Rapid Submission: Building an Evidence Base for Commercially Available Technology

A. KEY DATES

- Friday, March 27, 2020: Initial FOA posted
- Friday, May 22, 2020: UCONN INVESTIGATORS: InCHIP Affiliate Application due by 11:59 PM EST
- Friday, June 12, 2020: Full proposals due by 11:59 PM EST
- Friday, June 19, 2020: Applicants notified of award decision
- July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021: Award period

B. PURPOSE

The Institute for Collaboration on Health, Intervention, and Policy (InCHIP) and the UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media are collaborating on a seed grant program that promotes research that builds an evidence base for commercially available technology. Two proposals will be funded. One seed grant will be limited to UConn PIs ($15,000) and one will be open to PIs from any institution ($5,000). For the latter, including UConn investigators is highly encouraged. Eligible studies must be for the purpose of providing preliminary data to support a federal grant application. For example, eligible studies may:

- Evaluate the reliability, accuracy and/or validity of a wearable device or sensor
- Evaluate the real world effectiveness of a commercial health technology
- Evaluate the impact of specific uses of a social media platform on a health outcome
- Conduct a pilot feasibility study of a commercial technology on a health outcome
- Collect needed qualitative or quantitative data from users on their use of and preferences regarding a health technology

Funded projects must be consistent with the missions of InCHIP and the UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media (see below). Proposals must demonstrate how the proposed work will generate critical preliminary data to support an extramural grant (e.g., NIH, NSF) and describe the aims of that subsequent grant.

The ultimate goal of the FY20 InCHIP-UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media Seed Grants is to build evidence for commercially available health technology and to assist investigators in securing federal funding. UConn investigators must commit to submitting subsequent federal grants through InCHIP.

C. FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

One award of up to $15,000 is available for this seed grant competition for UConn investigators and one award of up to $5,000 will be available for investigators at any institution. All grant funds must be expended within two years of the award date. Unexpended funds will revert to InCHIP and the UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media.

Seed grant funds may only be used for direct costs of carrying out approved projects, such as:
a. Personnel who are essential for conducting the research project, such as graduate research assistants and student labor. Individuals who are not on the regular state payroll (i.e., consultants and other off-campus assistance) may be hired to perform special research-related tasks as needed.
b. Resources that require fee-for-services.
c. Participant incentives for recruitment or study participation.
d. Travel that is necessary to conduct the research, NOT travel to present the results of the research, or travel to explore future funding opportunities.
e. Equipment necessary for conducting the research (“equipment” is defined as an article of tangible, nonexpendable, personal property that costs $5,000 or more).
f. Project supplies, including drugs and services.
g. Other specifically authorized expenses that are essential for carrying out the project.

Seed grant funds may not be used for the following:

a. The salary of the UConn Principal Investigator, UConn Co-Investigator(s), or any faculty member.
b. Living expenses.
c. Laptops or desktop computers, unless used exclusively for the project and not for any other activities.
d. Service/maintenance contracts on equipment.
e. Laboratory renovations or other infrastructure renovations.
f. Institutional and/or individual memberships in professional organizations.
g. Travel to professional meetings to present the results of the research, or any conference attendance.
h. Indirect costs, including clerical and administrative personnel salaries.
i. Costs associated with the publication of results of the research, such as purchase of reprints.
j. Investigator training costs, including tuition.

Applicants are encouraged to contact InCHIP while they are developing their proposal if they have questions about whether a cost would be allowable.

D. PROJECT AND INVESTIGATOR ELIGIBILITY

1. Proposals must be for studies that are working to build evidence for commercially available technology addressing a health-related issue. They must also be for the purpose of gathering needed preliminary data for an extramural (e.g., NIH or NSF) grant.

2. For the $15,000 award, the PI must be a UConn faculty member and must meet the following eligibility requirements:
   a. The UConn PI must have an eligible faculty appointment at UConn, and s/he must be eligible to submit grants through InCHIP. Eligible faculty appointments are tenured or tenure-track faculty, in-residence research faculty, clinical faculty, other research faculty, research scientists/scholars, and adjunct faculty. Eligible faculty are not restricted to junior faculty.
   b. Ineligible appointments are post-doctoral fellows, lecturers, research assistants and research associates, visiting titles, and extension titles.
   c. The UConn PI must be an approved InCHIP affiliate by the time the final proposal is submitted. The InCHIP Affiliate application form and instructions are available here. Please allow at least two weeks for approval.
   d. Graduate students are not eligible.
   e. Attended the 2020 UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media 4th Annual Conference.

3. For the $5,000 award, the PI must meet the following eligibility requirements:
   a. Have a graduate degree in a related field and be employed in a relevant setting in academia, industry, non-profit, or government institution.
   b. Attended the 2020 UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media 4th Annual Conference.

4. Seed grant proposals must be predominantly the work of the PI and for the benefit of the PI’s research programs. Proposals written primarily by graduate students or others in the PI’s name are not permitted. Graduate student research has separate funding opportunities at UConn.
5. The proposed research must be consistent with the missions of InCHIP and the UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media:

a. **InCHIP Mission:** “InCHIP engages in research to create new scientific knowledge, theoretical frameworks, health behavior change interventions, and methodological advances associated with health and health behavior at multiple levels of analysis (e.g., individual, family, community, policy). InCHIP research focuses on understanding the dynamics of health behavior and related systems, on the science of health behavior change, on research to inform policy, and on the science and practice of developing, implementing, evaluating, and disseminating effective health behavior change interventions. Health is broadly defined and includes physical and mental health, and outcomes with critical implications for health. Work at the intersection of behavior and biology, and at the intersection of science and public policy are encouraged.” (See [here](#) for more about InCHIP’s mission.)

b. **UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media Mission:** “Our mission is to advance the science of digital health by exploring novel applications of digital technologies to health problems, using technology to increase the impact and reach of health interventions, leveraging technology to gain a deeper understanding of health issues, and developing new methodologies with digital health tools to conduct clinical research.”

6. The proposed seed grant project should address a novel research question, not a research question that is already being explored as part of an existing, externally-funded project.

7. Changes to the project’s objectives and budget will require prior approval from relevant InCHIP and Center for mHealth and Social Media staff.

8. The PI must commit in good faith to using the seed grant funds to obtain pilot data to support an external grant proposal that to be submitted by June 2022. Recipients of the $15,000 UConn-only award must submit a grant proposal through InCHIP.

9. If the PI has an InCHIP seed grant from a previous fiscal year, s/he must close out that award prior to the start of the award period for the FY18 InCHIP-UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media Seed Grant, including submitting an extramural grant proposal through InCHIP.

10. An individual may only submit one LOI/proposal for this competition as a Principal Investigator (PI).

E. APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

Note: InCHIP staff will answer questions about the seed grant application (including the budget), but will not assist applicants with development of the actual budget or budget justification, or with writing the seed grant LOI or proposal.

**Stage 1: Proposal Development (Optional)**

Applicants are encouraged (but not required) to utilize resources offered by InCHIP’s Cores and the UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media when developing their research ideas and proposals. Seed grant related services include:

- **Training and Development Core**: Individual consultations are available by appointment with InCHIP Training and Development Core staff. Additionally, a Grant Proposal Incubator is offered that gives applicants the opportunity to meet with a panel of InCHIP investigators to receive feedback on their research ideas. More information about this Core can be found [here](#).

- **Community-Engaged Health Research Core**: This Core can help UConn researchers make linkages to community researchers and community-based organizations. For assistance with identifying possible community partners, email boundaryspanners@chip.uconn.edu. For information about this Core, click [here](#).

- **Intervention Core**: This Core can help researchers identify and develop collaborations with experts who can assist with theory-based intervention development, implementation and rigorous outcome evaluation and dissemination. To request assistance finding a collaborator with intervention expertise, visit the Intervention Core webpage [here](#).

- **UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media**: The Center has a suite of services available to researchers on a fee-for-service model. Services include adapting intervention content and health messaging for social media delivery.
using specific platforms, training on social media management and scheduling software, data extraction, and user-centered design. Please contact Dr. Sherry Pagoto sherry.pagoto@uconn.edu for more information.

InCHIP Cores offer more extensive services for those applying for external funding including pre- and post-award services, as well as assistance in the design, development, implementation, and dissemination of research. A complete description of the Core services can be found in each Core’s respective websites (see links above). Please look for announcements from us about Core Trainings, Workshops, and events in the coming months.

Stage 3: Full Proposal

1. Full proposals must be submitted online through the application available on the InCHIP seed grant website by the above specified due date/time. The application must include the following:
   a. Project Title (maximum 81 characters)
   b. PI’s Contact Information
   c. Abstract/Project Summary (maximum 3000 characters) – should include the goals of your extramural grant proposal and why data gathered from this seed grant is needed for your proposal.
   d. Research Plan (3 pages)
      i. Specific Aims Seed Grant – the specific aims of your seed grant proposal (1 page)
      ii. Research Plan – for your seed grant research project (1 page)
      iii. Specific Aims of Extramural Grant Proposal – (1) the specific aims of your extramural grant proposal for which the seed grant will provide critical preliminary data. (2) the funding mechanism including program announcement to which you will submit this extramural grant proposal. (3) how seed grant will provide critical preliminary data to support this extramural grant proposal (1 page)
   e. The program announcement (or RFA) for the extramural grant
   f. References (not included in the page limit for the Research Plan)
   g. Roles and functions of project personnel, and the individual responsibilities of the PI (maximum 1 page)
   h. Budget with justification for each item (maximum 1 page)
   i. Biographical sketch of PI, in NIH or NSF format
   j. Other Sources of Support for the proposed project (e.g., additional funding, in-kind services, equipment)
   k. Optional: Letters of Support

2. Full proposals will undergo a rigorous review process, with reviewers from InCHIP and the UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media. One or more external reviewers may be consulted as well. Individuals who are Senior/Key Personnel or Other Significant Contributors on a seed grant proposal will be excluded from participation in the review process.

3. Each PI will be notified via email whether or not his/her proposal has been awarded funding.

F. REVIEW CRITERIA

Priority for funding will be based on the following review criteria, in no particular order:

- Scientific merit of the seed grant study and the extramural grant study
- Ways the work advances the science relating to a commercially available health technology
- Ways the work advances the science on the relevant health topic.
- Relevance of the study to the research missions of InCHIP and the Center for mHealth and Social Media.
- Extent to which the project is novel or innovative, especially a proposal testing a new methodology, new theory, or new area in need of pilot data.
- Importance of the research question to external funders.
- Feasibility of plans to submit a subsequent proposal to external funders no later than June 2022.
- Composition of the research team (preference will be given to diverse teams that include community partners and/or multiple academic disciplines).
G. Awardee Requirements

If awarded, the PI is not required to route her/his proposal through Sponsored Programs Services (SPS).

The awarded PI is responsible for obtaining all required approvals for her/his research. Please visit the UConn IRB website for more information about the IRB approval process for research conducted at the UConn-Storrs Campus, the five regional campuses, the School of Law, and the School of Social Work. For information about the IRB approval process for research conducted at UConn Health, please visit the UConn Health IRB website.

Awardees will be required to submit a brief summary report of their progress annually and a final report at the conclusion of the project or award period. Changes to the project’s objectives, PI, and budget will require prior approval from relevant InCHIP and UConn Center for mHhealth and Social Media staff.

Detailed awardee instructions/requirements will be distributed to the seed grant winner when s/he is notified of the award decision. All awardee requirements described above are subject to change in accordance with updated institutional procedures (e.g., routing requirements).

H. Contact

For questions not addressed in this FOA or on our seed grant website, please contact seedgrants@chip.uconn.edu.