



TCC Shark Tank  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

**Eligibility**

**Q: I have significant experience working with vulnerable communities, yet I am new to health policy research. Am I a competitive applicant for the Shark Tank Competition and TCC Pilot Project Program?**

A: Investigators at various levels of research experience have successfully applied to the Pilot Project Program. We are looking for Shark Tank candidates and prospective grantees who exhibit passion, subject matter expertise, and a commitment to advancing health equity. We anticipate the most successful applicants will be those who: 1) propose a well-organized and feasible concept paper; 2) demonstrate the knowledge and experience needed to carry out the project they propose; and 3) effectively articulate their research plans during the Shark Tank pitch.

Please understand that the TCC Pilot Program is both a *funding mechanism* and a *research development program*. We work diligently with pilot project grantees to ensure their research projects are methodologically sound, display scientific rigor, and are executed with fidelity. We provide ample shared resources, capacity building opportunities, and technical assistance to support the development of our pilot project grantees.

**Shark Tank Concept Paper Submission**

**Q: We only have 2 pages of space for the concept paper....how am I going to cover all of this information? Where should I focus my attention?**

A: Please address all items delineated in the Call for Concept Papers Announcement. While all items are important, we recommend you focus specific attention on: 1) summary of research activities; 2) anticipated policy impact. It is vitally important that we clearly understand *what you propose to do* if funded, and *why it is important* to informing health policy and practice. We expect you to be concise yet thorough in preparing your concept paper.

**Q: Do I need to register to be considered for the Shark Tank competition?**

A: Yes, event registration is required to participate in Shark Tank. Please register prior to submitting your concept paper: <http://www.msm.edu/tccsummit>.

**Q: If I am selected as a Shark Tank candidate will I need to attend the Summit in person?**

A: Yes, you must be physically present at the Summit to compete in the competition. All candidates must secure their own travel and lodging accommodations to attend the Summit. Please see the event webpage for more details on air travel and lodging: <http://www.msm.edu/tccsummit>.

**Q: We have less than 2 weeks to submit our concept papers?! Is this enough time to develop a quality concept paper?**

A: The Shark Tank is intended to be a “rapid response” opportunity. As such, we expect prospective applicants to be strategic in their plans to submit a concept paper (and subsequent pilot project application if selected as a Shark Tank winner). Given the relatively short time frame for this opportunity, it may be wise to consider presenting a research project idea that has already been fleshed out to a certain extent. You may not have time to develop a research project from scratch.

### **Preparing for the Shark Tank**

**Q: I was selected as a Shark Tank candidate! What next?**

A: Congratulations! You will receive a formal invitation to the Shark Tank Competition via email approximately one week after the Shark Tank submission deadline. Please review your letter carefully, follow the instructions provided, and submit all follow-up items (e.g. hi res photo headshot, revised abstract) by the designated deadline. Failure to comply may result in forfeiture of your candidate status.

### **Next Steps after Shark Tank Competition**

**Q: What are the ideal attributes of a strong pilot project application?**

A: Pilot project proposals must demonstrate collaboration; scientific merit; solid policy relevance; high potential for policy impact; scalability; sustainability; and potential to obtain future funding.

**Q: What documents must to be submitted to complete my pilot project application?**

A: You must complete the NIH SF424 (R&R) application packet provided by the Pilot Project Program. In addition to completing the required form fields in the SF424, you must attach all corresponding documents (in PDF). The following sections constitute a complete SF424:

1. SF 424 (R&R) Form
2. PHS 398 Research Plan
3. PHS 398 Cover Page Supplement
4. Research and Related Senior/Key Person Profile
5. Research and Related Other Project Information
6. Project/Performance Site Locations
7. Research & Related Budget
8. R&R Subaward Budget (if applicable)
9. Planned Enrollment Report

The following documents will be submitted under “Additional Requirements”

10. Data Safety Monitoring Plan
11. Indirect Cost Agreement documentation
12. CITI Certifications, or equivalent
13. Organizational status documentation (e.g. 501 (c) 3)
14. Federalwide Assurance (FWA) Number
15. Institutional Review Board (IRB) letter of record and approval notice (or exempt notification)

All application components must be completed before your application is submitted to NIMHD for review and final approval. Therefore, we STRONGLY recommend you be proactive and plan ahead for the full application submission process. Check the TCC Pilot Project website to view some of our application resources and support documentation: <http://www.msmtcc.org/pilotproject>. If possible, start the FWA and IRB processes as early as possible to prevent administrative delays and expedite the review process. The Pilot Project Program coordinator will assist prospective grantees complete all application components.

## **Q: What information should be included in the “PHS 398 Research Plan” Section?**

A: The Research Plan is comprised of the specific aims (1 page) and Research Plan (six pages) sections. This is a major component of the application and should be carefully prepared. Below is some general guidance on how to approach these sections:

- Specific Aims (1 page max):
  - State the overarching goals for your proposed research project, and describe at least two specific aims to be achieved by the end of the project performance period.
- Research Plan (6 pages max)
  - *Background and Significance:* Describe the community served by the pilot project and the community-identified health disparity, its causes and possible solutions. Also, describe the impact of the health problem in the community. This may include epidemiological or population surveillance data, findings from policy and environmental scans, findings from community needs assessments, and review of relevant literature on the community and/or health disparity of interest. Explain how your proposed project will serve to further explore and/or address the health disparity in the community or settings identified.
  - *Innovation:* Explain how your proposed project is innovative and makes a meaningful contribution to health policy research devoted to addressing health disparities and promoting health equity.
  - *Preliminary Work:* Describe all previous work and formative research conducted that informs the proposed project, if any.
  - *Experience, and Organizational Capacity:* Describe how the principal investigator and key personnel are qualified to carry out the proposed research, and how the organizations involved are strategically positioned to support the proposed research activities. Describe prior experience working with community-based organizations and/or academic institutions to effectively communicate the success of interventions utilizing high-impact, population-wide approaches that improve population health of those impacted by health disparities.
  - *Research Strategy/Approach:* Describe *in detail* the project’s specific population of interest, research approach/methods, data collection and management plan, statistical analysis and evaluation plan, dissemination and implementation plan, and timeline.
  - *Anticipated policy impacts:* Describe the project’s anticipated policy impact.

## **Q: What expenses are allowable in the project budget?**

A: Our TCC is fully compliant with all NIH Grants Policy Statement guidelines (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/nihgps/index.htm>). The following expenses are allowable under the Pilot Project mechanism:

- *Personnel:* Salary support and fringe benefits for investigators and key personnel should generally not exceed 25% of total budget, unless approved in advance. Please include full name, role on project, base salary, FTE on the project (based on calendar-months), salary requested, fringe benefits, and total cost for all investigators. Indicate names, role on project, qualifications, and specific role on proposed project for each personnel in the budget justification page(s).

- *Consultant Costs:* Please include expenses associated with all consultants, collaborators, and other parties who will serve a role in the execution of the project (e.g. evaluators, statisticians, etc.). Please note that stipends are not allowable expenses; all consultants must be paid by invoicing fees for services provided. Provide full justifications for all consultants in the budget justification page.
- *Equipment:* Please include all durable equipment that is essential to the completion of the project scope of work. Items costing \$5,000 or more shall be listed as “equipment” and are subject to approval.
- *Supplies:* Disposable office supplies, printing and copying, research related supplies, educational supplies, etc. Items costing below \$5,000 or less shall be listed as “supplies”.
- *Travel:* Mileage, transportation costs, and domestic travel when necessary to carry out the proposed research.
- *Inpatient/Outpatient Care Costs:* Care-related expenses directly related to carrying out the project scope of work.
- *Other Expenses:* Other allowable expenses necessary to carry out the project scope of work such as telephone service, survey costs, participant incentives, publication costs including reprints, development of policy briefs and other disseminable deliverables, etc.

**Q: What budget items or expenses are NOT allowable?**

A: The following expenses are generally NOT allowable:

- Secretarial/administrative personnel not directly tied to project scope of work (should be included in indirect costs).
- Student tuition and stipends
- Foreign travel, and travel not directly associated with the proposed project scope of work
- Rental or office/laboratory space
- Membership fees and dues, unless deemed necessary to complete project specific aims.
- Honoraria
- Per diem charges for hospital beds
- Purchasing and binding of periodicals and books
- Office and laboratory furniture

**Q: You are expecting Shark Tank winners to prepare a full SF424 application in a month?! This seems like a lot to do in such a short period of time. Why is the turnaround time so brief, and how will we ever get this done in time?**

A: Again, this is intended to be a “rapid response” opportunity. As such, applicants are expected to approach the application process with diligence and urgency. We expect applicants to have a firm grasp of the subject matter and available literature related to their research project, and have a research plan outlined by the time they deliver their Shark Tank pitch. Our Pilot Project Team will offer several resources to facilitate the full application process (e.g. webinar recordings, application templates and guides, sample application sections, etc.). Finally, the Pilot Project Program coordinator and other key personnel will assist you in completing all application components.

Perhaps the most time-sensitive application component is IRB review and approval. Therefore, we strongly encourage all applicants to **be proactive** in starting the IRB process early. If your project involves direct interaction with human subjects/participants or the usage of individual-level data (e.g. medical records, surveys, biometric data, etc.), it is very likely that you will need IRB approval. We encourage you to contact an IRB office early on for guidance. Many IRBs are willing to review a brief synopsis of your research project free of charge and provide guidance on appropriate next steps. If you are not affiliated with an IRB, we encourage you to engage our Morehouse School of Medicine IRB. Please note that fees apply for external partners to use

Morehouse School of Medicine as their designated IRB of record. These fees may be covered using F&A/IDC costs requested in your project budget.

**Q: Can you please explain the Final Application Review Process in more detail?**

A: Once all final application components have been prepared, your final application will be submitted to our NIMHD Program Officer and Grants Management Specialist for review and final approval. Please note that all application components must be in place before your application will be reviewed. There may be additional requests for information during the final review process. Prospective grantees are expected to respond immediately to all requests in order to prevent avoidable administrative delays. The Pilot Project Program coordinator (Dr. Divine Offoegbu) will liaise all communications and information exchanges. The final application review process is typically completed within 6-8 weeks of full application submission, barring any administrative delays. Grantees will be notified of their final approval by e-mail.

**Q: What happens after my full application is approved?**

A: Upon favorable review and approval by NIMHD, shark tank winners will be designated as Pilot Project Grantees and sign a 12-month Research Subaward Agreement with Morehouse School of Medicine TCC. The anticipated start date for the 12-month pilot project (barring any administrative delays) is **August 4, 2016**.

**Q: Do we receive the full balance of our award upon final approval and contract execution?**

A: No. Our institution does not allow “up front” payments. To receive initial payment you will be asked to participate in an orientation webinar, complete a time-phased work plan, and submit your first invoice. Invoice processing generally occurs within 45 days. Subsequent payment(s) will be based on completion of key milestones and deliverables delineated in the time-phased work plan.

**For More Information:**

You may refer to our TCC Summit Website for basic information. Please submit all Shark Tank questions and comments to our TCC mailbox at [tcc@msm.edu](mailto:tcc@msm.edu). Please contact our TCC Administrative Core if you have an immediate concern; please allow up to 24 hours for a response:

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