

**UNITE RESEARCH PRIORITY AREA  
RFA: INCREASING COVID-19 VACCINE UPTAKE**

**Release date: March 16, 2021**

**Application deadline: May 1, 2021**

**Project Duration: 12 months**

A part of the United in True Racial Equity (UNITE) Research Priority Area (RPA) mission is to support research focused on racial disparities, racial health equity, social and racial justice that will result in impactful scholarly outputs and extramural funding for sustainability.

This notice solicits applications for projects that will utilize theory-driven, evidence-based, and culturally appropriate research methods to enhance COVID-19 testing and vaccination in racial and ethnic minority populations in urban and rural areas of the Commonwealth. Projects that are responsive will increase vaccine uptake in Black and Hispanic/Latinx populations.

**Background:** According to the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Black people made up only 5.4% of vaccinations during the first month of the U.S. COVID vaccination program.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, they made up 14.7% of COVID-19 deaths where race was known as of March 8, 2021.<sup>2</sup> Black Kentuckians made up 8.8% of COVID-19 deaths in the state according to the National Center for Health Statistics.<sup>3</sup> Although they represent 8.23% of the total population, only 4% of Kentucky's vaccination recipients were Black or African American as of February 22, 2021.<sup>4,5</sup> On a national level, the rate of Hispanic/Latinx people receiving vaccinations (11.5%) lagged in comparison to the percentage of COVID-19 cases (20.7%) and their overall representation (18.5%) based on 2019 population estimates.<sup>1,2,4</sup> Hispanic residents of Kentucky made up 5.5% of COVID cases, while receiving only 1.1% of vaccines when the race of recipients was known.<sup>3,6</sup>

There are unique challenges associated with vaccine uptake in racial and ethnic minority groups. Government-sanctioned historical abuses in research and the impact of present-day structural racism on access and quality of healthcare undermine public trust and the willingness to get vaccinated.<sup>7,8</sup> Hispanic and Latinx populations face additional barriers associated with gaining access to care and vaccinations, such as linguistic barriers and fear of jeopardizing their immigration status for risk or law enforcement action.<sup>9</sup> Given the overrepresentation of these groups as essential workers, increased risk of death from COVID-19, and known challenges with willingness and accessibility of vaccine uptake, this is a critical issue nationally and within the Commonwealth.

The number of awards will depend on the type of proposals received; however, it is expected that at least two awards will be made. Eligibility is limited to full-time faculty (all title series including regular, research, clinical and special) at the University of Kentucky who are members of the UNITE Research Priority Area. If you are interested in applying and are not a member of the UNITE RPA, please send an inquiry to [unite-rpa@uky.edu](mailto:unite-rpa@uky.edu). Investigators in training including residents, post-doctoral fellows, and clinical fellows are not eligible to serve as PIs but may be co-investigators. A maximum of \$75,000 will be awarded for a period of 12 months. Applications are due May 1, 2021. Submit the application as a single (1) PDF file to [unite-rpa@uky.edu](mailto:unite-rpa@uky.edu). Applications must be single-spaced, at least 11-point Arial font, and adhere to standard grant 1/2-inch margins. **Applications that do not adhere to the font size or spacing requirements will not be reviewed.** Proposal submission through OSPA is not required. The UK proposal development office (PDO) is available to assist with internal competitive award proposals.

### **Applications must include:**

- UNITE Pilot Grant Cover Page
- Specific Aims (1 page)
- Research plan (3 pages)
  - Briefly describe the significance, innovation, and approach
  - Include a timeline for activities
  - Describe the plans beyond the pilot project, including plans for dissemination, publications, and seeking extramural funding
  - References do not count towards the 3-page total.
- NIH style biosketch for each investigator (5 page limit per investigator) with each investigator's role on the project clearly outlined. Please check [here](#) for instructions on formatting an NIH biosketch.
- Budget/justification (1-2 pages)
  - Provide brief justification for each budget item or category.
  - Allowable expenses include: graduate student stipends and tuition, equipment, travel costs associated with the research, up to 1 month of summer salary for those faculty on 9-10 month contracts, participant payments and other standard research expenditures.
  - Non-allowable expenses include: conference travel, salary for 11 or 12-month faculty
  - Note: the review committee will make budgetary recommendations that may impact the final award amounts.
- Letter(s) of support (e.g., community partners, consultants, data, or facilities access needed to complete study)
- Statement of collaborative support from the PIs department or college (1 page).  
Examples of collaborative support may include but is not limited to: monetary support for the project, effort from a staff member to assist with project execution, release of duties to execute the project etc.

**Reporting Requirements:** All publications, presentations, and other creative activities resulting from this award must include the following acknowledgement: "Funding was provided, in part, by the United in True Racial Equity Research Priority Area at the University of Kentucky." One (1) page final report due at project completion detailing study enrollment, results, dissemination, and plans for future funding. Awardees are also required to present findings at UNITE sponsored events.

### **Application deadlines and key dates:**

**May 1, 2021:** Applications due

**May 30, 2021:** Selected Applicants notified

Project period: 12 months from project start date (project start date dependent on IRB approval and disbursement of funds but must be within 1 month of award notification date). Projects must have IRB and other applicable required regulatory approvals in place before funding will begin.

Please address specific application questions to Leah Holton ([leah.holton@uky.edu](mailto:leah.holton@uky.edu)).

## Review Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by the selection committee and possible external reviewers. Scoring of proposals will be based on the standard NIH 9-point scoring system. Each proposal will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

**Significance:** (i.e., Does the project address an important problem or critical barrier to progress in the field?)

**Innovation:** (i.e., Does the proposal utilize novel and applicable theoretical concepts, approaches, methodologies, instrumentation or apply existing concepts to new populations or problems?)

**Approach:** (i.e., Are the intended research activities well-described and likely to be feasible? Does the strategy involve leveraging existing connections and collaborations? Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are study limitations acknowledged and addressed?)

**Investigator(s):** (i.e., Does the PI have the appropriate experience and training, evidence of productivity and/or potential to lead the project?, Does the PI and research team have the required expertise and experience to conduct the proposed research study?)

The review committee will also assess whether the proposed budget and timeline are appropriate for the scope and nature of the project and whether there are any human subjects considerations that may affect study implementation.

## References:

1. Painter EM, Ussery EN, Patel A, et al. Demographic Characteristics of Persons Vaccinated During the First Month of the COVID-19 Vaccination Program — United States, December 14, 2020–January 14, 2021. *Advanced Search Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7005e1>. Published February 4, 2021. Accessed March 8, 2021.
2. Surveillance Review and Response Group. Demographic Trends of COVID-19 Cases and Deaths in the US Reported to CDC. CDC COVID Data Tracker. <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/>. Published March 8, 2021. Accessed March 8, 2021.
3. Provisional Death Counts for Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Distribution of Deaths by Race and Hispanic Origin. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://data.cdc.gov/NCHS/Provisional-Death-Counts-for-Coronavirus-Disease-C/pj7m-y5uh>. Published February 24, 2021. Accessed March 2, 2021.
4. U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Kentucky; United States. Census Bureau QuickFacts. <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/KY,US/RH1725219>. Published February 22, 2021. Accessed March 8, 2021.
5. Weekly Vaccine Demographics - Feb. 22, 2021. Kentucky COVID-19 Vaccine Demographics. <https://chfs.ky.gov/CV19Vax/StatewideVaccineDemographics02222021.pdf>. Published February 22, 2021. Accessed March 2, 2021.
6. 20210208 Statewide Demographics. Kentucky COVID-19 Vaccine Demographics. [https://governor.ky.gov/attachments/20210208\\_Statewide-Demographics.pdf](https://governor.ky.gov/attachments/20210208_Statewide-Demographics.pdf). Published February 8, 2021. Accessed March 8, 2021.
7. Ojikutu BO, Stephenson KE, Mayer KH, Emmons KM. Building Trust in COVID-19 Vaccines and Beyond Through Authentic Community Investment. *American Public Health Association (APHA) publications*. <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2020.306087>. Published February 10, 2021. Accessed March 12, 2021.
8. Quinn S, Jamison A, Musa D, Hilyard K, Freimuth V. Exploring the Continuum of Vaccine Hesitancy Between African American and White Adults: Results of a Qualitative Study. *PLoS Curr*. 2016;8:ecurrents.outbreaks.3e4a5ea39d8620494e2a2c874a3c4201. Published 2016 Dec 29. doi:10.1371/currents.outbreaks.3e4a5ea39d8620494e2a2c874a3c4201
9. Thomas CM, Osterholm MT, Stauffer WM. Critical Considerations for COVID-19 Vaccination of Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants. *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*. <https://www.ajtmh.org/view/journals/tjmd/104/2/article-p433.xml>. Published January 13, 2021. Accessed March 12, 2021.



**UNITED IN TRUE RACIAL EQUITY (UNITE)  
PILOT GRANT COVER PAGE**

**Section A: CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

Principal Investigator Name & Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Department & College: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

UNITE RPA Member: ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Section B: OTHER PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S), CO-INVESTIGATOR(S), OR  
COLLABORATOR(S)**

Name, Role on Project, & College: \_\_\_\_\_

Name, Role on Project, & College: \_\_\_\_\_

Name, Role on Project, & College: \_\_\_\_\_

Name, Role on Project, & College: \_\_\_\_\_

Name, Role on Project, & College: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section C: DEPARTMENT BUSINESS MANAGER (Individual specific to PI's college or  
academic unit)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Department &/or College: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section D: TITLE OF PILOT PROJECT**

Pilot Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section E: BUDGET**

Proposed Dates: Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ End Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Requested: \_\_\_\_\_



## UNITED IN TRUE RACIAL EQUITY (UNITE) PILOT GRANT COVER PAGE

### Section F: RESEARCH AREA

Which UK research priority area does your proposal address (select all that apply):

- ☐ Substance Use
- ☐ Cancer
- ☐ Cardiovascular Disease
- ☐ Diabetes and Obesity
- ☐ Cerebrovascular/neuroscience
- ☐ Diversity and Inclusion
- ☐ Energy
- ☐ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### Section G: PRIOR REVIEW

➤ **Has this project been previously submitted for internal grant funding?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

*If Yes, please provide:*

- Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_
- Grant Mechanism (e.g., IRC, VPR pilot funding): \_\_\_\_\_
- Score & Summary of Feedback:

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**UNITED IN TRUE RACIAL EQUITY (UNITE)  
PILOT GRANT COVER PAGE**

➤ **Has this project been previously submitted for external grant funding?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

*If Yes, please provide:*

- Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_
- Grant Mechanism/Funding Agency (e.g., R03, NIDA): \_\_\_\_\_
- Score & Summary of Feedback:

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**Section H: REVIEW/APPROVAL REQUIRED BY UNIVERSITY POLICY &  
FEDERAL LAW**

➤ **Does this project involve the use of human subjects?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

*If Yes, the project MUST be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to funding start. Please provide:*

- IRB Protocol Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- Date Approved: \_\_\_\_\_
- If not approved yet, IRB date submitted \_\_\_\_\_



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION  
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RESEARCH PRIORITY AREA

**Section G. Abstract (300 words or fewer)**