



Community Focused Capacity Building to Support the Development of an HIV Syndemics Policy Research Center

Rapid Cycle Request for Proposals (RFP) 2023

Important Dates

RFP Release Date:	Monday, April 17, 2023
Questions Due:	Monday, April 24, 2023 by 12:00 PM Pacific Time
Applications Due:	Thursday, May 4, 2023 by 12:00 PM Pacific Time
Notification of Peer Review Outcome:	Friday, May 26, 2023
Performance Period:	August 1, 2023 – March 31, 2025

1. CHRP Mission and Programmatic Priorities

Our mission is to support scientists in California to develop, evaluate, and disseminate innovative research for (a) eliminating new HIV infections, (b) optimizing treatment uptake and outcomes for all persons living with HIV, and (c) addressing the comorbidities and social determinants that threaten the health and well-being of persons at risk for or living with HIV.

CHRP Programmatic Priorities: *Across every aspect of our work, the California HIV/AIDS Research Program (CHRP) seeks to fund high-risk, high-reward, high-rigor research projects that aim to substantially and rapidly advance HIV epidemic control and/or treatment, and which address research priorities and gaps not supported by other funders. Further, CHRP is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion as a means of increasing the effectiveness of its grantmaking and generating new knowledge that benefits all Californians.*

The California HIV/AIDS Research Program (CHRP) is a publicly funded grantmaking organization, administered through the Research Grants Program Office (RGPO) within the Division of Research and Innovation at the University of California, Office of the President. Since 1983, CHRP has invested over \$383 million dollars through over 2,000 research and capacity building grants to support the development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of innovative HIV projects through its stated [mission and strategic directions](#). These priorities align with other Ending the Epidemic(s) strategies developed by the [State of California](#), through the federal government by both the [CDC](#) and [White House Office of AIDS Policy](#), as well globally by the [WHO](#).

2. Goals of this Funding Initiative

With this Request for Proposals (RFP), CHRP seeks to award up to \$1,000,000 by the **date stated on page one** of this solicitation to support a capacity building partnership between an academic institutions and Community Based organization (CBO) to develop a HIV Syndemics focused Policy Center. To do this, CHRP will fund a single multiple-investigator award across the state of California. Investigators will work to support timely and impactful policy analyses that is responsive to policy maker and other stakeholder needs in California and that strengthen local, state, and national capacity to enact HIV-relevant policies informed by objective and rigorous research. Specifically, this research initiative aims to:

- A. Establish a new HIV Policy Center co-lead by both an academic and community-based organization (CBO) to **collaborate on and oversee policy research and analysis** from a community perspective focused on issues related to HIV syndemics;
- B. Develop **processes, procedures, and learning strategies** to ensure that selected community-based organization(s) become capable of developing relevant policy documents that are complimentary to the work of existing CHRP funded academic Policy Centers; and
- C. Support the development of a limited number of **rapid response research completed within a 6-month timeframe** on syndemic related policy issues that arise during the active grant period and through stakeholder engagement processes and in collaboration with other established policy centers.

3. Background

Historically, CHRP has funded two academic statewide HIV Policy Research Centers. These multi-disciplinary, academic teams work in partnership with providers, consumers, advocates, and policymakers to conduct HIV policy research. The goal of these Centers has been to support timely and impactful policy analyses that are responsive to policy maker and other stakeholder needs in California and that strengthen local, state, and national capacity to enact HIV-relevant policies informed by objective and rigorous research. To compliment the important work of these academic Centers, CHRP seeks to fund an additional Policy Center supported by both an academic institution and a community-based organization. Such an agency will offer a complementary perspective to support a fully holistic approach to HIV policy research within the state.

The purpose of this award is to fund the development of this new community-based syndemics focused policy center through capacity building. This center will use the knowledge acquired be able to support rapid response research completed within a 6-month (maximum) timeframe on policy issues that arise during the active grant period and through stakeholder engagement processes. CHRP anticipates providing up to \$1,000,000 in total (direct and indirect cost) funding for a period of 20-month.

4. Research Objectives

This funding opportunity will support the development of a community focused HIV Syndemics Policy Center. Full scoring criteria can be found in **Section 12** below. Successful applications will describe how the project addresses the following objectives relevant to this response:

Objective 1: Addresses unique research question(s) related to HIV syndemics policy issues within California.

Objective 2: Use capacity building principles to support the development of a new state-wide policy center focused on HIV Syndemics supported by both an academic institution and a community-based organization.

Objective 3: Describe how agencies will engage in capacity building with project experts and existing CHRP funded Policy Centers to support development of identification, development, execution, and dissemination of rapid-cycle (6-month) timeframe policy products (e.g., infographics, policy briefs, reports).

5. Eligibility

CHRP requires that applicant institutions must be non-profit research, academic, or community-based institutions located in California. CHRP will accept applicants from any non-profit organization or institution, provided that the organization can manage the grant and demonstrate financial health. The organization must also meet our liability insurance requirements. Before funding, the University will collect additional information, such as tax ID numbers and financial reports, to review the organization during the pre-funding process to ensure all financial management and project management eligibility criteria can be met.

The applicant PI is required to have PI status at a non-profit or academic institution in California, or assurance in writing from their institution that PI status will be granted "just in time" upon an offer to fund this award. In accordance with [UC policy](#), PIs who are UC employees and who receive any part of their salary through UC must submit grant proposals through their UC campus Contracts and Grants office. Exceptions must be approved by the UC campus where the PI is employed. US citizenship is not a requirement for the PI nor for any personnel to apply for CHRP funding.

PIs at any stage in their careers are welcome to apply. Applicants who are also key personnel on any current CHRP research awards are eligible to apply for funding under this initiative if the required scientific and fiscal reports on their existing grants are up-to-date. This means that Progress/Final Scientific Reports or Fiscal Reports that are more than one month overdue may subject an application to disqualification unless the issue is either (i) addressed by the PI and Institution within one month of notification, or (ii) the PI and Institution have received written permission from CHRP to allow an extension of any report deadlines.

Letters of Intent (LOI) are **not required** for this rapid cycle solicitation. Multiple principal investigators (Co-PI) are required under this mechanism. It is allowable for a PI on one application to serve in a different role on additional applications (e.g., Co-PI, Co-Investigator). Individuals, community-based organizations, and health systems/jurisdictions may participate in this application under this mechanism.

6. Collaboration Requirements

Centers are required to obtain stakeholder input and share capacity building activities and research findings to the broader community throughout this award. Two stakeholder engagement events (in-person or virtual) should take place per award year. The format and strategy for these stakeholder engagement and information sharing events is at the discretion of the Center. Centers should disseminate the findings from their policy briefs and other work products from the rapid response research in multiple ways, including, but not limited to: online, community-based meetings, and legislative or other briefings with policymakers.

Centers will be comprised of partnerships between academic institutions and community-based organization(s). The ultimate structure of this relationship with respect to lead institution must be specifically described in the response. To ensure a statewide focus, this Center must engage researchers from at least two academic institutions (one of which may be the lead) located in different California counties. Additionally, Centers are required to include a partnership with at least one community-based organization serving or representing those at highest risk for HIV infection. Additional community partners may include organizations focused on any HIV syndemic condition, including (but not limited to) infectious diseases (e.g., syphilis, Mpox, gonorrhea, chlamydia), addiction, housing, mental health, criminal justice, food insecurity, or other structural factors that affect individuals at risk for and living with HIV infection. At least one of the collaborating organizations should be located in an under-resourced area with elevated HIV infection rates (Examples: Alameda, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Sacramento counties, etc.). Applicants will be required to provide data justifying how the selected institution meets these criteria. Applicants will also be required to demonstrate how the community-based organization partners will actively participate in both the capacity building process as well as the Community Focused Capacity Building HIV Policy Research Center Award

generation, conduct, and dissemination of the findings produced by the Center. Applicants will be required to demonstrate how the proposed capacity building activities will contribute to the development and sustainability of a policy research capacity at the non-academic, partnering institution(s). All awarded Centers will be required to work together collaboratively.

7. Available Funding, Anticipated Number of Awards

CHRP receives its funding as part of the University of California's unrestricted general fund revenue from the State of California. For this initiative, CHRP expects to fund one award, with total budgets of up to \$1,000,000. This award is contingent on the availability of funds, and funding allocations may be adjusted based on performance (criteria will be provided in the instructions for the Full Application).

8. Award Duration, Budget, and Requirements

This award will support up to 20 months of related activities. Initial budgets may not exceed \$1,000,000 in total costs (including direct costs and indirect costs up to 35%) over the entire project period. Monies can be unevenly distributed across the project period to adjust for project lifecycle (e.g., lower annual costs in earlier time periods during start-up and planning, and higher annual costs during implementation).

Allowable direct costs include salaries, fringe benefits, supplies, sub-contracts (out-of-state sub-contracts and collaborations are generally not allowed), equipment (defined as any item costing \$5,000 or more), and limited travel (project-related and/or scientific conference travel). The RGPO [Grants Administration Manual](#) outlines all policies and regulations with respect to allowable indirect costs (IDC), which is **capped at 35%**, and other restrictions on use of funds. Some institutions will not accept awards with IDC capped at 35%; PIs may wish to discuss this requirement with their institutions before submitting a full application. Continued funding beyond year one is contingent on progress toward milestones enumerated in the application.

Continued funding beyond year one is contingent on progress toward milestones enumerated in the application. The PI (and Co-PI, if applicable) must commit a minimum of 10%, or 1.2 person-months, of effort to in their project budget(s) per calendar year. Periods of effort without support are allowable for other key personnel, but not for the PI.

9. Prospective Applicant Webinar

Due to the rapid nature of this solicitation no webinar will take place.

10. Applicant Questions

All questions will be due on the date and time listed **on page one** of this RFP. Questions can be emailed directly to the project officer (**Section 14** below). CHRP will collect all submitted questions and post

written responses on our website within one week. Questions or inquires submitted to CHRP after this date will not be answered unless determined vital by CHRP staff and leadership.

11. Submitting a Full Application

RGPO uses [SmartSimple](#), an electronic submission portal, for all official correspondence (e.g., LOI and application submission). PIs are required to register and use their accounts. Full applications must be submitted by the **date stated on page one** of this RFP. Documents providing a comprehensive description of all application sections are found on [SmartSimple](#), as are required templates for certain sections. Proposal narratives should be succinct, self-explanatory, and organized in alignment with the sections outlined below and in supplemental attachments. The full application will include the following sections:

- Scientific Abstract, Lay Abstract, Specific Aims
- Milestones and Timetable
- Demographics of Anticipated Study Volunteers
- Research Plan
- Budget and Justification
- Personnel Table
- Biosketches for all Key Personnel
- Facilities
- Assurances (if applicable: Human Subjects; Vertebrate Animals; Biohazards; DEA Controlled Substance use)

12. Peer Review and Scoring Criteria for Full Applications

All complete applications will be reviewed by a panel which includes (a) persons with lived experience in communities that are highly impacted by HIV in California, and (b) scientists from outside California who are subject matter experts and experienced peer reviewers. Reviewers will receive training and a manual of policies and procedures for application scoring and review before access to the applications is allowed; the manual is available to applicants by request. Current [RGPO policies and procedures](#) concerning confidentiality and conflicts of interest will be observed.

The following scoring criteria will be used to review your proposal:

1. **Capacity Building to Support Rapid Response Research Methods** (50% of total score): Scoring will reflect how the proposed Center outlines, or describes the development of, a robust mechanism to identify, conduct, and disseminate HIV policy research within a rapid (6-month) timeline? What is the approach to develop a structured outlined to keep the Center accountable to capacity building activities as well as the six-month (max) timeframe for policy-specific project development? Will the proposed mechanism outline how the research will have an overall statewide focus and will not focus primarily on a single California jurisdiction or county? Are the proposed methods and or framework appropriate for effectively informing local and State policy?

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2. **Collaboration** (20% of total score): Scoring will reflect how the proposal demonstrate that the community-based organization partners are amenable to the capacity building activities necessary to support the generation, execution, and dissemination of the work produced by the center? Do the proposed collaborations have the potential to contribute to the development and sustainability of policy research capacity at the partnering institutions?
3. **Stakeholder Input and Dissemination Plan** (20% of total score): Scoring will reflect an outline of a robust community/stakeholder engagement plan that will allow for multiple points of engagement during the research process (i.e., idea generation to results dissemination)? How effective will the proposed dissemination plan be for informing policies within California and potentially beyond? Is there a strategy for determining the impacts of the various research outputs?
4. **Expertise and Capacity** (10% of total score): Scoring will demonstrate that the investigators well suited to carry out rapid response HIV policy research? Does the proposed team bring complementary and integrated expertise to the Center? Has the applicant provided sufficient evidence that the participating institutions have the ability to administer the award and the relevant research and dissemination activities?

Reviewers will comment on but not score the following:

- **Budget:** Appropriateness of the budget request for the project.
- **Inclusion of Women, Minorities and Children in Research:** If human subjects are involved, the adequacy of plans to include subjects of all genders, all racial and ethnic groups (and subgroups) and children as appropriate for the scientific goals of the research will be assessed.
- **Protection of Human Subjects from Research Risk:** Appropriateness of protections from research risk relating to human subjects participation in the proposed research.
- **Sex as a Biological Variable (SABV):** Both sex and gender and their interactions can influence clinical characteristics, as well as health and disease outcomes. CHRP requires all proposals in all areas of study to account for sex as a biological variable in the Research Plan. CHRP policy is based on current [NIH Policy](#) but goes further, to include exogenous and endogenous sex hormones, and research using cell lines. Applicants are expected to explain how relevant biological variables, such as sex at birth and exogenous sex hormone levels, are factored into research designs and analyses for studies in cell lines, vertebrate animals, and humans. Applicants should demonstrate inclusion of SABV in the literature review, study sample (cells, animals, humans), data collection strategy, data analysis, and reporting plan.

Reviewers will assign component scores for each criteria listed reflecting the relative scientific merit of the proposal sections. RGPO generally adheres to NIH scoring methods. Each criterion will receive a score of between 1 and 9 corresponding to the table below. Final scores will be ranked, and the most meritorious by score will be advanced for review and approval by CHRP’s Advisory Council for funding consideration. CHRP is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion as a means of increasing the effectiveness of its grantmaking and generating new knowledge that benefits all Californians. Final funding decisions may take into account these and other programmatic priorities.

Score values correspond to the following descriptors.

Score	Descriptor	Strengths/Weaknesses
1	Exceptional	Extremely strong with essentially no weaknesses

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2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
5	Good	Strong with at least one moderate weakness
6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
8	Marginal	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
9	Poor	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness

13. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Supplements

All projects selected for funding under this RFP will be encouraged to apply for an additional \$10,000 in supplemental funds to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the pipeline of future investigators in HIV research. These supplemental funds are intended to partially support the scientific contributions of students or trainees (high school, undergraduate, graduate/clinical, post-doctoral) from sociodemographic groups that are underrepresented among health researchers, or with lived experience in a community with elevated HIV incidence in California, to the funded project. PI should consider all trainees who will promote diversity in HIV research, including trainees from diverse socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, sexual orientation, ability/disability, linguistic, and geographic backgrounds who would otherwise not be adequately represented in their field, trainees who are from underserved communities, and trainees who have demonstrated commitment to diversity efforts. More details will be provided to PIs with applications that are selected for funding.

14. How to Get Help

For scientific questions regarding application preparation or guidance regarding the suitability of a proposed project, contact Rhodri Dierst-Davies at Rhodri.Dierst-Davies@ucop.edu.

For general questions regarding the electronic submission of an LOI or application, including using SmartSimple, please contact the Research Grants Program Office, Contracts and Grants Unit at RGPOGrants@ucop.edu.



APPENDIX: Standard Policies and Procedures for all CHRP RFPs

A. RGPO Award Pre-Funding Requirements Policy

Following notification by RGPO of an offer of funding, the PI and applicant organization must accept and satisfy standard RGPO pre-funding requirements in a timely manner. Common pre-funding requirements include:

- Supplying approved indirect (F&A) rate agreements as of the grant's start date and any derived budget calculations.
- Supplying current “other support” documents for review by the Program Officer to rule out scientific, budgetary, and commitment overlap; and resolving any issues raised.
- Supplying any missing application forms or materials, including detailed budgets and justifications for any subcontract(s).
- IRB or IACU applications or approvals pertaining to the award.
- Resolution of any scientific overlap issues with other grants or pending applications.
- Resolution of any Review Committee and Program recommendations, including specific aims, award budget, or duration.
- Modify the title and lay abstract, if requested.

B. Stipulations

Funding: Awards are contingent upon availability of funding, as well as compliance with all research and reporting requirements. Grantees will be subject to funding renewal on an annual basis. The number of awards made will depend on the number and quality of applications received.

Human or animal subjects: Approvals or exemptions for the use of human or animal subjects are not required before the time of LOI or full application submission or review but will be required before any funded work with such subjects commences. Principal Investigators are encouraged to apply to the appropriate board or committee as soon as possible after submitting a proposal to expedite the start of the project.

Grants management procedures and policies: Details concerning the requirements for grant recipients are available in the latest version of the [Grants Administration Manual](#).

Application and award confidentiality: CHRP maintains confidentiality for all submitted applications with respect to the identity of applicants and applicant organizations, all contents of every application, and the outcome of reviews. For those applications that are funded, CHRP makes public: (i) the project title, Principal Investigator(s), the name of the organization, and award amount; (ii) direct and indirect costs in CHRP's annual report, (iii) the project abstract on the CHRP website. If the Program receives a request for additional information on a funded grant, the Principal Investigator and institution will be notified prior to the Program's response to the request. Any sensitive or proprietary intellectual property in a grant will be redacted and approved by the PI(s) and institution prior to release of the requested information. No information will be released without prior approval from the PI for any application that is not funded.

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Publications acknowledgement: All scientific publications and other products from any RGPO-funded research project must acknowledge the funding support from UC Office of the President, with reference to the program (CHRP) and the assigned grant ID number.

Open access: The University Office of the President is committed to disseminating research as widely as possible to promote the public benefit. All publications based on funding received from RGPO are subject to the [University's Open Access Policy](#). To assist RGPO in dissemination and archiving, the grantee institution will deposit an electronic copy of all publications in the [UC Publication Management System](#), UC's open access repository, promptly after publication. Notwithstanding the above, this policy does not in any way prescribe or limit the venue of publication. This policy does not transfer copyright ownership, which remains with the author(s) or copyright owners.

Appeals of review decisions: Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the CHRP Director and are subject to oversight from the CHRP Advisory Council and the Research Grants Program Office. Declined proposals may be submitted to future competitions without prejudice. An appeal regarding the funding decision of a grant application may be made only on the basis of an alleged error in, or deviation from, a stated procedure (e.g., undeclared reviewer conflict of interest or mishandling of an application). The period open for the appeal process is within 30 days of receipt of the application evaluation from the Program. Before submitting appeals, applicants are encouraged to talk about their concerns informally with the appropriate Program Officer or the Program Director. Final decisions on application funding appeals will be made by the Vice President of Research and Graduate Studies, University of California, Office of the President. The full appeals policy can be found in the [Grants Administration Manual](#).