UNITE RESEARCH PRIORITY AREA / COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK
REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

Release Date: 01/26/2022
Application Deadline: 03/31/2022
Project Duration: 18 months

The UNITE (UNited In True racial Equity) Research Priority Area (RPA) and College of Social Work are proud to introduce a pilot funding opportunity to support projects that will utilize an RCT (randomized clinical trial) design and increase underrepresented racial/ethnic scholars in research. Teams are expected to be multidisciplinary, awards will not exceed $50,000, and projects are expected to conclude within an 18-month period.

UNITE's mission is to support research focused on social and racial justice, racial disparities, and racial health equity that will result in impactful scholarly outputs and extramural funding for sustainability. This notice solicits applications for pilot projects that will utilize theory-driven, evidence-based, and culturally appropriate strategies within a randomized clinical trial (RCT) design. **It is expected that teams will be multidisciplinary and represent cross-college collaborations. Projects that are responsive will: 1) will promote racial diversity within research teams, 2) center a rigorous randomized clinical trial design, 3) detail concrete plans to scale and apply for external funding, and 4) closely align with a [Grand Challenge for Social Work](#).**

Background

Leaders in scientific research funding recently acknowledged the need for participation from underrepresented groups in the science research workforce, citing the potential for increased scientific innovation, the improved quality of research, and the ability to effectively address the health needs of underserved populations in biomedical research, among other benefits.[1] When compared to teams with low cultural diversity, teams with diverse backgrounds and experiences tend to improve the quality of research by addressing knowledge gaps, which in turn helps align research teams with the principles of scientific rigor and the scientific method.[2] Further, researchers who share similar ethnic, racial, or cultural backgrounds with potential participants may better understand participant concerns and build rapport.[3] Rapport between researchers and study participants is attributed to increased willingness to participate for underrepresented minorities and is a vital component of increasing RCT enrollment among underserved populations.[3]

Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) have been recognized as the most trusted research method for determining a potential cause–effect relationship between an intervention and an outcome.[4] Removing the ability of participants and investigators to assign participant groups adds validity to the results of the study by mitigating the probability that either party will deliberately or inadvertently skew the results. This approach in a pilot study capitalizes on the methodological rigor of randomization, providing useful information to decisionmakers and enhancing the scientific rigor and value of the full-scale study.[5,6] The reliability demonstrated by RCTs distinguishes them from alternate study designs and positions them as uniquely valuable mechanisms for generating high-quality evidence.[7] RCTs are used across disciplines and research domains, including human subjects research, within the behavioral and social sciences.

The Grand Challenges for Social Work (GCSW) is a groundbreaking initiative to champion social progress by targeting 13 challenges housed under three larger domains: Individual and family well-being, Stronger social fabric, and Just society.[8] Challenges range from a micro-level approach, focused on disparities experienced by individuals in marginalized groups, to macro-level challenges centered on inequality at the societal level. The "Grand Challenges" are to: ensure healthy development for youth, close the health gap, build healthy relationships to end violence, advance long and productive lives, eradicate social isolation, end homelessness, create social responses to a changing environment, harness technology for social good, eliminate racism, promote smart decarceration, build financial capability and assets for all, reduce extreme economic inequity, and achieve equal opportunity and justice. These efforts are designed to develop interventions that recognize the humanity of underserved populations through evidence-based scientific applications. Lastly, GCSW implements a policy of inclusivity through the embrace of diverse worldviews, methodologies, and scientific approaches to ensure that proposed solutions are ultimately "culturally respectful, safe, meaningful, effective, and sustainable".[8]

Eligibility

Eligibility is limited to full-time faculty (all title series including regular, research, clinical and special) at the University of Kentucky who are members of the UNITE Research Priority Area. If you are interested in applying and are not a member of the UNITE RPA, please send an inquiry to unite-rpa@uky.edu.

Projects must be interdisciplinary and inclusive; at least one faculty member from the College of Social Work and one faculty member (in the College of Social Work or any other College) classified as underrepresented in research must serve as collaborators. Please review the NIH's definition of underrepresented scientists here. During the application process please direct questions and needs for clarification regarding these criteria to Leah Holton (leah.holton@uky.edu). Selected applicants are also required to attend a virtual workshop focused on designing effective randomized clinical trials. Additional details regarding the workshop are forthcoming.

Applications
The number of awards will depend on the type of proposals received. However, we anticipate awarding up to three projects. A maximum of **$50,000** will be awarded for a period of **18 months**. Applications must be single-spaced, 11-point Arial font, and adhere to standard grant 1/2-inch margins. **Applications that do not adhere to the font size or spacing requirements will not be reviewed**. Proposal submission through OSPA is not required. The UK Proposal Development Office (PDO) is available to assist with internal competitive award proposals.

Completed applications are due to UNITE (unite-rpa@uky.edu) by **03/31/2022** and must include the following components, submitted as a single (1) PDF file:
- UNITE Pilot Grant Cover Page (form attached)
- Specific Aims (1 page)
- Research Plan (3 pages)
    - Briefly describe the significance, innovation, and approach
    - Include a timeline for activities
    - Describe concrete plans beyond the pilot project, including plans for dissemination, publications, and seeking extramural funding (please include the name of the agency and date expected to apply for external funding).

- References do not count toward the 3-page total
- NIH style biosketch OR an abbreviated curriculum vitae for each investigator (5-page limit per investigator) with each investigator's role on the project clearly outlined. Please check here for instructions on formatting an NIH biosketch.
- Budget/justification (1-2 pages)
  - Provide brief justification for each budget item or category
  - Allowable expenses include graduate student stipends and tuition, equipment, travel costs associated with the research, participant payments, and other standard research expenditures.
  - Non-allowable expenses include conference travel and faculty salary
  - Note: The review committee will make budgetary recommendations that may impact the final award amounts.
- Required Letter(s) of support (e.g., community partners, consultants, data, or facilities access needed to complete study)
- Statement of collaborative support from the PIs department or college (1 page)
  - Examples of collaborative support may include, but are not limited to monetary support for the project, percent allotted for faculty effort, effort from a staff member to assist with project execution, release of duties to execute the project, etc.

Application Deadlines and Key Dates
03/31/2022: Applications due
04/29/2022: Selected applicants notified
Project period: **18 months from project start date** (the project start date is dependent on IRB approval and disbursement of funds but must be within 1 month of the award notification date). **Funding may be withdrawn if project is not started within 30 days of award notification. Projects must have IRB and other applicable required regulatory approvals in place before funding will begin.** Please address specific application questions to Leah Holton (leah.holton@uky.edu).

Review Criteria
Proposals will be reviewed by the selection committee and possible external reviewers. Scoring of proposals will be based on a 9-point scoring system. Each proposal will be evaluated based on the following criteria:
Significance: (i.e., Does the project address an important problem or critical barrier to progress in the field as outlined in the RFA? Does the project specifically address the criteria highlighted as responsive in the RFA?)
Innovation: (i.e., Does the proposal utilize novel and applicable theoretical concepts, approaches, methodologies, instrumentation or apply existing concepts to new populations or problems?)
Approach: (i.e., Are the intended research activities well-described and likely to be feasible? Does the strategy involve leveraging existing connections and collaborations? Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Does the approach utilize methods that have been deemed responsive in the RFA? Are study limitations acknowledged and addressed?)
Investigator(s): (i.e., Does the PI have the appropriate experience and training, evidence of productivity and/or potential to lead the project? Does the PI and research team have the required expertise and experience to conduct the proposed research study?)

The review committee will also assess whether the proposed budget and timeline are appropriate for the scope and nature of the project and whether there are any human subjects considerations that may affect study implementation.

Reporting Requirements

All publications, presentations, and other creative activities resulting from this award must include the following acknowledgement: **"Funding was provided by the College of Social Work and United in True Racial Equity Research Priority Area at the University of Kentucky."**

A final report that is one (1) page in length and details study enrollment, results, dissemination, and plans for future funding – including progress toward applying for and securing external funding or Grand Challenge funding – will be due at project completion. Awardees are also required to present findings at UNITE and/or College of Social Work-sponsored events.

References

1. National Institutes of Health (NIH). Great Minds Think Differently: NIH Scientific Workforce Diversity Strategic Plan 2016-2020. Published online 2016.
2. Asmal L, Lamp G, Tan EJ. Considerations for improving diversity, equity and inclusivity within research designs and teams. *Psychiatry Res*. 2022;307:114295. doi:10.1016/J.PSYCHRES.2021.114295
3. Sierra-Mercado D, Lázaro-Muñoz G. Enhance Diversity Among Researchers to Promote Participant Trust in Precision Medicine Research. *Am J Bioeth*. 2018;18(4):44. doi:10.1080/15265161.2018.1431323
4. Bhide A, Shah PS, Acharya G. A simplified guide to randomized controlled trials. *Acta Obstet Gynecol Scand*. 2018;97(4):380-387. doi:10.1111/AOGS.13309
5. Agency for Healthcare Research. *Prevention & Chronic Care Program Using Pragmatic Clinical Trials to Test the Effectiveness of Patient-Centered Medical Home Models in Real-World Settings*.; 2013. Accessed January 11, 2022. www.ahrq.gov
6. Feeley N, Cossette S, Cŏté J, et al. The importance of piloting an RCT intervention. *Can J Nurs Res*. 2009;41(2):84-99. Accessed January 11, 2022. https://www.unboundmedicine.com/medline/citation/19650515/The_importance_of_piloting_an_RCT_intervention_
7. Hariton E, Locascio JJ. Randomised controlled trials – the gold standard for effectiveness research. *BJOG An Int J Obstet Gynaecol*. 2018;125(13):1716-1716. doi:10.1111/1471-0528.15199
8. Challenges for Social Work G. Grand Challenges for Social Work: Vision, Mission, Domain, Guiding Principles, & Guideposts to Action.

UNITED IN TRUE RACIAL EQUITY (UNITE)
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK
PILOT GRANT COVER PAGE

Section A: CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Principal Investigator Name & Title: _____

Department & College: _____
Email: _____ Phone Number: _____
UNITE RPA Member: Yes   No

Section B: OTHER PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S), CO-INVESTIGATOR(S), OR COLLABORATOR(S)

Name, Role on Project, & College: _____
Name, Role on Project, & College: _____
Name, Role on Project, & College: _____
Name, Role on Project, & College: _____
Name, Role on Project, & College: _____

Section C: DEPARTMENT BUSINESS MANAGER (Individual specific to PI's college or academic unit)

Name: _____
Department &/or College: _____
Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

Section D: TITLE OF PILOT PROJECT

Pilot Project Title: _____

Section E: BUDGET

Proposed Dates: Start Date: _____ End Date: _____
Amount Requested: _____

Section F: RESEARCH AREA
Which UK research priority area does your proposal address (select all that apply):

       Substance Use

       Cancer

       Cardiovascular Disease

       Diabetes and Obesity

       Cerebrovascular/neuroscience

       Diversity and Inclusion

       Energy

       Other, please specify _____

UNITED IN TRUE RACIAL EQUITY (UNITE)
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK
PILOT GRANT COVER PAGE

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
UNITED IN TRUE RACIAL EQUITY (UNITE)
RESEARCH PRIORITY AREA

College of
Social Work

Section G: PRIOR REVIEW

➤ **Has this project been previously submitted for internal grant funding?**

        Yes   No

If Yes, please provide:

- Date Submitted: _____
- Grant Mechanism (e.g., IRC, VPR pilot funding): _____
- Score & Summary of Feedback:

    _____

➤ **Has this project been previously submitted for external grant funding?**

        Yes   No

If Yes, please provide:

- Date Submitted: _____
- Grant Mechanism/Funding Agency (e.g., R03, NIDA): _____
- Score & Summary of Feedback:

    _____

Section H: REVIEW/APPROVAL REQUIRED BY UNIVERSITY POLICY & FEDERAL LAW

➤ **Does this project involve the use of human subjects?**

        Yes   No

If Yes, the project MUST be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to funding start. Please provide:

- IRB Protocol Number: _____
- Date Approved: _____
- If not approved yet, IRB date submitted _____

UNITED IN TRUE RACIAL EQUITY (UNITE)
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK
PILOT GRANT COVER PAGE

Section I. Abstract (300 words or fewer)