

HEI RFA 23-2: Assessing Changes in Exposures and Health Outcomes in Historically Marginalized and Environmentally Overburdened Communities from Air Quality Actions, Programs, and Other Interventions

This file includes answers to questions posed by participants of the applicant informational webinar held August 14, 2023. If you do not find an answer to your question here, you can consult our [frequently asked questions page](#) or email Dr. Anna Rosofsky at arosofsky@healtheffects.org for more information.

Eligibility and Review Process

Can an incoming new assistant professor apply?	Yes, an incoming new assistant professor can apply.
If we work for a regulatory governmental agency but our unit is non-regulatory, would we still be ineligible to apply?	As a non-regulatory body, you cannot apply as a Principal Investigator (PI), but you can be a member of the research team.
Are multiple PIs allowed on one project?	HEI encourages one PI per project, but multiple PIs are allowed when there is proper justification provided.
Can there be collaboration with researchers outside the US?	Collaborators can be outside of the US if they are relevant to your project, but the focus of this RFA is US-based study populations and actions.
Can the institution of the PI be international, and is there any requirement on the eligibility of PI in terms of citizenship and residency status?	Yes, the institution and the residency or citizenship status of the PI can be based outside of the US. The action to be assessed and the study population and reference or control populations must be US-based.
Can public agencies or special districts apply for this if they are already doing some of this work in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)?	HEI does not want to replicate work that is already underway. Non-regulatory government agencies can apply as part of a research team. Please note that EPA is a sponsor of HEI and that HEI prohibits individuals from sponsor agencies or organizations from being formal members of research teams to maintain independence between HEI sponsors and the research that HEI funds.
Are consulting companies eligible to participate in this RFA?	Consulting companies are eligible to participate in this RFA as part of the research team, but not as the PI.
Who will comprise the reviewer panel?	The Oversight Panel reviews preliminary and full applications and provides funding recommendations to the HEI Board of Directors.

How many proposals do you plan to select for developing full proposals, and will proposals be selected to balance the geographical coverage of the different studies?	A maximum of 10 proposals from the preliminary stage will be invited to move to the full application stage. The Panel judges each application based on its own merit, not the geographic coverage of the studies taken together.
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Budget

Can you provide a budget template?	There is no budget template for the preliminary application, but a template is provided for the full application if you are selected to continue to that stage.
Is \$2-\$3 million for each research team, or is it shared by all research teams?	That is the amount to be shared across all teams. The maximum study budget is \$800,000.
Are funds for the purchase of equipment included in these projects? And are purchases of data and software allowed?	Yes, purchase of new equipment can be included as part of your budget, and yes, those other purchases are allowed. The instructions for the budget and application can be found at https://www.healtheffects.org/research/funding/application-instructions .

RFA Scope

Is community engagement required?	Community engagement is not a required component of this RFA. Community engagement has many different meanings, can be conducted through a variety of actions to broaden the impact of studies, and benefit the communities involved.
Do community partners who are part of the research team need biosketches?	For the full application stage, all key investigators, including community partners if they are a key part of the research team, should provide information about their relevant background or expertise. We recommend that co-investigators from academia submit a biosketch using the provided form or similar. Please note that, in the preliminary application stage, a Letter of Collaboration is expected if a community partner is part of your team.
What are common (or expected) community partners?	Any community partners that are applicable to your project are acceptable. See "Box 1" on page 7 of the RFA for examples of community stakeholders.
Do you have a definition of underrepresented communities?	The RFA does not have a specific definition of underrepresented communities. Please see page 4 of the RFA for study population definitions.
For the study population, will the application be competitive if it is very locally focused?	Yes, different geographic scales are acceptable and competitive. Please note that the proposal must demonstrate power to detect changes in the outcome being assessed (e.g., health, air quality).

Can we focus on one specific population (e.g., Tribal), or do you want to see a broader population (e.g., all Communities of Color)?	Yes, you can focus on one specific population. Please note that the RFA asks for translatability of your research to other communities.
For studies in marginalized communities, do the study results need to be broadly generalizable, or is a study that is very community-specific acceptable?	Although the results do not need to be broadly generalizable, applicants should describe how the study methods and results can be translatable to other communities.
What is meant by a control/reference group?	For the purposes of this RFA, a reference or control group is the comparison population that is not expected to experience changes in air quality or exposures from the action. Not all study designs will merit a reference or control population.
Regarding statistical power, you did not reference changes in ambient concentration. Do we have to address exposure, or can we address ambient?	This RFA seeks studies that assess changes in air quality (i.e., concentrations of chemicals in ambient indoor or ambient outdoor air), exposure, health outcomes, or all the above in historically marginalized communities. Power calculations are expected for ambient concentration.
What is the expectation of follow-up, if any, in the policy front (e.g., dissemination) once the accountability report is published?	For studies meeting any of the four objectives, HEI asks for a Research Translation Plan in the full application stage for providing education and outreach to various sectors, such as community members and policymakers. Please see the RFA for specific instructions about the plan. For studies evaluating proposed actions, applicants should describe how the results will be integrated into development and implementation of the action being studied. They also may describe plans to leverage alternative funding to follow up on the action being evaluated.
Is there a preference for studies that quantify human health outcomes, or are studies that measure impacts on emissions or air quality in or near EJ communities equally acceptable?	They are all equally acceptable. There is not a preference for human health outcomes.
For proposed action proposals, do those actions have to have been proposed by a regulatory agency, or can they be of the investigators' design?	Proposed actions should be under consideration by policymaking or regulatory agencies, or similar. Proposed actions of the investigator's design or discussed or recommended in the scientific literature but that are not under consideration as part of an action to be implemented are not considered responsive.

Would analysis of impact of actions on reducing disparities be restricted to specific time frames (immediate vs long term), or can contexts be defined as the researchers see fit?	The RFA does not specify a timeframe for the action.
Do you prefer the evaluation of one policy or multiple policies?	There is no preference. However, the applicant should ensure that the proposal is not overly ambitious and that the methods allow for a link between changes in air quality, exposure, or health outcome to the specific action being assessed. Please see literature that discusses the chain of accountability for more information.
For proposal of past or current actions, programs, or other interventions, will these be judged on how new or novel the interventions are and existing weight of evidence?	The proposed study should provide valuable insight to inform future actions or improvements to current actions. If the action has been extensively studied in the scientific literature, the proposal should clearly describe the new or novel information that the results would provide.
Can exposure scenarios include exposure to ambient air pollution in an indoor environment?	Proposals evaluating actions aimed at reducing ambient air pollution in the indoor environment are responsive.

Data Collection Methods

What qualifies as standardized vs. non-standardized measurement methods?	Standardized methods are those for which high-quality air measurement standard operating procedures (SOPs) exist, such as those recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency . We recommend that investigators use standard methods and procedures when they exist and are applicable. Proposed use of other methods and procedures should be justified. In case SOPs do not exist, they should be developed by individuals who are knowledgeable of the specific procedures. SOPs will describe what, when, where, how, and why in a stepwise manner. They will be sufficiently complete and detailed to ensure that the data collected are of appropriate quality.
Is Google Streetcar air quality monitoring a standard measure?	Please see the link above or literature comparing Google Streetcar air quality monitoring to gold standard measurement methods to determine its quality.
Can we use publicly available sources rather than gathering the data ourselves?	Applicants may use publicly available data.

Are models that integrate Google data, saturation monitoring data, and government regulatory monitoring data acceptable?	This RFA is open to all those approaches, with justification if needed (please see standardized vs. non-standardized measurement methods).
Can we use data from Purple Air monitors or diesel particulate matter (DPM) measurements by aethalometer for the study?	Yes, applicants can use data from Purple Air monitors or DPM measurements. If the data are not collected using standardized sampling methods, applicants should compare those methods to standardized ones.
Is there encouragement to use low-cost sensors?	HEI does not specify or favor specific data collection mechanisms. The sampling approach should be justified in the application and be designed to meet the objectives of the proposal.

Past and Future RFAs

Have you had a previous RFAs that targeted the impacts of real or proposed interventions in disadvantaged groups before?	HEI has not previously released RFAs about this specific topic. However, previous studies and studies currently underway assess interventions in these communities as part of broader research aims.
Is this a one-time RFP, or do you anticipate future cycles?	At this time, we do not know whether we will release future cycles of environmental justice accountability RFAs. The EJ Program plans to release a separate, community driven RFA in early 2024.
What is the best way to see previously funded studies by HEI, especially those that look at impacts of interventions?	Previously funded accountability studies by HEI can be found at https://www.healtheffects.org/accountability/research-program . Other ongoing research funded by HEI can be found at https://www.healtheffects.org/research/ongoing-research .
Do you have a similar call that would fund similar proposals in Sub Saharan Africa?	HEI does not currently have similar RFAs for populations in Sub Saharan Africa. HEI does have a Global Health program and is in the process of developing a new five-year strategic plan that might result in similar RFAs for studies outside of the US in the future.

Miscellaneous

Can you suggest any organization who would like community youth involvement?	This question is outside of the scope of this webinar, but you can email Dr. Rosofsky (arosofsky@healtheffects.org) to discuss useful resources.
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