Frequently Asked Questions for Community Participation in Research Targeting the Medically Underserved

The NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) is the issuing organization of two linked Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs): PAR-08-075 (R01) and PAR-08-076 (R21) – Community Participation in Research Targeting the Medically Underserved. As a result of discussions with potential applicants, provided are responses to the most Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) seeking general information for these FOAs:

Q: How can I get assistance with determining/deciphering eligibility of a population or area for MUP, MUA, or HPSA designation?

A: Medically Underserved Areas/Populations are areas or populations designated by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as having: too few primary care providers, high infant mortality, high poverty and/or high elderly population. Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) are designated by HRSA as having shortages of primary medical care, dental or mental health providers and may be geographic (a county or service area), demographic (low income population), or institutional (comprehensive health center, federally qualified health center or other public facility).

Medically Underserved Areas (MUAs) may be a whole county or a group of contiguous counties, a group of county or civil divisions or a group of urban census tracts in which residents have a shortage of personal health services.

Medically Underserved Populations (MUPs) may include groups of persons who face economic, cultural or linguistic barriers to health care.

- Identify MUPs and MUAs by State and County at: http://muafind.hrsa.gov/.
- Identify HPSAs by State and County at: http://hpsafind.hrsa.gov/.
- Identify MUPs, MUAs, and HPSAs by address at: http://datawarehouse.hrsa.gov/GeoAdvisor/ShortageDesignationAdvisor.aspx.

Designation inquiries should be addressed to the HRSA Shortage Designation Branch:

E-mail: sdb@hrsa.gov
Phone: 1-888-275-4772 (Press option 1, then option 2)

Q: What are the expectations of R21 and R01 applications? At what point is preliminary data required?

A: The R21 funding mechanism encourages new, exploratory and developmental research projects by providing support for the early and conceptual stages of project development so it is ideal for pilot and feasibility studies. No preliminary data is

generally required. The goal is to describe your proposal including time for furthering the established partnership, gathering data, and implementing the proposed methods. R21 applicants are not expected to have fully accomplished their goals pre-award.

Conversely, the R01 funding mechanism is used to support discrete, specified, circumscribed research projects to be performed by the named investigator(s) in an area representing the investigator's specific interest and competencies. Preliminary data is required as R01 proposals are expected to be more developed than a R21. Feasibility should be demonstrated and solid methodology plainly outlined in the R01 application.

It is important for applicants of both mechanisms to clearly and thoroughly explain the rationale of proposed investigations and refer to current literature. Avoid assuming reviewers will automatically understand.

Q: I am interested in partnering with a community in another country outside of the United States. Are research proposals focused on international communities eligible?

A: Research proposals under these funding opportunity announcements must include a focus on the medically underserved in the U.S. (including U.S. territories). The required medically underserved classification should be in compliance with HRSA's guidelines, which are not applicable outside of the United States. Therefore, an application proposing research in a medically underserved area of Ghana, for example, would be deemed ineligible as HRSA's MUA criteria does not apply to Ghana.

Q: I have concerns regarding reviewer familiarity with CBPR. Will applications be reviewed in a standing Study Review Group (SRG)?

A: Applications received under PAR-08-075 and PAR-08-076 will be reviewed by a Special Emphasis Panel (SEP) at the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) consisting of qualified reviewers familiar with community-based participatory research and its principles.

Q: Where can I obtain information on recommendations for addressing concerns raised by Institutional Review Boards (IRBs)?

A: The Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) convened a series of educational conference calls covering the issue of IRBs and CBPR. Visit CCPH's website for audio files and transcripts of these conference calls addressing IRBs and ethical issues at: http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/irbcalls2.html. Of particular interest may be Call# 3, "*Community-Based Participatory Research Proposals and the Human Subjects Review Process: Methods for Working with University IRBs*", which includes tips on navigating the university IRB approval process for CBPR projects.

The CCPH maintains a listserv dedicated to the discussion of CBPR and Research Ethics. To subscribe, visit: http://mailman.mcw.edu/mailman/listinfo/ccph-ethics.