



## COMMUNITY-ACADEMIC GRANTS PROGRAM

### 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 through academic-community partnerships. REACH's work focuses on five social determinants of health (SDOH): 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 to achieve health equity. By addressing issues of inequity that include structural and systemic racism, we can 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 into practice and/or the replication of community-identified successful operations; and 2) 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 from an effective research project developed in partnership with community that is otherwise unable to be sustained when current 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. 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 must 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 sustain 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 target cities.

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. REACH funding is not intended primarily for research purposes. It is anticipated that approximately 80% of REACH funding will be awarded as Community Impact Grants, and 20% will fund Research Seed Grants. Applicants must specify the type of funding for which they are applying.

### **Round Four Funding**

Up to \$650,000 will be awarded in this funding cycle. Within that, up to \$300,000 will be devoted to proposals that demonstrate longitudinal engagement of learners in community partnerships beyond the period of grant funding. Such projects might include plans for a pipeline of students to work with community partners across academic semesters, on projects directly related to course work. Examples could include, *but are not limited to*:

- Students providing services directly in a community-based environment: serving clients, evaluating systems, etc.;
- Designing courses in collaboration with community-based partners that provide long-term opportunities for students to apply their knowledge while simultaneously advancing their studies.

Round Four grant awards will range from \$25,000 to \$100,000. The grant period will be up to one year, beginning January 1, 2025.

### **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 project's development.

- 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 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; private foundations or nonfunctionally integrated Type III supporting organizations are ineligible.
- 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 a portion of the funding must be earmarked for 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 based in one or more of these three cities.

### **Types of Projects That Could be Funded**

Below are examples of some of the projects already funded by REACH, as well as some broad examples of the types of projects that could be considered for funding in each of our topic areas. This list is not exhaustive. It should be noted that all applicants are encouraged to leverage other funding sources (federal, state, local, or foundation) where appropriate.

#### **Employment**

*REACH-funded:* [A Basic Income for Camden](#) This Community Impact Grant is exploring the feasibility of a basic income program for Camden City residents by surveying Camden households on how they would use \$500-\$1,000 in additional monthly income, and how they would like to participate in a changing employment landscape.

*Other examples include:*

- Exploring and expanding the role of local educational and healthcare institutions in training and hiring entry-level workers;
- Improving job readiness through improved literacy and other job skills;
- Developing or implementing efforts designed to reduce or mitigate poverty.

## **Education**

*REACH-funded:* [Strengthening Pathways to High School Graduation](#) This Research Seed Grant is focused on improving high school graduation outcomes in the three REACH target cities. Findings from research and recent practice are used to strengthen pathways to graduation for students from vulnerable populations; cross-sector community meetings serve to develop strategy and monitor performance; and information tools will be developed to allow for earlier identification of students falling off track, and earlier implementation of systematic responses.

*Other examples include:*

- Redefining effective teaching;
- Developing advocacy and supports that bolster family and community engagement in academic progress;
- Implementing strategies to improve high school graduation rates.

## **Food Access and Security**

*REACH-funded:* [Expanding the Impact of Newark Community Food Systems](#) This Community Impact Grant will provide healthy food access and nutrition education to 100 families residing in Newark food deserts; support 40 stakeholders in becoming ServSafe Manager certified; introduce a Doula training for families with expectant mothers or newborn babies; and engage 1800 community members through events promoting healthy food access, community green development, and pathways to green jobs.

*Other examples include:*

- Supporting the development of Food Policy Councils (including coalitions, councils, and task forces);
- Creating or compiling food systems and food security toolkit hubs and training materials;
- Training emergency food providers in making appropriate and effective referrals to other social and healthcare services.

## **Housing**

*REACH-funded:* [Increasing Capacity to Address Homelessness](#) This Research Seed Grant pairs the New Community Corporation of Newark with a multidisciplinary team of Rutgers staff, students, and faculty (including four members of the University's Housing and Health Equity cluster) to enhance infrastructure. This will facilitate rapid and stable transitions into permanent housing for unhoused families.

*Other examples include:*

- Investigating how anchor institutions engage in affordable housing practices;
- Researching policy changes to keep people housed;
- Providing financial literacy training for local homeowners.

## **Population Health**

*REACH-funded:* [Building Partnerships for Population Health](#) This Community Impact Grant is building partnerships between the Rutgers Health Service Corps (RHSCorps) and New Brunswick community-based organizations (CBOs) to enhance population health. The RHSCorps, comprised of Rutgers student volunteers, will collaborate with CBOs to organize health screening events, address SDOH, and promote health equity.

*Other examples include:*

- Addressing health inequities disproportionately affecting poor outcomes in the most under-resourced populations;
- Building on community-focused lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Initiating or supporting 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.

## **Application Materials**

All applications must be submitted online via InfoReady at <https://rutgers.infoready4.com/#freeformCompetitionDetail/1949932>. Complete details and access to the application system are available at: <https://reach.rutgers.edu/grants>.

The following elements will comprise a complete application packet:

- 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).
- Required letter(s) of commitment from all proposed community partner(s), 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.

## **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 identified SDOH: education, employment, food access and food security, housing, and 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;
- Quality of Budget (both justified and sufficient);
- Plan for sustainability.

The selection process will incorporate a lens of equity to ensure funding is distributed across all 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 quarterly through surveys and brief narrative reports. At the close of each 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.

## **IRB Approval**

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

- [Non-Human Research Self-Certification Tool](#) - This resource provides support on 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 PIs 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 in the eIRB system.
- [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 25, 2024 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://rutgers.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUqdO-qqz0sHNQa1gBgSXRai5CNFoz2WJOT>.

### **Timeline**

Announcement: September 4, 2024

Informational Webinar: September 25, 2024

Proposals Due: October 25, 2024 at 5 p.m.

Application review period: November 1 –December 6, 2024

Awards announced: December 15, 2024

Grants begin: January 1, 2025

### **Contact information:**

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