

Request for Applications

Pilot Studies

Innovations in Community-Engaged and Population Health Research to Address Chronic Disease

(RFA-HLRC-26-001)

The UAB Comprehensive Healthy Living Research Center (Healthy Living Center) invites applications for pilot and feasibility studies exploring innovations in community-engaged and population health research to address chronic disease.

The goal of this pilot program is to support novel, highly innovative studies with the potential to set new directions for the field and expand the scope of community-engaged and population health research.

Proposals from across the translational science spectrum are welcome. Preference will be given to studies that can inform future research and interventions and contribute to population-level improvements in chronic disease rates and/or outcomes through community-engaged research.

Proposals may address any chronic disease, risk factor, or contributor, as long as the project has substantial community involvement in planning and implementation. Projects may include local and/or international collaborations and may include a community MPI.

Examples of research proposals responsive to this RFA include, but are not limited to:

- Studies that test innovative methods to improve the quality of community engagement in research, including methods to measure engagement quality and quantity.
- Community-engaged development/testing of novel methods for measurement and analysis of contributors to chronic disease. This could include community-guided development of new measures, application of AI/ML approaches, the use of "big data," or the use of novel sources of data such as wearables or other sensing devices and electronic health record data.
- Natural experiments or collaborative evaluation of existing efforts to change policies, systems, or built/social/economic environments to improve chronic disease rates or outcomes. Examples include innovative analyses of economic development initiatives, state or local policies, neighborhood revitalization initiatives, systemic efforts to address food insecurity, systemic efforts to improve healthcare access, or other systemic interventions to improve health.
- Studies that use a systems thinking approach to examine the intersection of multiple contributors to chronic disease at the population level.
- Studies that advance our understanding and application of existing contributors to chronic disease such as social determinants of health, the interplay of genes and environment, healthcare access and utilization, etc.
- Studies in community settings that test innovative methods to improve nutrition and physical activity, especially among those living with chronic disease.

Examples of non-responsive proposals include:

- Simple application of widely published approaches to a new population or condition.
- Individual-level interventions that are unlikely to lead to population level changes.
- Studies aimed at incrementally advancing well-established lines of research.
- Proposals that fail to demonstrate substantive community involvement in the planning and implementation of the study.

Priority will be given to projects that show the potential to break new ground in preventing chronic disease and improving population-level health status and outcomes. The application should describe how, if successful, the results could serve as the basis for future R01 (or equivalent) funding.

Priority will also be given to projects that leverage Healthy Living Center services, including the Participant Access to Research Core, Community Health Coach Core, CBPR Core, Measurement and Evaluation Core, and the Partnerships & Engagement Program.

Funding

The Healthy Living Center will award 2–3 projects of up to \$75,000 each (total costs). The project period may be up to 24 months. **The anticipated start date is August 1, 2026.**

Eligibility

Applicants must hold a UAB faculty appointment at the Assistant Professor level or higher. Early-stage investigators (ESIs) are encouraged to apply; ESIs must include a senior faculty mentor with a strong record of NIH funding in the proposed research area.

Review

Eligible applications will be reviewed by a panel of experienced researchers, who will make funding recommendations. Specific review criteria are included in the application guidelines. Healthy Living Center leadership will make final award decisions. Based on the reviews, a pre-award consultation with subject matter or methodology experts may be required.

Submission Process and Deadlines

This request for applications has a two-stage application process, that includes (1) a letter of intent (LOI) and (2) a full application upon invitation. The deadline to submit a Letter of Intent has been extended. To ensure everyone has sufficient time to prepare, the subsequent deadlines have also been adjusted. Please refer to the updated schedule below

- **LOI Due: Extended Deadline - Wednesday, May 27, 2026 - 5:00 PM**
- **Invitation to Submit: Friday, June 5, 2026**
- **Full Application Due: Thursday, July 2, 2026 - 5:00 PM**
- **Anticipated Start Date: August 2026**

No exceptions to these deadlines will be given. All applications must follow the submission guidelines below. LOIs and applications must be submitted through the UAB InfoReady system. Emailed applications will not be accepted. Applications that do not follow the submission guidelines will not be reviewed.

Questions

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact:

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