

**Chicago Chronic Condition Equity Network (C3EN)**

**Research Project Pilot Grant Program**

**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

**Round 4**

**Funded by an NIMHD grant to University of Chicago and Rush University Medical Center**

**RFA issued:** July 14, 2023

**Applications due: December 1, 2023, 5:00 PM Central Standard Time**

**Earliest start date:** July 1, 2024

**Purpose:**

The Chicago Chronic Condition Equity Network (C3EN) coordinates a Research Project Pilot Grant Program that aims to expand and cultivate the network of health disparities researchers throughout the Chicago region. Its goal is to provide early stage investigators with funding to obtain compelling pilot data that they can leverage to establish and sustain an NIH-funded program of health disparities research. The C3EN Investigator Development Core will also provide grantees with mentorship from experienced investigators, access to the research infrastructure at both University of Chicago and Rush University Medical Center, and ongoing methodological and biostatistical consultation.

Pilot grants are not intended for large projects by established investigators, nor are they intended to provide bridging support or to supplement ongoing funded research that is not scientifically distinct from the proposed work. Small projects consisting of formative or summative research activities with a community partner are more appropriate for our mini-grant program, described in a separate call for proposals. Research Pilot Project Grants will have clear potential to inform future work addressing disparities in multiple chronic diseases<sup>1</sup> in the Chicago region. Projects with the following elements or characteristics will be prioritized.

- Examines/targets disparities in multiple chronic diseases
- A focus on intersectoral approaches to reducing disparities, which involve influencing

health through interventions implemented outside the health sector

- A robust, bidirectional partnership with a community organization
- Novel approaches and study designs, including simulation modeling, implementation research, cost-effectiveness studies, and urban design
- Applications from investigators who identify as under-represented minorities

Please feel free to contact us for guidance if you are unsure about the suitability of your topic or project.

<sup>1</sup> [Peer Reviewed: Defining and Measuring Chronic Conditions: Imperatives for Research, Policy, Program, and Practice \(nih.gov\)](#)

### **Applicant eligibility:**

Applicants must be investigators with a position at an academic institution or a partnering community organization in the Chicago region. Post-doctoral trainees and early career faculty (assistant professors, instructors) with a full time position are eligible to apply. Students, pre-doctoral trainees, and residents are not eligible to apply.

Applicants must be pursuing a line of scientific inquiry focused on health disparities and plan to conduct the proposed work in the Chicago region.

Applicants must be early stage health disparities researchers, which may include 1) individuals who have completed their training within the past 10 years, or 2) early career faculty (e.g., assistant professors, instructors) who have not previously received substantial NIH funding in health disparities as a PI. Early career faculty who have received R01-level funding are eligible to apply if they are transitioning the focus of their work to health disparities.

Individuals may only be awarded one Research Project Pilot Grant as PI, but may submit multiple applications in a given round of funding provided each is scientifically distinct.

### **Funds Available and Duration of Support:**

Approximately 6-7 Research Pilot Project Grants will be awarded in this round of

funding. The recommended duration for proposed projects is 12 months, but project timelines of up to 24 months may be proposed if there is a compelling justification (e.g., the need for developmental work at the outset of a study, delivery of an intervention over a longer time span). The main budget for Research Pilot Project Grants may not exceed \$50,000 direct costs. However, projects that include active involvement by a community partner may budget up to an additional \$10,000 direct costs that is allocated towards the efforts of the community partner organization on the project (for a total budget of \$60,000). Allowable costs include personnel effort; research-related materials and supplies; participant stipends and reimbursements; professional services (e.g., transcription, software programming); and other research-related expenses. Salary support for the PI beyond 10% effort will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Up to \$2,500 may be allocated for conference travel, and up to \$2,500 may be allocated toward major equipment purchases. Indirect costs are allowed, but cannot exceed the federally negotiated indirect cost rate at the PI's institution. If the PI's institution does not have a federally negotiated F&A rate agreement, you may include the de minimis rate of 10% for indirect costs. Applicants may be required to reduce their budgets or reallocate funds prior to award.

C3EN provides all grantees with access to methodological consultation from experts in biostatistics, informatics, implementation science, and intersectoral action for health. There is no cost associated with methodological consultation. Grantees will have access to consultants both throughout their project, and after their project end date as they publish their findings and develop grant applications.

**Conditions of funding:**

Whenever possible and appropriate, projects should incorporate Social Determinants of Health Measures from the PhenX Toolkit

(<https://www.phenxtoolkit.org/collections/view/6>), which represent common data elements collected across many studies supported by C3EN. Depending on the nature of their project, applicants may be encouraged to incorporate additional common data elements, and to contribute (de-identified) data from their project to pooled analyses

focused on common data elements collected across studies at multiple NIMHD-funded centers.

Grantees will be expected to participate in several investigator development activities during the period in which their project is active. Mentorship is a key component of the C3EN investigator development strategy. All grantees must identify a project mentor who will provide guidance and accountability to the PI. The mentor must be in a position to ensure that pilot projects are conducted in compliance with all federal, state, and local policies, rules, and guidelines for research involving human subjects and vertebrate animals. The qualifications of the mentor, and the mentoring plan, should be described in the Mentorship Plan component of the application. Applicants may identify a mentor with whom they have an existing mentoring relationship, or may seek mentorship from a C3EN investigator (see C3EN website for [membership roster](#)).

Grantees should plan to attend quarterly research progress meetings that are intended to connect early career and senior health disparities investigators throughout the Chicago region. These meetings are informal and conversational in nature, with discussions centered on meeting project milestones, generating solutions to any challenges encountered, and planning future research. Grantees may also have the opportunity to attend a national meeting of all of the NIMHD-funded centers.

Projects involving human subjects research must provide documentation of IRB approval prior to the issuance of funds. The C3EN must review and approve a Data Safety Monitoring Plan for all non-exempt human subject research studies.

All projects involving an NIH-defined clinical trial must be registered on ClinicalTrials.gov prior to the enrollment of the first subject.

Brief progress reports describing success in meeting project milestones will be reviewed annually throughout each project's 12- to 24-month project period. In the absence of timely progress, the awardee may be asked to develop a remediation plan to get the project back on track. A close-out report detailing the completion status of each study aim will be due within 3 months of the project end date. As part of its own evaluation

process, C3EN will solicit updates from applicants on long-term outcomes from the pilot project, including abstract presentations and published manuscripts resulting from the pilot project, and grants applied for and awarded based on pilot results.

### **Full Application:**

The application is an abbreviated NIH R01-style format and NIH forms are used as indicated in the table below. Forms can be downloaded from <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>. Applications are expected to use NIH formatting standards (single-spaced, 0.5 inch margin minimum, Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype, or Georgia typeface in black in at least 11 point size).

### **REQUIRED APPLICATION COMPONENTS:**

- **Face Page**

REDCap form available at this link: <https://www.c3en.org/apply-for-a-pilot-award/>. Applicants complete this form online. The form collects basic information about the applicant, co-investigators, and the proposal.

- **Response Memo** (1 page limit)

If this is a resubmission, please send a 1 page response memo to address reviewer comments

- **Mentorship Plan** (1 page limit)

Describe the relevance of the mentor's expertise to the proposed work; the nature of the mentoring plan; and mentor's ability to oversee the sound and ethical conduct of the project; and the applicant's and mentor's shared expectations for authorship, data ownership, and intellectual property rights.

- **Abstract** (30 lines maximum)

- **Specific Aims** (1 page limit)

- **Research Strategy** (5 page limit)

Should follow the NIH format (significance, innovation, approach)

- **Plans for Future Funding** (250 word limit)

Describe how completion of this pilot project will lead to submission of a grant proposal to NIH or other funding agencies

- **Literature Cited** (no page limit)

- **Detailed Budget** ([Form Page 4](#))

- **Indirect Cost Checklist** ([Checklist Form Page](#))
- **Detailed Budget Justification** (No form)
- **NIH Biographical Sketch for PD/PI** ([NIH Biosketch](#))
- **Protection of Human Subjects** (if applicable, no page limit)  
See guidance for section 3.1 Protection of Human Subjects at: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-e/general/g.500-phs-human-subjects-and-clinical-trials-information.htm#IfYes>
- **Inclusion Across the Lifespan** (if applicable, no form)
- **Inclusion of Women and Minorities** (if applicable, no form)
- **Inclusion Enrollment Table** (if applicable, Table in REDCap form)
- **Letters of Support** (no form)  
Letters of support are only required for collaborations with partnering institutions and/or organizations. The letter of support should include information about the community served by the organization and the services offered.

#### **How to Submit:**

Applicants should submit one electronic PDF version of the completed grant application no later than **Friday, December 1, 2023, 5:00 PM Central Standard Time.**

Applications should be submitted through the REDCap form available at [www.c3en.org](http://www.c3en.org).

Questions about the application process should be sent to:

Melanie Norstrom, PhD

Chicago Chronic Condition Equity Network (C3EN)

Email: [mnorstrom@medicine.bsd.uchicago.edu](mailto:mnorstrom@medicine.bsd.uchicago.edu)

Scientific questions should be directed to:

Brad Appelhans, PhD, [brad\\_appelhans@rush.edu](mailto:brad_appelhans@rush.edu)

Arshiya Baig, MD, [abaig@medicine.bsd.uchicago.edu](mailto:abaig@medicine.bsd.uchicago.edu)

Funding for this Research Project Pilot Grant Program comes from the Chicago Chronic Condition Equity Network (C3EN; P50MD017349), and institutional support from University of Chicago and Rush University Medical Center.