# Reducing Social Disparities

# Request for Proposals

The Social Science Research Institute (SSRI) invites proposals for pilot research projects that address SSRI’s strategic aim of *Reducing Social Disparities*. This RFP is motivated by evidence of increasing inequities in health and health care, education and employment opportunities, poverty and economic well-being, exposure to adverse environments and other domains of life. Often such disparities are associated with race/ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, young and old age, place of residence, and other factors that shape opportunities and life chances and that can intersect in detrimental ways. A key step is to identify pathways to resilience in the face of challenge. We seek proposals for novel research by new interdisciplinary teams that focus on the causes and consequences of social disparities and/or the development of policies, programs and practices for building resilience and for remediating the negative impacts of disparities across people and places.

We will prioritize applications that:

* Propose novel research, including high-risk, high-reward and transformative, proof-of-concept projects that assemble or generate preliminary data necessary for external funding;
* Develop collaborations involving interdisciplinary teams of junior and senior faculty.

# Eligibility

This mechanism is primarily designed to assist Penn State social/behavioral science faculty to advance programs of research that can address social disparities by securing extramural funding. Although research teams can include students, post docs, faculty from other institutions and other external collaborators, our intent is to support interdisciplinary teams involving Penn State's faculty. For this reason, team leaders should be tenure track or research faculty with continuing appointments. Single investigator proposals will not be considered. Investigators may be PI or MPI on only one proposal; however, investigators may serve as a collaborator on up to two proposals.

**Timeline**

November 3, 2020: Call for proposals released

January 18, 2021: Proposals due by 5pm Eastern Time

February 15, 2021: Funding decisions announced

# Proposal Guidelines

This funding mechanism is designed to support research projects with specific research questions, a well-conceived theoretical basis, an identified team of Penn State faculty collaborators, and the potential to gain external funding.

* Awards are between $20,000 and $50,000
* Members of SSRI’s Steering Committee and relevant college Associate Deans will provide reviews
* Funds are allocated for a 12-24 month period

**Support will be provided for:**

* Innovative interdisciplinary research and integrated research-outreach projects that involve collaborations among Penn State faculty
* Travel, consultants, graduate student time, or hourly support of activities
	+ **Note:** special guidelines for international travel
		- Funds will be provided for only one investigator
		- Funds will not be provided for graduate student travel
		- Proposals must include a letter of support from the international collaborator(s) outlining his/her role in the project
* PI salary of up to $7,500 (replacement cost for one course buyout or equivalent in consultation with the department head in the semester of proposal writing/submission)

**Funds are NOT intended to support:**

* Student (masters, dissertation research) or post-doctoral projects
* Projects of individual faculty members or on-going research
* Delivery of outreach programs or services
* Funding for activities supported by departments and colleges (travel to conferences, computer or software purchase unless specific to the proposed study, etc.)
* Summer salary
* Projects involving a Penn State faculty member and external collaborators only; our goal is to build and support Penn State teams
* Publication costs
* Graduate student tuition

**Criteria for Review**

NIH funding criteria will be used to evaluate proposals including as follows:

* Novel research with potential for impact
* Clear contribution to social/behavioral science
* Well-articulated aims and rigorous and reliable methods
* Teams comprised of investigators with relevant expertise who range in seniority and disciplinary backgrounds
* Potential to lead to a proposal for external funding and a timeline for its submission, including evidence of interest by potential funding sources
* For human subjects research, proposals must provide strong evidence for access to the population of interest; for secondary analyses, proposals must describe dataset availability
* Investigators are expected to prepare and submit the appropriate requests for IRB approval.

**Structure and Submission of Proposals**

Proposals should be single-spaced, in Times New Roman font size no smaller than 12-point type, left-aligned with one-inch margins (see Proposal Submission Form below). Please include a NIH or NSF biosketch for each investigator. Your proposal should be sent as **one** document, including letters of support and biosketches to ssri-seed-grant@psu.edu.  To complete your proposal submission, please download, complete, and email the [Proposal Submission Form](http://www.ssri.psu.edu/sites/ssri/files/Level_%202_Proposal_Submission_Form.doc) (also included below).

**Other issues to consider as you prepare your proposal**

* Consult with SSRI Associate Director Leif Jensen about your project as needed.
* Talk with any of the SSRI unit directors (e.g., Geographic Information Analysis (GIA), Survey Research Center (SRC), Social, Life, and Engineering Sciences Imaging Center (SLEIC), and Methodological Consulting Center) about how you might use the expertise of their units to enhance your research
* If you need time and funding to network, organize your team or further develop your research ideas, consider applying for a SSRI Level 1 project at <https://ssri.psu.edu/node/66>.

**Project Reports**

Funded investigators are required to provide an annual project status update and a brief (one page) final report upon completing the project. These materials allow us to track and report outcomes as well as monitor the success of our seed grant program.

If you need to make changes to the project team, description, design, or budget during the course of your projects, please send a request to ssri-seed-grant@psu.edu with the specific details of these changes.

**Questions?**

**Contact** Leif Jensen Ph.D., Associate Director, Social Science Research Institute and Distinguished Professor of Rural Sociology and Demography