



TRANSDISCIPLINARY  
COLLABORATIVE CENTER  
INFORMING HEALTH POLICY AND PRACTICE

Transdisciplinary Collaborative Center for Health Disparities Research  
“Informing and Influencing Health Policy and Practice”  
Pilot Project Program Request for Applications (RFA-TCC-2014-01)  
(Updated 1/21/16)

**Letter of Intent Deadline (Required): December 21, 2015 by 5:00 PM EST**  
**RFA Technical Assistance Webinar (Optional): February, 10, 2016 at 1:00 PM EST**  
**Application Deadline: February 24, 2016 by 5:00 PM EST**  
**TCC Pilot Project Portal Website: <http://www.msmtcc.org/pilot>**

## I. OVERVIEW

The Morehouse School of Medicine Transdisciplinary Collaborative Center (TCC) for Health Disparities Research (U54MD008173) is an institution-wide health policy research center (U54) funded by the National Institute of Health (NIH), National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD). TCC seeks to inform and ultimately influence policy through innovative research and scientific evidence focused on eliminating health disparities and achieving health equity. It will accomplish this through collaboration for the purpose of fostering innovation in research, which provides the evidence for policy decisions and health practice.

TCC's portfolio of activities are centered on communities and populations located in the HHS Region IV, the region of the country that historically suffers from the largest racial and ethnic disparities in disease morbidity and mortality (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee). An additional key geographic area of the TCC's work includes consortium partners that are members of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Actions Institute (REHDAI) Coalition (Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon, and Texas).

Under this announcement, TCC is soliciting applications to support pilot research projects that are aligned with TCC for Health Disparities Research thematic focus of addressing the barriers to implementing health policies that target achieving health equity. These projects will generate the pilot data necessary to enhance competitiveness for extramural funding and create new transdisciplinary collaborative, investigative teams with the greatest potential to transform the health policy research landscape. The projects should have the potential to lead to long-term health impact and improvements in HHS Region IV region and/or REHDAI coalition member states.

## II. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants may be academic faculty investigators or represent a non-academic organization. Eligibility is open to faculty investigators and organizations of the HHS Region VI (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee) and CDC REHDAI coalition member states (Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon, and Texas). Eligibility criteria for each applicant type is detailed below:

### **Academic Faculty Investigator Eligibility**

To receive funding, investigators must be full-time faculty members at the rank of instructor or above. Investigators at the instructor level must obtain a letter from their department chairperson confirming: 1) the

investigator holds a full-time faculty appointment and 2) the department intends to develop the faculty member as a research investigator. Junior-level faculty members are strongly encouraged to apply. Doctoral students, medical residents, postdoctoral fellows, and other individuals in part-time adjunct or temporary positions are not eligible to apply for this program. **All academic faculty investigators must identify at least one non-academic organization or group as a key collaborator for their project.**

### **Organization Eligibility**

Community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, health services organizations, businesses, tribal organizations, local government entities, schools, institutions of higher education, or state and regional organizations are eligible to apply for TCC pilot project funding. All organizational applicants must be eligible to receive federal funding. **All organizations must identify at least one faculty member at an academic institution as a key collaborator for their project.**

### **Previous Pilot Project Program Applicants**

Individuals who have submitted applications but were not funded in prior pilot project solicitations are encouraged to revise and resubmit their application, or submit a new application. Please note that all resubmissions must address the weaknesses of the previous proposal, and indicate if and how they utilized TCC technical support mechanisms in the creation of their revised proposal.

### **Questions and Technical Support:**

Please contact Program Manager Divine Offoegbu, DrPH, MPH, at 404-752-1933 or [doffeogbu@msm.edu](mailto:doffeogbu@msm.edu) regarding questions about eligibility or technical support needs as you prepare your application.

### **Pilot projects will be classified as eligible if they fulfill the following criteria:**

1. The research proposal addresses an important aspect of health disparity in the region. Please note that pilot projects involving human subjects must be submitted to NIMHD for prior approval before beginning the project (please refer to RFA-MD-12-007 policy notice at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-MD-12-007.html>)
2. Adoption of best practices in implementing health policy at the community level
3. Translation of community health principles and lessons learned regarding barriers to health policy to fundamental health policy research on health equity.
4. Evidence that the junior investigator applicant will benefit from advice and mentoring from an experienced expert in the field
5. For multidisciplinary pilot project awards, a minimum of three (3) investigators with complementary expertise and research skills/experience is required; however, to optimize accountability, one will serve as the principal investigator and will be responsible for administration of award.
6. Each investigator on an application is expected to provide critical intellectual as well as technical input into projects funded by the TCC for Health Disparities Research pilot program
7. A Principal Investigator may only be funded twice in a five year TCC funding cycle.

### **III. FUNDS AVAILABLE**

TCC seeks to fund a diverse group of grantees through two mechanisms:

- 1) **Pilot Project Awards:** These awards are intended to support the implementation of small health policy-oriented research projects. The maximum amount for pilot project awards is **\$50,000** in total costs per year (direct + indirect costs).
- 2) **Developmental “Seed” Awards:** These awards are intended to support health policy research capacity building activities or early stage formative activities that will result in the development of a pilot project. Examples of the type of activities eligible for developmental seed awards include community coalition and partnership development, focus group discussions and analyses, and policy assessments.

The maximum amount for developmental seed awards is **\$10,000** in total costs per year (direct + indirect costs).

Each project will be funded for a one (1) year period. Applicants may only apply to one funding mechanism for this RFA (pilot project or seed award). Pilot project funds may be used for salaries, supplies, research subject incentives, project-specific travel, and other allowable expenses. Detailed budgets and their justification will be required. In general, up to 25% of the award may be used for salary support for investigators and key personnel. Institutional indirect costs (e.g., F&A) must be calculated into the total budget amount (total not to exceed \$50,000.00). The purchase of any major equipment (e.g. computer systems, medical technologies, etc.) will be subject to approval.

#### **IV. LETTERS OF INTENT (LOI) TO APPLY**

Applicants are encouraged to submit a letter of intent to apply (LOI) prior to submitting a full application. Letters of intent in response to this FOA should include:

- Names of the PI and key collaborators
- PI's Academic Department, Center/Institute, or organization name
- Health disparity the proposed project will address
- Specific aims of the proposed pilot project
- A brief summary of the proposed research, including research questions and methods
- A paragraph describing the significance of the research project relative to the stated purpose and goals of this FOA

The maximum page limit for the Letter of Intent is **two pages, single spaced, minimum 11 point font, and minimum 0.5" margins**. Feedback will be sent within 10 business days of receipt of the LOI. The LOI is **optional** and will not be considered in the final scoring of the full proposal.

**The LOI shall be submitted electronically in PDF format to the TCC Pilot Project Portal at <http://www.msmtcc.org/pilot> no later than Monday, December 21, 2015 by 5:00 PM EST.** For assistance with the LOI please submit questions and comments under "Contact TCC" on the Pilot Project Portal at <http://www.msmtcc.org/pilot>.

#### **V. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

All applicants will submit proposals using the NIH SF424 (R&R) Form and attach corresponding support documentation. Investigators should use a decipherable font (e.g. Times New Roman or Arial) of no less than 11 point, no less than 0.5 inch margins, and include the investigator name on all attachment pages.

**A complete application package shall include:**

1. SF 424 (R&R) Application Form (PDF) and related attachments.
  - SF 424 (R&R) Form
  - PHS 398 Research Plan
  - PHS 398 Cover Page Supplement
  - Research and Related Senior/Key Person Profile
  - Research and Related Other Project Information
  - Project/Performance Site Locations
  - Research & Related Budget
  - R&R Subaward Budget (if applicable)
  - Planned Enrollment Report
2. Data Safety Monitoring Plan
3. Indirect Cost Agreement documentation

4. CITI Certifications, or equivalent
5. Organizational status documentation (e.g. 501 (c) 3)

Please refer to the TCC Pilot Project Portal at <http://www.msmtcc.org/pilot> for all application materials and templates, sample proposals, and samples of supporting documentation. Please include the Pilot Project Program Review Checklist with your application packet. The application packet shall be submitted electronically to the TCC Pilot Project Portal at <http://www.msmtcc.org/pilot> no later than **Wednesday, February 24, 2016 at 5:00 pm EST**.

### **Budget and Budget Justification**

Applicants should address all detailed budget and budget justification pages delineated in the NIH SF424 form. The detailed budget and budget justification should clearly outline all costs associated with the proposed scope of work. Please describe all in-kind support you expect to receive in the budget justification page(s). Please see the [Pilot Project FAQ](#) and [NIH Policy Statement – Cost Considerations](#) for more details on allowable and unallowable expenses. **Please note that all budgets are subject to review and revisions prior to final approval. Also, please incorporate Travel (airfare, ground transportation, lodging and meals) for at least one person to attend the TCC Health Policy Summit held in Atlanta, GA.**

### **Research Plan and Approach**

The following sections should be addressed in the Research Plan section. Please adhere to page limits:

- Specific aims (1 page limit)
- Research Plan (6 page limit)
  - Background and Significance
  - Innovation
  - Preliminary Work
  - Experience, and Organizational Capacity
  - Research Strategy/Approach
  - Anticipated community benefits and policy impacts
  - Timeline

**A bibliography and references cited must be included (not counted in the six-page limit)**

### **CITI Certifications**

All project investigators and personnel who will engage in research activities are required to submit proof of completion (certificate) for the Collaborative Institutional Training Institute (CITI) “Human Subjects Research” basic course – OR- equivalent program. Please access the CITI website for more information on training courses: <https://www.citiprogram.org/>

### **Letters of Support**

Letters of support (minimum of 3) are required from key collaborators, community leaders, and others in support of the proposed research. Letters shall include prior experiences with the lead investigator/organization, and plans to develop or expand existing collaborations. Letters shall be signed by key leadership of each organization and presented on official letterhead.

### **Appendix Items**

Appendix items should include: A copy of the organization’s 501(c) 3 or other status documentation; samples of tools and materials, and other supporting documentation.

## **VI. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS**

### **Scientific Review**

A transdisciplinary panel of MSM academic faculty, health policy experts, and community advisory members representing the diverse constituencies of the regional community will review all proposals.

Proposals will be carefully evaluated to determine scientific merit, relevance to the elimination of health disparities, and health policy and practice implications. The review process will follow the NIH peer- review format with at least three independent reviewers assigned to each application. Proposals will be scored using the [NIH 9-point rating scale](#). After excluding individuals with potential conflicts of interest, expert reviewers will be assigned to review project proposals. Reviewers will score each proposal based on structured criteria and provide written critiques to substantiate their scores. The following criteria will be used:

- *Overall Impact*
- *Significance*
- *Investigator (experience and expertise)*
- *Innovation*
- *Approach*
- *Environment*

Following independent peer review, the review team will convene as a panel to discuss the merits of each application and generate a rank order list of applicants recommended for funding.

All applicants will receive decision letters no later than 45 business days following the applicant submission deadline. Decision letters will include reviewer scores and comments. **Please note: All proposals recommended for funding will be subject to NIH review and final approval prior to funds being awarded.**

**PLEASE NOTE:** All pilot and developmental seed projects involving research with human subjects will require review and approval from a qualified Institutional Review Board (IRB). While IRB approval is not required to submit an application to the TCC Scientific Review, IRB is required for NIH final review and approval. Therefore, we **strongly** suggest all prospective applicants consult their designated IRB official **early** for guidance on how to proceed with the IRB process. If you or your organization is not affiliated with an IRB, please contact Dr. Divine Offoegbu, Program Manager at [doffoegbu@msm.edu](mailto:doffoegbu@msm.edu) or 404-752-1933 for assistance.

## **VII. GRANTEE EXPECTATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Upon receiving a final approval notice, grantees will be presented with a subaward contract (Pilot Project Award) or MOU (Developmental Seed Award) for signature and execution. Upon execution of contract, grantees will be required to submit a time-phased work plan, revised timeline, and invoice prior to receiving initial payment. **Please note: Morehouse School of Medicine policy prohibits lump sum payments upon execution of contract.**

As a member of the TCC Pilot Project Program, all grantees are required to:

- Complete all invoices in a timely fashion
- Participate in monthly capacity building webinars
- Participate in quarterly progress conference calls
- Submit interim reports (RPPR)
- Submit final report 30 days after the project ends

Numerous technical support, development, and capacity building opportunities are available to TCC Pilot Project Program grantees. These opportunities will be discussed in detail during the new grantee orientation webinar and subsequent e-mail communications.

## **VIII. RFA OVERVIEW AND SF424 WEBINAR**

To assist faculty investigators and organizations in the application submission process, TCC will partner with the Office of Sponsored Research Administration (OSRA) to offer a technical assistance webinar to all prospective applicants. An overview of the RFA will be provided, along with a detailed tutorial on how to successfully complete the SF424 form. Prospective applicants will have an opportunity to ask questions and receive technical assistance. The webinar will be held on **Wednesday, February 10, 2016 at 1:00 pm EST.**

## IX. DUE DATES, TIMEFRAMES AND TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Letters of Intent (LOI) must be submitted electronically via the TCC Pilot Project Portal (For assistance with the LOI please submit questions and comments under “Contact TCC” on the Pilot Project Portal at <http://www.msmtcc.org/pilot> no later than **Friday, December 21, 2015 at 5:00 PM** Eastern Standard Time (EST) to be considered.

Full proposals must be submitted electronically no later than **Wednesday, February 10, 2016 by 5:00 pm EST. Please submit all application materials to the TCC Pilot Project Portal: <http://www.msmtcc.org/pilot>.** Please contact Dr. Divine Offoegbu, Program Manager at [doffoegbu@msm.edu](mailto:doffoegbu@msm.edu) if you encounter any issues or challenges in submitting your application. **Late applications will not be accepted.**

Timeline (Subject to Change)

Date	Activity
Monday, November 16, 2015	Official release of 2015 Pilot Project RFA
Monday, December 21, 2015	Letter of Intent Due (optional)
Monday, January 4, 2016	LOI responses sent to applicants
Wednesday, February 10, 2016	Technical Assistance Webinar
<b>Wednesday, February 24, 2016</b>	<b>Proposal Submissions Due</b>
Wednesday, March 30, 2016	Scientific Review complete; decisions letters sent to applicants
Friday, May 20, 2016 (or earlier)	Prospective grantee proposals sent to NIH for final review
Monday, August 1, 2016 (or earlier)	Anticipated NIH approval date, execution of grantee contracts.

### **Applications that fail to meet any of the below requirements will NOT be reviewed:**

1. All proposals must be submitted using the SF424 format, using decipherable font no less than 11-point, with minimum 0.5” margins on all sides for all attachments.
2. All required information must be fully completed.
3. Specific Aims and Research Plan sections must not exceed stated page limits.

### **Key Contact for More Information:**

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