Center for Environmental Health and Susceptibility (CEHS) Community Pilot Projects Program 2024-2025

GUIDELINES FOR PROPOSALS

LETTER OF INTENT: January 19, 2024 – Not required for application submission

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: February 23, 2024

The UNC Center on Environmental Health and Susceptibility (CEHS) announces the availability of funding for pilot projects to support **Environmental Health Disparities (EHD) and Environmental Justice (EJ)**, as defined by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS): https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/translational/justice/index.cfm. These proposals should include epidemiological, or social scientific investigations of health conditions that burden people experiencing poverty or people with lower incomes, and those with health disparities. A collaboration between a population or social scientist and faculty member at UNC Chapel Hill and a community organization is required. Review criteria for proposals are described below. Awards will be up to $25,000.

ELIGIBILITY: Any member of the **UNC Chapel Hill faculty** (tenured/tenure-track or fixed term), representative of a **community-based organization**, or **UNC postdoctoral scholar** with a collaborating faculty member as co-PI. Applications from community-based organizations are also encouraged. These organizations must identify a UNC faculty collaborator at the time of their application.

We strongly encourage applications where the CBO leadership and/or faculty represent groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields. Likewise, we strongly encourage participation from CBOs that serve constituents that have been socially or economically marginalized.

LETTER OF INTENT: Although not required, applicants may complete the online Letter of Intent form by January 19, 2024. Completing a LOI allows us to pre-screen applications for fit to mission, connect applicants with core facilities as needed, and expedite the selection of relevant external scientific reviewers, to facilitate a rapid roll out of awards. **Click here to complete the Letter of Intent.**

BUDGET: Total budget requests cannot exceed $25,000 and must be expended within a 12-month period: 03/01/2024 - 2/28/2025. Faculty members should prepare a budget following typical NIH format. CBOs may obtain assistance in preparing a budget. **Please contact CEHS Associate Director for Administration, Michael Sanderson (sanderson@unc.edu) for budget-related support and questions.** No carryover of funds past the end of the budget period may be allowed. Funding for food is not allowable under NIH rules.

Allowable expenses:
- Appropriate personnel expenses that are commensurate with effort and engagement
- Meeting costs including facility rental as required
- Travel reimbursements (e.g., hotel, airfare, personal vehicle mileage)
- Funds required to support active participation of community groups, including childcare expenses and participation incentives
- Funds to cover the measurement of exposures
- Supplies for meetings
- Printing

- Postage
- Wifi hotspot devices, monthly service fees

If you have questions as to whether other costs are allowable, please contact Mr. Sanderson (Sanderson@unc.edu).

The budget and budget justification must be detailed and should follow the format of the current NIH Budget and Budget Justification pages. For personnel, the appropriate cost for fringe benefits should be included – UNC current fringe rates. Health insurance for permanent staff and Graduate Research Assistants (GRA) should also be included (current health insurance rates apply; please check with the business office of the corresponding department to confirm the appropriate rates in effect at the time of this submission). If a GRA is hired, the PI should decide if the tuition award cost will be included in the budget **(and is consistent with the PI's departmental guidelines). In general, the CEHS does not support faculty salaries as a component of the pilot project.** The Center does not fund clinical trial research, so proposals involving clinical trials should not be submitted. For funded proposals, budget changes must be requested in writing. **Any deviations from these budget guidelines require approval prior to submission. The project and budget period will be from March 1, 2024 to February 28, 2025. All projects must be completed by February 28, 2025. PI requests for carryover funds are discouraged.**

USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS AND ANIMALS: Selected projects using human or animal subjects are required to submit a copy of the IRB or IACUC approval letter covering the pilot. Even if your project is covered under an existing/active IRB, we need a letter of approval stating such. Human subject studies are also required to complete the NIH Human Subjects and Clinical Trials form. Funds cannot be allocated until appropriate approvals are in place.

GENERATING ADDITIONAL GRANT PROPOSALS: CEHS pilot grants are seed money. It is expected that ALL pilot projects will generate preliminary data that will lead to new grant proposals, especially proposals to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. All successful applications will clearly articulate specific plans for extramural funding applications. Funding for CEHS pilot grants is made possible by support from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS): P30ES010126.

USE AND SUPPORT FROM CEHS CORE FACILITIES: Following preliminary funding decisions, finalists will be **required** to meet with one or more of the CEHS Facility Core or sub-core directors for review of relevant research components. If investigators are proposing to use facility cores as a part of their pilot project, we strongly recommend that they engage core directors early in their application process in order to optimize research methodology and budget information respectively. Pilot projects are required to use at least one CEHS core as a part of their pilot.

CEHS Facility Cores or Sub-Cores can be found here: (http://sph.unc.edu/cehs/facility-cores/).

1. **Integrative Health Sciences Core (IHSFC)**- Director Hazel Nichols (hbn@email.unc.edu)
2. **Molecular Analysis and Statistical Support Core(MASS)**- Co-Directors Kun Lu, kunlu@unc.edu (Molecular Analysis) and Haibo Zhou, zhou@bios.unc.edu (Biostatistics)
3. **Community Engagement Core** - Director Kathleen Gray, kmgray@email.unc.edu

APPLICATION FORMAT: We have substantially revised our format to limit investigator and reviewer burden. Review criteria will emphasize the significance of the problem and the potential for future NIEHS funding. We recommend providing enough information on scientific approach so that reviewers understand how the project will be implemented, but details are not required. Page limits below are recommended.

APPLICATION FORMAT: Please tell us your story, using the information requested below. If you would like to include images, audio files, videos, or other materials to support your application, you are welcome to do so. If you need support or assistance in developing your application, we suggest attending one of the information sessions identified below or contacting Dr. Kathleen Gray.

Please submit the following materials as a single PDF:

- **Application Cover Page**. This page should indicate the Principal Investigator (PI). For the purpose of this proposal, the Principal Investigator is the faculty member or community group member who will be the recipient of the funds, and will be responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the application are met. The PI can be a faculty member, community leader, and/or CBO officer. If there is more than one PI, please designate a single contact PI.

- **Project Overview.** This is part of the Cover Page and should be approximately 5 sentences in length. What are you trying to do and why? Why is this issue important?

- **Proposal.** (approximately 2 pages)
    - *Specific aims*: What are the goals of this grant? (approximately 1/2 page)
    - *Significance*: Describe the EJ or EHD issue that you propose to focus on in this grant period and its importance. (approximately 1/2 page)
    - *Approach*: What are you proposing to do in this period and how will you do it? Identify 2-3 objectives that will guide your proposed work. How will you determine whether your project has been successful? How will you evaluate your activities? (approximately 1-1.5 pages)
    - *Impact*: What do you hope to achieve through this project? (1 paragraph)
    - *Plans for future NIEHS funding*: How do you plan to move this work toward a larger, NIH funded proposal? (1/4 pages)

- **Budget and Justification** (explanation of all proposed expenses, not to exceed $25,000)

- Faculty applicants should submit an **NIH biosketch**, and community organizations should submit **resumes** and **background information on the history and accomplishments of the community organization and the constituents that the organization of community leader serves.** This information should not exceed 4 pages.

- If the proposal includes a collaboration with a specific community organization, a letter of support from the community partner, on organizational letterhead, is required. This letter should specifically state:

    To: [Applicant]
    From: [Printed name of the individual collaborator or name of the organization and name and title of the official submitting this memo]
    Date: [Insert date]

    By signing below (or transmitting electronically), I acknowledge that I am listed as a collaborator on [or that I will cooperate in helping support the activities of] the proposal entitled "_____(proposal title)_____," with _____(PI name)_____ as the Principal Investigator. I agree to undertake the tasks associated with me as described in this proposal, and/or commit to provide or make available the resources designated in the proposal.

    Signature: _____
    Organization Name: _____

We will hold two Zoom sessions to respond to questions from community groups who are considering submitting applications. There will be no formal presentations during these sessions, which will be held on **January 29, 2024, from 12-1pm,** and on **January 30, 2024 from 4-5pm**.

Zoom link for information sessions: https://unc.zoom.us/j/9551697241 **Phone call option:** (929)436-2866 or (301)715-8592 Meeting ID: 955 169 7241

Applicants should submit a single PDF file with all written material. Any accompanying videos, images, or audio files should have the same file name. The file should be sent as an email attachment to the CEHS Associate Director, Michael Sanderson, sanderson@unc.edu. Applications are due by midnight **February 23, 2024**.

APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA:

Each application will be part of a two-tier review system. The two-step review process will include evaluation by external experts in EJ, community-based, or disparities-related research, followed by evaluation by the CEHS Internal Advisory Board. The review criteria are:

1) *Goal and Objectives*
    - Are the project goal attainable in a one-year timeframe?

- Are the objectives specific, achievable, and measurable?
- Does the collaboration between CBO and researcher reflect a mutually beneficial, multi-directional relationship?
- Are the environmental problems identified aligned with the mission of NIEHS (https://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/strategicplan/index.cfm)?

2) *Significance/ Importance of the problem*
   - Does the applicant describe a current EJ/EHD issue?
   - Have the applicants justified the inclusion of specific communities or community-based organizations?

3) *Approach and Impact*
   - Is the proposed activity [activities] clearly described – Who, What, When, and Where?
   - How do you propose to accomplish the aims [objectives]?
   - Is the approach feasible to accomplish within the timeframe and budget provided?
   - Has the applicant identified evaluation metrics they will use to determine whether the project has been successful?
   - Does this address the overall EJ/EHD problem?

4) *Expertise of faculty and community group*
   - Does the faculty or postdoc have the expertise to steer community engaged research?
   - Does the community partner/CBO demonstrate capacity to accomplish the objectives/aims in this proposal?

5) *Demonstrated need (if applicable)*
   - The budget of the CBO is less than $50K (or $100K)
   - The proposal describes a project that is community-driven and centers equity.

CEHS PARTNERS – OTHER RESOUCRES AND OPPORTUNITIES: The Center for Environmental Health and Susceptibility has several partnerships across the UNC campus interested in sharing resources and possibly matching CEHS research funds. While not required, applicants may benefit from these resources:

The following centers/units have historically participated in **grant matching** with the CEHS. Please indicate in your application if you have an affiliation with these or other university centers
- UNC TraCS - Proposals related to translation of research to clinical practice
- NC Policy Collaboratory – Proposals addressing North Carolina Environmental issues
- UNC Lineberger Cancer Center – Proposals addressing cancer research
- UNC Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center (IDDRC)

Please review the eligibility requirements for those listed below to see if your application is eligible.

CEHS CONTACTS:
For more information on programmatic fit and funding priorities for the CEHS, please contact Michael Sanderson, CEHS Associate Director for Administration at sanderson@unc.edu

CEHS

Center for Environmental Health and Susceptibility (CEHS)

Pilot Projects Program 2024-2025

APPLICATION COVER PAGE - Applications due February 23, 2024

Project type *(circle one)*	EJ Planning EJ Pilot

Project Title	

Principal Investigator *(Last name, First name)*	
Title/Academic Rank if applicable **Community Organization affiliation or other title**	
UNC Department/School (if applicable)	
E-mail address	
Telephone number	

Other Collaborator *(Last name, First name)*	
Title (if applicable)	
Agency/Organization	
E-mail address	

Are Human Subjects Involved?	Yes or No *(circle one)*
Are Vertebrate Animals Used?	Yes or No *(circle one)*

Names and Departments of Co-Investigators - *(Last name, First name, Academic Rank, Department)*

Project Overview