

## CALL FOR LETTERS OF INTEREST (Due November 15, 2024)

### Build your skills in transforming care with LHS training & mentorship

#### Seeking 2 early-career scientists to lead learning health system (LHS) research projects at Kaiser Permanente Washington

##### 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](https://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 (UW), 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 primary faculty position or are a postdoctoral scholar eligible for external research funding at UW or KPWHRI as of March 31, 2025. People in acting faculty positions are also eligible.

**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](mailto:monica.m.fujii@kp.org).

## What are the timeline and funding expectations?

- Cohort 2 scholars will start their projects in April 2025. 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, a project manager at approximately 15% FTE, 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.
- In addition, the E-STAR Center will provide a modest amount of FTE for collaborative scientists at KPWHRI to support the project's quantitative and qualitative methods needs.

## What primary care organizations are involved?

Both scholars will carry out their projects at Kaiser Permanente Washington. Kaiser Permanente is an integrated health system whose mission is to provide high-quality, affordable health care services and to improve the health of the members and the communities they serve. Within Washington state, Kaiser Permanente provides health insurance to 700,000 members, about two-thirds of whom receive their primary care at a Kaiser Permanente Washington medical facility. Members in Washington reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the areas they serve: 14% of members are Asian, 7% are Black or African America, and 7% are Hispanic. Kaiser Permanente Washington strives to address inequities and disparities in health outcomes by providing culturally responsive, equitable care for all of their members.

We will release a separate call for letters of interest for VA-based candidates interested in applying to work with the VA Puget Sound Health Care system.

## What are the research priorities at Kaiser Permanente Washington?

Kaiser Permanente Washington is partnering with the Washington LHS E-STAR Center to select 2 scholars who will each focus on one of the following research priorities:

- **Low completion of postnatal visits.** Health system partners are interested in identifying potential drivers of incompleteness, including operational factors and/or barriers to access. The longer-term goal for this project would be to implement an evidence-based intervention or change to practice to improve rates of postnatal appointment attendance.
- **Low rates of flu vaccine completion for Black and African American patients and patients in rural communities under 2 years of age.** Health system partners are interested in identifying and piloting evidence-based interventions to address this gap. Research projects could partner with Kaiser Permanente Washington team to evaluate centralized outreach strategies or with a single clinic to evaluate practice-focused interventions.
- **Improve immunization rates among pregnant people and infants.** Health system partners are interested in identifying and piloting evidence-based interventions to improve vaccine completion during routine pregnancy care for both the pregnant person and infant, focusing on flu/Tdap (pregnancy) and flu/DTaP (infant).
- **Improve breast cancer screening among members 40-59 years old.** Recent changes in screening guidelines lowered the recommended age for starting screening from 50 to 40. Given these

changes, health system partners are interested in developing and testing patient outreach and other intervention strategies to increase screening rates in this younger population.

## How to apply

Early-career scientists interested in becoming a Washington LHS E-STAR scholar should **complete an [online form](#) and send the following 2 documents by email to [LHS-ESTAR@kp.org](mailto:LHS-ESTAR@kp.org) by 5 p.m. PST on November 15, 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 more of Kaiser Permanente Washington's identified research priorities. Please select the research priorities you feel are the strongest match for your interests and skills. You must address at least one of these research priorities for your letter to be responsive.
- Your proposed contribution to the research-health care partnership with Kaiser Permanente Washington.
- How the project, training, and mentoring will advance your research and career goals. Include which [LHS competencies](#) you are interested in training.
- How your research, teaching, and/or service activities reflect Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles, and/or how you plan to advance excellence in DEI through your future research, teaching, and/or service. To the extent you feel comfortable, you may also discuss how your personal identities and lived experiences have shaped your approach to DEI in these areas.
- Your current responsibilities, including clinical, teaching, research, and other duties you will continue during your time as a scholar.

## E-STAR commitment to health equity

The Washington LHS E-STAR Center is committed to improving health equity in primary care and diversifying the LHS research workforce. We strongly encourage **scholars with identities and lived experiences** that AHRQ describes as [underrepresented in health services research \(see Part 2, Section 1\)](#) to apply. 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;

## Key dates

### Informational webinar

October 22, 2024

### Letter of intent deadline

November 15, 2024

### Notice of invitation to apply

By December 20, 2024

### Application deadline

February 7, 2025

### Awardees notified

April 2025

### Project timeline

Approximately April 2025-  
March 2027

- 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

The E-STAR Center will collaborate with Kaiser Permanente Washington to select LHS scholars interested in conducting projects addressing their research priorities. Based on submitted letters of interest, we will select a group of candidates to move forward in the application process. Selected candidates will be notified **by December 20, 2024**.

Next, these candidates will meet with Kaiser Permanente Washington quality leaders to inform the content and scope of a full proposal, which will be **due on February 7, 2025**. 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 (which includes community members and representatives from our partner PCOs) will review the full proposals and select 2 scholars to invite into the program. Formal notification of acceptance will go out to selected scholars **in April 2025 — with a project start date shortly thereafter**.

### Three cohorts of E-STAR scholars

- The WA LHS E-STAR Center will select a total of 7 scholars over 5 years. In our first of 3 cohorts, we recently selected 2 scholars to work with Community Health of Central Washington and Neighborcare.
- For our second cohort, we are currently seeking 2 scholars to work with Kaiser Permanente Washington, as well as one VA-based scholar (call for letters of interest is forthcoming).
- In the third and final cohort, we will be seeking 2 candidates to work with HealthPoint and Community Health Association of Spokane on research priorities that they identify. We encourage early-career scientists who don't apply for the current opportunity to watch for our next call for letters of interest in mid-2025.

### Informational webinar

Please [register for an informational webinar](#) on October 22, 2024. A recording will be available online 1-3 business days after the webinar online, [act-center.org/lhs-e-star/apply](https://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](mailto:monica.m.fujii@kp.org).