

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESOURCE CENTER INSTRUCTIONS

Submissions for the Community Engagement Resource Center (CERC) must come from a non-profit research or policy organization and be led by a Director. Inclusion of a partnering organization (academic or non-academic) that has a strong engagement history with one or more underserved communities and with which the submitting organization has an established relationship is appropriate. The lead from the partnering entity would generally hold the role of Co-Director.

Required Pre-proposal

The pre-proposal must include the following information:

- Community Engagement Resource Center
- Name and institution of the Director (or Co-Directors) of the Center
- Center title
- If the CERC submission includes a partnering organization, demonstration of established collaborative relationship between the two organizations (one-page PDF upload)
- A one-page description of the proposed work, documenting successful past work with academic-community partnerships, including experience around equity-focused community-driven research projects, training/capacity building, and proven ability to assess effectiveness of community research and/or policies through formative and summative evaluation approaches. (Required PDF upload)

Community Engagement Resource Center

The Community Engagement Resource Center will, under leadership of the Director, incorporate a multidisciplinary approach to provide capacity building, training, evaluation, and the management of a Community of Practice for the full Network. The Center will develop training resources and career development opportunities while working closely with Partner Hub Directors, Project PIs, Trainees, and other project staff to optimize their success.

We expect the CERC to include five 'cores' including: administrative, evaluation/outcomes, statistics/methods, training/capacity building, and communications. For each 'core,' an expert should be named from the CERC team who has experience in this area. It is also permissible to subcontract with another organization to provide this expertise. All work must be done in an equity first, community guided way that centers the community in the work and supports the collaborative efforts of academic and community partners.

The Community Engagement Resource Center proposal must be submitted by a non-profit research or policy organization that can demonstrate past success in facilitating community-driven research. Inclusion of a partnering organization (academic or non-academic) that has a strong engagement history with one or more underserved communities and with which the submitting organization has an established relationship is appropriate.

In addition to facilitating the overall activities of the HERN, the CERC will compile and make available to the broader scientific community and other stakeholder key findings, recommendations, and resources from the network, thus leveraging the evidence-based approaches that will have been developed.

Institutional Eligibility/Location of Work

AHA awards are limited to U.S.-based non-profit institutions, including medical, osteopathic and dental schools, veterinary schools, schools of public health, pharmacy schools, nursing schools, universities and colleges, public and voluntary hospitals and others that can demonstrate the ability to conduct the proposed research. Submissions will not be accepted for work with funding to be administered through any federal institution or work to be performed by a federal employee, except for Veterans Administrations employees.

The CERC is not transferable to another institution.

An institution may submit only one Partner Hub (and related Projects) proposal or one Community Engagement Resource Center proposal.

Individuals at the applicant institution who are not participating in their institution's Hub and project(s) proposal may participate in a separate institution's Hub submission. Individuals other than the Hub Director who are participating in their institution's Hub proposal, may participate in a separate institution's center proposal. The proposal may include individuals and/or projects at more than one institution provided there is evidence supporting

the likelihood of a successful interaction among research and training personnel. The Community Engagement Resource Center applicant cannot have overlapping key personnel with any HUB (or related projects) submission.

It is the responsibility of the submitting institution to ensure that only one proposal is submitted for the institution or to coordinate across several institutions to create a single proposal. The Community Engagement Resource Center's institution will maintain fiscal responsibility for the entire award.

Representative Approaches Responsive to this RFP

The intent of this initiative is to support a collaborative network of researchers whose collective efforts will lead to breakthroughs in methodological approaches to community-driven research. AHA anticipates (and welcomes) submissions for research focused on cardiovascular, stroke and brain health conditions. However, **because the goal of this funding mechanism is broad understanding of innovative approaches to community-driven research, submissions proposing studies that do not focus on cardiovascular disease, stroke or brain health are also welcome.**

Ultimately, successful applicants will be those proposing innovative approaches to engaging communities in the research process and the ability to persuasively demonstrate the broad applicability of their results.

There are several opportunities to improve academic-community partnerships in research, fostering more effective, equitable, and sustainable collaborations. We anticipate the Community Engagement Resource Center will support the Network in the areas listed below. We also expect Partner Hubs to propose projects that incorporate a majority of core tenets for effective community-engaged research, including:

1. **Capacity Building:** Providing training and capacity-building opportunities for community partners can empower them to actively engage in the research process, contribute their unique expertise, and enhance their understanding of research methodologies and ethical considerations.
2. **Clear Communication:** Enhancing communication strategies, including the use of plain language, visual aids, and culturally appropriate materials, can improve understanding and engagement

between academic researchers and community members.

3. **Shared Governance:** Establishing shared decision-making processes and co-governance structures can ensure that both academic and community partners have a voice in setting research priorities, designing studies, and making critical decisions.
4. **Community Ownership:** Encouraging community ownership of research findings and outcomes can lead to better dissemination strategies, helping to ensure that research results are translated into action or policy changes that benefit the community.
5. **Long-term Commitment:** Building long-term relationships and trust with community partners is vital. Researchers should be committed to continuous engagement beyond the scope of a single project, fostering enduring partnerships.
6. **Cultural Competence:** Enhancing cultural competence among academic researchers is essential. Cultural sensitivity and respect for community values and traditions can lead to more respectful and effective partnerships.
7. **Resource Allocation:** Equitably allocating resources and funding to community partners, ensuring that they are fairly compensated for their time, expertise, and contributions to the research effort.
8. **Transparency and Accountability:** Establish clear mechanisms for accountability and transparency in the research partnership, including protocols for addressing any conflicts of interest or ethical concerns.
9. **Evaluation and Feedback:** Regularly assess the partnership's effectiveness, collect feedback from all stakeholders, and use these insights to make improvements and adjustments as needed.
10. **Policy and Institutional Support:** Advocate for institutional and policy changes within academic institutions to recognize and support community-engaged research, including tenure and promotion policies that value community partnerships.

Implementation of these approaches through academic-community partnerships will result in more inclusive and impactful collaborations that benefit academic institutions, CBOs, and the communities they serve.

Community Engagement Resource Center Proposal Details

Duration: Five (5) years

Number of Awards: The Network will include one (1) Community Engagement Resource Center. This award will be selected based on scientific merit and how the proposal aligns with AHA's mission and goals.

Award Amount: The maximum budget amount a Community Engagement Resource Center may request is \$3,500,000. The AHA reserves the right to determine the final award amount for competitive projects based on need and potential impact.

Appropriate Budget Items

- Salary and fringe benefits of the Center Director (CD) and Co-Director (if named).
- All Project-related expenses, including costs of other faculty and staff working on behalf of the project, supplies, training materials, ongoing evaluation and assessment costs, and travel costs. Large instrumentation or equipment costs are not generally supported but may be with clearly documented need and prior approval by AHA.
- CERC Director(s) may use award dollars to pay for travel to two required face-to-face, network-wide meetings each year and other meetings where HERN research is presented. One semiannual meeting will be in the Fall and a second in the Spring. The purpose of both meetings is to share results across the network and identify and act on potential collaborative opportunities. If awarded, the Director(s) would be expected to attend the annual meeting in Dallas, TX on Sept 23 & 24, 2024. More information about meetings will be provided upon award.
- Maximum of 10% institutional indirect costs may be claimed on the award.

Sample CERC Budget (not prescriptive except as noted)	Center Totals
CERC Director A maximum \$50,000 salary plus fringe benefits (estimated at 30%) per year for the Center Director, who must commit at least 10% effort	\$ 325,000

Project costs Inclusive of all additional personnel and project-related expenses as described above	\$ 2,706,818
Facilities and meeting costs For training, community-related meetings and events, etc.	\$ 150,000
Direct Costs (Total)	\$ 3,181,818
Indirect Costs AHA Policy allows for a maximum of 10% for indirect costs	\$ 318,182
Total	\$ 3,500,000

Note for CERC Submissions: The director will be responsible for overseeing the total budget for the grant. If awarded, the director and the institution assume an obligation to expend grant funds for the purposes set forth in the submission and in accordance with all regulations and policies governing the grant programs of the AHA.

CERC Director Requirements

The Director of the CERC:

- Must possess a doctoral degree and/or experience demonstrating the skill needed to direct the activities of the CERC.
- Must have a faculty appointment or equivalent.
- May hold another AHA award simultaneously but may not be a Center Director for an active SFRN or HERN.
- Must demonstrate a 10% minimum effort.

The Director must have one of the following designations:

- U.S. citizen
- Permanent Resident
- Pending Permanent Resident (must have applied for permanent residency and have filed Form I-485 with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and have received authorization to legally remain in the U.S., having filed an Application for Employment Form I-765)
- G-4 Visa – family member of employee of international organizations and NATO

Peer Review

General: Peer Review for the Community-Driven Research Approaches HERN will be a two-phase process. Community Engagement Resource Center submissions that advance past Phase 1 will undergo separate Phase 2 reviews.

CERC proposal scoring is based on the criteria below.

Phase 1 Review

- **Center Director:** Does the Center Director have the scientific background, expertise, time commitment, and administrative experience to provide strong leadership, direction, management, and administration of the CERC? Has he/she/they documented other experience required for success of the project, including past community-driven research, equitable collaborations, capacity-building, mixed methods expertise, implementation planning, and formative and summative evaluation approaches?
- **Investigative Team:** Is the broader investigative team appropriately trained and well-suited to carry out the work of the CERC as proposed? Is the experience level of the investigators in alignment with the complexities associated with conducting a project of this type? Has the investigative team demonstrated a history of and commitment to engaging across multiple entities and communities?
- **Evaluation and Assessment:** Has the Center Director adequately described an approach to evaluation and assessment appropriate for the scope of the projects? Does the CD and team members have all the required tools available to conduct the needed assessments?
- **Team-building:** Success of this HERN will require exceptional engagement of the projects with not only one another, but also the various communities with which they will be partnering. Has the CD demonstrated the ability to foster a team approach for a large-scale initiative of this type?
- **Communication and Dissemination:** The CD will have responsibility for communicating and disseminating key findings and recommendations of the network. Has the Director described an adequate approach to ensure prioritization of communicating key findings to community partners, along with plans to ensure key results are effectively communicated to the scientific community?

- **Approach:** Has the CERC described how it will facilitate capacity building, communication, evaluation, a Community of Practice, and developed a plan that will optimize the synergies and collaborative opportunities across the Hubs? Will the delineated plan ensure clear, consistent, and frequent communication with and between the Hub project sites? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and have a plan to mitigate those should they arise?
- **Lay Summary/Summary for Non-Scientists:** How well written is the lay summary in explaining to a non-scientist audience the research proposed and importance? Does the Lay Summary adequately explain the approaches to capacity building, training, evaluation, and the management of a Community of Practice for the full Network? Does the Lay Summary show how the CERC will develop training resources and career development opportunities while working closely with Partner Hub Directors, Project PIs, Trainees, and other project staff to optimize their success? Does it provide information on the overall impact of this work and the potential advances in the field? **Does it relay how the proposal supports the mission of the AHA?**

Phase 2 Review

Phase 2 review of the Community Engagement Resource Center will focus on documented experience around equity-focused community research, capacity building, and proven ability to assess effectiveness of community research and/or policies, as well as proven training record and effectiveness.

- **Synergy** – A clear vision of what can be achieved through successful completion of this initiative, and the potential to impact community-driven research, is expected. The CERC Director should clearly articulate an approach to optimizing synergistic opportunities across the multiple centers and projects of the HERN. He/she/they should describe the overall strategy for achieving the Center objectives and how each element of the CERC relates to the strategy.
- **Collaboration** – Does the CERC Director provide evidence of successful collaboration with academic and community-based organizations and local communities? While not required, evidence of formal training in leadership skills with an emphasis on collaborative leadership will be favorably reviewed.
- **Diversity of the Research Team** – As noted above, AHA is committed to broadening the diversity of investigators supported by programmatic, multi-investigator initiatives it offers. As such, **at least**

30% of personnel of the CERC team must be from groups who are under-represented in science and medicine. The CD must be able to document the diverse composition of the team and should comment on steps their organization has taken/is taking to expand and support diverse investigators and team members.

Applicants are prohibited from contacting AHA peer reviewers. This is a form of scientific misconduct and will result in removal of the submission from funding consideration and institutional notification of misconduct.

Award Selection

Final funding decisions are subject to approval by the AHA.