REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS
HEALTH POLICY RESEARCH (RFA-GSHPC-15-16-001)

The Gulf States Health Policy Center (GS-HPC) (U54MD008603), led by BayouClinic, Inc., a Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alike, in collaboration with The University of Southern Mississippi and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, invites applications for community-based health policy research projects. Projects should examine whether or how socioeconomic, environmental, and/or health and health-system policies may contribute to health outcomes in communities. The results of this research should assist in providing evidence to inform policy change and health system improvements that will increase community resilience and ultimately improve the health outcomes of citizens in the Gulf States region (Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, and Texas).

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Background

Health is influenced by many determinants, both within and outside the health system. GS-HPC is interested in all factors that impact the health of our communities, with a special interest in minority, low-income, and other vulnerable populations. Increasingly, governments and businesses are being encouraged to consider the health consequences and health equity of proposed policies, such as transportation, housing, education, tax, and land use policy – a “health in all policies” approach. Health impact assessments are being commissioned to study the potential health consequences of policies concerning such diverse topics as minimum wage laws, freeway widening, clean air, and affordable food. The National Prevention Council, established under the Affordable Care Act of 2010, released the first ever National Prevention Strategy. This strategy has been adopted by individual communities, state and local governments, and businesses to move our country toward becoming a healthier nation.

Health policy research is concerned with how policies are developed and implemented and how groups and individuals involved in policymaking can influence health outcomes. It is also concerned with how policies or a lack of policies may impact a community’s health status. Traditionally, health policy research intended to inform health policy at the national or state level. Therefore, health policy researchers have given less attention to policy translation at the local level. However, community-based participatory research (CBPR) offers an opportunity to identify and address local health policy questions. By integrally involving community members as part of the research process, CBPR is often able to generate evidence that is both relevant and actionable. By conducting CBPR, health policy researchers may be able to provide scientific evidence that could ultimately improve the health of the community.
Although federal policies and programs are necessary to eliminate health disparities, it is up to local governments, organizations, and individuals to implement those initiatives. Local policy can target the unique needs of communities and populations in ways that are impossible at the national level. Widespread research efforts to inform local policy may, in the long term, have a larger aggregate effect on eliminating health disparities.

**Purpose**

The Gulf States Health Policy Center seeks to fund community-based research projects that:

a. Investigate whether or how socioeconomic, environmental, and/or health and health-system policies may contribute to health outcomes in communities

b. Provide evidence to inform policy change and health system improvements that will increase community resilience and ultimately improve the health of citizens in the Gulf States region (Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, and Texas).

GS-HPC encourages research on both formal policies (e.g., written documents, rules, and guidelines) and informal policy practices (e.g., how policies are experienced in daily life) to understand why and how policies are developed, communicated, implemented, and evaluated, including how researchers and communities influence policymaking. GS-HPC encourages research on policies made in the public, private, and philanthropic sectors.

Examples of research questions that may be applied to a specific health policy topic include, but are not limited to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Assessment</th>
<th>What policies are in place that impact the chronic disease burden in Gulf States communities? How do these policies vary across communities?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Development</td>
<td>What chronic disease health disparity concerns are most prevalent among community residents?</td>
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<td>How do social, economic, cultural, and/or environmental policies (or lack of policies) impact the health topic of concern in the community? Locally, regionally, or nationally?</td>
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<td>What strategies have been used to address the health disparity? What has been the outcome of those strategies? Have policy initiatives been considered as an approach to impacting the area of concern? If so, what was the outcome? How might the policy be revised to be more successful?</td>
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<tr>
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<td>How can policy be used to address the chronic disease burden in Gulf States communities? How can grassroots community support be garnered to communicate the need for policy change?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Implementation and Evaluation</td>
<td>Were the policies implemented as intended? Were the objectives met? What were the unexpected outcomes? Did the policies benefit the intended audience? Did the chronic disease burden and health outcomes change?</td>
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An example of:

**State policy:** Does a policy allowing parents to check students out of school after 11 a.m. and still be counted as present contribute to increased high school dropout rates and poor health outcomes?

**City ordinance:** Does limiting the number of liquor stores per square foot decrease violence and domestic disturbances in a community?

**Individual/group/community policy/practice:** In the past, local shrimpers changed the oil in their boats by emptying the oil into the water. Citizens established a local policy to place barrels on the piers for the oil, along with signage asking the fisherman to use them. Did this grassroots policy effort improve local water quality?

**Funding Priorities**

The Gulf States Health Policy Center welcomes applications across a range of research topics. For example, our community partners have identified the following topics as areas of particular interest: health literacy, healthy foods, health care, school wellness, education, financial literacy, and transportation.

**Available Resources**

To stimulate community-academic partnerships, GS-HPC will assist in connecting community partners with appropriate academic investigators, and vice-versa. Applicants are highly encouraged to contact the Gulf States Health Policy Center representative for a consultation about available resources and services. Contact information is provided at the end of this document. Additionally, study design and statistical support may be available, if needed.

**II. Award Information**

**Award Budget:** Application budgets are limited to a maximum of $50,000 in total costs for the duration of the project period.

**Award Project Period:** The award project period is up to two years. Two progress reports will be required annually. Brief updates (one paragraph) will be required on a monthly basis. Funding will be contingent upon making adequate progress consistent with the proposed research plan.
III. Eligibility Information

Eligible applicants are limited to partnerships between community organizations and academic researchers in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Florida, as outlined below:

**Community organizations:** Community organizations in the aforementioned states are eligible to apply. A community organization can be a municipal government or a not-for-profit organization with a 501(c) designation. If a community organization does not have this designation, a 501(c) designated organization must serve as the fiscal agent for the entity. Collaborations with academic partners (i.e. faculty members) are required.

**Faculty members:** Faculty members at institutions of higher education in the aforementioned states are eligible to apply. Applicants at the levels of Instructor or Assistant Professor must have a senior faculty member serving as a mentor. Collaborations with community partners are required.

Applications must be submitted jointly:
- Projects will have at least two Principal Investigators
- An academic investigator and a community investigator will:
  - Jointly develop the application and budget
  - Co-design the research project
  - Jointly implement and analyze the research

For each application, an academic investigator and a community investigator will share the leadership of the project, as both will serve as Principal Investigators. Applicants may participate in numerous applications per cycle, but may only serve as Principal Investigator on one project per cycle.

If community organizations or academic researchers have difficulty finding partners, GS-HPC staff will attempt to assist with identifying possible partners. Should this be the case, please inform the GS-HPC representative as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to help locate a partner prior to your Letter of Intent.

IV. Pre-Application Information and Training Sessions

The Gulf States Health Policy Center recognizes that community members and academic faculty may need additional training to prepare for collaboration on community-based participatory research projects. This training is helpful in facilitating the development of a collaborative project proposal. Participation in the training is not required, but is highly encouraged.
Information and training sessions will be held:

September 30, 2015, 1-2:30 p.m. CT
BayouClinic, Inc.
13833 Tapia Avenue
Bayou La Batre, AL 36509
To register by phone, call 251.824.4985.

October 5, 2015, 12-1:30 p.m. CT
UAB, Medical Towers Building, Room MT419A
1717 11th Avenue S.
Birmingham, AL 35205
To register by phone, call 205.934.6868.

To register for sessions in Bayou La Batre or Birmingham: http://gulfstateshealthpolicycenter.eventbrite.com

An information and training webinar will be held:

October 1, 2015, 12-1:30 p.m. CT
To register for the webinar: https://attendee.gototraining.com/r/1001843478502046209

V. Application and Submission Information

Key Dates
Pre-Application Information and Training Sessions: September 30, October 1, October 5, 2015
Letters of Intent Due: October 30, 2015
Invitations to Submit a Full Application: November 2015
Applications Due: January 15, 2016
Announcement of Recipients: March 2016
Project Start Date: July 1, 2016

Letter of Intent (1 page): The Letter of Intent (LOI) is evaluated by GS-HPC to determine which proposed projects will be invited to submit a full application for funding. LOIs will be evaluated on their relevance to the Request for Applications, health policy theme, and collaboration of community and academic investigators on the project. The LOI should be one page and include the following information:

- Academic Principal Investigator name(s) and title(s)
- Community Principal Investigator name(s) and title(s)
- Mentor name(s) and title(s), if applicable
- Project title
- Purpose of study
- Description of the specific aims of the proposed project
- Brief timeline
- Project cost and indication that partners will share grant funding
- Description of the academic/community partnership

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• Identification of the community organization as a municipal government or a not-for-profit organization with a 501(c) designation. If the community organization does not have this designation, a 501(c) designated organization must serve as the fiscal agent for the entity and this should be noted in the LOI.

LETTERS OF INTENT MUST BE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY by 11:59 p.m. CT on October 30, 2015 at: http://www.uab.edu/medicine/mhrc/research/funding-opportunities.

Application: Investigators should submit an NIH-format application on combined PHS 398 forms (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html) as a single Word or PDF file. Applications should be single spaced, with at least .5 inch margins, and should use 11-point Arial or 12-point Times New Roman font.

Applications must include:
• 2 Face Pages (One for the organization (lead applicant) that would receive the grant if awarded and one for the partner organization).
• Project Summary/Abstract
• Project/Performance Sites
• Key Personnel and Responsibilities
• Other Significant Contributors
• Mentorship Plans – for Instructors and Assistant Professors only (limit to 1 page)
• Table of Contents
• 2 Detailed Budgets (One for the lead applicant and one for the partner organization based on the amount in the lead applicant’s “Consortium/Contractual budget in line item)
• 2 Budget Justifications (One for the lead applicant and one for the partner organization)
• Biographical Sketches for all investigators (5-page: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm#4567)
• Resources/Equipment
• Research Strategy (6 pages, plus 1 page for Specific Aims):
  a. Specific Aims (1 page)
  b. Significance
  c. Innovation
  d. Approach
• Overview of Community Partner’s Process for Managing and Accounting for Financial Resources (limit to 1 page)
• Documentation of 501(c)(3) Status, 501(c)(4) Status, or Affiliation
• Human Subjects Research (if applicable)
• References/Literature Cited
• Targeted Enrollment Table
• Letters of Support are optional

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VI. Application Review Information

Applications will be evaluated on the scientific merit of the project, its relevance to the scope of the Gulf States Health Policy Center, the proposed mentorship plan (if applicable), and the applicant’s potential for future funding. It is expected that awarded projects will lead to future grant funding, including federal and foundation grants.

Review Criteria

**Relevance and Significance:** Is the project relevant to the focus of the Request for Applications (RFA)? Does the proposal address an important issue and an issue that’s important to the community? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, community policies, and/or community practices improve?

**Principal Investigators:** Are the academic investigators, community investigators, and mentors well-qualified for the project? Do they have appropriate experience and training? Is there meaningful involvement of the academic and community investigators? Is the governance and organizational structure appropriate for the project?

**Innovation:** Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research paradigms or the climate in the community by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, or interventions?

**Approach:** Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims for the community served? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented?

**Future Funding:** What is the likelihood that the pilot project will lead to extramural funding?

VII. Funding Restrictions

The following types of expenditures are allowable:

- a. Research supplies
- b. Technical assistance
- c. Domestic travel to carry out the proposed research or to attend scientific meetings
- d. Publication costs, including reprints
- e. Cost of computer time
- f. Special fees (pathology, photography, etc.)
- g. Stipends for students/fellows if their role is to support the project
- h. Equipment costing less than $2,000
i. Registration fees for scientific meetings
j. Salary for investigators and key personnel
k. Participant incentives

The following types of expenditures are not allowed:
  a. Secretarial/administrative personnel
  b. Tuition
  c. Foreign travel
d. Honoraria and travel expenses for visiting lecturers
e. Per diem charges for hospital beds
f. Non-medical services to patients
g. Construction or building maintenance
h. Major alterations
  i. Purchasing and binding of periodicals and books
  j. Office and laboratory furniture
  k. Office equipment costing $2,000 or more
  l. Rental of office or laboratory space
  m. Recruiting and relocation expenses
  n. Dues and membership fees in scientific societies

**VIII. Allowable Uses of NIH Appropriated Funding**

NIH grantees are permitted to prepare and disseminate certain (1) nonpartisan analysis, study, or research reports; (2) examinations and discussions of broad social, economic, and similar problems in conferences and reports; and (3) information provided upon request by a legislative body or committee for technical advice and assistance. Along these lines, an analysis, study, or research should contain a balanced, objective exposition of the facts to enable the public or an individual to form an independent opinion or conclusion. Materials must be circulated widely to diverse audiences in a nonpartisan manner and must not contain an overt “call to action.”

Additional information, including non-allowable or restricted activities, can be found by visiting: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/lobbying_guidance.htm.

**IX. Gulf States Health Policy Center Contact Information**

Contact for technical questions:

Laura Coulter  
Communications and Research Coordinator  
University of Alabama at Birmingham  
E-mail: lauracoulter@uabmc.edu  
Phone: 205.934.9396

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Contacts for programmatic questions:

Isiah Lineberry  
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Phone: 251.824.4985

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E-mail: eedmonson@uab.edu  
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