MUSC Center for Global Health
Request for Applications (RFA) for Faculty Pilot Project Grants

RFA Release Date: Monday, June 3, 2019

Full Proposal (6-page limit)
Deadline: **July 10, 2019   12 p.m. (noon) EST**
Earliest anticipated award notification: **September 5, 2019**
Late Applications will not be reviewed.

The MUSC Center for Global Health (CGH) is pleased to announce that it will fund several pilot project grants for up to $20,000 for a 12-month period. Through this RFA, the CGH seeks to provide pilot funds to stimulate research in low and middle-income countries, with the larger goal of enabling investigators to leverage preliminary findings and data to become the basis of a competitive extramural research grant application. The prime purpose of these awards is to strengthen the applicant's ability to secure subsequent research funding. **Projects that have the best potential for future growth and external funding will be prioritized for funding.** Applications that include matching funds will be given preference.

This funding mechanism is designed to support research in low and middle-income countries (a listing of eligible countries can be found at the World Bank website). Applicants should describe plans for how the results generated will be applied to obtain future external funding, as this is one of the highest weighted evaluation criteria.

Examples of research topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Studies assessing the prevalence of diseases, behaviors, or health conditions;
- Pilot studies assessing the effectiveness of novel health intervention strategies;
- Assessment of the acceptability, feasibility, and/or safety of health interventions;
- Health services research targeted to low-income settings;
- Formative research (including qualitative studies) to develop novel health intervention strategies;
- Development of health technologies appropriate for low-income countries in which in-country assessment is part of the research plan;
- Laboratory studies using samples from low-income settings;
- Applications focusing exclusively on health interventions and services and capacity-building activities that are not evaluated for impact will be considered non-responsive to the RFA.
- Applications focusing exclusively on travel, conference attendance, or organizing conferences and meetings will be considered non-responsive to the RFA.

Eligibility
Principal Investigator (PI) must have primary faculty appointment at MUSC at the time of application. Those in "visiting" or "adjunct status" or those pending appointments are not eligible. Applicants at all levels are eligible, and early-career investigators are especially encouraged to apply. Applicants must not have existing funding that can support the proposed research. Proposals may include collaborators from other institutions but the PI must be MUSC faculty.

Application Review Information
Applications will be reviewed for compliance with eligibility criteria, and to determine if they propose research projects. Applications not meeting eligibility criteria will not be submitted for scientific review. In addition, given that this mechanism is to strengthen the applicant's ability to secure subsequent

research funding, applications that do not include a feasible plan for future funding of a larger study may be removed from consideration.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL
Proposal Due Date: July 10, 2019 by 12 p.m. (noon) EST

Access the South Carolina Clinical & Translational Research Institute (SCTR) Pilot Project Program website to submit your application at https://sctrweb2.musc.edu/appsite/user_session/new. The process includes uploading the following documents: Biographical Sketch for all investigators, Project Description, Budget and Justification, Proposal. Letters of Support from foreign collaborators (encouraged, but optional) can be attached at the end of the Proposal.

NOTE: All the uploads should be in PDF format. Please do not use PHS 398 PDF fillable forms, which are not compatible with the SCTR application system. Use the PHS 398 MS Word forms, and convert to PDF format to upload.

1. **Biographical Sketch**. Please use PHS 398 Form Biographical Sketch Format Page in MS Word at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html Follow the "new" 5-page format. If one of the Co-Investigators serves as a Co-PI, list the Co-PI as the first Co-Investigator on the online application and indicate by entering "(Co-PI)" after his/her last name. Personal statement of Co-Investigators must describe his/her role in the project. Convert the Word document to PDF to upload.

2. **Funding Entity Code and Grant Category.** On the online application form, in the Project Information section, choose "Global Health" for the Funding Entity Code; and choose "Discovery" as the Grant Category.

3. **Project Description/Global Health Relevance.** Provide a NIH-formatted, one-half page description (Arial font size 11, at least 0.5" margins). State the application's broad, long-term objectives, relevance to global health in low and middle-income countries, and specific aims. Summary should serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work when separated from the application. Upload this PDF file to the "Upload Project Description" box at the bottom of the online application.

4. **Budget and Justification.** Please use PHS 398 Form Page 4: Detailed Budget for Initial Budget Period in MS Word version at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html and use Continuation Format Page as needed for the budget justification. Each budget item listed in the Form Page 4 must be clearly justified. At the bottom of the online application, upload **one single, combined PDF document (budget and justification)** to the box labeled Budget and Justification.

   Faculty salary support is not allowed. All expenses must be directly related to proposed research. Facilities and administrative costs, also known as indirect costs, are not permitted.

5. **Proposal.** (6-page limit). (Arial font size 11, at least 0.5" margins PDF only). Follow NIH instructions for Research Strategy but with a six-page limit. The NIH Research Strategy instructions can be found at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.pdf. The page limit excludes references, support letters and technical appendices.
   - Include a description of the goal of the proposed study, preliminary data, hypothesis, specific aims, research design and methods, a description of the research team and research setting, and expected outcomes that would become the basis of a competitive extramural research grant application.
   - Identify future funding opportunities you plan to apply for utilizing the pilot study results.

- Identify collaborating in-country investigators.
- Include the plans AND estimated timeline for receiving IRB clearance at both MUSC and in the country where the study will be conducted. Specify which institutions and national agencies in the host country will require ethical clearance. If you believe that the study is exempt from IRB approval at either MUSC or in the host country, provide a rationale for exemptions.
It is not necessary to have approvals of all applicable institutional human, animal, and biosafety protocols (such as IRB, IACUC, IBC) to apply for this grant. However, approvals must be in place and documented before funding is released.
- Include a one-half page detailed plan addressing the timeline for the study, and post-study submission timeline for a larger, external grant. Include a comprehensive plan for use of the data/outcomes from this study to seek additional research funding, and anticipated dates of submission for subsequent funding. Investigators are encouraged to cite a specific RFA or Program Announcements from potential funders of the future study.

- Letters of Support. A letter of support from a collaborating in-country investigator is strongly encouraged, but optional. Letters of support should be submitted as part of the single PDF file with the proposal, references and technical appendices.
- Include no more than three documents such as reports and papers, survey instruments, and illustrations. Reference section should be limited to two pages. Technical appendices that contain material normally included within a proposal should not be attached and will not be considered.

At the bottom of the online application, upload **one single, combined PDF document for all the Proposal documents listed under the #5 above** (research strategy, references, letters of support, matching funds statement, etc.) to the box labeled "Upload Proposal."

Matching Funds. We encourage (but do not require) applicants to seek matching funds. Applications with matching funds will be given a higher priority. If matching funds are available to the investigator, submit a signed statement from the PI and the provider of matching funds, as part of the single PDF proposal document. Clearly indicate the source and amount of matching funds. The match must be in U.S. currency and can be from PI's Department/Division, Center or Foundation grants but cannot be from existing grants.

Evaluation: Application will be evaluated by reviewers with appropriate expertise and ranked based on the review criteria as described below. Preference will be given to the most promising applications based on scientific merit, innovation, impact, and feasibility to become the basis of a competitive extramural research grant application. Selected applicants will be notified via email at the earliest anticipated date of September 5, 2019. Please see the application review criteria and process section below for more details.

Award Details
- NOTE: Funds cannot be released until all applicable institutional human, animal, and biosafety protocols (such as IRB, IACUC, IBC), and any other required regulatory documents (such as INDs, IDE, and CITI Training) have been approved and documented.
- Principal investigators for funded projects will be required to submit an annual report and final progress report two years following the completion of their project to the Center for Global Health indicating: the number of subsequent grant applications, the funding outcome of these applications, and any publications or presentations that may have been based on the pilot grant.
- Awardees must agree to credit the MUSC Center for Global Health in any publication, publicity or applications that result from awards.

- It is the PI's responsibility to inform the CGH office of any changes to the project, including departure from the PI's institution. This will help to determine how both parties should proceed, such as transfer a PI's responsibility to another team member or to close out the project.

Award Considerations
- Awardees and business managers are encouraged to engage appropriate members of the Finance and Administration immediately upon receiving funds to ensure the best way to handle international financial transactions. International transactions can be complex and it is critical to plan ahead of time to ensure there are no delays in the research project.   When possible, setting up a sub-award with the partnering institution can help alleviate transactional issues.
- International research typically requires IRB approval both in the U.S. and at the partnering institution. As international IRB approval can be time-consuming, starting the approval process as soon as possible will help keep the project on target.

For questions, contact Kathleen Ellis, CGH Executive Director at ellisk@musc.edu

South Carolina Clinical & Translational Research Institute (SCTR) has resources and consultation services (such as biostat, budget, regulatory, coordinator core and intellectual property consultations) that can help investigators interested in applying under this RFA. Please submit your request for a consultation via sparc.musc.edu or call the SCTR SUCCESS Center at 843-792-8300.

APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA AND PROCESS

Reviewers for the applications will be identified from faculty with expertise in relevant scientific disciplines and current research areas. Reviewers are instructed to evaluate applications by addressing the <u>core review criteria</u> (listed below) as applicable based on the grant category.

<u>Core Review Criteria for Overall Impact/Priority Score</u>:

i. Significance including Scientific Merit of Proposed Project:
- Does the project address an important health problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field?
- If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved?
- How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?

ii. Potential to Secure Future Extramural Funding:
- Does the project have high potential to secure future extramural funding?

iii. Investigator(s):
- Are the PIs, collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project? Do they have established roles, skills and experience to carry out the project?
- Is there clearly established new trans-disciplinary collaboration? i.e. collaboration between basic and clinicians, clinicians and community, and vice versa
- If Early Stage Investigators or New Investigators, do they have appropriate experience and training?
- If Early Stage Investigators, is there a defined mentorship plan with a senior/established investigator and timetable for becoming independent and a plan for achieving research independence and potential to lead to independent funding (with a plan to submit K or R applications)
- If established, have they demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have advanced their field(s)?
- If the project is collaborative, do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise; is their organizational structure appropriate for the project?
- Does investigator have a documented in-country collaborator appropriate to the project?

iv. Innovation:
- Is the project new and innovative?
- Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions?
- Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel to one field of research or novel in a broad sense?
- Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed?

v. Approach:
- Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project?
- Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented?
- If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility and will particularly risky aspects be managed?

- o If the project involves clinical research, are the plans for 1) protection of human subjects from research risks, and 2) inclusion of minorities and members of both sexes/genders, as well as the inclusion of children, justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed?
- o Is there appropriate justification provided for the number of subjects (e.g. humans, animals) involved?
- o Is the proposal feasible and will lead to success?

vi. Environment:
- o Will the scientific environment in which the research will be done contribute to the probability of success?
- o Are the institutional support, equipment and other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the project proposed?
- o Will the project benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, subject populations, or collaborative arrangements?

vii. Budget & Period Support:
- o Is the budget and the requested period of support fully justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed research?