

Community-University Partnership Seed (CUPS) Supplemental Guide

Applicants interested in applying for CUPS funding are encouraged to refer to this guide for definitions of key terms and background information about partnership development and community engagement in research. Please reference the MICHR Pilot Grant Program Seed Grant application guidelines for more information.

Background Information

What is Community Engagement in Research?

Community engagement in research is a process that supports authentic partnership of people affiliated with or self-identified by geographic proximity, special interest, and/or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of the community of focus.¹ Community-engaged research approaches are built on the premise that the health issues being studied are best understood by the community members living in the environments where the research is taking place, and that communities should be directly involved in the decisions that will affect their lives. This process requires power sharing, equity, and flexibility in conducting research in a manner that fits the priorities, needs, and capacities of the communities involved.¹

There are different models of community-engaged research that have varying levels of community involvement. Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is a specific type of community-engaged research that equitably involves community members, organizational representatives, and academic researchers in all aspects of the research process.^{2,3} Applicants are encouraged to utilize a CBPR approach for this funding mechanism, or a similar participatory approach that strives for equitable involvement of all partners throughout the research process.

Partnership Formation, Maintenance, and Sustainability

Partnerships are the foundation of any community-engaged research endeavor. The process of developing, maintaining, and sustaining a research partnership requires time, commitment, resources, and is different for each project and group of partners involved. Colleagues at the Detroit Community Academic Urban Research Center have described this process as occurring in seven broad stages or phases that commonly occur when conducting CBPR. These phases include forming the partnership, assessing community strengths and dynamics, identifying priority local health concerns and research questions, designing and conducting the research, feeding back and interpreting the research findings, disseminating and translating the findings, and finally maintaining, sustaining and evaluating the partnership.^{2,3} There are two core components of this process that are critical to consider for the purposes of this funding opportunity. The first core component is forming the partnership. This is the initial stage that involves identifying potential partners and communities, building trust, and establishing principles and norms for working together. The second core component is maintaining and sustaining the partnership. This occurs continuously throughout all phases of the research as partners work together to share knowledge and skills, strengthen trust, and explore ways that the partnership might be improved or modified to address new collaborative research efforts.^{2,3} The CUPS funding opportunity supports efforts at any phase in this process, from the early stages of partnership formation to the ongoing stages of maintaining and sustaining the partnership.

Definition of Community

For the CUPS funding opportunity, "Community" is defined more broadly as a group of people affiliated by similar characteristics, such as identities (e.g. social/economic backgrounds), geographic location (e.g. city of Flint), special interests (e.g. coalition to reduce childhood obesity), and/or situations that affects the well-being of that group. Applicants must clearly describe the specific community or communities that represent the focus

of the partnership. MICHR's Community Engagement Program is specifically interested in applications that seek to reduce health disparities and improve health among communities that experience poorer health outcomes and have historically been excluded from opportunities to engage in research (e.g. racial/ethnic minorities, women, low-income families).

Award Description and Examples

CUPS grant funding is intended to support community-academic partnerships at any phase of the research process. Applicants who are in the early stages of forming their partnership may have a greater focus on relationship building, exploration of shared areas of interest, and creation of the partnership structure. Examples of activities that can be funded to support newly forming partnerships include, but are not limited to:

- building relationships between partners (e.g. facilitating meetings for partners to learn about each other, explore the involvement of other potential partners, and how the partners will adopt and use equitable collaborative principles);
- exploring shared research interests and identifying capacity building needs (e.g. identifying partnership research priorities, determining research approach that will be used, participating in trainings and mentoring opportunities);
- developing a Steering Committee and/or other appropriate partnership infrastructure mechanisms (e.g. defining roles and responsibilities, developing communication and decision-making mechanisms, policies and procedures);

Applicants who are already engaged in an established partnership may be focused on different activities, such as the dissemination of research findings or evaluation of the partnership process. These activities would support the ongoing maintenance, sustainability, and/or evaluation of the research partnership. Examples of activities that can be funded to support partnership maintenance, sustainability, and evaluation include, but are not limited to:

- conducting community assessment(s) to inform new collaborative research efforts (e.g. focus groups to gather data to inform the research question and/or methods);
- disseminating and translating research findings (e.g. development of dissemination tools, such as, fact sheets and policy briefs, to specific audiences); and
- evaluating the partnership process (e.g. collecting data to assess to what extent the partnership is achieving its goals, challenging and facilitating factors, and identifying future directions for the partnership).

Detroit-based partnerships: Applicants involved in research partnerships in the city of Detroit should apply through the [Detroit URC Small Planning Grant Program](#).

For additional information, please contact: Lisa Ahrens, Pilot Grant Program Coordinator at 734-998-7308 or MICHR-PilotGrants@umich.edu.

References

1. Ahmed S, Palermo A. Community engagement in research: Frameworks for education and peer review. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2010; 100(8):1380–1387.
2. Israel B, Rowe Z. Strategies for building and sustaining equitable, effective community-based participatory research partnerships. *Presented at the MICHR Community Engagement Symposium*. 2013.
3. Becker, A, Israel, B, Allen, A. Strategies and techniques for effective group process in CBPR partnerships. *Methods in community-based participatory research for health*. 2005; 52-72.