REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Lowering the Cost of Conducting Rigorous Nutrition Research

In the roughly four decades since the government first started providing dietary advice, the percentage of Americans who are obese has more than doubled, and the number of people with diabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control, has quadrupled. The lack of credible nutrition research has made it difficult to determine what we should and should not eat in order to be healthy. The dearth of reliable research is due in part to the fact that it is difficult and often cost-prohibitive to conduct rigorous nutrition studies. For example, well-designed nutrition studies usually require expensive inpatient stays for participants in order to ensure that they adhere to the diet in question. Studies conducted in free-living settings are less costly; however, the quality of the data is ambiguous at best since researchers cannot control for many factors. Thus, the Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF) is seeking proposals that are intended to reduce the cost of nutrition studies while improving the quality of the evidence. (Note that LJAF has also issued a related solicitation for proposals outlining rigorous nutrition research on physiological responses to sugar. Details of that Request for Proposals can be found here.)

Project categories

For purposes of this Request for Proposals focused on lowering the cost of conducting rigorous nutrition research, the team is specifically interested in two categories of projects:

1. New methods, including technology or biomarkers, to track and monitor eating patterns. The methods must be more reliable than surveys or questionnaires.

2. New methods for conducting nutrition studies in controlled settings that are not as expensive as metabolic wards. Examples might include military bases or other institutions where behavior and food intake can be more easily monitored.

Applicants must demonstrate that the proposed method can be implemented in a practical, real-world setting, either through past experience with similar studies, potential interested partners, or other evidence demonstrating that there is a viable plan for implementing the approach. Proposals should address the following criteria.

- How much would this proposal cost, and how would it reduce the cost of nutrition studies?
- What is the anticipated quality of the evidence?
- Is the approach feasible?
- Has the applicant provided evidence supporting an actionable and viable plan to test the idea?
- Has this approach been tried before?
- Can the approach be scaled?
- Will this advance the health policy debate?

**Submissions**

Applicants should submit a research proposal by 5 p.m. CDT Jan. 15, 2017 to LowCostNutritionRFP@arnoldfoundation.org.

All proposals should include the following sections and should not exceed 10 pages (inclusive of the sections listed below, appendices, and exhibits):

- A half-page abstract
- A concise summary of the motivation for the project, a description of how the proposed work ensures rigorous evaluation at a lower cost and its importance for health policy
- A brief review of relevant literature and a clear statement that explains how the proposed work will provide a meaningful and innovative contribution
- A detailed description of research design and methods, which follows LJAF’s Guidelines for Investments in Research
- A project budget and timeline including dates for key milestones, deliverables, and completion
- Disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest of all participating researchers
- Vita(e) of the researchers (CVs and bios do not count toward the page limit).

**Selection**

All proposals will be evaluated by a panel of leading experts. The winning project will propose transformative approaches that are intended to improve stakeholders’ understanding of key questions and will have broad policy implications. In addition, selected proposals will bring an innovative and rigorous approach to the evaluation of nutrition.

**Additional information**

LJAF grant funds may only be used for charitable, educational, and/or scientific purposes. LJAF does not fund efforts to influence legislation, to intervene in political elections or campaigns, to promote propaganda, or to conduct voter registration drives. LJAF does not make grants or loans to individuals and does not directly fund scholarships, fellowships, or prizes.