

**Request for Applications:
Research Projects on the Social Determinants of Obesity
and Related Chronic Diseases throughout the Life Course (RFA-TCC-14-002)**

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 **community-based research projects on disparities in obesity, with a focus on pathways to obesity and related chronic diseases and the mechanisms connecting these pathways to health disparities throughout the life course.** All projects must include at least one academic investigator and at least one community organization from the pool of community partners listed at the end of this document.

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 the differential health outcomes of minority populations in obesity and related chronic diseases, the Mid-South TCC promotes an integrative approach that accounts for multiple influences, including social, behavioral, and biological, which interplay to affect the etiology, management, and amelioration of obesity and chronic diseases. Further, the Mid-South TCC requires collaboration between academic experts and community stakeholders in studying the pathways to disparities in obesity and chronic diseases. The community at large will benefit from the collaborative process where research studies and health interventions are developed and implemented by taking into account the experiences and needs of multiple stakeholders and holding a dialogue about the research agenda.

Purpose: The Mid-South TCC seeks to fund community-based research projects that investigate the social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors driving and sustaining health disparities in obesity and related chronic diseases and the way these factors interact to impact a person’s health and produce disparate health outcomes in minority populations. 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) Longitudinal studies that reveal lagged, cumulative, and contemporaneous effects of SDH over the life span; 3) Studies to identify the effect of specific social determinants on biological and behavioral mechanisms that produce health

disparities; 4) Implementation and evaluation of community-based interventions to reduce disparities in obesity and related chronic diseases by influencing specific social determinants; 5) 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. To stimulate academic-community partnerships, the Mid-South TCC Academic-Community Engagement Core will connect academic investigators with appropriate community partners as needed. *Applicants are highly encouraged to identify what Cores may be relevant to their proposed research and to contact the Core leaders at their respective institution for a consultation about available Core resources and services. Core leaders are listed at the end of this document.*

II. Award Information

Available Funds: The Mid-South TCC intends to commit approximately \$300,000 for this round of applications. Funding is contingent upon NIH appropriations.

Number of Awards: Three to six projects will be funded.

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

Award Project Period: The award project period is up to 2 years, with the possibility of an extension upon submission of a written request no later than 60 days prior to the end of the project period. Quarterly 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

1. 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. Collaborations with community partners are required.
2. Community organizations in collaboration with an academic investigator from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Jackson State University, the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Louisiana State University, or Dillard University.

Collaborations between the Mid-South TCC institutions are 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

Key Dates

Letters of Intent Due: February 1, 2014

Invitations to Submit a Full Application: February 15, 2014

Applications Due: April 1, 2014

Announcement of Recipients: May 15, 2014

Project Start Date: August 1, 2014

Progress Reports: First progress report at 3 months after funding, then every 6 months

LETTERS OF INTENT AND APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY AT www.uabmhrc.org BY 11:59 PM ON THE DATE DUE.

Letter of Intent (1 page): Include PI/Investigator(s) names and title(s), mentor(s) and title(s) (if applicable), project title, purpose of the study, and description of the specific aims, timeline, and project cost.

All projects must include at least one academic investigator and at least one community organization from the pool of community partners listed at the end of this document. Partnerships with community organizations not represented in the pool at the end of this document will be considered ineligible for this competition. Academic investigators who are not sure which community partner would be most suitable for their project need to indicate this in the Letter of Intent. The Mid-South TCC Community-Academic Engagement Core will assist with the selection of an appropriate community partner.

The Mid-South TCC Community-Academic Engagement Core will facilitate the academic-community collaboration. *Please do not contact the community organizations directly. Instead, please contact the Community-Academic Engagement Core in your state for a consultation about community partnerships. Contact information of the Core leaders is provided at the end of this document.*

Letters of Intent will be evaluated on the project's relevance to the theme and focus of this Request for Applications.

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 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
- Biographical Sketches (4-page: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/biosketchsample.doc>)
- 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 and animal maintenance
- b. Technical assistance
- c. Domestic travel when necessary to carry out the proposed research
- d. Publication costs, including reprints

- e. Cost of computer time
- f. Special fees (pathology, photography, etc.)
- g. Stipends for graduate students/postdoctoral fellows if their role is to support the project
- h. Equipment costing less than \$2,000
- i. Registration fees for scientific meetings
- j. Investigator salary

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 and supplies
- l. Rental of office or laboratory space

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 health disparities in obesity and related chronic diseases throughout the life course), the proposed mentorship plan, if applicable, and the applicant's 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 five scored review criteria below:

Relevance and Significance. Is the project relevant to the focus of the RFA? 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 1) protection of human subjects from research risks, and 2) inclusion of minorities and members of both sexes/genders, as well as the inclusion of children, justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed?

Future Funding. 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

Principal Investigators

- UAB** Mona Fouad, MD, Professor and Director, Division of Preventive Medicine; Director, Minority Health & Health Disparities Research Center; mfouad@uab.edu; 205-934-4307
- LSU** John Estrada, MD, Professor and Principal Investigator, Community-Academic Partnership to Address Health Disparities in New Orleans; JEstra@lsuhsc.edu; 504-210-2974 or 504-210-2783
- JSU** Marinelle Payton, MD, PhD, Professor and Assistant Dean for Research & Program Development, College of Public Service; marinelle.payton@jsums.edu; 601-979-8817
- UMC** Herman Taylor, MD, Shirley Professor for the Study of Health Disparities, Director of Jackson Heart Study; htaylor@umc.edu; 601-979-8744

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

Application Submissions Contact

Gabriela Oates, MA
Director of Research, UAB Minority Health & Health Disparities Research Center
goates@uab.edu; 205-975-7940

Financial/Grants Management Contact

Theresa Wallace, PhD
Associate Director of Center Administration, UAB MHRC
twynn@uabmc.edu; 205-934-6892

Community Partners

- ALABAMA** **Jefferson County Health Action Partnership:** A coalition of more than 100 organizations and agencies working together to make Jefferson County, Alabama, a healthier place to live, learn, work, and play. www.healthactionpartnership.org
- Urban League of Birmingham:** A community-based movement devoted to empowering African Americans and other underserved individuals to enter the social and economic mainstream. www.birminghamurbanleague.net
- Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity (JCCEO):** A community action agency dedicated to reducing poverty and helping low-income citizens of Jefferson County, Alabama meet critical needs and become self-sufficient. www.jcceo.org
- LOUISIANA** **Dillard University Office of Community Relations:** The Office works with several community and faith-based organizations engaged in revitalization of the Gentilly and other neighborhoods across New Orleans by assisting in rebuilding the city infrastructure and offering community outreach programs for residents to improve their lives. www.dillard.edu
- Edible Schoolyard New Orleans:** Changes the way children eat, learn, and live at five FirstLine public charter schools in New Orleans. Improves the well-being of students, families, and the school community by integrating hands-on organic gardening and seasonal cooking into the school curriculum, culture, and cafeteria programs. www.esynola.org

Community Gardening/Schoolyard Garden: Community partnership between Dillard’s Office of Community Relations, Medard Nelson Elementary School, Langston Hughes Academy Charter School, and Pilotland Neighborhood Association in Gentilly.

Tekrema Center for Art and Culture: A not-for-profit cultural arts organization dedicated to the development and preservation of African and African American art and culture through the performing and visual arts and the humanities. Focused on the Lower Ninth Ward, the Center conducts educational programs related to issues affecting the African American community. tekremacenter.wordpress.com

Lower Ninth Ward Community Wellness Consortium: A consortium of private, public, community-based, faith-based, and academic organizations partnering to create a wholesome, healthy, thriving community that is able to enhance the quality of life for its habitants.

Lower Ninth Ward Homeowners Association: Works to rebuild and revive the environment devastated by Hurricane Katrina, with a goal of restoring the Lower 9th Ward to the thriving, loving, and caring community it was before the strike of the hurricane. www.lower9thwardhomeowners.org

Daughters of Charity Services of New Orleans – St. Cecilia: A federally qualified health care center (FQHC) which offers primary and preventative health services that address the needs of the total individual. DCSNO provides care for chronic illnesses such as asthma, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and depression. Behavioral/mental health, dental, optometry, prenatal, and pharmacy services are also available. www.dcsno.org

All Congregations Together: A congregation-based non-profit organization with a commitment to helping individuals, families, and communities empower themselves in order to improve the quality of life in Greater New Orleans. The group’s priorities are driven by each community’s needs and include crime prevention, education, economic development, and housing.

Louisiana Public Health Institute: A statewide non-profit organization with a mission to promote and improve health and quality of life through diverse public-private partnerships with government, foundation, academia, community groups, and private businesses at the community, parish, and state levels. www.lphi.org

MISSISSIPPI

Jackson Heart Study Coalition: Investigates the causes of cardiovascular disease (CVD) in African Americans and works to prevent CVD by delivering of health education programs in the community. www.jacksonheartstudy.org

Urban League of Greater Jackson: Provides direct and indirect services to disadvantaged individuals to improve their standard of living in the areas of education, economic empowerment, quality of life, and civic engagement.

JSD Foundation: Promotes coalition building and supports collaboration among communities, faith-based organizations, and individuals to implement service projects in the areas of education, children’s and women’s health, and the overall health and wellness of the family. www.jsdfoundation.org

Innovative Behavioral Services: Delivers comprehensive services to children, families, communities, health and human service provider organizations, and educational entities through activities that promote healthy choices and lifestyles and educational and cultural enrichment for children and families. www.ibshealthy.com

