Trailblazer Award
REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

Community Health Partnerships is requesting applications for collaborative, community-engaged research projects that are designed to improve the health of Indiana residents. Projects will be funded for up to $25,000.

Now's your time to blaze the trail!

Proposal Deadline
Monday, June 1, 2026

Please note that you will be submitting through the Indiana CTSI's grants management software WebCAMP. Please allow enough time to become familiar with this system.

The WebCAMP user's guide is also available under the funding announcement here:
https://indianactsi.org/translational-research-development/open-funding-opportunities/

Indiana Clinical & Translational Sciences Institute (CTSI)
Community Health Partnerships

TRAILBLAZER AWARD FOR COMMUNITY-ENGAGED RESEARCH
Request for Applications (RFA)

I. Purpose

The Indiana CTSI Community Health Partnerships (CHeP) is soliciting proposals for collaborative, community-engaged research projects focused on topics that have potential to improve health outcomes for Indiana residents. This RFA accepts projects which propose to serve residents of any county or counties of Indiana. Please note that as the Indiana CTSI is predominately funded by the NIH we must adhere to the unified funding strategy as outlined here.

II. Types of Projects

Eligible projects will propose to: (1) implement exploratory research that has the potential to improve health or address barriers to good health and health care access; (2) evaluate a program that has the potential to improve health or address barriers to health and health care access; or (3) implement and do a preliminary evaluation of a health-related program. Projects that propose to achieve their objectives by changing (or demonstrating the potential to change) policy, systems, or the environment are encouraged.

CHeP defines health broadly and is especially seeking proposals that focus on improving the underlying factors influencing health outcomes. These projects may span various sectors and do not have to be clinical in nature. Examples of such projects could include affordable housing initiatives; food security and nutrition programs; community safety and violence prevention; education and employment initiatives; environmental health and access to green spaces; and transportation and mobility solutions. Additional topic areas that proposals may address include, but are not limited to: cancer, obesity prevention, infant mortality, access to care, diabetes, mental health, and substance use disorder. Eligible projects should aim to create lasting, positive impacts on the conditions that influence people's health and well-being.

III. Application Requirements

Applicants must address a community-engaged research question that is significant and relevant to both the community and university leads. Applicants must demonstrate how the proposed project incorporates community engagement, and provide evidence of shared control of the research question by both leads. See FAQ document on the Trailblazer Award website for a description of community-engaged research. Representatives from the community you wish to serve should be included in the project (i.e., patient or community representatives).

There must be both 1) a university lead and 2) a community lead for the project. Both leads must currently be employed in an Indiana-based organization. Individuals who have received salary support from Indiana CTSI Community Health Partnerships (other than previous Trailblazer Award support) in the 24 months prior to the submission deadline may collaborate on the project but may not serve as a project lead.

The university project lead must be a "full-time" ($\geq$80% FTE) faculty member employed by a college, university, or other academic institution located within the state of Indiana. Postdoctoral students, fellows, residents, adjunct professors, visiting professors, and staff members are not eligible to serve as the university project lead. However, they are permitted to collaborate on the project and may, under guidance from a research faculty member designated as the university project lead, serve in a leadership role for the project.

The community project lead must spend at least 80% of their time working in the community. Community project leads may represent faith-based, cultural or grass-roots organizations, health systems, health departments, or health coalitions. If a community project lead receives salary support from an academic institution, specifically acknowledge this, and justify their role in the community. All individuals listed on the application in any role are required to join the Indiana CTSI Community Health Partnerships Network. To join, please complete this [form](#).

IV. **Funding**

Indiana CTSI Community Health Partnerships will provide up to $25,000 to support each project. Funding will be made available once a letter of IRB approval or review exemption is obtained. Indiana University-based leads will receive a university account number for their portion of the budget. Other university-based leads will receive a purchase order to invoice for their portion of the budget. Community leads will receive a check for their awarded amount.

Requirements:

1. Budget allocations must be split between the community and university leads (minimum 25% to each lead). Faculty salary may be supported up to $5,000 (including fringe and benefits) total per project with appropriate justification. There is no limit to non-faculty salary support. An estimated effort for both supported and in-kind work is expected in the budget, and effort committed cannot be covered by other federal support. (See FAQ page on the Trailblazer [website](#)). You may reimburse for personnel time required to complete CITI training, CIRTification training, or equivalent.
2. The proposed budget must be justified, including all planned expenditures. Please indicate if there are other resources committed to the project in the total budget. Total project costs may exceed $25,000 when other funding entities have committed to the project.
3. If equipment is being purchased with award funds, up to $5,000 of funding can be used to purchase each piece (meaning that individual pieces of equipment cannot exceed $5,000).
4. All hospitality expenses must be justified.
5. Travel expenses (in-state only) are limited to those necessary to achieve the aims of the proposed project. Out-of-state travel cannot be included in the budget.
6. The proposed project period cannot exceed 24 months.

Visit the FAQ page on our [website](#) for an example of a successful application or budget.

V.   Review Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee that includes both community and university representatives, and the committee's funding recommendations will be sent to the Indiana CTSI Community Health Partnerships Advisory Board for review. After review by the Advisory Board, funding recommendations will be made to the Indiana CTSI Strategy Committee. The Indiana CTSI Strategy Committee reserves the right to make final funding decisions based on priorities regarding geographical and institutional diversity as well as project alignment with other Indiana CTSI initiatives. Review criteria include:

1. **Engagement**. Quality and feasibility of community and university lead collaboration on the project. Degree to which community engagement is illustrated in the proposed project at appropriate levels. **[0-20 points]**
2. **Significance**. Significance of the health condition that will be addressed in the proposed population, and the demonstrated need for research and/or intervention to address it. **[0-20 points]**
3. **Health Impact**. Degree to which the project has the potential to improve health, the potential impact of the project on the health condition of interest, and its potential to change a related policy, system, or environmental issue. **[0-20 points]**
4. **Methods and proposed products.** Use of sound design and methods for (i) a research project or (ii) a comprehensive evaluation. Aspects reviewed include: study design, rationale for sample size, description of measures, analysis plan, and data management and statistical platforms. **[0-20 points]**
5. **Sustainability.** Plan for long-term sustainability of the partnership, expansion of the research project, and future funding potential. **[0-20 points]**

VI.   Post-Award Requirements

During the project period, funded recipients will be required to:
1. Obtain IRB approval (if not already approved) or written confirmation from the IRB that the project does not need IRB review. Funding will not be released until one of these is submitted.
2. Submit progress reports annually during the life of the award that describe the work accomplished to date.
3. Attend quarterly meetings with the other current Trailblazer Grant awardees. See the FAQ page on the Trailblazer Award [website](#) for more details.
4. Present project results at the Indiana CTSI Community Health Partnerships Annual Meeting.
5. Complete partnership surveys at the start of the project, 12 months after the start of the project (approximately halfway), and at the close of the project. These partnership surveys are for the purposes of our own internal program improvement and are kept confidential.

Once the project is completed, all recipients (via WebCAMP) will be required to:
1. Provide a written summary of the project and major findings for dissemination to the public (one page).
2. Provide a project impact statement with project close out information.

3. Annually complete status reports on the partnership as well as data on projects, publications, extramural funding, or intellectual property that resulted from the project for at least five years. The Indiana CTSI staff will contact awardees with the link to the online progress reporting system.
4. Acknowledge Indiana CTSI Community Health Partnerships support in all presentations, publications, and reports resulting from the project. Acknowledgement procedures will be explained at the initial post-award meeting and outlined in the award agreement.

VII.   Completing the Application

For the highest likelihood of receiving a reviewer with expertise relevant to the topic of the proposal, applicants should complete a Letter of Intent (LOI) no later than Monday, May 18th, 2026. LOIs should be sent to chep@iu.edu. LOIs should describe the study aims, research questions, or the general topic of the proposal. Applications may still be submitted without a Letter of Intent but may not be reviewed by someone with expertise in the topic area of the proposal.

To start your full submission use the **Start a Submission** link found here or enter https://indianactsi.org/researchers/services-tools/translational-research-development/open-funding-opportunities/ into your browser and open the Community Health Partnerships Trailblazer section.

1. **Cover Page**: The university lead and the community lead must complete and sign the application form. Institutional signatures must also be obtained. Please indicate whether your research involves human subjects. If an IRB application has already been submitted, indicate the protocol number with the approval date or indicate that approval is 'pending'. On this page, you will also indicate the Indiana county or counties in which your project will take place.
2. **Summary/Abstract** *(up to 300 words)*: Include the title, leads and other collaborators involved, purpose/aims, methods, geographic area, target population, expected outcomes, and potential impact.
3. **Project Description** *(up to six pages total, single-spaced, Arial 11-point font, 1-in margins)*: The guidelines below are to help applicants gauge how much content to dedicate to each section. They represent the maximum length of each section for a maximum of six pages total.
   a. Project specific aims *(up to one-half page)*
   b. Project significance and innovation *(up to one page)*
   c. Health impact statement (in lay language) *(up to one-half page).* This statement should briefly explain how your project has the potential to improve health outcomes for the community served by the project.
   d. Project design and methods *(up to two pages)*
   e. Ethical considerations to participants and the community at large. *(up to one-half page)*
   f. Desired outcome, anticipated short-term and long-term impact, and how you plan to evaluate this impact. *(up to one page)*
   g. Description of partnership. Include how the community-university partnership and project idea came about, the level of commitment for each project lead, importance of the project to the community, how the partnership will function, and any unique qualifications and resources. If a community lead receives salary support from an

academic institution, specifically acknowledge and justify the community lead's role in the community. *(up to one page)* Please see FAQ on the Trailblazer [website](#) for the guiding principles of community engaged research.

h. As this award is intended to support the work of an existing community-university partnership, describe the method or metric you will use to evaluate the change in quality of your partnership throughout the project. *(up to one-half page)*

i. Dissemination plan including how you will share the results of your project with the community you seek to serve. *(up to one-half page)*

j. Proposed next steps and plans for long-term sustainability, including extramural funding opportunities and/or intellectual property (IP) that will be pursued. *(up to one page)*

4. **Prior Funding** *(if applicable)***:** If you have received prior Indiana CTSI support/funding (e.g., prior Trailblazer Award, Trailblazer Planning Grant, Project Development Team (PDT) funding, or other Indiana CTSI pilot funding), explain how this project relates to and/or will complement your other Indiana CTSI supported work.

5. **Proposed timeline** that includes all the major components of the project.

6. **References/Literature cited**

7. **Detailed Budget & Budget Justification**. Example in FAQ page on Trailblazer [website](#).

8. **Resume, CV, or NIH Biosketch of University Lead and Community Lead.** *(maximum 5 pages each)*

9. **Letters of Support** (if applicable, include with application, not as separate attachment; maximum of 3).

10. **Response to request to use application for educational purposes.** See FAQ on [website](#).

11. **Application Checklist**

VIII.   Timeline

RFA Release:	March 1, 2026
Virtual Q&A Session:	April 24, 2026 11:00am
Letter of Intent Deadline:	May 18, 2026
Proposal Deadline:	June 1, 2026
Award decisions:	August 2026
Start date:	October 1, 2026

IX.   We encourage you to reach out to Sarah Glock with questions:

Sarah Glock, Program Manager: sardowns@iu.edu / 317-278-8416

If you have further questions, please see our website, view our informational webinar recording [here](#), and register to attend our virtual **Q&A on Friday, April 24th, 2026 at 11:00am.**
Register in advance for this meeting:
https://iu.zoom.us/meeting/register/xYtY05rGSseBQNochSU4eA

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.