Request for Applications:
Pilot Research Projects on the Social Determinants of Obesity and Related Chronic Diseases (RFA-TCC-16-002)

The Mid-South Transdisciplinary Collaborative Center for Health Disparities Research (Mid-South TCC) (U54MD008176), led by the University of Alabama at Birmingham in partnership with Jackson State University, University of Mississippi Medical Center, Louisiana State University, and Dillard University, invites applications for pilot research on obesity and related chronic diseases, with a focus on social determinants of health and the mechanisms connecting them to health disparities throughout the life course.

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Background: The importance of social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors for driving and sustaining health disparities is increasingly recognized. The World Health Organization identifies the social determinants of health (SDH) as “the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work, and age.” (WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health: Final Report; www.who.int/social_determinants/thecommission/finalreport). These circumstances are shaped by social and economic policies, the distribution of power and resources, education, and other fundamental social factors.

For the purpose of this funding announcement, the SDH refer to social conditions (lifestyles, living and work situations), class position (income, education, and occupation), stressful circumstances, poverty, and economic (e.g., unemployment, recession), political (e.g., policies, government benefits), and religious factors that affect the health of individuals, groups, and communities, either negatively or positively. Further information on the topic of SDH can be obtained at http://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/.

In exploring the factors responsible for differential health outcomes in obesity and related chronic diseases, the Mid-South TCC promotes an integrative approach that accounts for multiple influences – social, behavioral, and biological – which interplay to affect the etiology, management, and amelioration of obesity and related chronic diseases. Further, the Mid-South TCC promotes collaboration among academic experts and community stakeholders in studying the pathways to disparities in obesity and chronic diseases.

Purpose: The Mid-South TCC seeks to fund pilot research projects that investigate the social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors driving and sustaining health disparities in obesity and related chronic diseases. Proposed research should consider pathways to obesity and related chronic diseases and the mechanisms connecting such pathways to health disparities throughout the life course.

Examples of proposed research include: 1) Studies of the relationship between social factors and health during critical periods in the life course, such as pregnancy, early childhood, and old age; 2) Studies to identify the effect of specific social determinants on biological and behavioral mechanisms that produce health disparities; 3) Any other studies that advance the theme of the Mid-South TCC as described above.

Available Resources: The Mid-South TCC will provide support to funded pilot research projects through the services of three Cores: 1) Social Determinants of Health Measurement Core; 2) Academic-Community Engagement Core; and 3) Biostatistics and Study Design Core. Applicants are highly encouraged to identify what Cores may be relevant to their research and to contact the Core leaders at their institution for a consultation about available Core resources and services. Core leaders are listed at the end of this document.
II. Award Information

Number of Awards: Up to three projects will be funded.

Award Budget: Application budgets are limited to $100,000 in total costs for the entire duration of the project.

Award Project Period: The award project period is up to 1 year. Semiannual progress reports will be required for all funded projects, and funding will be contingent upon making adequate progress consistent with the proposed research plan.

III. Eligibility Information

Faculty members at the levels of Instructor, Assistant Professor, or Associate Professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Jackson State University, University of Mississippi Medical Center, Louisiana State University, and Dillard University are eligible to apply. Applicants at the levels of Instructor or Assistant Professor must have a senior faculty serving as a mentor.

Collaboration between Mid-South TCC institutions is highly encouraged. Applicants may participate in more than one application per cycle but may not submit more than one application as the Principal Investigator of a project.

IV. Application and Submission Information

The application process will be conducted in two phases: letter of intent and full proposal. Letters of intent deemed meritorious by the selection committee will be invited to submit a full proposal.

Key Dates
Letters of intent due: March 15, 2016
Announcement of LOIs selected for a full proposal: March 22, 2016
Full proposals due: May 2, 2016
Announcement of recipients: May 23, 2016
Project start date: August 1, 2016

LETTERS OF INTENT AND FULL PROPOSALS MUST BE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY AT www.uab.edu/medicine/mhrc/research/funding-opportunities BY 11:59 PM ON THE DATE DUE.

Letter of Intent (2 pages): Include PI/Investigator(s) names and title(s), mentor(s) and title(s) if applicable, project title, purpose of the study, specific aims, timeline, and project cost.

Full Proposal: 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 0.5-inch margins, and should use 11- or 12-point Arial or Times fonts.

Applications should include:
- Face Page
- Project Summary/Abstract and Relevance
- Project/Performance Sites
- Key Personnel
- Other Significant Contributors
- Mentorship Plan – for Instructors and Assistant Professors only (limit to 1 page)
- Table of Contents
- Detailed Budget
- Budget Justification
Resources/Equipment

Research Strategy (6 pages, plus 1 page Specific Aims):
  a. Specific Aims (1 page)
  b. Significance
  c. Innovation
  d. Approach

Human Subjects Research (if applicable)

References/Literature Cited

Targeted Enrollment Table

Letters of Support are optional

V. Funding Restrictions

The following types of expenditures are allowable:
  a. Research supplies
  b. Technical assistance
  c. Domestic travel when necessary to carry out or present the proposed research
  d. Publication costs, including reprints
  e. Special fees (pathology, photography, etc.)
  f. Stipends for graduate students/postdoctoral fellows if their role is to support the project
  g. Equipment costing less than $2,000
  h. Registration fees for scientific meetings
  i. Investigator salary
  j. Consultant/contractor costs
  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. Construction or building maintenance
  g. Office and laboratory furniture and office equipment
  h. Rental of office or laboratory space (excluding rental space specific to the study, e.g., community space for participant interviews or focus groups.)

VI. Application Review Information

Applications will be evaluated on the scientific merit of the project, its relevance to the scope of the Mid-South TCC (social determinants of obesity and related chronic diseases), the mentorship plan if applicable, and the potential for future funding. It is expected that awarded projects will lead to R01/R03/R21 applications, K-awards, or other extramural funding.

Review Criteria

Overall Impact. Reviewers will provide an overall impact/priority score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved, in consideration of the scored review criteria below:

  Relevance and Significance. Is the project relevant to the focus of this FOA? Does the proposal address an important issue? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice improve? How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?
Investigator(s). Are the PIs, collaborators, and mentors well suited to the project? Do they have appropriate experience and training? Does the proposed mentorship plan ensure accomplishment of the project aims?

Innovation. Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions? Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel to one field of research or novel in a broad sense? Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed?

Approach. Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? If the project involves clinical research, are the plans for protection of human subjects from research risks, and engagement with community partners adequate?

Future Funding Potential. What is the likelihood that the pilot project will lead to an R01/R03/R21 application, a K-award, or other extramural funding?

VII. Mid-South TCC Contacts
We encourage inquiries concerning this funding opportunity from potential applicants.

Principal Investigators

**UAB**
Mona Fouad, MD, Senior Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, School of Medicine; Professor and Director, Division of Preventive Medicine; Director, Minority Health & Health Disparities Research Center; mfouad@uab.edu; 205-934-4307

**LSU**
Lucio Miele, MD, Professor and Department Head, Department of Genetics, School of Medicine; Director for Inter-Institutional Programs, Stanley Scott Cancer Center and Louisiana Cancer Research Consortium; lmiele@lsuhsc.edu; 504-568-8088 or 504-210-3433

**JSU**
Marinelle Payton, MD, PhD, Professor and Assistant Dean for Research and Program Development, College of Public Service; marinelle.payton@jsums.edu; 601-979-8817

**UMC**
Mario Sims, PhD, Associate Professor, School of Medicine; Science Officer of Jackson Heart Study; msims2@umc.edu; 601-815-5784

Social Determinants of Health Measurement Core

**UAB**
William Cockerham, PhD, Distinguished Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology wcocker@uab.edu; 205-934-3307

**LSU**
Richard Scribner, PhD, D’Angelo Professor of Alcohol Research, School of Public Health rscrib@lsuhsc.edu; 504-568-5937

**UMC**
Mario Sims, PhD, Associate Professor, School of Medicine, Jackson Heart Study Science Officer; msims2@umc.edu; 601-815-5784

**Dillard**
Robert Collins, PhD, Interim Dean, College of Arts & Sciences, Associate Professor of Urban Studies & Public Policy; rcollins@dillard.edu; 504-816-4092

Biostatistics and Study Design Core

**UAB**
Karan Singh, PhD, Professor and Director, Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Shared Facility kpsingh@uab.edu; 205-996-6122
Sejong Bae, PhD, Professor and Co-Director, Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Shared Facility; bsejong@uab.edu; 205-996-6122

**LSU**
Claudia Leonardi, PhD, Biostatistician, School of Public Health; cleon1@lsuhsc.edu; 504-210-2783

**UMC**
Nancy Min, PhD, Associate Professor of Medicine; ymin@umc.edu; 601-815-5767
Community-Academic Engagement Core

UAB
Yu-Mei Schoenberger, PhD, MPH, Assistant Professor, Division of Preventive Medicine
yschoenberger@uabmc.edu; 205-934-1724

JSU
Donna Antoine-LaVigne, PhD, Coordinator, Community Outreach & Partnership, Jackson Heart Study; Donna.antoine-lavigne@jsums.edu; J00096297@jsums.edu; 601-979-8740

LSU
Richard Scribner, MD, D’Angelo Professor of Alcohol Research, School of Public Health;
rscrib@lsuhsc.edu; 504-568-5937

Application Submissions Contact
Gabriela Oates, PhD
goates@uab.edu; 205-975-7940

Administrative/Program Management Contact
Lori Bateman, PhD
Program Director, Mid-South TCC
loribateman@uabmc.edu; 205-934-2924