



Rutgers Equity Alliance for Community Health: Community-Academic Grants Program

Background

About REACH

The Rutgers Equity Alliance for Community Health (REACH) is designed to improve health outcomes in economically disadvantaged communities by addressing social determinants of health with academic-community partnerships. REACH's work focuses on five social determinants of health: education, employment, food access and food security, housing and population health in three New Jersey cities: Camden, New Brunswick and Newark. REACH is a university-wide effort designed to bring faculty, students and staff from all four chancellor-led units together with community partners to address health and socioeconomic inequities. The purpose of REACH's grant funding is to put evidence into practice by working in partnership with community residents and leaders on new or proven approaches to bring about long-lasting systemic change and achieve health equity. By addressing issues of inequity that include structural and systemic racism we are able to make an impact in all five of our social determinant focus areas. REACH is designed to transform academic-community partnerships in ways that support Rutgers faculty, student and staff engagement in equitable, longitudinal and sustainable community-based scholarship and service.

Funding Purpose

The REACH Community-Academic Grants program comprises two funding categories: **Community Impact Grants** will fund projects focused on positively impacting the community in a demonstrable way through an evidence-based strategy for change. These projects are not required to have a research focus or lead to subsequent research funding. The impetus for this funding category is two-fold: 1) to incentivize translation of research and/or replication of community-identified successful operations into practice and 2) to serve as a mechanism to provide bridge funding for continuity of community engagement projects that positively impact socioeconomic and health outcomes. For example, these grants may support ongoing community-based work that emerged in an effective research project developed in partnership with community that is unable to be sustained when current grant funding ends. These funds may also be used to pilot the integration of learners into community-engaged service and/or scholarship with an expectation that such engagement can be maintained once the grant funding ends. It should be noted that all Community Impact Grants must include an evaluation component and plans for sustainability should be outlined.

Research Seed Grants will fund projects that have the potential to advance knowledge and identify new evidence-based strategies for improvement in one of the five social determinants. These projects are required to have a clear research focus that will lead to ongoing research funding. The impetus for this funding category is two-fold: 1) to incentivize faculty to further develop community partnerships to inform their research direction and 2) to provide funding for the collection of preliminary data and results that will make future grant applications to other funders more successful. Where appropriate, these grants can be used to fund community-based participatory research projects that focus on one of the five identified social determinants in one of the three key cities.

REACH funding is not intended primarily for research purposes. Research Seed Grants are therefore intended to seed community-based research projects designed to answer questions focused on one or more of our five social determinants of health to inform action to achieve long-lasting systemic change.

In both funding categories, grants will only be awarded for projects that align community members, organizations, and Rutgers faculty or staff in a long-term collaborative alliance. It is anticipated that approximately 80% of REACH funding will be awarded as Community Impact Grants, and 20% will fund Research Seed Grants. Applicants will be required to specify the type of funding for which they are applying.

Total Awards

Round Two begins September 6, 2023

A total of up to \$1.5 million will be awarded in this funding cycle

Grant awards will vary from \$25,000 to \$200,000*

Grant period will be up to two years, beginning December 15, 2023

Grant recipients will have the opportunity to apply in future funding cycles

* Proposals that demonstrate **longitudinal engagement of learners** in the funded work will be considered for an additional \$25,000 in funding, beyond the \$200,000 maximum award.

Anticipated Future Funding Cycles

Round	RFP Release Date	Anticipated Award Date	Anticipated number of awards	Grant period
Round 3	3/6/2024	6/15/2024	25 ranging from \$25,000 to \$200,000	Up to two years
Round 4	9/4/2024	12/15/2024	20 ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000	One year

Eligibility Criteria

- Principal investigators/project directors (PI/PD) must be full-time Rutgers employees.
- Any Rutgers faculty/staff member is eligible to apply, provided they are proposing work in which they are engaged in an active, mutually generative partnership with a community-based organization working on one or more of REACH's identified SDOH in one or more of REACH's three targeted cities. Community partners should be directly involved in the development of the project to be funded.
- Proposals from full-time Rutgers staff must represent projects directly related to their roles and work within the University.
- Eligible Rutgers faculty and staff may only submit one proposal per funding cycle as Principal Investigator. Faculty and/or staff serving as PIs may work on other funded projects, if deemed appropriate.
- All proposed projects must be a partnership between the indicated Rutgers PI/PD and at least one community-based organization.
- As part of the proposal submission, community partner representatives must endorse the proposal and attest to their role in the formation and implementation of the project. Community partners should also outline the anticipated outcomes and impact of the project on local communities and/or systems.
- Community-based organizations must be tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and not private foundations or nonfunctionally integrated Type III supporting organizations.
- Examples of partner organizations include, but are not limited to: faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, local health and human service agencies; K-12 schools, hospital systems, local government, government agencies or departments, nonprofits, or other eligible entities interested in making an impact in their communities around SDOH. While the grant recipient will be a Rutgers faculty/staff member, grant funding is intended to support the strategies and work of the proposed project so some of the funding must be shared with the community partner(s).
- All applications must focus on projects based in Camden, New Brunswick or Newark. While community partners may be based outside of these cities, the funded work must be focused on one or more of these three cities.

Types of Projects That Could be Funded

Below are broad examples of the types of projects that could be considered for funding in each of our topic areas. This list is not exhaustive and only provides a few examples. It should be noted that all applicants are encouraged to leverage other funding sources (Federal, State, Local, or Foundation) where appropriate.

Employment

- Develop or implement efforts designed to reduce or mitigate poverty
- Focus on improving job readiness through improved literacy and other job skills
- Focus on innovative entrepreneurial opportunity development

- Explore and expand the role of local educational and healthcare institutions in training and hiring entry-level workers

Education

- Redefine effective teaching
- Focus on advocacy for and supports that bolster family and community engagement
- Focus on strategies to improve high school graduation rates

Food Access and Security

- Bolster the local food economy
- Conduct community asset mapping
- Engage in communication and community-building through community-wide health communication strategies
- Support the development of Food Policy Councils (including coalitions, councils, and task forces)
- Create or compile food systems and food security toolkit hub and training materials
- Train emergency food providers in making appropriate and effective referrals to other social and healthcare services
- Focus on relationship building through the development of trauma-informed services
- Support nutrition incentive programs

Housing

- Develop a housing and implementation plan for Camden, Newark, and New Brunswick
- Expand equitable housing development
- Research how anchor institutions engage in affordable housing
- Expand sustained homeownership through higher-quality credit
- Increase capacity for tenant advocacy
- Improve housing quality
- Research policy changes to keep people housed
- Provide financial literacy training for local homeowners

Population Health

- Address health inequities disproportionately affecting poor outcomes in the most under-resourced populations
- Build on community-focused lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Initiate or support local projects that align with NJ Department of Health priority areas such as sexual and reproductive health, mental health and substance use, and chronic disease prevention

Required Application Materials

All applicants must submit their complete proposal packets online using InfoReady at <https://rutgers.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1914195>.

The following elements will comprise a complete packet and are available on the InfoReady application site:

- Applicant Information
- Proposal type: Community Impact Grant vs. Research Seed Grant
- Proposal abstract: Brief description of the overall project, not to exceed 500 words.
- Proposal narrative: Not to exceed five pages, including any figures or tables. No appendix materials will be accepted.
- Proposed budget: Anticipated budget for the project, including funding to be allocated to community partner(s).
- Letter(s) of commitment from community partner(s): Required of all proposed community partners, describing their role in and commitment to the project.
- Principal Investigator's Curriculum Vitae (CV) and CVs or resumés from identified project staff and community partners.
- A clearly documented evaluation strategy with a determination of whether IRB approval will be required.

The guidelines provided here, and more detailed instructions are available on the templates in the InfoReady site.

Selection Criteria

Grants will be awarded only to projects aligning community members, organizations, and Rutgers faculty/staff in a collaborative alliance. **Projects must be based in one or more of the target cities: Camden, New Brunswick or Newark, and must address one or more of the five focused social determinants of health: education, employment, food access and food security, housing or population health.**

Selection Process

All grant proposals will be reviewed by the REACH team and a committee of external experts. Funding decisions will be based on the following criteria:

- Merit
- State of readiness
- Overall anticipated outcomes and participant benefits
- Collaborative engagement/robustness of community-academic partnerships
- Inclusion of Rutgers students where appropriate
- Budget
- Plan for sustainability

The selection process will incorporate a lens of equity to ensure funding is distributed across a myriad of priorities including addressing issues of structural and systemic racism where appropriate. Grant awards may not be distributed equally among the three target communities and five areas of focus.

Evaluation and Monitoring

Grant recipients are expected to meet the requirements for submitting narrative and financial reports. For this funding cycle, grant recipients will be required to report on a quarterly basis, through surveys and brief narrative reports. At the close of each grant, grant recipients will be required to submit a financial report of all grant expenditures and a narrative report summarizing all project activities and plans for sustainability.

Use of Grant Funds

Grant funds may be used for limited project faculty/staff salaries, student and community resident stipends, consultant fees, data collection and analysis, meetings, supplies, project-related travel, and other direct project expenses, including a limited amount of equipment essential to the project.

Grant funds may not be used to subsidize individuals for their health care costs, to support clinical trials of unapproved drugs or devices, to construct or renovate facilities, to pay rent, for lobbying, for political activities, or as a substitute for funds currently being used to support similar activities.

How to Apply

All applications must be submitted online. Complete details and access to the application system are available at: <https://reach.rutgers.edu/grants>.

IRB Approval

The Rutgers Office for Research has several new tools and resources for determining if the proposed project is considered “Human Subject Research” and requires IRB approval, including:

- [Non-Human Research Self-Certification Tool](#) - This resource provides support to Rutgers investigators when determining if a project is human research requiring IRB review. This tool asks a series of questions about the proposed project activities and, based on responses, issues a self-certification or directs faculty to contact the IRB for assistance.
- [IRB Pre-Review Service Team](#) - Comprised of highly knowledgeable IRB and HRPP staff, as well as key Committee Members on the IRB, the Pre-Review team provides subject matter expertise and feedback for all study documents prior to the researcher’s formal submission or resubmission for review by the IRB in eIRB.

- [IRB Review Type and Template Recommendation Tool](#) - asks a series of questions to provide investigators with recommendations on which protocol and consent templates to use based on the type of research indicated.

Should the proposed project require IRB approval, notice of approval will be required prior to the release of funding. It is not required at the time of application.

Applicant Information Webinar

An informational webinar will be held on September 27, 2023 at 2 p.m. for interested applicants or community partners. During this webinar, applicants will have an opportunity to ask questions about REACH, its overall objectives, and how to enhance the viability of concepts or projects for this funding.

To register to attend this webinar, visit <https://tinyurl.com/2u6z7fxb>.

Timeline

Announcement: September 6, 2023

Informational Webinar: September 27, 2023

Proposals Due: October 27, 2023 at 5 p.m.

Application review period: November 3 – November 30, 2023

Awards announced/Grants begin: December 15, 2023

Contact information:

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