporary lodging for cancer patients and their caregivers when treatment is far from home.

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Everyone deserves the opportunity to benefit from progress in the fight against cancer and we are dedicated to eliminating disparities in the cancer burden defined in terms of socioeconomic status, income, disability status, age, race/ethnicity, geographic location, sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Evidence-based health equity principles are the foundation of everything we do as we work to eliminate barriers and ensure everyone has the same opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer.

**GINA BEVIGLIA COMMENTS:** The American Cancer Society improves the lives of cancer patients and their families with a triumvirate model of advocacy, patient support, and research. As the largest cancer-fighting organization in the U.S., ACS recognizes that ending cancer as we know it requires not only strategies in prevention and treatment, but also efforts related to accessibility and patient support. In recent years, FMKF has been supporting all aspects of this three-pronged model, with grants for both patient support programs in Northwest New Jersey and extramural research. In 2024, ACS is seeking a \$300,000 grant for both of these purposes.

ACS' advocacy-focused affiliate organization, the ACS Cancer Action Network (CAN), understands that access to affordable healthcare and cancer screenings is a crucial component in the fight against cancer. While advocating for increased cancer research funding is an important part of what CAN does, the majority of their advocacy is dedicated to reducing economic, racial, and geographic disparities in healthcare. For example, policy initiatives that CAN is currently supporting include an extension of the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program which provides free and low-cost breast and cervical cancer screenings. While an insured person would receive such screenings at an annual OB-GYN visit, someone who is uninsured might be forced to forgo preventative measure because of financial constraints. CAN acts as a watchdog, identifying that more support in the Senate is needed to pass this bill into law, then rallying its vast network of stakeholders to contact their elected officials. By supporting Medicaid expansion, affordable access to screening services, and education about the negative effects of tobacco use and the benefits of healthy living, CAN is reducing the nationwide total of cancer cases through prevention efforts. ACS' patient services alleviate the emotional and logistical burdens of a cancer diagnosis. Free information and support is provided through ACS' National Cancer Information Center, which was contacted over 10,000 times by New Jersey residents in 2023. Services in this area are broad. Reach to Recovery and the Cancer Survivors Network provide a safe place to share fears and personal experiences, while Road to Recovery and Hope Lodge communities provide opportunities for transportation and lodging when treatment is far from a patient's home. In 2023, ACS provided the following support services in New Jersey:

- 251 patients were provided with 4,432 nights of lodging through Hope Lodge.
- 101 additional patients were provided with 898 nights of lodging through lodging grants and hotel vouchers.
- 1,395 rides to treatment were provided statewide through Road to Recovery, 409 of which were in Northwest New Jersey.
- 6,444 additional rides to treatment were provided through grants to local health system partners.

In 2024, ACS anticipates that 26,000 people statewide and 4,000 people in Northwest New Jersey will benefit from the compassionate guidance and assistance that the support services provide.

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Because ACS is not tied to any single research institution, they have the freedom to invest in highly innovative researchers who may not be receiving funding through another avenue. This flexibility, combined with their vast resources and prestigious reputation, allows ACS to nurture the most promising young investigators nationwide who work to unlock the cures of tomorrow. The report provided some exciting updates on researchers who have benefitted from past FMKF support, as well as an introduction to the researcher whose post-doctoral fellowship is being funded by our 2023 grant.

Dr. Joseph Green, University of Minnesota, has been studying the impact of a protein component of immune cells, Lyn kinase, on the immune system's response to cancer. Cancer reprograms the body's immune system by manipulating the body's defense mechanisms, utilizing the immune cells known as macrophages to perform pro-tumor functions. In other words, the macrophages are sent by the immune system to a tumor to defend the body, but, once there, start working in ways that actually promote tumor growth and metastasis. Because of this, the presence of macrophages in tumors is a threat; removing macrophages once they are already present in a tumor is difficult and such therapies reveal mixed results in patients. In the last year, Dr. Green has discovered that turning off the Lyn kinase within macrophages interferes with the communication from the cancer cells, making it harder for the cancer to manipulate the macrophages. Inactivation of Lyn kinase in these macrophages has the potential to slow tumor growth and promote the correct functioning of the immune system. Another FMKF-funded researcher, Dr. Priyan D. Weerappuli, University of Michigan, has been studying the role of neutrophil extracellular traps (NETS) in tumor growth and metastasis. NETS are web-like structures created by the immune system in response to a pathogen. When NETs come into contact with hard tumors, however, they develop pro-tumor qualities such as promoting metastasis. In the final year of his fellowship, Dr. Weerappuli worked with a lipid biochemist and a formulation chemist to develop a drug that was found to successfully degrade NETs and to interrupt the influence of NETs on tumor growth. Dr. Weerappuli is now working in animal models of breast cancer to perform the safety studies needed to submit an investigational drug application to the FDA.

FMKF's 2023 grant to ACS is supporting the post-doctoral research of Dr. Suarabh Sharma at the Stanford University School of Medicine. Dr. Sharma hopes to find a more effective treatment for melanoma that has metastasized to the brain. Current therapies for brain metastases have limited effectiveness, in part because the brain's protective barrier prevents the proper functioning of immune-based treatments. A specialized nanoconjugate, a chemically-modified nano-sized particle, has shown promise in its ability to enhance the immune response in the brain. During his fellowship with ACS, Dr. Sharma will focus on two goals. First, he will attempt to demonstrate that this nanoconjugate can penetrate the brain's protective barrier and enhance immune system response more effectively than current therapies. Second, Dr. Sharma will work to optimize this nanoconjugate so that it can actually decrease the immune system's resistance to cancer-fighting drugs. If Dr. Sharma's time with ACS is successful, this research will ultimately lead to the development of a low-cost treatment that can be tested in clinical trials, potentially improving survival rates and eliminating the negative side effects of current brain metastases treatments.

To date, FMKF has supported over 35 ACS researchers with over \$4 million in grants. Researchers funded by FMKF have gone on to publish over 7,000 articles and 791 book chapters that have been

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cited over 665,000 times. In 2023 alone, FMKF-funded researchers have published 72 papers. **(JJK: Wow, what fascinating statistics. Thank you for including that in this evaluation. Very good information for Directors to be aware of.)**

Support of innovative researchers like Drs. Green, Weerappuli, and Sharma contributes to a more complete understanding of the immune system's capacity to fight cancer, leading to more effective treatments. While the majority of our support is designated for extramural research, I am impressed with ACS' efforts on the advocacy and patient support fronts. With an understanding of how disorienting a cancer diagnosis can be, ACS wants to ensure that every patient, regardless of location or economic status, can navigate the treatment journey with the help of a support system and access to quality care. As we have discussed contributing to another Mission Boost grant in 2025, a site visit to ACS in advance of that decision should be a priority. I am happy to recommend continued support of ACS' patient services in Northwest New Jersey and the extramural research of early career investigators.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I recommend a grant of \$250,000, payable over 1 year, designated for support of programs in Northwest New Jersey and support of the National Home Office Extramural Research early career investigators.

- Support of programs in Northwest New Jersey - \$30,000
- Support of the National Home Office Extramural Research early career investigators - \$220,000

**JUSTIN J. KICZEK COMMENTS:** I concur with the recommendation above. With ACS being one of the nation's most iconic and largest non-profit organizations, one could worry that a grant, even in the amount of \$250,000, would be a drop in the bucket. But GEB's notes above about the impact of FMKF-funded research gives us a strong sense of the impact of our funding on research, especially over such a long period (since 1967!). Moreover, the robust patient support numbers inform us how critical these services are to people going through what might be the most difficult days of their lives. As noted in previous EFs (and through our support of Caring House), proximity and fidelity to treatment is one of the most critical factors in patients' success rate for treatment.

I agree that a site visit here is imperative, as it has been almost five years (while we had a Zoom with them in June 2020, it was really just focused on Covid. October 2019 was last more thorough site visit). If in NYC again, it would be great to invite Board directors and guests to enjoy, particularly SDK, Jr., who had met Dr. Sanchez in Austin, TX.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I recommend a grant of \$250,000, payable over 1 year designated for support of programs in Northwest New Jersey and support of the National Home Office Extramural Research early career investigators.

- Support of programs in Northwest New Jersey - \$30,000
- Support of the National Home Office Extramural Research early career investigators - \$220,000

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**DISPOSITION:**

- Declination
- Hold for review on/about:
- Approval for: **\$250,000**
- Recommended Grant Payment(s):  
**2024:**  
**2025:**  
**2026:**
- Hold for Board Review: **September 6, 2024**
- Payee Other Than Addressee: **American Cancer Society, Inc.**
- Insert Information:  
**Support of programs in Northwest New Jersey - \$30,000**  
**Support of the National Home Office Extramural Research early career investigators - \$220,000**
- Other:

Initials: JJK

Date: 8/2/2024

Check #                     

Date: