



Opioid Abatement and Recovery Research Program 2022

Supporting Local Efforts to Address the Opioid Crisis in North Carolina

Request for Proposals

Application deadline: 5:00pm, October 28, 2022

The North Carolina Collaboratory, headquartered at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill), is partnering with North Carolina Central University and the UNC Injury Prevention Research Center to request research and development proposals that can assist local efforts to abate and remediate the opioid crisis across the State.

Opportunity Overview

- **Eligible applicants:** Constituent institutions of the UNC System, as per Section 9F.1(c)(2)(c) of Session Law 2022-74.
- **Total funding available for program (all awards):** \$1,900,000.
- **Award budgets per project:** Direct costs may not exceed \$380,000 for the entire project period.
- **Award period per project:** Projects may not exceed 24 months.
- **Special considerations:** Applications incorporating engagement activities with local governments and/or communities will be prioritized. Project teams should ideally demonstrate prior experience with successful, impactful engagement with local governments and/or have well-established connections to communities impacted by the opioid crisis, including underrepresented or underserved groups experiencing health disparities.
- **Anticipated products:** Practical information, tools, strategies or other research products that can be used by North Carolina local governments and/or the communities they serve to aid opioid abatement and recovery efforts.
- **Funding requirements:** All funds distributed via this program must be used in accordance with State regulations found in Title 09, Subchapter 03M of the North Carolina Administrative Code.
- **Spending restrictions:** No indirect (F&A) costs are permitted, as per Article 31A of North Carolina General Statute (NCGS) Chapter 116-255 Subsection (c)(2).
- **Matching funds requirement:** None.

All applicants should read these instructions thoroughly before preparing an application. Questions regarding this Request for Proposals (RFP) are welcome and may be sent to collaboratory@unc.edu.

Jump to a section:

- [Important Dates](#)
- [Background and Scope](#)
- [Funding Guidelines](#)
- [Eligibility](#)
- [Application Instructions](#)
- [Submission Process](#)
- [Review Process](#)
- [Award Process](#)
- [Reporting and Auditing Requirements](#)
- [Contact](#)

Important Dates

- **Application deadline:** October 28, 2022
- **Estimated award announcements:** November 28, 2022
- **Earliest project start date:** January 1, 2023

Background and Scope

Established in the summer of 2016 by the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA), the North Carolina Collaboratory facilitates the dissemination of expertise within the UNC System and other institutions of higher education for practical use by State and local governments and the communities they serve. In July 2022, the NCGA appropriated funds to the Collaboratory for opioid abatement research and development activities in North Carolina.

This appropriation is part of a \$26 billion national opioid agreement with major drug distributors, of which the NCGA has received an initial installment of \$4.4 million, and local governments have received an additional \$16.3 million. Over the next 18 years, subsequent payments to State and local governments in North Carolina will total \$757 million, with the goal of addressing the opioid crisis through treatment recovery, harm reduction and other strategies.

Accordingly, this Request for Proposals (RFP) seeks to support the generation of practical information, tools, strategies and other research products that can be implemented in counties and municipalities across the State of North Carolina to abate and remediate the opioid crisis. This includes preventing and addressing the misuse and abuse of opioids, as well as treating or mitigating opioid use and other effects of the opioid crisis.

To accomplish this goal, the Collaboratory is partnering with North Carolina Central University and the UNC Injury Prevention Research Center to establish a competitive grant program that engages with local communities, evaluates and guides local government spending over the next 18 years, and generates practical end products for use by local governments and the communities they serve.

Priority Areas

The primary goal of this RFP is to generate practical end products to be used by local governments and/or the communities they serve to address the consequences of the opioid crisis.

Applications are sought in two priority areas:

Priority Area A: Research and surveillance for treatment recovery, harm reduction and other opioid abatement strategies.

Funding for this program is part of a \$26 billion national opioid agreement with major drug distributors, of which State and local governments in North Carolina will receive \$757 million over the next 18 years to address the opioid crisis through treatment recovery, harm reduction and other strategies.

As per the settlement language (including Distributors' 3.25.2022 Exhibit Updates; Exhibit E List of Approved Uses; Schedule B Approved Uses; Part 3 Other Strategies; Section L Research; pages E-14 and E-15), applications for this priority area should seek to address topics such as (but not limited to):

- Research on:
 - Non-opioid alternatives for alleviating pain, especially chronic pain treatment options that are viable and less expensive.
 - Improved service delivery for modalities such as SBIRT [Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment] that demonstrate promising but mixed results in populations vulnerable to opioid use disorders.
 - Novel harm reduction and prevention efforts such as the provision of fentanyl test strips.
 - Innovative supply-side enforcement efforts such as improved detection of mail-based delivery of synthetic opioids.
 - Swift/certain/fair models to reduce and deter opioid misuse within criminal justice populations that build upon promising approaches used to address other substances (e.g., Hawaii HOPE and Dakota 24/7).
 - Public health risks and harm reduction opportunities within illicit drug markets, including surveys of market participants who sell or distribute illicit opioids.
- Epidemiological surveillance of Opioid Use Disorder-related behaviors in critical populations, including individuals entering the criminal justice system, including, but not limited to approaches modeled on the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (“ADAM”) system.
- Geospatial analysis of access barriers to Medication-Assisted Treatment and their association with treatment engagement and treatment outcomes
- Monitoring, surveillance, data collection and evaluation of programs and strategies described in this list.

For more information about the settlement, visit the [CORE-NC website](#) (created and managed by UNC-Chapel Hill investigators) and the [MorePowerfulNC website](#).

Priority Area B: Supporting local government spending on opioid abatement efforts.

Starting in 2022 and continuing for the next 18 years, 100 counties and 14 municipalities will receive 85% of funds allocated to North Carolina as part of a nationwide opioid settlement. To spend these funds, local governments can select from a variety of [abatement strategies](#), including evidence-based, high-impact strategies that can be implemented immediately or following collaborative strategic planning with diverse members of local communities.

To support local governments in these efforts, applications for this priority area should propose projects that can **provide local governments with practical information, resources or tools** to maximize the impact of their spending, such as (but not limited to):

- Tools for tracking/measuring performance metrics of community/region-specific opioid abatement strategies.
- Best practices for centering people with lived experience of former or current substance use in opioid abatement programs.
- Resources to capture emerging trends and inform local government decision-making.
- Evidence for test strip distribution and other harm reduction initiatives.
- Best practices for program coordination across counties and municipalities.

For more details about the settlement and resources for local governments in North Carolina, visit the [CORE-NC website](#) (created and managed by UNC-Chapel Hill investigators). Details of the national settlements can be found on [opioidsettlementtracker.com](#) and [nationalopioidsettlement.com](#).

Anticipated End Products

All applications should seek to develop products that can be used by specific end-users within local governments and/or communities such as (but not limited to):

- Policy recommendations
- Decision-making tools (e.g. website dashboard, interactive map)
- Best practices documentation (e.g. handbook for practitioners)
- Training or educational materials
- Methodology or techniques
- Stakeholder reports
- Technology
- Service or aid
- Community and/or local government presentations

In partnership with North Carolina Central University and the UNC Injury Prevention Research Center, the Collaboratory will assist with the dissemination of results to state and local partners. However, inclusion of local non-academic partners in proposed projects and documentation of prior experience working with non-academic partners to disseminate project results and products are strongly encouraged. Traditional scientific products, such as peer-reviewed publications and presentations at scholarly meetings, are also expected.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Funding Guidelines

All funds distributed via this program constitute State appropriations from the NCGA and must be used in accordance with North Carolina State law. The total amount available for grants in this program is \$1,900,000 via the following funding tiers. All budgets should reflect the actual needs of the proposed project and scope of work. No matching costs are required.

Due to the impact of the opioid crisis on communities across the State, this RFP may prioritize proposals that demonstrate effective community and/or local government engagement, particularly involving or serving underrepresented or underserved groups, with scopes and study designs that are acceptable to and directly benefit these partners.

Funding Tier	Maximum Duration	Maximum Direct Costs	Parameters
1	Up to 24 months	Up to \$190,000	Standard research grant: A proposal for original academic research targeting any topic listed under Priority Area A or Priority Area B of this RFP.
2	Up to 24 months	Up to \$380,000	Engaged research grant: A proposal for original academic research targeting a topic listed under Priority Area A or Priority Area B of this RFP and involving <u>community and/or local government engagement activities</u> .

Funding Restrictions and Requirements

All funds distributed via this program must be used in accordance with State regulations found in Title 09, Subchapter 03M of the North Carolina Administrative Code.

Allowable budget requests:

- Salary and fringe/benefit costs for university personnel who are directly contributing to project activities, including (but not limited to) principal investigators, other key personnel, project managers, research staff, and students.
- Consultants (e.g. community/government partners).
- Travel expenses.
- Equipment.
- Materials and supplies.
- Contracted services.
- Publication fees.
- Student tuition.
- IRB costs.

Budget restrictions:

- Institutional overhead/indirect costs (F&A) are not permitted, as set forth in North Carolina General Statute (NCGS) 116-255(c)(2).

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Eligibility

Applicants

Applications will only be accepted from constituent institutions of the UNC System, as per Section 9F.1(c)(2)(c) of Session Law 2022-74.

Applications from institutions with a core mission to serve underrepresented or underserved groups are strongly encouraged. These groups have been more strongly impacted by the opioid crisis and associated health disparities. The core mission of an institution may be demonstrated by the existence of a dedicated program or activities focused on unique needs of these groups (see [Proposal Content](#)).

Applications are also encouraged from historically minority-serving institutions in North Carolina, namely Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, North Carolina Agricultural & Technical University, North Carolina Central University, UNC-Pembroke, and Winston-Salem State University, as per NCGS 116-255(b)(3).

Engagement Activities

Due to the impact of the opioid crisis on communities across the State and the role of local governments in opioid abatement and recovery, this RFP prioritizes proposals that demonstrate effective engagement with communities and/or local governments.

Accordingly, applications that meet the following criteria may be prioritized:

- Scope of work and study design that are acceptable to, and directly benefit, community and/or local government partners.
- Letters of support from community and/or local government partners.
- Project team members with experience in local government and/or community engagement and trust building.
- Scopes and study designs that reflect active participation from community and/or local government partners.

Principal Investigators and Key Personnel

Any individual with the resource, skills, and knowledge required to carry out the proposed activities may serve as principal investigator (PI) in accordance with their institutional policies and procedures.

If the application includes engagement with communities and/or local governments, the PI and/or key personnel should demonstrate a strong track record of engaging with these entities, including established connections to either:

- Communities impacted by the opioid crisis, including underrepresented or underserved groups experiencing health disparities.
- Local government personnel performing work related to the opioid crisis.

Research Subjects and Materials

All project activities must be conducted in accordance with established federal guidelines and policies for research involving human subjects. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is not required at the time of submission, but the application should a) briefly describe any human subject activities and b) confirm that if selected for funding, the project will be disclosed to appropriate compliance office(s) and IRB (see [Proposal Content](#)).

As applicable, successful applicants will be required to submit IRB protocol numbers and expiration dates to the Collaboratory before award funds are released.

Submission of an application to this RFP indicates an acceptance of all the above requirements for the proposed project. Applicant institutions are responsible for a) ensuring all proposals submitted to the Collaboratory have been reviewed and approved by appropriate institutional personnel and b) overseeing compliance for all awarded projects.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Application Instructions

All activities described in the application should accurately reflect the amount of funds requested for the project and be feasible within the proposed timeframe. **Due to the breadth of topics covered by this RFP, applicants should assume reviewers are scientifically and technically literate but not subject matter experts.**

Proposal Format

Proposals must adhere to the following formatting requirements:

- Use margins of 0.5 inches or larger (top, bottom, left and right) for all pages.
- Use fonts of standard type (e.g. Times New Roman, Arial or Calibri) at 11 points or larger. Smaller text in legends is acceptable if the text remains legible when the page is viewed at 100%.
- Follow the page limits for each section of the application, as outlined below.
- Concise writing and frequent use of white space and headings is strongly recommended.

Applications that include documents that are illegible and/or do not conform to instructions within this RFP will be withdrawn from consideration and will not undergo review.

Proposal Content

Proposals must not exceed the page limits included in each section. Once completed, the following components should be **assembled in the order listed below and combined in a single PDF** for submission to the Collaboratory (see [Submission Process](#)).

Document	Page Limit	Instructions
(1) Cover Page	-	Complete the template provided in the application package.
(2) Project Team	-	Complete the template provided in the application package.
(3) Performance Site Location	-	Complete the template provided in the application package.
(4) Public Information Summary	30 lines of text or less	Provide a succinct and accurate summary of the proposed work for <u>public release</u> that is informative and understandable to a <u>lay reader</u> .
(5) Project Description	6	Using the headings provided below, address the following points using language suitable for a <u>scientifically/technically literate lay reader</u> . Heading 1: Issue or need. Describe the issue/need that you plan to investigate and the intended beneficiaries of your work (e.g. community and/or local government). Heading 2: Prior work and experience. Outline prior work and evidence to support your proposed approach. <i>For <u>funding tier 2 applications</u></i> , provide evidence of established connections to local governments and/or communities impacted by the opioid crisis, including underrepresented or underserved groups experiencing health disparities. Heading 3: Institutional environment. Briefly describe the institutional environment, including any core mission to serve underrepresented or underserved groups impacted by the opioid crisis and associated health disparities. This core mission of an institution may be demonstrated by the existence of a dedicated program or activities focused on unique needs of these groups.

		<p>Heading 4: Approach and engagement. Describe your approach and how your study design will benefit communities and/or local governments in efforts to address the opioid crisis in North Carolina. <i>For funding tier 2 applications</i>, also describe the community or local government partners and their role(s) in the project, and how efforts will be taken to ensure the project activities are not burdensome for any partners.</p> <p>Heading 5: Anticipated challenges. Describe any anticipated project and/or scientific challenges, and how these will be managed and mitigated to increase the likelihood of project success.</p> <p>Heading 6: Outcomes and impacts. Describe your expected products and outcomes. This should include describing a) the products you expect to generate during this project, b) who will be able to access, utilize and benefit from these products, and c) how your project and products will help local governments and/or communities address the consequences of the opioid crisis in North Carolina.</p>
(6) Scope of work	2	Describe the aims, activities, milestones and deliverables of the proposed project, including any important project dates. Also describe how project success will be defined and assessed. <i>For funding tier 2 applications</i> , identify your engagement activities with communities and/or local governments.
(7) Bibliography	-	Using your preferred reference style, provide full references for all information/literature cited in the application.
(8) Budget	-	Complete the template provided in the application package according to the funding guidelines above.
(9) Budget justification	-	Explain in detail each expense listed in your budget. Salary/fringe requests should be accompanied by the name, title, responsibilities, and effort (% or calendar months) of individuals in the proposed project. If any equipment or contracted services are included, please provide quotes from the vendor(s).
(10) Biographical sketches	2 each	Complete the biographical sketch template for the PI and other key personnel (as defined by NIH guidelines) participating in the project.
(11) Letters of support	-	Letters of support are only <u>required</u> for projects involving community and/or local government partners. Letters of support from other individuals/entities are optional.
(12) Human subjects (<i>if applicable</i>)	-	As applicable, describe the involvement and characteristics of human subjects, as well as study procedures, materials used in the research, potential risks to subjects, the process for recruitment and informed consent, and protection against risks. Provide a statement that demonstrates the applicant institution(s) have the appropriate compliance infrastructure and policies in place for all proposed human subjects work, and assurance that the project, if awarded, will be reviewed and approved by an IRB and comply with HIPAA.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Submission Process

The deadline for submissions is 5:00pm on October 28, 2022. Applications received after this deadline will not be reviewed or considered for funding.

All application materials should be combined into a single PDF and submitted via email to collaboratory@unc.edu. Submission emails should be sent by the individual serving as the project PI and contain the following:

- **Subject line:** “Application for Opioid Abatement and Recovery Research Program 2022”.
- **Body:** Include the name, institutional affiliation and contact details for the PI.
- **Attachments:** A single PDF containing all application materials listed in the section above.

Following submission, a reply from the Collaboratory will be sent to the email address used for application submission to confirm receipt. If an email reply is not received within two weeks, please contact collaboratory@unc.edu.

This RFP is solely a request for expressions of interest and statements of qualification. It is not an offer to contract or an invitation capable of acceptance to create a contract. The Collaboratory may cancel or modify this RFP at any time without liability for any loss, cost, or expense as a result of that cancellation or modification. For more information about the Collaboratory and previously funded projects, please see <https://collaboratory.unc.edu/>.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Review Process

All proposals will be evaluated by a review panel comprised of experts from diverse fields and programmatic leadership. **Due to the breadth of topics covered by this RFP, applicants should assume reviewers are scientifically and technically literate but not subject matter experts.**

As part of the review process, the Collaboratory may share the contents of grant applications with both internal and/or external experts to assess the merits of each application and their adherence to requirements described in this RFP. If applicable, the applicant is responsible for specifically identifying all confidential information within the application that should not be shared outside the Collaboratory and review panel.

If deemed necessary by the review panel, applicants may be asked to submit additional information or documentation, and/or present their proposal and other relevant information to reviewers before a funding decision is made.

Review Criteria

The Collaboratory seeks to ensure the highest principles of academic research rigor and scientific inquiry are followed in all projects. Accordingly, reviewers will assess proposals for compliance with the following principles:

1. The development of significant questions that can be investigated empirically.
2. Linkage of research to relevant theory.
3. The use of methods that directly address the question(s) of interest.
4. A coherent and explicit chain of logic and reasoning.
5. A standard of generalizability with existing research and research contexts.
6. Publication of research to encourage professional critique.

Specific to this RFP, the review panel will also evaluate all proposals according to the following criteria:

- What is the potential for the proposed project to effectively address the goals of this RFP (see [Priority Areas A and B](#))?
- Is there a clear description of how end products generated during this project will benefit local governments and/or communities affected by the opioid crisis?
- Is the PI based at an institution with a core mission to serve underrepresented or underserved groups impacted by the opioid crisis and associated health disparities?
- Is the project team well qualified to conduct the proposed activities?
- Is there a clear description of the project’s scope of work?
- Is the budget reasonable for the proposed activities and timeline?
- Is the plan for performing the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on sound rationale?
- For funding tier 2 only:
 - Does the proposed project demonstrate a mutually beneficial collaboration with a community and/or local government partner?
 - Does the project team have the experience and expertise needed to partner with local governments and/or communities impacted by the opioid crisis?

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Award Process

The Collaboratory anticipates notifying applicants of award decisions no later than November 28, 2022. ***Projects may last for up to 24 months, starting no earlier than January 1, 2023.***

Before funds are released, award recipient institutions will be required to review and sign a Funding Agreement (shared after the notification of award) and provide the following information:

- IRB approval dates and protocol numbers (as applicable).
- Payment information, such as a W-9 form, remittance address and ACH banking details.

Funding for selected projects must be managed in accordance with State regulations found in Title 09, Subchapter 03M of the North Carolina Administrative Code, as well as any other regulations that may arise and/or change during the project performance period, as and when the Collaboratory receives updated guidance from relevant entities such as, but not limited to, the NCGA, North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM), UNC System, and UNC-Chapel Hill.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Reporting and Auditing Requirements

Successful applicants will be expected to submit performance and expenditure reports to the Collaboratory. Reporting schedules, instructions, and templates will be provided by the Collaboratory. Failure to submit reports by the deadlines provided by the Collaboratory may result in a hold on or retraction of remaining funds from the award.

Successful applicants are expected to ***keep complete records of the receipt and disbursement of all funds under this project*** for a minimum of five years after the completion of their project, or until all audit exceptions have been resolved, whichever is longer, as required by OSBM and subject to updated guidance from State, UNC System and UNC-Chapel Hill entities. Successful applicants may also be subject to audit requirements stipulated in the North Carolina State Administrative Code. As per State

requirements, non-State entities may also be required to provide an audit by internal and/or external auditors to meet the requirements of the North Carolina Administrative Code and other applicable State guidance, regulations, and/or policies.

During and after the project funding period, successful applicants will be required to respond to information requests from the Collaboratory and the North Carolina Central University Coordinating Center, and may also be asked to participate in seminars, conferences, and presentations to the State legislature and [Collaboratory Advisory Board](#).

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Contact

Questions regarding this funding opportunity and the application process are welcome and should be sent to the Collaboratory team via email to collaboratory@unc.edu.

[\(Back to top\)](#)