

**South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
FY 25-26 Proviso 33.29 – Biomedical Research Center**

**1. Introduction**

This Report is submitted pursuant to Section 33.29, (GP: Biomedical Research Center). The Proviso states:

From funds appropriated, the department shall contract with South Carolina public entities that include health service districts, health authorities, or agencies to develop a biomedical research center for the purpose of analyzing biological pathways, networks, and molecular systems. The center shall perform an evaluation of gene and protein structures along with their functions, variations in sequences and their significance, interactions between genes, proteins, and the environment, and other key discreet elements of the human condition. The purpose of this initiative is the evaluation of genetic profiles and patterns associated with disease risk to establish effective detection and therapeutic responses. The ultimate goal is to transform the orientation of healthcare from current disease treatment to one of wellness and prevention.

The center shall have or source significant relevant experience in the following areas: (1) an established medical data research Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct data and human test condition studies; (2) an established record of success recruiting patients to clinical trials particularly from underserved and rural areas of the state; (3) an established model for de-identification of patient data meeting all HIPAA requirements, along with proven information technology infrastructure to gather and successfully incorporate and organize data including System and Organizational Controls 2 (SOC2) to manage information related risk; and (4) robust and documented experience in the realm of molecular medicine insights.

The department is authorized to establish necessary contract conditions, parameters, and targets. For each year that contracts are in place, the department shall provide to the Chairmen of the House Ways and Means Committee, Medical Military Public and Municipal Affairs Committee, State Medical Affairs Committee, and to the Senate Finance Committee a written report by January 1st describing the distribution of funds and progress made in this effort.

## 2. Status

### A. Transfer of Funds

Proviso 33.29 requires the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) contract with South Carolina public entities to transfer funds appropriated. SCDHHS has transferred \$25,000,000.00 through contractual means, to Spartanburg Regional Health Services District (SRHS) to continue developing a biomedical research center for scientific knowledge and a telehealth program.

### B. Report of Goals from SFY2025

To promote the goals stated in Proviso 33.29, SCDHHS requires the provider to submit quarterly reports demonstrating its efforts to achieve the seven goals stated in the contract with SRHS for SFY 2025. The goals and quarterly report updates are listed below:

- 1) Develop a virtual Biomedical Research Center for the evaluation of genetic profiles and patterns associated with disease risk to establish effective detection and therapeutic responses.
  - a. A grant project manager was appointed by the CEO of SRHS to assist in the procurement of the grant.
  - b. The project manager identified an operational committee, consisting of key leaders within SRHS, to develop a plan for completion of the grant's deliverables and determine a process for allocation of funding to complete the work.
- 2) The Center shall perform an evaluation of gene and protein structures along with their functions, variations in sequences and their significance, interactions between genes, proteins, and the environment, and other key discreet elements of the human condition.
  - a. SRHS is currently planning for the biomedical research center to focus on adult-onset Type 2 Diabetes with three stages:
    - Enrollment of 1,000 patients with Type 2 diabetes at risk for developing chronic kidney disease to an observational study.
    - Data aggregation and structuring of data collected from the

patients enrolled in stage one.

- Data evaluation and regression analysis with the ability to identify key clinical indicators associated with elevated risk of disease progression.
- 3) Collaborate with hospitals, higher education entities and the health data science industry to advance South Carolina as a leader in biomedical and genomic research.
- a. SRHS is currently working on ideas on how to collaborate with hospitals, higher education entities and the health science industry.
- 4) SRHS will ensure that the Center has or will source significant relevant experience in the following areas: (1) an established medical data research Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct data and human test condition studies; (2) an established record of success recruiting patients to clinical trials particularly from underserved and rural areas of the state; (3) an established model for de-identification of patient data meeting all HIPAA requirements, along with proven information technology infrastructure to gather and successfully incorporate and organize data including System and Organizational Controls 2 (SOC2) to manage information related risk; and (4) robust and documented experience in the realm of molecular medicine insights.
- a. Both the Greenwood Genetics Center and the Guardian Research Network (GRN) have been chosen by RFP for this task.
- 5) Develop the digitization of large genetic data sets previously funded by the State to extract data points that bear potential diagnostic utility. This virtual initiative will be comprised of various partners, with preference provided to those incorporated and/or headquartered in South Carolina.
- a. Greenwood Genetics Center started scanning and creation of a de-identified clinical database for rare orphan diseases.
  - b. Guardian Research Network (GRN) started the successful scanning, digitizing, validating, and integrating of the initial 10,000 Greenwood Genetics records into a master patient index database which was done in March 2025.
  - c. The next phase of this project involves scanning, validating, and integrating the remaining approximately 3,000,000 records.

- d. Since July 23, 2025, over 3 million records have been scanned, with the final payment of \$400,000 paid to GRN upon successful digitization of the remaining records and confirmation of project.
  - e. As of November 1, 2025 all documents have been scanned, and GRN is now working on natural language processing to create discrete data fields, making the database searchable by Greenwood Genetics. The project remains on schedule.
- 6) Establish a telehealth pilot program designed to provide an innovative healthcare delivery model for chronic disease coverage gaps in rural communities working in concert with its Biomedical Research Center efforts.
- a. SRHS no longer wishes to pursue the telehealth pilot program. SCDHHS is in the process of amending the contract to remove the telehealth pilot program requirements.
  - b. The \$5,000,000 set aside for the telehealth pilot program has been refunded to SCDHHS.
- 7) Develop a protocol and engage a third-party partner for discrete supportive elements necessary to complete the program. This virtual initiative will be comprised of various partners, with preference provided to those incorporated and/or headquartered in South Carolina.
- a. Phase I involves the digitization of Greenwood Genetics Center paper records into a de-identified, relational, and searchable database.
    - In August 2024, a request for proposal (RFP) was approved by the operations committee and submitted to identify external partner(s) to support the objective of Greenwood Genetics Center (part one of the grant). SRHS followed a system defined policy driven RFP process to ensure a fair selection.
    - One response to the request was received, and the operational committee reviewed and independently ranked the response according to the goals and vendor selection criteria of the RFP. The Guardian Research Network (GRN) was selected as the vendor to award the initial \$2,000,000.
    - The SRHS BRISK Steering Committee completed the contract negotiation and executed a Project Services Agreement with Guardian Research Network (GRN) in an amount not to exceed

- the guaranteed maximum price of \$1,950,000 in December 2024.
- The first two invoices, totaling \$950,000, were received in December 2024 after confirmation that GRN had executed contracts for the necessary labor and equipment needed to complete the project.
  - The third invoice, \$600,000 was received and processed in March 2025.
- b. Phase II is a multi-stage comprehensive protocol analyzing complex, multi-dimensional molecular and clinical data that will focus on key chronic diseases plaguing South Carolina.
- The Request for Proposal for Phase II of BRISK was issued November 23, 2024.
  - The SRHS BRISK Steering Committee reviewed the responses consistent with standard procurement processes and awarded the designated funds to the highest-rated vendor.
  - The Guardian Research Network (GRN) was notified of the award in January 2025. The BRISK Phase II Services Agreement was fully executed effective June 1, 2025, and includes a detailed payment schedule tied to specific project milestone events.
  - GRN is currently finalizing a clinical trial protocol to submit for feedback and approval from the external institutional review board (IRB).
  - The first payment of \$4,000,000 to GRN has been allocated according to that schedule. GRN finalized the clinical trial protocol and received IRB approval in August 2025, and SRHS processed a second payment of \$6,000,000 to GRN in September 2025.
  - The GRN is working on agreements with five sites for patient enrollment, as well as lab agreements. Patient enrollments are expected to start in December 2025. Future payments will follow the schedule and milestones outlined in the Services Agreement.

Outcomes achieved in SFY 2025 demonstrate progress has been made, and the achievement of future goals will ensure that South Carolinians will benefit from the investments made in this virtual Biomedical Research Center.

**C. Development of Goals for SFY2026**

To promote the goals stated in Proviso 33.32, SCDHHS requires SRHS to continue to submit quarterly reports that demonstrate its efforts to achieve the six (6) remaining goals stated in the contract that covers SFY 2026.

SCDHHS will continue to review reports submitted by SRHS to evaluate achievement of stated goals and strategies.

**3. Conclusion**

SCDHHS will continue to work with SRHS and other healthcare partners to ensure the goals stated in this Proviso are achieved.