Call for Proposals
Bloomberg American Health Initiative: Spark Awards
January 2017

Overview

The Bloomberg American Health Initiative will support faculty research every year, with work in each of the five focus areas eligible for funding: addiction and overdose, environmental challenges, obesity and the food system, risks to adolescent health, and violence. One of the mechanisms for this support will be Spark Awards.

Spark Awards are intended to support innovative research projects to advance knowledge in the five BAHI focus areas while providing the foundation for future work (i.e., the award will provide a “spark” for pursuing future research, policy, or practice).

A total of $150,000 is available for Spark Awards in the initial round this year. It is anticipated this funding will support up to four Spark awards, each no more than $75,000, led by faculty with primary faculty appointments in the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Information on this solicitation and Spark awards can be found below. You can find more information on the BAHI initiative and the challenges within the focus areas here: http://jhsph.edu/BAHI.

What are Spark Awards?

Spark awards are one-year awards intended to provide seed funding for research projects that would benefit from an early investment in a pilot phase, such as data collection that complements an existing project; the development of analytic strategies, methods, or model interventions; a first-stage evaluation of a promising intervention; or pilot work that would inform the formulation or implementation of policies.

Funds can be used to support salary, student stipend, or research expenses to work with external colleagues, as well as travel costs, equipment upgrades, or other resources that will help the ultimate success of a more extensive project. Awards can also be used to help build or support collaborations with public or private agencies engaged with work in the focus areas.

Spark awards are limited to requests for up to $75,000; projects that require less funding commensurate with scope are welcomed. The expense of selected applications will determine the number of projects that can be funded. Awards are for one year and will begin May 30, 2017. A six month progress report will be due November 30, 2017 and a final report will be required by July 15, 2018.
Prior to initiating the award, there will be a written agreement required of the principal investigator that reflects an understanding of the project period and reporting requirements. As a result, applicants are urged to consider the practicalities of implementing the proposed project within this timeframe and tailor aims accordingly.

**How should the project be related to the focus areas of the Bloomberg American Health Initiative?**

Applications should detail how the proposed project will advance understanding in one or more of the five focus areas, including potential relevance to policy and practice. Applications should also explain how those findings, data or insights will benefit larger projects that will seek external funding. The proposed work should be put in context of the current or expected state of the field.

There are few constraints regarding the scope or nature of the work that may be funded during this initial round of applications. For example, projects could:

- apply new assays to previously collected samples;
- serve as supplements to existing funded projects that would allow collection of new information;
- support an approach to modeling that could be built out to scale with additional external support;
- collect data or demonstrate the feasibility of an intervention or the feasibility of a policy or program evaluation with a community partner;
- begin to explore the implementation of a law that was recently passed;
- develop proof of concept evidence for a new method or data infrastructure useful to the focus areas; or
- demonstrate the utility of a laboratory-based approach for understanding specific health threats in the focus areas.

Although the BAHI focus is on research conducted domestically, methods, policies, or programs that have been developed in an international context but which can now be applied within the U.S. are also welcome.

Proposals are welcomed that involve direct engagement with the end-users of the research, including but not limited to policymakers, health department officials, advocates, and organizational leaders.

**Who can apply?**

All professorial and scientist track faculty members of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health are eligible to serve as principal investigator. Applications submitted by scientist track faculty should include a brief supportive letter from the Department Chair.
Applications from faculty members whose work is not currently focused on one of the five BAHI focus areas are encouraged so that new perspectives and disciplines can be brought to these topics.

How do I apply?

A brief email noting the intent to apply and the focus area of the application should be sent to BAHIresearch@jhu.edu by March 1, 2017. In return, applicants will be directed to a website to upload applications.

The application deadline is March 15, 2017 at 5 pm. Awards will begin May 30, 2017.

What is the application format?

The body of the application can be no longer than six single-spaced pages and must contain the following sections:

1. Introduction, including relevance to BAHI focus area
2. Specific aims
3. Methods
4. Significance
5. Relevant preliminary data or information

The significance section should include how this work will serve to move the field forward, its potential relevance to policy and practice, and how it will benefit subsequent applications for external funding.

If your proposal includes collaborators external to the School, provide information regarding that relationship in the Methods section.

The application should also include (Items 6-9 are not included in the six page limit):

6. An NIH-format biographical sketch for all involved faculty.
7. A proposed budget and justification, including justification for the specific personnel involved.
8. Other support page (including pending applications) for the principal investigator. If the proposal is part of a larger grant, there should be a clear explanation of the larger grant and how this proposal fits into it and does not duplicate the existing award.
9. Figures and references as appropriate.
In writing your application, don’t try to collapse description of an R01 into 6 pages. Avoid jargon. Instead, target your application to a broader audience than your specific field so that reviewers from different disciplines can understand what you plan to do and why.

**How will award decisions be made?**

Applications will be judged on relevance of the proposal to one of the five BAHI focus areas in the United States, research approach and innovation, qualifications of the applicant and collaborators to conduct the research, budget, likelihood of future external support in this area as a result of the project, and the potential for relevance to policy and practice. **Priority will be given to applications that are most likely to yield high-quality data, insight, or collaborations that can lead to public health progress and equity in the BAHI focus areas.**

Proposals will initially undergo a review for alignment and relevance to the BAHI topics and goals. **Proposals that are selected to move forward will then be reviewed for scientific merit by a committee comprised of faculty experts convened by the Vice Dean for Research & Faculty and BAHI leadership.**