

Addendum to RFA# 67-111  
Collaborative Research on COVID-19

Date: 11/16/2020

Addendum Number: 1

Addendum Changes:

- 1) This addendum is to provide answers to all questions per the RFA Potential Applicant letter.

Q: Will this link be anyway connected to the existing Share Point account for our institution that will require us to use the current login credentials?

A: No.

Q: Will the link be unique to this submission with no connection to the existing Share Point account?

A: Yes.

Q: For institutions like us who have issues with Share Point, will an alternate electronic method be made available to submit?

A: No.

Q: The instructions state: "On all applications forms, the name of the applicant must be identical to the legal name of the applicant organization exactly as registered with the Department of State." For us, that would be "University of Pittsburgh—Of the Commonwealth System of Higher Education." May the shorter "University of Pittsburgh" be used on other parts of the application?

A: No. Please follow the instructions as provided in the RFA.

Q: For item XV, Curriculum Vitae, Resumes, or Biographical Sketches, the first paragraph says "Do not exceed five pages per biographical sketch," while the second paragraph says, "The biographical sketch must include the following items and may not exceed four pages." Which is it—four pages or five pages?

A: Four pages

Q: Will the research studies proposed in the most competitive applications be focused on only one thematic area or will they (or should they) include more than on theme if scientifically justified?

A: No. As stated on page 12 of Part One of the RFA, in Section A.3. Requirements of the Collaborative Research Project, a) Conduct Research – "Design and conduct only one scientifically meritorious research project consistent with the research priority. One research project may consist of several hypothesis-driven

sub-projects or studies that are proposed to address each aim of the overall research project or address a different aspect of the overall goal. The studies must be closely related to each other and the overall goal. The proposal must include only studies that will be completed within the Grant period.”

Q: Here’s the question: Does a start-up company that is incorporated in Delaware but has its headquarters (primary location) and all staff in Pennsylvania meet criteria as a Pennsylvania-based organization? All research will be conducted within Pennsylvania.

A: No. Where the company is incorporated is not relevant. As stated on page 11 of Part One of the RFA, in Section A.2 Who May Apply, “The applicant and all collaborating organizations (which have a meaningful and substantive role in the research project) must be located in Pennsylvania.” An organization is considered to be located in Pennsylvania if it is registered with the Pennsylvania Department of State to do business in Pennsylvania.

Additionally, Section A.2 states, “The applicant must be a legal entity that will receive all Grant funds and shall be responsible for the fiscal aspects and all other aspects of this Grant. The applicant and all collaborating organizations must be located in Pennsylvania. Lead applicants and collaborating organizations must conduct 98 percent of the research proposed in the Grant application at Pennsylvania-based facilities.

Q: Preface: What is the likely composition of the peer review board?

A: Peer reviewers must meet the requirements of the Tobacco Settlement Act, Act 2001-77, i.e., they must be nationally recognized physicians, scientists or researchers from the same or similar discipline as the research grant proposals under review. They will be selected from outside of Pennsylvania to minimize the potential for conflict of interest. If any of the research proposals that are submitted contain a clinical research component involving patient-oriented research, at least one expert will be a clinician who has expertise conducting research.

Q: Preface: Must research on COVID-19 directly relate to its transmission and impacts? Or, are broader research questions of interest (e.g., “To what extent does the economic recession associated with COVID19 impact healthcare services for vulnerable populations?”)

A: Yes. As stated on page 12 of Part One of the RFA, in Section A.3. Requirements of the Collaborative Research Project, a) Conduct Research – “Design and conduct only one scientifically meritorious research project consistent with the research priority. One research project may consist of several hypothesis-driven sub-projects or studies that are proposed to address each aim of the overall research project or address a different aspect of the overall goal. The studies must be closely related to each other and the overall goal. The proposal must include only studies that will be completed within the Grant period.”

Further, as stated on page vii of the Research Priority to the RFA, “All research projects submitted in response to this RFA must be consistent with the research priority COVID-19.” In the Preface to the RFA, page v, states, “The extent to which an application is consistent with the research priority will be determined by peer reviewers who will review and rank the application based on the scientific and technical merit of the research project. Each application will be evaluated based on criteria as stated in Part One, Section B.2.”

Q: Preface: Does an established working partnership matter for evaluation of the collaboration and project feasibility?

A: No. As stated on page 12 of Part One of the RFA, in Section A.3. Requirements of the Collaborative Research Project, b) Foster collaborative research – “Facilitate collaboration among multiple disciplines and involve multiple partners and organizations relevant to the research project goals, as demonstrated by letters of commitment from the organizations. The focus of the application must be the design of scientifically meritorious research that will lead to improving the health of Pennsylvanians.”

Q: Part 1, A, 2: Can PA institution staff who are not located in Pennsylvania participate? Or, must all participating PA institution staff be located in PA?

A: Yes. As stated on page 11 of Part One of the RFA, in Section A.2 Who May Apply, “The applicant and all collaborating organizations (which have a meaningful and substantive role in the research project) must be located in Pennsylvania.” An organization is considered to be located in Pennsylvania if it is registered with the Pennsylvania Department of State to do business in Pennsylvania. There is no residency requirement.

Q: Part 1, A, 3a: Is there any requirement that research projects focus specifically on Pennsylvania populations?

A: Yes. In the Preface to the RFA, page v, states, “Pennsylvania’s use of tobacco settlement funds to support broad-based health research in Pennsylvania helps direct research efforts to state-defined health research objectives that improve the health of all Pennsylvanians.” And, “1. Address a health-related issue that has significant impact on the health of Pennsylvanians.”

Additionally, as stated on page 12 of Part One of the RFA, in Section A.3. Requirements of the Collaborative Research Project, b) Foster collaborative research – “The focus of the application must be the design of scientifically meritorious research that will lead to improving the health of Pennsylvanians.”

Q: Part 1, A, 3c: To what extent can existing internship opportunities be expanded or modified? May funds “be used for existing internships that meet the overall project goals?

A: Yes. Additionally, as stated on page 12 of Part One of the RFA, in Section A.3. Requirements of the Collaborative Research Project, c) Train minority students – “Although not required, should a minority graduate student training be included in the research project and supported with Grant funding, it must include some or

all of the following: research stipends, tuition, course credit for graduate-level minority students to receive training, mentoring, or involvement in some aspect of the research project during the academic year or the summer. Medical students are considered graduate students for the purpose of this RFA. A post-baccalaureate program designed to prepare students for biomedical research training programs is considered to be a graduate student training program.”

Q: For the letter of intent due on November 12<sup>th</sup>, should we extract the PDF form that is part of the RFA and use it?

A: You may request a Word version of the document by emailing [ra-healthresearch@pa.gov](mailto:ra-healthresearch@pa.gov), but it must be submitted as a PDF.

Q: Are we expected to submit the LOI in the form of PDF or Word doc? If Word doc, could you please email us a word file?

A: See answer above. Please submit as a PDF.

Q: Must an applicant have a “major research organization” as a collaborator, or will other collaborating institutions meet this criterion as long as they have a meaningful and substantive role in all phases of the project?

A: Yes. As stated in the Preface of the RFA on page v., “5. Promote collaboration among Pennsylvania institutions including smaller colleges and universities and other non-academic medical centers as well as major research institutions.”

Additionally, in the Research Priority of the RFA on page ix, “Collaboration between academic institutions, health care systems, health care insurers, public health agencies, or business is encouraged. To the extent possible, organizations that are not academic medical centers, such as smaller colleges and universities and local public health agencies, should be included in addition to major research institutions.”

Q: Must all underrepresented grad students supported be PA resident?

A: No. They would need to be a graduate student of a PA College or University.

Q: Will the fillable application materials be sent directly to the institution upon submission of the letter of intent? Or can they be requested now by writing to this email?

A: No. The application materials will be provided via the SharePoint site provided upon receipt of the Letter of Intent.

Q: Can partners be NGOs that work with minority communities rather than research institutions?

A: Yes. As stated in the Preface of the RFA on page v., “5. Promote collaboration among Pennsylvania institutions including smaller colleges and universities and other non-academic medical centers as well as major research institutions.”

Additionally, in the Research Priority of the RFA on page ix, “Collaboration between academic institutions, health care systems, health care insurers, public health agencies, or business is encouraged. To the extent possible, organizations that are not academic medical centers, such as smaller colleges and universities and local public health agencies, should be included in addition to major research institutions.”

Q: When will the signed grant agreement be received by the chosen organizations?

A: When they are fully executed. The exact date(s) cannot be determined.

\*Except as clarified and amended by this Addendum, the terms, conditions, specifications, and instructions of the RFA and any previous addenda, remain as originally written.