

Community Health Equity Pilot Studies Program

Request for Proposals for Fall 2023 Submission

The UB Community Health Equity Research Institute provides seed grants for pilot projects to support research in health equity and adverse social determinants of health (SDOH). In this funding cycle, the Institute will fund 2 pilot projects with a maximum budget of \$40,000 each.

Health inequities are preventable differences in the burden of disease and opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations. The term “disparities” refers to disproportionate health outcomes, while the term “health inequity” stresses the injustice and oppression that underlies these differences. The root causes of health inequities are often **social determinants of health (SDOH)**, the conditions in which people live, work, learn and play. They are typically found in underdeveloped neighborhoods and communities and are often driven by systemic structural racism. The root causes of health inequities are institutional and societal conditions, practices and policies that create the social determinants that result in adverse health outcomes.

One of the most pressing problems in Buffalo is race-based health inequities, a condition shared with many American metropolitan areas. Priority will be given to projects that address health inequities in Buffalo’s African American community. The community-based projects prioritize African Americans because they are the largest racialized group in Buffalo and the United States. Blacks' socioeconomic hardships are similar to those facing other racialized populations of color in Buffalo. Therefore, if a model for abolishing race-based health inequities among Black people is developed, it might be applicable to other populations with necessary adjustments.

Proposed studies should address health disparities and the role of social determinants of health in health disparities. SDOH include, but are not limited to:

- Poverty
- Educational opportunity
- High unemployment
- Poor housing stock
- Limited access to healthy food
- Limited access to healthcare
- Underdeveloped neighborhoods
- Unhealthy home and neighborhood built environments
- Criminal justice system
- Access to WiFi
- Access to public transportation
- Access to recreational facilities and greenspace
- Discrimination
- Environmental exposures, including climate change impacts

Successful pilot studies proposals will meet the following three objectives:

1. They will address root problems that underly adverse SDOH and health inequity. While mitigating health disparities is important, the intent of this pilot studies program is to address underlying root causes that will lead to institutional and systemic changes.
2. They will involve at least one community-based partner. The UB Community Health Equity Research Institute prioritizes community-based participatory research, which involves the community in the entire project from planning the project, to conducting the study, to benefiting from the results.
3. They are designed with the goal of achieving larger scale extramural funding. The scope of projects to address root causes of adverse SDOH and lead to systemic change will need to be greater than what a pilot study can support. The intent is that the pilot studies will support key preliminary studies that will produce data that will strengthen larger proposals. The pilot proposal should articulate a clear plan for future substantive extramural funding, for example, a large federal or foundation grant such as an NIH R01 National Science Foundation grant, or Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant.

Study start date and funding period

The anticipated start date for funded projects is May 1, 2024. The project should be completed in 1 year.

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must be a full-time or part-time faculty member at UB. Faculty from all 12 UB schools are invited to apply.

Application Process

Applying for pilot studies funding involves a two-tiered process:

- 1) Submission of a Letter of Intent (LOI), and
- 2) Submission of a full proposal, if invited, following review of the LOIs.

Timeline

Request for proposals released	October 30, 2023
Informational Session	November 13 @3:00 pm
Letters of intent due	December 14, 2023
Invitations to successful applicants to submit full proposals	December 22, 2023
Presentation to Community Advisory Board	Mid January
Full proposals due	February 20, 2024
Notification to applicants	Late March/Early April
Funding start date	May 1, 2024

An **Informational Session** on tips for success in obtaining community health equity pilot studies will be held on 11/13 at 3:00 pm via Zoom.

<https://buffalo.zoom.us/j/92265374037?pwd=ZnFTVkJNZeTkxOWRkcDF5Z0p2bXFTZz09>

Anyone applying for pilot studies funding is encouraged to attend. Questions about the submission process or scope of the RFA can be sent to Heather Orom (horom@buffalo.edu).

Letter of Intent (LOI) Submission

There is a 2-page limit for LOIs

Page 1

- a. Succinct title for the proposal
- b. List of names and affiliations of all investigators, including community partners, involved in the project

Page 2 should provide a succinct abstract of the proposal, summarizing:

- a. The problem to be solved and your approach to solving the problem
- b. How the pilot study and the larger program of research will contribute to changing structures and systems with the aim of reducing health inequities
- c. Your community engagement plan
- d. How the pilot study will lead to substantive extramural funding, including identifying one or more target funding mechanisms

Format

LOIs should be submitted as a single PDF in Arial 11-point font, single-spaced text, 0.5-inch margins. Submissions must be emailed to Health-Equity-Pilot-Studies@buffalo.edu. Applicants will be notified with a decision as to whether their proposal has been selected to move forward to the second tier of the application process.

Full Proposal Submission (by invitation)

Invited applicants should use the following template:

Page 1

- a. Project title
- b. Names/degrees of all project investigators and their institutional affiliations
- c. Abstract (300 word max)
- d. Five key words relevant to your research topic
- e. Two sentences that describe your project for a general scientific audience
- f. Indication whether the project involves human and/or animal subject research

Pages 2-5 (4-page limit)

- a. Specific Aims

- b. Background and significance of the project, including the anticipated impact of the pilot study and the larger program of research on changing structures and systems to reduce health inequities
- c. Brief overview of the approach, including your community engagement plan and the metrics by which you will assess impact
- d. Study timeline with milestones to be accomplished
- e. Role of pilot study in securing extramural funding for a larger project

Additional required materials not included in the 4-page limit:

- a. References
- b. Budget and Justification (1-page limit): The maximum allowable budget is \$40,000 direct costs; there are no indirect costs. All costs needed for the project must follow the Uniform Guidance Cost Principles and must be allowable, reasonable, allocable and consistent. Please note that faculty salaries/fringe, tuition, and equipment are not allowable expenses on pilot awards. Salary for staff, students, postdocs and supplies are allowed.
- c. NIH Biosketches: A current [NIH biosketch](#) for each faculty investigator should be provided (5-page limit per biosketch). The personal statements for each investigator should make clear of their role as it pertains to the project.
- d. Resumes: Community partners involved in the proposed study should provide a current resume.

Format

Full proposals should be submitted as a single PDF in Arial 11-point font, single-spaced text, 0.5-inch margins. Proposals must be emailed to Health-Equity-Pilot-Studies@buffalo.edu. All applicants will be notified with a decision as to whether or not their proposal has been selected for funding.

Registration with Central Study Registration

For most proposals involving human subjects, the principal investigator must register their study with [Central Study Registration](#) (CSR) *prior to submission of the full proposal*. Exceptions are noted below. To begin the CSR process, a proposal document (at minimum) is required. **It is not necessary to submit an IRB proposal at this stage.** For any questions regarding CSR registration, please contact the [CTSI Clinical Research Facilitators \(829-4357\)](#). Due to reporting requirements, chart reviews *must be registered* with CSR.

- The HRP-503-Protocol template can be found in the [CLICK portal](#), within the IRB Library section, under the “Templates” tab.

Please note the following exceptions to CSR Registration HRP-503 protocols:

- If you plan to submit your protocol to the IRB for determination of “Not Human Subjects Research”.
- If you will seek “Exempt Status” from the IRB for your study.

If bypassing CSR, please leave a comment in Click indicating you are seeking one of the above listed determinations. This will allow the IRB intake coordinator to know your study should not be returned for registration.

Review Process

PIs invited to submit full proposals will be required to present a relatively brief summary of their projects to the Community Health Equity Research Institute Community Advisory Board (CAB) approximately mid-way through the proposal writing period. This group of community leaders will provide feedback on the project approach and potential for impact. While researchers will not be evaluated on their presentation, they will be expected to be responsive to the CAB feedback. A summary will be provided to both the researchers and the reviewers to evaluate responsiveness.

Applications will be reviewed by independent reviewers and rated using the following criteria.

- a. Scientific merit and innovation
- b. Incorporation of community engagement into the research process
- c. Potential for contributing to the reduction of structural and systemic causes of health inequities
- d. Potential for reducing health inequities in Buffalo's East Side
- e. Responsiveness to CAB feedback
- f. Potential for securing extramural funding
- g. Realistic milestones and feasibility of completion within one year
- h. Rationale and use of proposed budget

Conditions for Awarded Pilot Projects

The following are required of every pilot study PI:

- a. Attend "on-boarding" session regarding requirements associated with funding and award. The PI must attend before funds will be released and before the project will begin.
- b. Submit quarterly progress reports on the status of the budget and the aims using the form that will be provided.
- c. Submit brief progress reports yearly following the project end date, for three years, using a form that will be provided.
- d. Present findings at the annual Community Health Equity Institute Research Day.
- e. If called upon, serve as a reviewer of proposals submitted to this Community Health Equity Pilot Studies Program.

Awarded Pilot Projects

- All investigators are encouraged to submit findings to an academic peer-reviewed journal or discipline-specific publication within two years of the pilot project end date.
- All investigators are encouraged to apply for funding at the next level, including NIH R01 proposals or similar funding sources within two years of the pilot project end date.