Wellcome Trust: Mind the Funding Gap

Dr Georgios Trichas
About us

Global independent charitable foundation dedicated to achieving extraordinary improvements in health by supporting the brightest minds.
The Wellcome Trust was set up in 1936 under the will of Sir Henry Wellcome, who vested the entire share of his pharmaceutical company, The Wellcome Foundation (sold in 1995), in a charitable trust.

Endowment in 1936 - $124,000
Today

- Endowment of $25bn
- Sponsor of >5000 researchers globally
- 60 years of continuous support for research
- Spend ~$1.2 billion per year
- Translational Funding ~$136m
Organization

Investments
- Capital growth of endowment

Science
- Hypothesis Driven

Culture & Society
- History & Education

Innovations
- Translational

Equity & Equity Long/Short
Absolute Return & Buyout
Healthcare & Venture
Property & Infrastructure
Private Equity

Syncona

Evergreen Fund
Innovations: Our Purpose

Bridge the gap between fundamental research and commercial application.

Fund applied research and development projects to a stage where they are attractive to a follow-on funder, such as venture capital firms, industry and public-private partnerships.

Driven by unmet medical need
Input
303 projects supported
Range: £25K - £11.2M
£534 million committed

Output
£1.19billion leveraged
32 exits via M&A/listing or licensing, 15 products launched
Funding Programmes Available

- Seeding Drug Discovery
- Translation Fund
- R&D for Affordable Healthcare in India
- Pathfinders
Seeding Drug Discovery

- Facilitate early-stage small-molecule drug discovery
- Starting points - novel drug target or new chemistry
- Global eligibility, 2 calls per year, triage committee then full committee
- Two entry points to the scheme
  - ‘Early stage’ projects fund screening to identify lead series molecules - up to 2y, £1-2m
  - ‘Late stage’ projects to support lead optimisation and preclinical development to clinical trials - up to 4y, £3-5m
- Next deadline 5th November 2014
"To develop drug-like, small molecules that will be the springboard for further R & D by the industry in areas of unmet medical need"
Translation Fund

• To develop innovative and **ground-breaking** new technologies in the biomedical area
• Already demonstrated proof of principle
• Across types of technology and therapeutic areas
• Global eligibility - two rounds per year
• Normally £0.5m - £5m over 2-4y
• Apply by concept note, preliminary applications by invitation only
• Next deadline **24th October 2014**
Funding Model: Companies

- Awards are made as “Programme Related Investments”
  - Wellcome Trust is recognised in the form of financial return should the innovation be successful
  - Aiming for “fair and equitable” return
- Fund “Direct Project Related Costs” only. No overheads.
- Funding provided in advance but in tranches
  - Tranches released on successful completion of a Milestone (Go/No Go Decision Point)
- Unsuccessful projects do not need to repay the Wellcome Trust’s funding.
The fine(r) print

- If Company fails to exploit within set period of time, the Trust is entitled to take over exploitation.
- Access to Medicine is important
- The Trust will exert project oversight through participation in Research Steering Group meetings
- Company obligations
The Application Process

1. Concept Note (Translation Fund Only)
2. Staff Committee
3. Preliminary Application
4. Triage Committee
5. Full Application
6. Expert Reviews & Due Diligence
7. Funding Committee presentation
The Seven Deadly Sins

I. Weak scientific rational (target validation)
II. Healthcare impact limited / unrealistic competitive advantage
III. Major practical implementation hurdle
IV. Major chemical hurdle / low probability of success
V. Lack of key expertise
VI. Poor project plan / under-resourced
VII. Unrealistic ‘exit’ / Target Product Profile
Some awardees