

Minnesota Population Center (MPC) Proposal Development Mentorship Grants

MPC invites applications for Proposal Development Mentorship Grants. The purpose of these grants is to maximize the competitiveness of MPC members' proposals for external research funding. Unlike the Seed Grants that we have awarded in the past, Proposal Development Mentorship Grants require that investigators work closely with other MPC affiliates to maximize the probability that projects earn external funding. We aim to encourage the submission (and resubmission upon rejection) of high quality, fundable, multi-disciplinary population¹ research proposals at the University of Minnesota.

Recipients of MPC Proposal Development Mentorship Grants will be awarded \$10,000 in research funds after successfully completing (1) a formal internal mock proposal review four months in advance of their agency or foundation deadline (2) a formal external mock review three months prior to their agency or foundation deadline, and (3) submission of the proposal via MPC to the external agency or foundation.² The purpose of the cash portion of the Proposal Development Mentorship Grant is to support the primary investigator(s) in pilot work that will either (1) strengthen unfunded proposals to be revised and resubmitted in the following funding cycle³ or (2) supplement research funds derived from funded proposals. Pilot funds may be used, for example, to carry out preliminary analysis or feasibility studies, to begin data collection, or to test instruments. The pilot funds will not be awarded unless applicants fully participate in both the internal and external mock reviews; proposals will only be submitted for external mock review upon the approval of the internal mock review committee.

MPC expects to make two or three Proposal Development Mentorship Grant awards per year. Applications are accepted at any time but *must be submitted at least six months prior to the external funder's proposal submission deadline*.

Eligibility

All MPC faculty affiliates, MPC-affiliated research associates, and MPC-affiliated post-doctoral researchers are eligible to apply. Faculty researchers who are *not* currently affiliated with MPC can request affiliation (and thus become eligible to apply) by contacting mpc@umn.edu

Submission Instructions

MPC Proposal Development Mentorship Grant applications must be sent to the MPC Proposal Development Mentorship Grants Committee six months prior to the external funder's proposal submission deadline.

Completed MPC Proposal Development Grant applications must include:

1. A four-page overview of the research to be proposed for external funding, including:
 - Project title
 - Executive summary/abstract (less than 250 words)
 - Specific aims or research questions
 - A statement regarding the *significance* of the research to be proposed
 - A brief discussion of *likely methods and data* to be used in the research plan
 - The name of the agency or foundation to which the proposal will be submitted, the competition title and/or number and the submission deadline for which the proposal will be submitted
2. Two pages of references that will be cited in proposal
3. A two-page curriculum vitae
4. Two to five suggested external (not at the University of Minnesota) mock reviewers

Proposal Development Mentorship Grant Requirements

Approved applicants will work with MPC Administrative and Program Development Core staff to draft a complete, polished external grant proposal four months prior to their agency or foundation deadline. MPC staff will provide assistance with creating biographical sketches and other necessary forms; budget preparation; proposal formatting and copy editing; and arranging formal internal and external mock proposal reviews.

Four months prior to the agency or foundation submission deadline, proposals will be assigned to two internal reviewers who will utilize funding agency criteria and review forms to evaluate and comment on the proposal. Internal reviewers may include MPC members who have had success in obtaining funding for their own research and/or who have participated in relevant review panels. Written reviews will be provided to the applicant within two weeks. At this point, internal mock reviewers may recommend (1) that the proposal be subjected to external mock review upon revisions or (2) that the proposal be designated as not ready for external review. In the latter case, the applicant will be encouraged to postpone submission until the next funding cycle to allow sufficient time for major revisions.

Two months prior to the agency or foundation submission deadline, proposals recommended for external mock review will be assigned to at least one external reviewer. The external reviewer will be instructed to utilize funding agency criteria and review forms to score and provide a written review within one month. External reviewers will include content experts, preferably those who have recently rotated off the review panel to which the proposal will be submitted. External reviewers will be paid (\$500) for their participation.

Applicants will then have approximately three weeks to incorporate external reviewers' comments in time for the University of Minnesota's Sponsored Projects Administration proposal deadline; depending upon the outcome of the external mock review, applicants may instead opt to hold off until the next funding cycle.

After applications have participated in the internal mock review and the external mock review and have submitted their proposal to an external agency or foundation, \$10,000 in pilot funds will be deposited in an MPC-administered account in the applicant's name. Except in unusual circumstances, applicants will only be awarded the \$10,000 if the proposal for external funding is administratively routed through the MPC.

Note: In exceptional cases, and upon request, the MPC Proposal Development Mentorship Grants Committee may award small sums (perhaps \$2,000 to \$3,000) to applicants for expenses necessary for initial proposal development (e.g., data acquisition, pilot work, statistical consulting). Applicants needing such funds should request them at the time of their initial application.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications for MPC Proposal Development Mentorship Grants will be evaluated by the MPC Proposal Development Mentorship Grants Committee based on the proposed research project's likelihood of leading to externally funded population research. Priority will be given in descending order to (1) junior researchers; (2) senior researchers who are developing new lines of investigation; and (3) other applicants seeking funding from the National Institutes of Health, other federal agencies, or major foundations.

Deadline

The MPC expects to make two or three awards per year. Applications are accepted at any time but must be submitted at least six months prior to the external funding agency's proposal deadline.

¹ Consistent with the mission of the Demographic and Behavioral Sciences (DBS) Branch of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), we define "population research" as demographic, behavioral, and social sciences research on fertility, families, population movement, morbidity and mortality, HIV/AIDS, and population composition.

² Recipients of MPC Proposal Development Grants will also receive administrative assistance in preparing their proposal for submission to the agency or foundation.

³ In 2010, 85% of all NICHD R01 proposal submissions were rejected. Just 14% of all NIH research project grants original submissions were funded, while 35% of first resubmissions and 45% second resubmissions were funded. http://report.nih.gov/success_rates/index.aspx