

The Alameda AIDS Research Coalition 2011 Request for applications

A. Overview

The Alameda AIDS Coalition (AARC) pilot grants program announces its 2011 Request for Applications. The program supports pilot studies for innovative research to address HIV/AIDS health disparities in African American communities in Alameda County. The pilot grants program prioritizes the funding of projects that will lead to future research grant proposals to the NIH or other substantive extramural funding (e.g., CHRP funding).

The AARC pilot grants program is supported by a grant from the National Institute for Minority Health and Health Disparities (RC4MD005723). The AARC is a consortium of health sciences investigators at local universities (academic researchers), community-based organizations that serve the African American community (CBO researchers), and community members (community researchers) to answer significant scientific STI/HIV research questions. The AARC has been funded to develop strong, long-term relationships that bridge the gap between research and communities by developing trainings and forums to build the capacity of research partners to engage in community-involved research, leveraging existing electronic infrastructure to build support mechanisms for community-involved research, and seeding the next generation of STI/HIV research.

B. Funding Opportunity

The pilot funding program will support community-based, applied research undertaken by academic investigators working in partnership with community based organizations, AIDS service organizations, or local health departments. The awards are intended to encourage research collaboration that addresses important and timely research questions, strengthens research and evaluation infrastructure within service settings, and addresses real-world challenges in research translation and application. To address gaps in research, and to meet the challenges of a changing epidemic and the prevention and care needs of people most impacted by HIV, supported research will focus on issues of HIV/AIDS health disparities in the African American community in Alameda County.

Funding decisions will be based on merit, responsiveness to this call for proposals, feasibility of completing the project in a timely manner, and availability of funds. The maximum award amount is \$25,000.

The following guidelines will also be considered in the selection of projects:

- The proposed study should represent community-based participatory research. The application should demonstrate that the research questions were identified by both academic and community partners and the roles and responsibilities of each partner should be clearly articulated.
- The proposed study should be innovative rather than something that is already well studied.
- The proposed study should involve the target population in the formation of the protocol.
- The application should explain how the proposed study fits into the larger body of published knowledge in the area.
- The application should clearly describe a plan for utilizing the lessons from the pilot study to inform public health practice and future research directions.

C. Eligibility

The primary purpose of the AARC pilot study program is to foster innovative HIV/AIDS research that addresses the health disparities in the African American community in Alameda County and support community-based participatory research. As such, applications with multiple Principal Investigators (PI), representing both academic researchers and community researchers, are expected.

Proposals must demonstrate the specific contributions that each collaborative partner will make to the research and the plans for developing and sustaining the collaboration and community partner organization's research infrastructure after the research award. The application must demonstrate that the impetus for the research derives from community-identified needs, that the community partner plays a strong role in framing the research questions, and that the proposed research will answer questions of primary interest to reducing health disparities in the African American community. In addition, successful proposals are ones in which the academic partner is actively engaged in formulating the background, theoretical framework and justification, and research plan. Thus, it is not the intent that either partner completes the application individually, but rather jointly. Projects can include new data collection or analysis of existing community-based data.

Eligible entities are Academic, Community Based, and Faith based organizations that are tax exempt public or private 501 (c) 3 organizations. Organization or initiatives that have a track record of success within the area of inquiry that are not 501 (c) 3 may apply with a fiscal sponsor. Organizations or partnerships must show proof of fiscal sponsorship agreements.

In order to be eligible, each PI must:

1. Have been involved in the activities of the AARC. This is defined as having attended at least two Coalition meetings.
2. Commit to attending regular AARC meetings and commit to participate in one training or forum as a presenter (see Progress Reporting, below).
3. Have a community or academic affiliation and be able to submit grants through their institution as a PI to extramural funding sources.
4. Obtain written approval from the board chair, executive director, CEO, Department head or other person authorized to make commitments on behalf of their organization.

D. Budgets

Budgets may not exceed \$25,000 total. Award money should be spent within one year of receipt of funding.

Supplies and Expenses: Office supplies and other necessary and reasonable expenses are allowed and must be fully justified in the application.

Equipment: Equipment is defined as non-expendable, tangible property that has an acquisition cost of \$1,500 or more, is freestanding, and has a normal life expectancy of two years or more (e.g., computer). Only equipment requested and fully justified in the application and approved in the award budget may be purchased with these funds.

Effort: Each PI must invest effort on the project of at least 1%. PIs cannot "donate" time to a project.

E. CHR/IRB Approvals

All studies that involve human participants ultimately require approval by a certified Institutional Review Board (IRB). However, approval is not a prerequisite for submission. If a project is selected for funding, proof of IRB approval must be supplied before funds can be released. Applicants are strongly encouraged to investigate how IRB approval will be accomplished for their collaborative work (e.g., will academic PI's IRB cover the community partner?). The AARC will actively work with each funded project to assist in obtaining IRB approval.

F. Peer Review Process

The AARC will convene a panel to review applications and make recommendations for funding. The panel will include HIV/AIDS scientists, community-based agency staff and community members. Each panel member will sign a conflict of interest form and recuse her/himself from the discussion of any application for which they are in conflict. Each proposal will be reviewed in detail by at least three members of the panel. The proposal then will be discussed in a meeting of the full review panel. Funding will occur sequentially beginning with the highest scored grant until all funds have been expended.

G. Research Resources

The AARC offers multiple resources for the design, conduct, and analysis of pilot research and PIs are encouraged to use them in preparing proposal for this submission. As part of the submission, applicants also will be asked to describe other resources and infrastructure that may be available to them to facilitate timely completion of the project.

H. Progress Reporting

All awardees are required to attend AARC meetings and submit a brief progress report at the end of 6 months and a final report after 12 months. Awardees also will be asked to deliver a presentation about their research findings at an AARC meeting. Funds are awarded with the expectation that the pilot studies will lead to extramural funding, and progress reports should be written with this in mind.