

Funding Opportunities for SPH Faculty – Spring 2024

idea hub at the Boston University School of Public Health is dedicated to creating an innovative space to meet our core purpose to Think. Teach. Do. for the health of all. This RFA includes multiple funding opportunities to support the varied needs of faculty members and early career researchers at SPH. These opportunities are available thanks to generous donations to the school. For all awards, priority will be given to applications that align with our strategic directions, as articulated on our [strategy map](#).

I. PRE-DOCTORAL AND POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCH AWARDS

SPH Pre-doctoral Research Ignition Award. The SPH Research Committee is seeking applications for SPH Pre-doctoral Research Ignition Awards from students enrolled in our PhD or DrPH programs. These awards are intended to provide resources to doctoral students so that they may advance their own research initiatives that are not already funded via other mechanisms, creating an opportunity to advance innovative ideas in ways that would not otherwise be possible. The awards may be used for the collection of preliminary data, equipment, supplies, and/or research support personnel. The expectation is that the funded project will be presented at a professional meeting or conference and result in a publication, and though not a requirement, projects intended to support the development of a dissertation award are encouraged. Applicants are expected to work closely with their faculty mentor during all stages of the process (ie application, research compliance, conducting project, presenting and publishing results). The maximum award amount per recipient is \$2,000 and the award period is one year. There is a limit of one award per student.

SPH Post-doctoral Research Ignition Award. The SPH Research Committee is seeking applications for SPH Post-doctoral Research Ignition Awards from post-doctoral associates at SPH. These awards are intended to provide resources to these early career researchers so that they may advance their own innovative research initiatives, supporting preliminary research activities that will lead to the submission of a competitive grant application. The awards may be used for the collection of preliminary data, equipment, supplies, and/or research support personnel. Applicants are expected to work closely with their faculty mentor during all stages of the process (ie pilot application, research compliance, conducting project, grant application). The maximum award amount per recipient is \$5,000 and the award period is one year.

SUBMISSION DETAILS FOR IGNITION AWARD APPLICATIONS: The spring 2024 submission deadline is March 1, 2024. Applications can be submitted to [Mike McClean](#) (Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Advancement) and will be reviewed by the SPH Research and Faculty Advancement Committee. In this competitive process, the review committee acts in an advisory capacity to the Dean, who serves as the final step in the approval process. Applications must include:

- a cover sheet that includes the project title, the PI and faculty mentor, additional investigators (with their affiliations), and a brief abstract that can be shared with donors (maximum 250 words)
- a description of the background, specific aims, and approach (maximum two pages). Note that citations are not counted toward the two-page limit
- a budget and budget justification that includes an explanation of why the proposed pilot project cannot be conducted with existing funds (e.g. a grant of the faculty mentor)

- a letter of support from the faculty mentor (1 page limit) that describes how the mentor will support the PI throughout the project. For doctoral student PIs, the mentor should also confirm that the student is in good standing in the program.

While funds may be used to support undergraduate or masters students at BU or to engage BEDAC services, they may not be used to support other doctoral students or staff at BU (to avoid conflicts with existing reporting arrangements). Funds may not be used for publication fees, travel to conferences, faculty salaries, or indirect costs at other institutions.

II. SEED GRANTS

SPH provides seed funding for faculty-initiated projects that will advance their education, research and/or practice activities. In this cycle, we are accepting applications for the following seed grant opportunities:

Early Career Catalyst Award. The SPH Research Committee is seeking pilot project applications from junior faculty members with primary appointments at SPH (Assistant Professor ranks, modified or unmodified titles). Research scientists, with the support of their supervisor, are also eligible. These awards are intended to assist early career researchers as they launch their independent research careers at SPH. The awards may be used for the collection of preliminary data, equipment, or research assistance necessary to strengthen a grant application to be submitted within one year of the award. Applicants who have not previously received R-level funding should include a letter of support from a faculty mentor as an appendix to their pilot application. This letter, not to exceed 1 page, should outline how the mentor will support the applicant during the pilot project and subsequent preparation of an application for external funding. For research scientists, if the faculty mentor does not also serve as the applicant's supervisor, then the letter should be co-signed by the supervisor to indicate their approval. Applicants who have previously received R-level funding are also welcome to include a mentor letter. To further advance the strategic directions on our strategy map, we strongly encourage applications that address the areas of: cities and health; climate, the planet, and health; health inequities; and mental and behavioral health. The maximum award amount per recipient is \$20,000.

Established Investigator Innovation Award. The SPH Research Committee is seeking innovative pilot project applications from established investigators with primary appointments at SPH (Associate or Full Professor ranks, modified or unmodified titles). These awards may be used for the collection of preliminary data, equipment, or research assistance necessary to prepare competitive applications for larger extramural awards. Priority will be given to pilot proposals that are interdisciplinary in nature and that cross departments within SPH. The application for extramural funding is to be submitted within one year of the award. To further advance the strategic directions on our strategy map, we strongly encourage applications that address the areas of: cities and health; climate, the planet, and health; health inequities; and mental and behavioral health. The maximum award amount per recipient is \$20,000.

Educational Innovation Award. The SPH Education Committee is seeking promising pilot project applications from SPH faculty who are engaged in teaching a course or managing an educational program at SPH. These awards are intended to strengthen the School's equitable and competency-based educational programs through innovation and inclusive practices in teaching, assessment or evaluation. Priority will be given to pilot proposals that are interdisciplinary in nature, have the potential for impact, and have the capacity for implementation more broadly across SPH. Awardees are required to demonstrate scholarship generated by the pilot award and are required to present at least one Boston University educational symposia (i.e. McCahan Medical Campus Education Day, the Center for Teaching and Learning Educational

Innovation Conference, the Annual Assessment Symposium, or a workshop for SPH faculty and staff). The maximum award amount per recipient is \$20,000.

Practice Innovation Award. The SPH Practice Advisory Board is seeking promising pilot project applications from faculty members engaged in advocacy around specific policy initiatives. This award furthers the School's mission to think, teach, do for the health of all by translating faculty research and educational interests into action, and ideally, change. Projects should strengthen the School's commitment to effecting change to improve the conditions that promote health in local, national, and global communities. The project can be related to faculty member's current research, advocacy activities, and/or teaching interests. Pilot awards will be considered for projects that foster engagement of faculty in any or all aspects of advocating for policy or programmatic change at the local, state, national, or global level. Such activities may include but are not limited to writing a policy paper; developing and implementing a strategic advocacy or communication plan; and building a sustainable collaborative of advocacy partners. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate timely impact and encourage school-wide involvement. Awardees are expected to present their work during a School Assembly. The maximum award per recipient is \$20,000.

The Carlin Foundation Pilot Award for Public Health Innovation. With generous support from the Carlin Foundation, applications are being accepted for a pilot project focused on infectious disease research. This pilot may be focused on the collection of preliminary data, equipment, or research assistance necessary to prepare competitive applications for larger extramural awards. Applicants must have primary appointments at SPH. There will be one award of \$20,000.

CFAR Developmental Grants Award. The SPH Research Committee is seeking pilot projects focused on HIV/AIDS as part of a collaboration with the Providence/Boston Center for AIDS Research (CFAR). The goal of the CFAR Developmental Grants Award program is to enable the awardee the opportunity to obtain sufficient original data to achieve NIH research funding. The program provides support for three types of AIDS biomedical and behavioral research projects: (1) Initial AIDS Research Projects for applicants who have not yet received R01-type funding from NIH in the HIV/AIDS field; (2) Pilot Projects testing new or innovative ideas for applicants who have received R01-type funding from NIH, but not in the HIV/AIDS field; and (3) Collaborative Projects where at least one applicant is an HIV investigator and collaborators must not have previous NIH R01-type funding together. Applicants are encouraged to discuss their application with the CFAR Developmental Core Directors (Benjamin.linas@bmc.org; rgummuluru@bu.edu; Ira_Wilson@brown.edu) before submission. Applicants must hold a full-time primary faculty appointment at SPH. The maximum award amount is \$40,000, including up to \$25,000 from SPH and up to \$15,000 from the CFAR Program. Consistent with the policies of the CFAR program, faculty salary coverage is allowed on the \$15,000 portion of the budget. Only one award will be given annually.

SUBMISSION DETAILS FOR SEED GRANT APPLICATIONS: The spring 2024 submission deadline is March 1, 2024. Applications should be submitted to **Mike McClean**, Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Advancement. Applications must include:

- a cover sheet that includes the project title, investigators (with their affiliations), and a brief abstract that can be shared with donors (maximum 250 words)
- a description of the background, specific aims, and approach (maximum two pages). Note that citations are not counted toward the two-page limit.
- a timeline for the project that includes details about the funder, funding mechanism, due date, and an explanation of why the pilot project is necessary to submit a competitive application.
- a budget and budget justification that includes an explanation of why the proposed pilot project cannot be conducted without the requested funds; and

- a letter of support from faculty mentor (for Early Career Catalyst Award, if applicable as described above).

In this category of awards, funds may not be used for publication fees, travel to conferences, faculty salaries, or indirect costs at other institutions. The expectation is that these pilot awards are for one year. Applications are reviewed by the Research and Faculty Advancement Committee, Education Committee, or Practice Committee, as appropriate. Applicants are encouraged to discuss their application with their departmental representative to the relevant committee prior to submission.

III. STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AWARDS

SPH also provides funding opportunities for the purpose of advancing strategic initiatives of the school. Opportunities within this category vary over time and are specified on each RFA. Currently, we are accepting applications for the following opportunities:

Strategic Direction Spark Award. The SPH Research and Faculty Advancement Committee is seeking applications for Strategic Direction Spark Awards from faculty members with primary appointments at SPH. These awards are intended to catalyze new collaborations leading to a body of innovative research that aligns with one or more of our strategic directions: cities and health; climate, the planet, and health; health inequities; infectious diseases; and mental and behavioral health. Applications must be submitted by multi-PIs from different SPH departments and engage interdisciplinary research teams from across multiple SPH departments. At least one PI must be at the rank of Associate or Full. The expectation is that this award will lead to the submission of multiple grant applications or a single application for a large multi-component grant (e.g. center grant, program project grant). The maximum amount per award is \$100,000 over an award period of two years.

SUBMISSION DETAILS: Applications should be submitted to **Mike McClean**, Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Advancement. Applications (max of four pages) must include the following components:

- an overview of the central research focus,
- the specific aims of the Spark award
- the approach proposed to address the specific aims
- the objectives of the planned grant applications - this should include details about the potential funders, funding mechanisms, and due dates, and specificity about how the Spark award will facilitate the development of competitive grant applications

Applications should also include the following (not counted toward the four-page limit):

- a cover sheet that includes the title, investigators (with their affiliations), and a brief abstract that can be shared with donors (maximum 250 words)
- a timeline, budget, and budget justification
- citations

Funds may not be used for publication fees, travel to conferences, faculty salaries, or indirect costs at other institutions. Applicants are encouraged to discuss their application with their departmental representative to the Research and Faculty Advancement committee prior to submission. Priority will be given to grants that are (a) consistent with the school's strategic directions, (b) build inter-departmental bridges, and (c) are likely to lead to extramural funding that would not have been possible without the Spark award.

Training Grant Development Award. Externally-funded training programs provide critical resources for pre-doctoral and post-doctoral trainees, which also more broadly benefits our faculty and advances the

mission of our School. An inherent challenge of pursuing a new externally-funded training program is that Principal Investigators must be willing to lead this non-trivial effort primarily for the benefit of the broader community. Accordingly, the purpose of this award is to provide support for the development of new training grant applications that will support doctoral students and/or post-doctoral fellows via the NIH T32 funding mechanism (or a comparable mechanism).

Established investigators with primary appointments at SPH (associate or full professor ranks, modified or unmodified titles) are eligible to apply. Each award will include 15% salary coverage for the PI (prorated for multiple PIs) during the 12-month period prior to submitting the training grant application. The award also includes a \$1,000 overbase for a member of the staff designated to support the PI in this endeavor. The bonus will be included in the payroll cycle following submission of the application. Finally, when the training grant is funded, the PI will receive 10% salary coverage for serving as the director (prorated for multiple PIs) for the duration of the award period.

SUBMISSION DETAILS: The application is limited to a maximum of two pages and should include the following: an overview of the proposed program (i.e., the need/rationale, objectives, and design), trainee details (i.e., number and type of trainees, eligibility, intended outcomes), and the submission plan (i.e. specify the funder, funding mechanism, due date, estimated budget). Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and should be submitted to Dean Galea (sgalea@bu.edu). Priority is given to proposals that cross departments within SPH and advance one or more of the strategic priorities of the School, as detailed on the [strategy map](#).

Think. Teach. Do. Protected Time Award. Faculty at all career stages work to balance the multiple demands that are an inherent part of faculty life while also working to advance their careers. These many competing demands can make it challenging to pursue activities that are not funded via external sources or captured by the SPH rubric for faculty salary coverage. Accordingly, the purpose of this award is to provide protected time for activities that are outside the scope of an individual faculty member's normal research, teaching, and service activities and that will advance the strategic priorities of the School, as detailed on the [strategy map](#).

Faculty are welcome to pursue specific SPH-solicited proposals as well as their own faculty-initiated proposals. For SPH-solicited proposals, the School will offer specific opportunities inviting applications from faculty to conduct specified activities to meet School needs. For faculty-initiated proposals, the School will accept applications in which faculty propose to conduct a defined set of activities that are outside the scope of an individual faculty member's normal research, teaching, and service activities covered via the salary coverage rubric described in the [Faculty Handbook](#). These awards are not intended to support activities that are consistent with an individual faculty member's normal responsibilities and scope of engagement.

As just a few examples, activities that could be supported by this mechanism include (but are not limited to):

- faculty may propose a set of activities to pivot their research agenda to include a new area of inquiry that will lead to new opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and funding;
- the School may determine that a new approach is needed in a particular pedagogic content area and offer salary coverage to faculty who would like to take on the responsibility of developing a new comprehensive curricular rethink for a cluster of courses or a specific program;
- faculty may be called upon, or propose to engage in, a suite of citizenship activities that leans on their particular expertise and experience that goes beyond our normal citizenship activities.

Full-time faculty members with primary appointments at SPH are eligible to apply. Each award will provide up to a maximum of 15% salary coverage for a maximum of a 12-month award period. Note that these are

maximums; the level and duration of requested support must align with the effort required to conduct the proposed activities. Given the novelty of this funding opportunity, we will re-evaluate and re-consider the TTD Protected Time Award in Spring 2025.

SUBMISSION DETAILS: The application is limited to a maximum of one page and should include a summary of the proposed activities, a description of the anticipated benefits, and a justification for the level and duration of requested support.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and can be submitted to **Mike McClean**, Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Advancement. Applications will be reviewed by the Research, Education, Practice, or DEIJ Committee, as appropriate. The review committee will serve in an advisory capacity to the Dean, who serves as the final step in the approval process.

IV. FAST-TRACK FUNDING MECHANISM

Funds are sometimes needed to pursue time-sensitive opportunities, such that waiting for the normal submission deadlines is not possible. Accordingly, SPH offers a fast-track funding mechanism when modest resources are required to pursue (a) an opportunity to resubmit a proposal that received a competitive score (i.e., $\leq 30^{\text{th}}$ percentile), or (b) a 'quick turnaround' funding opportunity.

SUBMISSION DETAILS FOR FAST-TRACK FUNDING: Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and should be submitted to **Mike McClean**, Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Advancement. Applications must include:

- a cover sheet that includes the project title, investigators (with their affiliations), and a brief abstract that can be shared with donors (maximum 250 words)
- a description of the background, specific aims, and approach (maximum two pages). Note that citations are not counted toward the two-page limit.
- a timeline for the project that includes details about the funder, funding mechanism, due date, and an explanation of why the application meets the criteria for fast-track funding.
- a budget and budget justification that includes an explanation of why the proposed pilot project cannot be conducted without the requested funds; and
- the summary statement and/or RFA, as applicable.

As for seed grants, funds may not be used for publication fees, travel to conferences, faculty salaries, or indirect costs at other institutions. The expectation is that these pilot awards are for one year. Applications are reviewed by the Research Committee.

V. PILOT ACCOUNT ADMINISTRATION

Pilot award recipients must obtain all necessary approvals (e.g. IACUC, IRB) prior to receiving access to pilot funds, as appropriate. All pilot project accounts are located in a central SPH Pilot Accounts Fund Center, and expenses can be charged to the pilot account via the department administrator at the request of the PI and in accordance with the approved pilot budget. PIs are expected to complete pilot award progress reports as requested.