



Request for Applications-

M-LEEdD Director's Fund: New and Early Stage Investigator Project Grants

Release Date: December 12, 2024

Funding Period: January 30, 2025 – March 31, 2025

The Michigan Lifestage Environmental Exposures and Disease (M-LEEdD) Center announces support for project funding for small, quickly executed projects for New Investigators (NI) or Early Stage Investigators (ESI) related to environmental health sciences (EHS) research, especially those that aim to define, explain, or mitigate impacts of environmental exposures during vulnerable stages of life. M-LEEdD is a National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) Core Center, which seeks to improve the understanding of the contribution of environmental exposures toward the etiology of chronic diseases and conditions like asthma, neurodegenerative diseases, metabolic syndrome and prematurity.

Please review the eligibility criteria and funding objectives below carefully. If there are any questions about a prospective proposal's eligibility, please contact Rose Branstrom, M-LEEdD Administrative Assistant, rbranstr@umich.edu, and Dr. John Meeker, M-LEEdD Deputy Director & Pilot Project Program Leader, meekerj@umich.edu, for confirmation. Nonconforming proposals will not be considered.

APPLICATION DUE DATE

January 19, 2025 by midnight

AWARDS

Standard project budget requests between \$5,000- \$8,000 will be accepted.

FUNDING PERIOD

Budgets should be prepared with an anticipated start date of January 30, 2025 and an end date of March 31, 2025. Although the work on the project may continue after that date, awarded funds must be spent by the end of the funding period, and no extensions will be given.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

A New Investigator (NI) or Early Stage Investigator (ESI) Principal Investigator (PI) is required for this project. Any NI or ESI member of the University of Michigan Faculty is eligible to apply as PI. Postdoctoral trainees may apply as the PI if a member of the University of Michigan Faculty in the trainee's same home department is identified as a co-PI on the project. An investigator can be PI on a single funded application for this project cycle but may collaborate on multiple projects in other roles.

The National Institute of Health (NIH) [definition](#) of an NI is an applicant *who has not yet competed successfully for a substantial, competing NIH research grant*. The NIH [definition](#) of an ESI is an applicant *who has completed their terminal research degree or end of post-graduate clinical training, whichever is later, within the past 10 years and who has not previously competed successfully as a PD/PI for a substantial NIH independent research award*. ESI Extensions, [as detailed by NIH](#), are accepted for this award.

FUNDING OBJECTIVES

The objective of this RFA is to provide small, quickly executed research grants to stimulate new directions and enhance current NI/ESI projects relevant to studying the impacts of environmental exposures during vulnerable stages of life, or EHS research more generally, including those related to the [2025-2029 NIEHS Strategic Plan](#). The M-LEEdD Center especially encourages proposals that will use the funds to complete an ongoing study for publication or acquire preliminary data supporting a grant application to an external funding agency such as NIEHS.

RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS AND VERTEBRATE ANIMALS

Use of M-LEEd project funds for research involving human subjects or vertebrate animals **must** have IRB or IACUC approval at the time of submission of the application, and letters of approval must accompany the application. Any application that involves human subjects or vertebrate animals and does not include documentation of IRB or IACUC approval will not be considered.

Proposals that involve human subjects research as defined by the NIH must submit a Protection of Human Subjects section equivalent to an NIH grant. Review the NIH website on [Research Involving Human Subjects](#) to determine if your proposed research is considered human subjects research by NIH standards and to access instructions for completion of the Protection of Human Subjects section. This website has links to topics on Human Subjects Questionnaire and on Frequently Asked Questions that are particularly useful. The [U of M NIH Forms-H Human Subject and Clinical Trials Information Worksheet](#) (or equivalent) should be included in the application.

RESEARCH INVOLVING CLINICAL TRIALS

This funding mechanism **may not** be used to support research involving a clinical trial, as defined by NIH, which includes any research study in which one or more human subjects are prospectively assigned to one or more interventions to evaluate the effects of those interventions on health-related biomedical or behavioral outcomes. Interventions can include any manipulation of the subject or subject's environment for the purpose of modifying one or more health-related biomedical or behavioral processes and/or endpoints (examples can include: drugs; biologics; devices; procedures including surgical techniques; strategies to change health-related behavior (e.g., diet, cognitive therapy, exercise, development of new habits, educational interventions); treatment strategies; prevention strategies). Please see this [website](#) for more information on what NIH defines as a clinical trial.

RESEARCH INVOLVING A FOREIGN COMPONENT

This short-term funding mechanism will NOT support research that has a foreign component as defined by NIH, due to the additional time required for US State Department approval. See NIH [Definitions of terms used in the Grants Policy Statement](#) for details.

APPLICATION PREPARATION GUIDELINES

1. Format proposals single-spaced with minimum text size 11 point, 6 lines per inch, and half-inch page margins. Research Plan pages should include a header with the title of the proposal and the PI's name (a smaller font size is permitted in the header).
2. Prepare a Proposal Abstract (300-word limit).
3. Prepare a Research Plan (2-page limit, does not include Literature Cited).
 - a. **Specific Aims** (0.25 pages suggested).
 - b. **Significance** (0.5 pages suggested): Describes rationale for the proposed research, including importance of the problem addressed, current knowledge, gap(s) addressed, and relevance to public health.
 - c. **Approach** (1 pages suggested): Include: experimental design (subjects/samples, data collection, and data analysis); anticipated results and interpretation; use of M-LEEd Facility Cores, M-LEEd Community Engagement Core, and M-LEEd Research Teams, if applicable.
 - d. **Outcome** (0.25 pages suggested): Explain how use of the funds is anticipated to contribute to the field, especially the mission of the M-LEEd Center, a future publication, or external research grant. For projects that engage community partners, outcomes should include a description of deliverables or products for community organizations or audiences, as relevant.
 - e. **Relevance to Public Health and Community Engagement** (2-3 sentences suggested): Describe the relevance of the proposed project to public health and community engagement. Please note that this is distinct from directly involving the Community Engagement Core. *(This is similar to an NIH Project Narrative section)*
4. Prepare a Literature Cited section (1 page suggested)
5. Prepare a budget:
 - a. Budget requests of \$5,000 - \$8,000 will be considered.

- b. Itemize in a table how the funds will be used.
 - c. In a budget explanation, justify all expenditures by category and describe how the funds will be spent by March 31, 2025;
 - d. The following items may not be charged to these projects: faculty salary support, equipment, computers, cost overruns, retroactive funding, publications, grant preparation costs, GSRA costs, foreign travel, travel unrelated to the conduct of research (e.g., conferences), hosting (unless related to the project and subject to approval of M-LEEd), renovations, subcontracts and possibly other items. Applicants are encouraged to discuss allowable expenses with M-LEEd if there are questions.
6. Create a current NIH biosketch for the Principal Investigator. Section A of the Personal Statement of the biosketch should specifically address this proposal. Biosketch instructions can be found on the NIH webpage: [Biosketch Format Pages, Instructions and Samples](#). *Note- if a postdoctoral trainee is applying as PI, a biosketch of the Co-I in the same home department must also be included.*
 7. Protection of Human Subjects (no page limit): If the proposed research project involves human subjects research, then prepare a Protection of Human Subjects section equivalent to an NIH grant. Review the NIH website on [Research Involving Human Subjects](#) for definitions and instructions. The U of M [NIH FORMS-H Human Subject and Clinical Trials Information Worksheet](#) (or equivalent) should be included in the application.
 8. If the proposed research involves human subjects or vertebrate animals, include documentation of IRB or IACUC approval, respectively (usually an approval letter).
 9. Prepare a single PDF of the Application Components.
 10. Send the completed application to Rose Branstrom (rbranstr@umich.edu) by midnight on January 19, 2025.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Applications should be submitted electronically to Rose Branstrom (rbranstr@umich.edu) on or before midnight on January 19, 2025.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Additional information about the M-LEEd Center and its Pilot Project Program can be found [here](#). The NIEHS Strategic Goals can be found [here](#). For further information about this RFA you are encouraged to contact: Rose Branstrom, M-LEEd Administrative Assistant, rbranstr@umich.edu, and Dr. John Meeker, M-LEEd Deputy Director & Pilot Project Program Leader, meekerj@umich.edu.

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