



2023 Pilot Projects Program Description and Instructions for Applications

Letter of Intent (LOI) Due: Friday, November 17, 2023, by 5 PM PST

Full Applications Due: Friday, February 9, 2024, by 5 PM PST

(Full Applications will be by invitation from LOI only)

The Southern California Center for Latino Health is pleased to announce a request for applications (RFA) for one-year pilot research projects. These projects will receive 12 months of funding, from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. We are seeking to fund pilot projects that are designed to understand and address health disparities related to chronic diseases among Latinos, including but not limited to disparities in obesity, type 2 diabetes (T2D), non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) and dyslipidemia. We will prioritize research that is led by investigators who are early-career, new to the field, and/or from underrepresented minorities (URM) in the research workforce (i.e., underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, individuals with disabilities, sexual minorities, and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds), to support their transition to independent funding. We will also prioritize supporting projects that integrate multidisciplinary team science, and that involve community partnerships and community-based participatory research (CBPR) approaches.

The Center's Investigator Development Core (IDC) will award 5-7 pilot projects in the coming year, at up to \$70,000 in direct costs per project for a 12-month project period. Pilot studies can apply to compete for a second-year renewal, depending upon satisfactory progress.

This year, our pilot awards are intended to support:

- Preliminary research that will facilitate community partnerships and that use community-based participatory research (CBPR) approaches, which will lead to larger extramurally-funded community trials, health outcomes research, or implementation research.
- Projects from investigators who have an existing community partner or who will establish a new community partnership to help address disparities in Latino health.
- Pre-existing research in the above-referenced research areas by incorporating a different discipline and investigator who is new to collaboration with the current team. The award may be used to leverage data and resources from a currently-funded project to expand the research in a new direction, ultimately leading to the submission of a new grant or expansion of a current effort to a larger scale extramurally funded project.
- Projects that leverage or supplement the Center's three ongoing R01-type research projects (details here <https://socallatinohealth.org/research-project/>)

Opportunities and benefits:

Funded pilot project teams will benefit from numerous resources and opportunities provided by our Center (<https://socal latinohealth.org/>) and the broader Health Equity Action Network (<https://health-equity-action.org/>), which is a consortium of 11 centers across the U.S. Examples include:

- Pilot projects can draw on resources from our Center Cores that include: Administrative Core, Investigator Development Core, Methods & Data Sub-Core, and Community Engagement Core (details here: <https://socal latinohealth.org/research-project/> and here: <https://socal latinohealth.org/meet-our-team/>)
- Funded pilot projects that are led by early-career researchers will have the opportunity to be matched with an experienced Center Mentor who is familiar with the specific field of research.
- Our Center's Annual Research Showcase provides an opportunity to (i) connect with members of our Center's Research Projects, Cores, community partners and funded pilot project teams, (ii) present your pilot project research, and (iii) participate in roundtable discussions and Q&A on research best practices, career development, and other topics.
- The annual Health Equity Action Network meeting provides pilot project PIs the opportunity to attend workshops and seminars for early-stage investigators, to present their pilot projects, and to network with NIH and consortium members.

ELIGIBILITY

Those who are eligible to serve as Primary Investigator (PI or Co-PI) are individuals with a faculty or research scientist appointment in any department or school/division at any of The Southern California Center for Latino Health partner institutions, including: the University of Southern California, Children's Hospital Los Angeles, UC San Diego, UC Irvine, San Diego State University, University of Colorado-Boulder, the CU Medical Center in Denver, The Sansum Diabetes Research Institute, California State Universities (Long Beach, Northridge, Dominguez Hills, Los Angeles), California Polytechnic State University, Cedars Sinai, Family Health Centers of San Diego, Scripps Whittier Diabetes Institute, Public Health Foundation Enterprises, and Kaiser Permanente. Other Southern California institutions may be eligible to extend the reach of the consortium.

Those who are not eligible to apply are: key personnel from our Center, postdoctoral scholars, students, and individuals who have been Principal Investigators on a pilot project previously funded by our Center.

We will prioritize proposals from: (1) NIH early-stage investigators and investigators new to the field, (2) self-identified members of populations that are under-represented in the research enterprise (<https://diversity.nih.gov/about-us/population-underrepresented>), including: Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino/ Latinx, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, socioeconomically-disadvantaged individuals, underserved rural communities, and sexual and gender minorities.

Based on the mandate of our Center, pilot projects are required to include a community outreach, community engagement, and/or dissemination component. This may be achieved via several approaches, such as: the use of community advisory boards, patient advocates, and citizen scientists; community-based participatory research (CBPR) approaches; or dissemination plans for policy, decision makers, and key opinion leaders. Funded projects will be supported by our Center's Community Engagement Core to achieve these goals.

For questions about eligibility or other aspects, please contact Marymar Vacio: vacio@usc.edu

INFORMATION SESSION

A virtual information session for interested applicants, led by leadership of our Center's IDC, will be held at 1:00pm PDT, Wednesday September 27, 2023.

Please register for the information session here: <https://tinyurl.com/LOIVirtualWebinar>

For those who cannot attend, the meeting will be recorded. Please contact Marymar Vacio (vacio@usc.edu) for the recording.

LETTER OF INTENT (LOI) INSTRUCTIONS (Submission deadline 11/17/2023)

Interested applicants must provide the following LOI materials combined into 1 PDF document.

1. **A one-page LOI:** This should briefly describe: (i) the research gap that the project is addressing, (ii) the pilot project's specific aims (iii) a very short summary of the project team, (iv) the project's fit with The Southern California Center for Latino Health research program (and if the project involves a community partner, also describe the alignment with the community partner goals), and (v) how the project will lead to larger extramurally funded research. The LOI must be written in 11-point Arial font with 0.5-inch margins.
2. **A 0.5-page personal statement:** This should briefly describe how the PI(s) meet the key eligibility criteria, and the PI(s): expertise, research experience (including any experience with community-engaged research), publication and grant record, and career goals for conducting independent research. The personal statement must be written in 11-point Arial font with 0.5-inch margins.
3. **NIH-formatted biosketches:** Provide these for all proposed key personnel. Please use the NIH template for this document: NIH Biosketch guidelines & template: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>

LOI's should be submitted to this link: <https://airtable.com/appyvwtgHYkpTioMq/shrbUWuj3ToSL9Rnz>

Review and Selection: LOIs will be pre-reviewed by a scientific panel of Center members and affiliates for significance, innovation, and relevance to the Center. Up to 15 LOIs will be selected to advance to a full submission. The LOI submission deadline is Friday, November 17, 2023.

Early-career researchers of the LOIs that are selected to proceed to full proposals will have the opportunity to be matched with an experienced mentor who is familiar with the specific field of research.

The deadline for invited full proposal submissions is Friday, February 9, 2024. Final award notifications will be sent out on Friday, March 8, 2024. We intend to fund between 5 and 7 projects.

TIMELINE

SCCLH Pilot Project 2023-24 RFA Timeline	
09/15/2023	Announcement of RFA
09/27/2023	Pre-submission Informational Webinar
11/17/2023	Letter of Intent (LOI) Submission Deadline
12/11/2023	LOI Selection & Notification
12/13/2023	Invited LOI PI's who are Early Career Investigators matched with Center Mentor
02/09/2024	Full Proposal Submission Deadline (invited LOIs only)
03/08/2024	Award Notification
07/01/2024	Release of Funding and Project Start Date

FULL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS (by invitation only)

Applicants whose LOIs were selected to advance to a full application should prepare the following items, combined into one (1) PDF document in the order listed here. All documents should be written in 11-point Arial font with 0.5-inch margins.

Proposals need to clearly articulate (a) who their community partner is, and the nature of their relationship/collaboration, (b) the members/expertise in their multidisciplinary team, and (c) the Research Strategy should clearly describe the details of the observational or intervention study.

1. **Cover Sheet** – Including the full title of the project; name, contact information, institution, and department of the Principal Investigator(s); and the name, institution, and department of any co-investigators or faculty sponsors.
2. **Project Abstract (300 words or less)** – A brief summary of the project.
3. **Specific Aims (1 page)** – Concise goals of the proposed research and a summary of expected outcomes, including specific objectives.
4. **Research Strategy (4 pages MAXIMUM, not including references)**
 - a. **Significance** – Describe the importance of the problem or critical barrier that the project addresses, and explain how the project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, or clinical practice if the proposed aims are achieved.
 - b. **Alignment with the Center and community priorities** – Describe how the project fits with The Southern California Center for Latino Health research program, and the priorities and goals of the community members or partners that are engaged in the research.
 - c. **Innovation** – Describe how the proposed research seeks to shift research practice paradigms and how any methodologies or theoretical concepts that are being developed or used in the project may have an advantage over existing practices.
 - d. **Approach** – Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish specific aims, including how data will be collected/acquired. Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks of success.
 - e. **Timeline** - A proposed timeline of study performance, identifying specific tasks and milestones in project progress for the 12-month period of performance. If you are planning on applying for a second year of funding with the center (that will be assessed through a competitive renewal), please include a timeline with milestones for each year.
 - f. **Future plans and grant potential (1/2 page maximum)** – Clear description of the PI(s) plans for establishing an independent research program, and how a successful pilot project will lead to an R01 (or equivalent extra-mural) grant submission.
 - g. **Plan for conducting translational research and disseminating research results (1/2 page maximum)** – Applicants are encouraged to consult with the Center’s Community Engagement Core in developing plans to engage target audiences and key stakeholders in the pilot project development, implementation, and dissemination of project results (for example, the use of Community Based Participatory Research). For this, you may contact Nicole Wolfe at the Community Engagement Core, at Nicole.Wolfe@med.usc.edu. This section should also include plans for disseminating the research results to scientific and community audiences and partners.

5. **Lay summary of the project (1 page maximum)** - A summary of the project that is suitable for a broad audience, including community members or stakeholders who may be involved in the application reviews.
6. **Budget** – A budget table of personnel, equipment, supplies, travel, and other estimated costs to perform the proposed 1-year project. Applicants may budget up to \$70,000 for direct costs.
 - a. Indirect costs can be requested according to your Institutions federal rate unless you have an Institutional waiver on indirect costs for this pilot funding.
 - b. *Non-Allowable Expenses* include:
 - i. Salaries for co-investigators who are Associate and Full Professors
 - ii. Tuition for graduate students (funding for graduate student Research Assistants is allowable)
7. **Budget Justification (2 pages maximum)** – A detailed explanation and justification of the amount of funding that is requested. Use the Budget Justification to provide information about the funds requested in each budget category: e.g., equipment, travel, personnel support, and other direct cost categories.
8. **NIH-Format Biosketches** (5-page limit per investigator), **& Other Support documents**– both documents should be submitted for the PI, Co-Investigators and faculty sponsors
 - a. Please use NIH templates for both documents:
 - i. Biosketches: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>
 - ii. Other Support: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/othersupport.htm>
9. **Letter of Support** from Department Chair, School Director, Division Chief or Supervisor
10. **Required if human subjects' research:**
 - a. NIH-Format Protection of Human Subjects section
 - b. NIH-Format Planned Inclusion Enrollment Report
 - c. If clinical trial, a data safety monitoring plan is also required

APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed by a multidisciplinary panel of scientists and include at least one community member who has undergone a comprehensive research reviewer training. Proposals will be evaluated using an NIH-style peer review process. The major review criteria are:

1. Relevance and potential to identify causes and solutions to chronic disease health disparities among Latinos, with priority given to research in obesity, type 2 diabetes (T2D), non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) and dyslipidemia;
2. Displays scientific quality and innovation;
3. Meaningfully engages with community partners and/or members in the design, implementation and/or dissemination of the research;
4. Stimulates interdisciplinary activity, particularly within our center, or with other centers and initiatives; and
5. Likelihood of leading to R01 or other equivalent external funding.

Priority: Preference and highest priority will be given to projects that demonstrate a clear path to sustaining extramural funding or to direct implementation of improvements in clinical and translational research processes. Commitment of the PI to a career in research will be considered a plus.

Awardees will be selected for funding following the review, and **projects and funding will begin July 1, 2024 and end June 30, 2025.**

AWARD

The maximum direct cost that can be requested is \$70,000. Indirect costs can be requested according to your Institutions federal rate unless you have an Institutional waiver on indirect costs for this pilot funding. We will fund between 5-7 pilot projects depending upon the quality of the proposals and as funding allows for total costs.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The anticipated period of funded project performance will be July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. Project funding is contingent on submission of IRB/IACUC approval, and thus IRB/IACUC approval letters must be received as soon as possible. **Funded projects will be expected to submit initial IRB applications immediately following the notice of award.** All funded projects, along with IRB approval, must be reviewed and approved by NIMHD before funding can be released.

In addition, all pilot project grantees are required to submit a **brief 6-month Project Update**, and an **Annual (12-month) Progress Report**, in each calendar year that the project receives funding. The progress report will contain updates on the project, publications directly related to findings from the project, and grants directly associated with project results. Grantees may be asked to present a poster or short oral presentation on pilot progress at our annual Center Research Showcase.

All publications and scientific presentations directly or partially resulting from pilot funding must include the following funding **acknowledgement**: "This work was supported by The Southern California Center for Latino Health (Funded by The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, P50MD017344)".

REGULATORY APPROVALS

For projects selected for funding, awards are contingent upon documentation of submission of all applications for required regulatory approvals to Institutional IRB and/or IACUC. Funding associated with human subject research cannot be released until the appropriate approvals have been obtained. Human Subjects (IRB) and other regulatory approvals should indicate that your research is/will be supported by The Southern California Center for Chronic Health Disparities in Latino Children and Families (P50MD017344).