

## **Acres Homes CPC Community-Engaged Research in Persistent Poverty (PP) Communities: Round 4 Pilot Projects**

The Acres Homes Cancer Prevention Collaboration (CPC), a partnership of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, UTHealth, The University of Texas Austin and Be Well™ Acres Homes, would like to invite you to submit a **proposal for pilot projects in cancer prevention and control with a focus on obesity-related cancer research in partnership with the Acres Homes (AH) community in Houston, Texas**. The objective is to collect preliminary data to advance cancer prevention-related research studies that hold promise to benefit the Acres Homes community and inform understanding and strategies for obesity-related cancer prevention and control. Projects should have the potential to yield preliminary data that has the potential to develop into externally funded, high-impact, cancer research projects.

The Acres Homes CPC community and scientific advisory boards have identified the following priorities for new research. Proposals are welcomed that address one or more of these priorities:

1. Healthy food access and acceptability of Acres Homes food retail options.
2. Identifying health needs of and ways to engage men in cancer prevention efforts.
3. Impact of policy changes on household budgets, health behaviors, and health outcomes.
4. Effective methods of communicating cancer risk reduction strategies (e.g., healthy eating) among Acres Homes residents related to nutrition, physical activity, and cancer prevention.
5. The use and impact of farmers markets.
6. The role of the physical environment (e.g., illegal dumping, vacant lots, sidewalk access, parks access) as a facilitator/barrier to healthy behaviors.

**Researchers should consider the relevance of their research to the community and pose questions and use methods that highlight and value the lived experiences of Acres Homes residents. Studies that use engaging qualitative methods beyond standard focus groups (photovoice or similar) are encouraged. Competitive proposals will consider how findings of the pilot study could be used by the community to advance the health and quality of life of the Acres Homes residents, with findings that could be used to inform communication with local leaders related to addressing conditions that affect obesity-related cancer.**

### **GUIDELINES**

One year pilot project awards of up to \$75,000 will be made. Acres Home CPC anticipates it will fund up to 2 pilot awards.

Funds are provided by MD Anderson and subject to the specific requirements of this unique collaborative funding mechanism. Proposed budgets should only include direct costs. Funds not expended during the award period cannot be carried forward.

When the application is ready for submission, email an electronic copy in PDF format with all documents combined in one file to [mdlubin@mdanderson.org](mailto:mdlubin@mdanderson.org).

### **Eligibility**

Applications will be accepted from MD Anderson, UTHealth or UT Austin faculty at the level of Instructor or above, regardless of tenure status at the time of the submission deadline.

Eligible applicants may submit only one Pilot Project application per review cycle. Principal investigators may only hold one active pilot research award at a time. Investigators who have received previous pilot awards from the Acres Homes CPC are eligible to apply if they expect their first project to be completed (and funds expended) by April 30, 2026.

### **Proposal Due Dates**

- Proposals are due on **Monday, ~~October 20, 2025~~, November 10, 2025 by 5PM CST.**
- A complete electronic copy (add documents in one file) should be emailed to

[mdlubin@mdanderson.org](mailto:mdlubin@mdanderson.org)

### **Acres Homes CPC Support**

Awardees of the Pilot Projects will receive support related to conducting community research as a part of the Acres Homes CPC *Engagement Core*. This will include training on best practices in community research, warm connections to organizations working within Acres Homes, opportunities to help recruit for studies, and support from the Be Well Communities team throughout the project period. Reach out to [bewellcommunities@mdanderson.org](mailto:bewellcommunities@mdanderson.org) for more information.

The *Research and Methods Core* will support pilot awardees at no cost with comprehensive consultation such as sample size calculation, etc. Statistical support, survey creation or data analysis is available but would fall under compensated work and needs to be included in your budget.

### **Award Timeline**

Applications will be reviewed in **December 2025**. Notification of awards will be made in **March 2026** and funding is expected to begin by May/June 2025. Access to award funds is subject to review and receipt of all compliance documents.

### **APPLICATION FORMAT**

**Investigators must** have an initial consultation with the Engagement Core before submission of their proposal. Email [bewellcommunities@mdanderson.org](mailto:bewellcommunities@mdanderson.org) for more information.

Required Components:

1. **Abstract** summarizing the research question, the background of the project, the specific aims, the proposed approach, and the expected outcomes of the project (400-word maximum)
2. **Project Plan** inclusive of the following sections:
  - a. Specific Aims, Significance/Relevance, Innovation, Approach, Collaboration and Dissemination (5 pages maximum): define and explain the PP census tract areas' need for a cancer prevention research/control program and what research gap this would address.
  - b. Provide a background statement on any relevant existing services or resources offered at the cancer center, and any staff expertise for the expansion or incorporation into a new program for this effort. Include a statement of the qualifications for the identified lead(s) of the program.
  - c. Timeline: Outline a work plan that provides a timeline for development and/or implementation of the research, which should include milestones for tracking the progress of the work.
  - d. Responsiveness to Priorities: Describe how this project is responsive to at least one of the nine priority areas identified on page 1. Provide a justification for the research partnership (as appropriate) and the community partner's role (if applicable) (1/2 page)
  - e. Plans to Seek Extramural Funding (1/2 page)
  - f. References Cited (no page limit, does not count towards page limits)
3. **Budget (modular) with Justification**
  - a. Funds should be spent in 9 months. Allowable budget requests includes: salaries (must reasonably reflect the percentage of time actually worked on the project); project supplies (recruitment incentives, focus group supplies, etc.) services and minor equipment; participant support; patient care (contingent upon meeting compliance with applicable institutional and sponsor requirements); travel (allowed only for recruitment and data collection),
  - b. Not allowable: tuition, advertising, entertainment costs, gifts.For inquiries regarding other expenses email [mdlubin@mdanderson.org](mailto:mdlubin@mdanderson.org)
4. **NIH biosketches** for each investigator (5-page limit each).
  - a. A biosketch should be included for each key personnel involved with the project, including the community partner.
5. **Letters of Support from Community** (required if recommended by the Engagement Core if planning to work with specific community partner, 1-page maximum)

Only required for PI's who are awarded:

6. **Regulatory compliance information**, including Protection of Human Subjects, Vertebrate Animals

**General Formatting Requirements:** Minimum 0.5-inch margins and Arial 11-point font are required. (Smaller type size may be used for figures and legends.)

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### **REVIEW CRITERIA**

Overall impact with respect to significance, investigator(s), innovation, approach, collaboration, and environment will be reviewed. The likelihood of success for future funding (especially from the NCI and other cancer-focused funding agencies) will also be taken into consideration. Awards will be made based on a combination of scientific merit, feasibility, responsiveness to community needs, and Acres Homes CPC priorities.

Proposals will be reviewed by both scientific and community reviewers.

The Acres Homes CPC leadership will confirm awards based on merit and availability of funds, and with consideration for funding priorities, U54 portfolio balance and relevance to the Acres Homes community. Acres Homes CPC Leadership reserves the right to alter the award amount at any time.

### **Award Notices**

A three-step approach is followed.

1. A scientific and community committee reviews and makes recommendations for proposals to move on to the next step: review by NCI. PIs will be notified of their proposal status.
2. The NCI PP Steering Committee reviews and approves or rejects Center submissions.
3. Notification in the form of a Notice of Award (NoA) will be provided to the applicant organization for successful applications.

**Regulatory Approvals:** For projects involving human subjects, vertebrate animals, and/or select agents research, prior IRB, IACUC, and/or IBC approval is not required at the time of application submission. However, it is expected that the appropriate protocols will be submitted so approval is imminent at the anticipated project start date. **All applicable institutional approvals must be in place before awarded funds can be released.** *IRB protocols must be submitted for review within 10 days of notice of selection and final IRB approval provided to Cancer Center administration within 60 days of notice of selection.*

PIs are responsible for exhausting the entire project funds within the project period. An NCE will not automatically be awarded.

### **Reports from Awardees**

#### Written Report Requirements

Written reports are due for **quarters 1-3** of the project period. This includes progress towards aims, barriers encountered, plans for the final quarter, and plans for publication and seeking extramural funds for a larger project informed by the pilot project outcomes. A standardized progress report template will be sent to awardees at the end of each quarter via email.

A final report will be due **90 days** after the completion of your project period. This report should include the results of your project and plans for new or expanded studies that build on these results. A standardized final report form will be sent to awardees at the end of each project period via email.

#### Presentation and Oral Report Requirements

##### *Start of Study - Leadership Meeting: Presentation Time (~10 minutes)*

This presentation is designed to be bidirectional. It should include an overview of your project, including overall aims, methodology, and recruitment plan (timeline, eligibility criteria, expectations of participants, and recruitment demographic). Also include how Acres Homes will benefit from your project results, either now or in the future, and how those results will be disseminated into the community. The goal is to allow Leadership and cores to ask any questions and provide any suggestions or support they may have regarding your pilot project and to provide a forum for you to ask questions regarding recruiting and other community-related engagement items.

##### *Acres Homes CPC Steering Committee Meeting: Presentation Time (~10 minutes)*

This presentation is your opportunity to share your initial study design with residents and organizations from Acres Homes. The audience will include more than 30 members of the Be Well Acres Homes Steering Committee, who also serve as the Community Advisory Board for the Acres Homes Cancer Prevention Collaboration (Acres Homes CPC).

##### *Annual Acres Homes CPC Retreat (~10 minutes)*

This presentation should detail your overall aims, methodology, current progress, next steps and any barriers you have faced within your project. Any specific requirements for this presentation will be sent closer to the Annual Retreat date.

##### *End of Study - Leadership Meeting: Presentation Time (~10 minutes)*

Presentation of completed pilot project proposal that includes findings from study as well as your dissemination of results plan (including plan to disseminate to community partners and participants).

##### *Acres Homes CPC Steering Committee Meeting: Presentation Time (~10 minutes)*

Present your findings is an important opportunity to build transparency, trust, and continued collaboration with these community stakeholders through research dissemination. More details regarding this presentation will be shared closer to the meeting date.

Other presentations may be requested by Leadership throughout your project period.

## Acknowledgements

In all publications (abstract, poster, press release, etc.) of findings derived by the use of these funds, the following acknowledgement must be included; "This work was supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Cancer Institute (NCI) under award number 1U54CA280804-01. The contents of this work is solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the NIH." For biosketch purposes, this award should be referred to as "Acres Homes Cancer Prevention Collaboration award number 1U54CA280804-01."

### APPENDIX Instructions for Preparing the Project Plan (Limit: up to five (5) pages, not including references)

- **Specific Aims:** Introduce the topic and specifically reference the relevance of the proposed research to cancer prevention; state what is known about the topic, and state what is not known (the gap in knowledge as related to the objective of your overall proposal). State the central hypothesis that you propose to test or the purpose of the overall proposal. It should be related to the gap in knowledge. List the Specific Aims by which you will test the hypothesis or accomplish your purpose. State your long-term goal. Identify the aspect—central hypothesis or one of the specific aims—for which you must develop preliminary data and explain why it is critical. Briefly elucidate the next step in your research and how these funds will assist you in reaching that step. Include plans to seek extramural funding to support next steps.
- **Significance/Relevance:** Briefly sketch the background of the proposal and critically evaluate existing knowledge. Describe the importance of the preliminary data to the success of the proposal. The preliminary data you expect to develop using the Acres Homes CPC funds.
- **Innovation:** Identify novel aspects of the research questions and methods for the proposed pilot.
- **Approach:** Describe the study design and the procedures to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the work described in the proposal. Describe the protocols to be used and tentative sequence of the investigation. Describe how the data will be analyzed and interpreted. Describe new methodology and its advantage over any existing methodology. Discuss the potential difficulties and limitations of the proposed procedures and alternative approaches to achieve the aims. Discuss any relevant considerations for conducting this project in a PP community. Point out any procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to personnel and the precautions to be exercised. Include a brief description of physical resources available if appropriate including the nature of access to and availability of any existing data. If collaborating with a community organization describe the organization and the nature of the collaboration.
- **Collaboration:** Cite names, departments, and institutions/organizations of collaborating investigators and community organizations. Provide reasons for collaboration and percent effort involved. Please include information about the type of organization that would be well suited to serve as a partner on this project. The Engagement Core will work to match projects with appropriate partner organizations as possible.
- **Dissemination:** Projects that are data based should include a plan for providing the data back to the community. How will data be shared? For example, this might include presentations to the steering committee or relevant community organizations, preparation of reports in lay language, etc.
- **References:** Cite published literature to support the scientific rationale and substantiate contentions, with either citation numbers in parentheses or as superscripts, and provide the complete references in a reference list at the end of the Research Plan.