North Carolina TraCS Institute Pilot Grant Program
Health Research Stakeholder Engagement $2K Pilot Voucher Guidelines

Purpose
The North Carolina Translational and Clinical Sciences Institute (NC TraCS) is the academic home of the National Institute of Health, Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA). NC TraCS provides vouchers in the amount of $2,000 to assist clinical and translational researchers in implementing a proposed study of moving a research project forward by providing rapid access to funds that will support almost any aspect of promising and innovative research.

Translational researchers who seek to employ community engagement strategies in their research may use these funds to compensate health research stakeholders for their time in collaborating on translational research studies as well as to cover other costs associated with stakeholder engagement. Investigators may utilize the funds to compensate health research stakeholders whom NC TraCS has prepared for research collaboration or other health research stakeholders whom they have identified. Financial administration of the Health Research Stakeholder Engagement $2K voucher may be handled by the researcher’s department or by NC TraCS. Community and Stakeholder Engagement staff can help applicants determine the most feasible option. Organizational and individual stakeholders will invoice the department or NC TraCS for the agreed upon compensation.

With the goal of facilitating health research stakeholder contributions to the design, implementation, dissemination, and evaluation of translational research, health research stakeholders may be compensated for a variety of activities, including the development, review, and dissemination of research materials and the design of recruitment and retention strategies for populations underrepresented in health research.

This article is a useful reference titled “Recommendations for Planning Pilot Studies in Clinical and Translational Research.”

Please note that PIs are not able to apply for a $2K health research stakeholder pilot voucher and the $2K pilot grant program for the same project at the same time.

Eligibility
Eligible to apply as principal investigators (PIs) are:

- UNC-Chapel Hill faculty, post-doctoral fellows, and doctoral students. Doctoral students applying for the $2K voucher are required to have a faculty mentor who will complete the Mentor Responsibility Agreement.
- Faculty members of external NC TraCS Institute-affiliated institutions.

Co-PIs are allowed, although one person must be identified as the main contact with primary responsibility for the research project and disposition of data obtained. SPA and EHRA non-faculty are not eligible to apply.

All PIs and Co-Investigators must be members of NC TraCS Institute. There is no fee to join. See www.tracs.unc.edu for instructions on how to become a member.
Required Consultation
A consultation with the NC TraCS Community and Stakeholder Engagement Program to help you refine your application is required before submitting. During this consultation, Community and Stakeholder Engagement program staff can help applicants gauge the appropriateness of a proposal and budget.

NC Health Priorities
Priority will be given by reviewers to proposals that address the following NC Health Priorities:
Cancer
Cardiovascular disease / Hypertension
Chronic disease management
Diabetes
Healthcare access
Mental health
Nutrition / Obesity
Oral health
Physical activity
Substance abuse

Funding
Each award will provide a $2,000 voucher to cover costs associated with health research stakeholder collaborations with researchers in proposal development, intervention tailoring and design, research implementation, as well as post-award dissemination of results. Grant budgets are to cover expenditures with 12 months, and the expectation is that all funds will be expended by the end of the grant period. TraCS Community and Stakeholder Engagement program staff will work closely with investigators throughout the grant period to monitor progress and, where necessary, provide mentoring. Completion of the 12-month evaluation questionnaire and participation in other ongoing Community and Stakeholder Engagement program evaluation activities is required. TraCS will expect the PI to provide a final report on the outcomes of the $2K voucher and whether or not the $2K voucher contributed to new external funding.

Full protocol and IRB submission are not required for proposals that are for grant preparation and dissemination of results. Proof of IRB approval will be required for proposals for health research stakeholder engagement activities to be conducted while participants are actively enrolled.

Review criteria
A review committee will examine each proposal for health research stakeholder engagement significance, soundness of stakeholder engagement methods, translational attributes, and the potential for future external funding. If re-submitting a proposal previously submitted to NC TraCS, please provide a summary detailing amendments and improvements to the original proposal. Applicants are limited to one re-submission per proposal, unless the investigator has utilized TraCS resources to substantially amend and improve the proposal as certified by a TraCS Research Navigator.

Application procedure
Application deadlines are monthly. The application is available to complete online here. Notification of awards will be made generally within 5 weeks of the due date. Every applicant will be notified by email whether or not their application is selected for funding.

Tips for writing a successful application
1. The “Study Methods” section (500 words) corresponds to the Approach section of an NIH application. Describe with as much detail as necessary the research design for which you seek health research stakeholder engagement. The reviewers are drawn from a wide range of scientific disciplines. Therefore,
avoid (or define) technical jargon or specialized abbreviations or acronyms. Pitch your narrative toward a more general audience than you might for an NIH Study Section.

2. In the “Role of community stakeholders in your study” section describe what you seek to gain from your proposed health research stakeholder engagement strategies and how health research stakeholder engagement will improve the application or project. Address timelines and feasibility. You may be confident that you can complete your work within 12 months, but the reviewers don’t know that. Address how long it will take to plan to implement your health research stakeholder engagement plan and follow up activities.

3. The maximum allowable voucher is $2,000, to be expended over a maximum of 12 months. If your health research stakeholder engagement plan requires more than this amount, describe a specific source for the extra funds.

4. Please remember that this is a Pilot award. It is very important to describe where this work is going. Assuming the work is successfully completed, what is the next step? An external grant application? Questions concerning applications may be submitted by investigators via email to the NC TraCS Community and Stakeholder Engagement Program at: engagement.nctracs@unc.edu.