

**LA CaTS Center**  
**Community Scholars Program (LaCoSP)**  
**Request for Applications 2025-2026**  
(Revised 1/7/2025)

## LA CaTS Community Scholars Program (LaCoSP) 2025-2026 Call for Applications

KEY DATES	
<i>Dates are subject to change (Revised 1/1/25)</i>	
Release Date	January 8, 2025
Informational Session (Zoom meeting) <a href="https://xula.zoom.us/j/93149533483">https://xula.zoom.us/j/93149533483</a>	January 17, 2025 (3:00pm CST)
<p><b>*LaCoSP Proposal Preparation Webinar Series*</b></p> <p>Webinars with respective links are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Fostering community-Academic partnerships</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Research ethics and human protection regulations</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Ethics in community engaged research</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Grant writing and research plan</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">NIH checklist and templates</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Budget guidelines and NIH templates</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webinar were designed to provide support during the proposal preparation.</li> <li>• Meetings to review learning topics and/or ask questions can be requested any time before proposal submission. Email <a href="mailto:mechever@xula.edu">mechever@xula.edu</a></li> </ul>
Letter of Intent Due (required)	Feb 7, 2025 (5:00pm CST)
Invitation for Full Application	Feb 11, 2025
Mentorship personalized sessions	February 11 to Mar 31
<p>Project presentations to LACATS's Community Advisor Boards (CABs) (required)</p> <p>This is a community engaged experience where teams, invited to submit full proposals, present the project and receive feedback from the community advisors on how to improve their projects.</p>	<p>(Ad hoc) March 13-21</p> <p>Meetings will be scheduled according to the needs</p>
Applications Due	Mar 31, 2025 (5:00pm CST)
Evaluation of proposals / LACATS approval	Apr 1- May 30, 2025
Notice of award status	Jun 2, 2025
Kickoff Retreat: Are we Ready?	Zoom, Jun 9, 2025 11:00 to 1:00pm
IRB approval letter and CITI certificates due	June 30, 2025
NIH approval and grant award disbursement (1)	July 1, 2025
Start of pilot projects (1)	July 1, 2025
Quarterly project reports due	Sept. 2025, Dec. 2025, March 2026
End of pilot projects and final report due	June 30, 2026
Closing Ceremony (Project Presentations & Awards)	TBD

(1): Grant award disbursement require NIH and IRB approvals. Dates to start project activities vary according to grant status as well as the respective university administrative process.

General Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community and academic Co-PIs; Up to 2 teams awarded; Funding up to \$10,000/project</li> <li>• Presentations to CABs before proposal submission and participation in formal training is <b>required</b></li> <li>• LA CaTS and NIH approval required</li> <li>• One year to complete pilot project activities</li> </ul>
<p>LaCoSP Applications Details: <a href="https://www.lacats.org/research-funding/available-opportunities/funding-opportunity-lacosp.aspx">https://www.lacats.org/research-funding/available-opportunities/funding-opportunity-lacosp.aspx</a></p> <p>Application Submission Site: <a href="https://sparc.lacats.org">https://sparc.lacats.org</a></p>
Contacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LaKeisha Williams, PharmD., MSPH, LACaTS Community Engagement Core, Director, <a href="mailto:llgeorge@xula.edu">llgeorge@xula.edu</a></li> <li>• Margarita Echeverri, PhD., MSc, LACaTS Community Engagement Core, Associate Director, <a href="mailto:mechever@xula.edu">mechever@xula.edu</a>, 504-520-6719</li> </ul>

## Informational Conference Call

The recording from the informational session will be uploaded in the LACaTS YouTube channel. Please email [mechever@xula.edu](mailto:mechever@xula.edu) for further questions.

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## LA CATS Community Scholars Program (LaCoSP)

### LaCoSP

The LaCoSP is a research opportunity that was developed by the Community Engagement and Outreach Core (CEO) of the Louisiana Clinical and Translational Science (LA CaTS) Center.

### Purpose

The goal of the LaCoSP is to increase the capacity of community-academic partnerships to conduct community engaged research with mutual ownership of the processes and products, and with the ultimate

goal of improving the health of residents of Louisiana and the nation. LaCoSP pilot projects are intended to inform future grant applications by each LaCoSP team for state, federal, foundation and other sponsor funding considerations.

## Goals

- Increase academic research investigators' participation in community engaged research.
- Promote collaboration and trusted partnership between community-based organizations addressing health disparities and translational researchers within the LA CaTS Center institutions.
- Fund multiple PI (Community & Academic) pilot projects relative to community needs, which are congruent to the goals, mission and vision of the LA CaTS Center.
- Stimulate subsequent research funding, projects and peer-reviewed publications.

## Overview and Competencies

The Louisiana Clinical and Translational Science (LA CaTS) Center Community Engagement and Outreach Core (CEO) is accepting applications for LA CaTS Community Scholars Program (LaCoSP), **Cohort 7 (2025-2026)**. The program provides formal training and pilot project funds for teams comprised of a community and an academic partner interested in conducting community-engaged (CEnR) research studies.

Participants successfully completing LaCoSP, will have the skills to:

1. Articulate the concepts and components of CEnR and other methods
2. Apply community engagement principles in the conduct of research.
3. Communicate with audiences in both community and academic settings about community engagement principles and components.
4. Design and implement a pilot community engagement study to address a shared community health priority.
5. Incorporate community engagement principles and approaches in funding applications.
6. Develop a 3–4-year plan for subsequent community engagement research funding based on pilot results.

## Priorities

The LA CaTS Community Advisory Boards (CABs) and results of community needs assessment identified the following health issues as a priority for research in Louisiana: obesity, cardiovascular disease, social determinants of health, maternal and child health, and mental health. We look forward to seeing how team projects align with these priorities and/or to expanding this list of health research needs based on input from communities and research teams across the state.

## Program Requirements & Eligibility

### Team Structure

Each team must consist of at least one community partner and one academic partner.

An **academic partner** is an individual(s) with a faculty appointment at any LA CaTS Institutions, including Pennington Biomedical Research Center, LSU Health-New Orleans, Tulane University, Children's Hospital, LSU A&M, Xavier University of Louisiana, LSU Health-Shreveport, or Ochsner Health.

A **community partner** is defined as an individual(s) who maintains a primary affiliation (employed full time) with a community organization and who is not affiliated with an academic and/or healthcare institution. For the purpose of this program, *community organization* is defined as an organization that has:

- 1) a documented interest in improving the health of the relevant community (e.g., a mission statement); and
- 2) a history of serving the health needs and interests of the relevant community.

These organizations may include, but are not limited to public schools, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, community-based health provider organizations and/or advocacy groups.

Notes:

- *The intent is to foster community organizations to conduct research. Community partners with high prior research experience will not be allowed to apply as the community principal investigator.*
- *Considering the size of this program, proposals considering clinical trials are not allowed. Please check the [NIH definition of clinical trial](#) when designing the study.*

## Program Details

The program is divided into three key components:

### I. Proposal submission

During the application period, each team prepares and submits a pilot grant proposal as part of the LaCoSP application. Teams submitting a proposal should follow instructions provided along this document, including the assessment of the status of their collaboration.

### II. Formal Training

Considering that team members may have different levels of expertise when writing a proposal as well as working on community engagement projects, LaCoSP provides formal training and mentorship to help in the improvement of the proposal and successful submission for LA CaTS and NIH revision and final approval as well as along the conduction of the project activities.

As the formal training is developed to ensure that LaCoSP scholars and prospective applicants have the ability to meet each LaCoSP competency and that each team gains the necessary skills to carry out a community-engagement project, it is divided into two components: The **LaCoSP Proposal Preparation Webinar Series** will be conducted *before* the deadline to submit full proposals, and the **LaCoSP Seminar Series**, *after* the awardees are confirmed.

The sessions would be approximately 60-90-minutes each. In order to facilitate attendance, the sessions could be scheduled together (one day-long or two half days) and delivered using different approaches (in-person, online, or hybrid), according to the needs. However, dates for in-person training will be provided in advance. The sessions may address topics related to community engagement and building and sustaining partnerships; grantsmanship following NIH requirements; working with culturally diverse populations; addressing low health literacy; understanding and applying ethical principles in community research; developing evaluation plans; and career development, among others. Inter-professional faculty and

community members conduct these training sessions. Optional online modules, as needed, will be recommended to all participants to help build research capacity.

Participants will receive an attendance notice for each session. Those participants attending and submitting the survey evaluation of at least 80% of the sessions will be given a *Certificate of Completion of the LaCoSP Formal Training Program*.

### III. Mentorship

Prospective LaCoSP applicants may get advantage of mentorship provided during the proposal writing and during the study timeline.

**A. Mentorship for proposal preparation:** An important component of the formal training provided as part of the LACoSP program is the personalized mentorship sessions provided to teams while writing the proposals. During this mentorship period, teams are encouraged to submit questions and requests for mentorship to LaCoSP staff. The personalized sessions will be scheduled and conducted through zoom meetings and/or emails according to the needs. Mentorship may include revising the proposal, consents, IRB applications, budgets, study materials (surveys, interview scripts, etc.), bio-sketches, and anything else that the team may need to submit a competitive application.

**B. Mentorship for study activities:** In the proposal, each team may identify a community and/or academic mentor, according to the team's needs and field of choice. A statement about how the mentor(s) will help guide the development, implementation, and evaluation of a pilot project should be included in the proposal, as well as the respective letter(s) of support. Study mentor(s) should have expertise and success with community engagement methods, data collection/analysis, and/or with the health topic addressed by each team. Teams are expected to meet with their mentor(s) at least once a month. If you need a mentor(s) for your project but still have not one identified and/or committed to the project, contact the LaCoSP staff during the *Mentorship for proposal preparation* and describe expertise required and LaCoSP staff will help you to find one.

## Application Process

LaCoSP application materials are available for download at the [LA CaTS Funding Opportunities webpage: https://www.lacats.org/research-funding/available-opportunities/funding-opportunity-lacosp.aspx](https://www.lacats.org/research-funding/available-opportunities/funding-opportunity-lacosp.aspx)

### I. Letter of Intent

Please send a **Letter of Intent** (LOI) signed by academic and community partners with a brief 2-3 sentence statement describing your research project. A Letter of Intent Template is available as an attachment on this document (*See attachment I*). Due date is stated in the KEY DATES Table at the top of this document. **Please submit the LOI by email to [info@lacats.org](mailto:info@lacats.org), and include “LaCoSP Letter of Intent – Cohort 7” in the subject line of the email.**

## II. Full Application

**Project management and performance:** Following the principles of community-engagement and community-based participatory research, both the academic and the community principal investigators assume similar responsibilities in the management and performance of the project. However, the academic PI is responsible for the submission of the proposal, IRB protocol and the general administration of the project and funds received.

Documents required for administrative and NIH approval of the project include designated NIH forms (i.e. face page, performance sites, budget pages, etc.), regulatory approval, applicable human subjects' protection section, training certificates, among others. *Details for completing each section and requested information are provided below.* Please complete **ALL** sections of the LaCoSP application materials in the following **order**:

### A. NIH PHS 398 Forms (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>)

1. Form Page 1: Face Page (signed by authorized institutional representative)
2. Form Page 2: Project Summary, relevance, project sites
3. Form Page 3: Key personnel and significant contributors
4. Form Page 4: Detailed Budget for Initial Budget Period (1 year)
5. Form Page 5: Budget for Entire Proposed Project Period and Budget Justification. If the budget justification does not fit on Form Page 5, then download and utilize the Continuation Format Page

**Notes:** Funds for the project will be managed by the academic partner's institution that is a LA CaTS Center member institution. The budget amount awarded is dependent upon NIH funds and/or agreeable institutional available funds. The funding available for each project is determined by the LA CaTS Center Executive Committee and each team should discuss budget details with the LaCoSP leaders

### B. Community and Academic Partnership (1 page): Please describe:

1. Team and purpose of the partnership
2. Date and description of established partnership
3. The work you have previously completed as partners
4. The process of identifying project health issue and development of the proposal
5. The team and institutional environment: your ability as a team to carry out a community-engaged research project in partnership and contributions of each team member, including the role of the mentors, if any, as well as institutional resources and support.

Note: Attach as appendix the signed **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** (*See template in Attachment II.*), and the **bio-sketches** and respective **letters of support** from key personal and institutions participating in the project.

**Notes:** A biographical sketch, also known as a bio-sketch, is a standardized format to summarize achievements, skills, education and formal training. LaCoSP Academic partners and mentors, if any, are required to submit an NIH-formatted bio-sketch. Go to <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm> for a template, examples, and for more information. LaCoSP Community partners are encouraged to submit an NIH-formatted bio-sketch. However, it is also acceptable for Community partners to submit a resume describing their experience, education, accomplishments, and awards.

### C. Research Plan

(5 to 7 single-spaced pages, Arial 11 font, half-inch margins– excluding references)

1. **Specific Aims:**

- State the aims (recommend no more than 3 aims)
- For each aim, specify expected outcomes including how outcomes are being measured and research hypothesis.

2. **Research Strategy**

a) **Significance** (approx. 1/2 page recommended)

- Describe the research problem and research question.
- Why is this problem important?
- Why is this project worth doing?

b) **Innovation** (approx. 1/2 page recommended)

- How will this work advance the field or contribute to the needed body of knowledge?
- How will this work lead to changes in health behaviors or health?

c) **Methods:**

- Describe study design and procedures
- Describe measurements and data collection instruments to be used to collect participants' data. *Note: Attach as appendix any questionnaires, surveys or interviews scripts and any other tools to be used.*
- Include a timeline for project completion with major milestones for project completion over the one-year timeframe.
- Describe data management and statistical analysis plan including team capabilities to perform the procedures.

**Note:** Applicants are **recommended** to consult with the LA CaTS Biostatistics & Epidemiology Core regarding data management and statistical procedures. *Requests for a biostatistical consultation are made online on the **LA CaTS Center SPARC Request** website (<https://sparc.lacats.org>). Search the SPARC service catalog for the necessary services.*

d) **Sample Population and Human Subjects Protection Plan:**

- Describe the target population in the study and your plans to engage your community of interest in terms of participant involvement, support and the nature of outcomes.
- Describe estimated enrollment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, possible risks/benefits and mechanisms to protect privacy and confidentiality of information, including consent and HIPAA protections.
- Discuss rationale for inclusion/exclusion of women, children and minorities as research participants, and attach the **PHS Human Subjects** information including the **Inclusion Enrollment Report** (link to [fillable form](#) and [Instructions](#))
- Describe the status of the submission process for IRB approval and the CITI trainings required by the institution to complete research with human participants

**Notes:** Information in this section should be consistent with the IRB protocol. Each member of the teams accepted into the LaCoSP must complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training(s), required for the respective academic organization, as part of the submission of the IRB protocol. Team members must complete the training individually. Community partners may need to login information at the academic institution to have access to the CITI training. Teams will receive additional information on how to complete CITI training(s) when they are accepted into the program. The IRB approval letter and CITI training certificates will be required one month after award notification.

e) **Impact** (approx. 1 page recommended)

- Short-term project goals



- Long-term project and team partnership goals
- How does this work advance the aims of community engagement and translational research?
- Why and how will this initial investment of money and effort lead to research that impacts the health of people and communities?
- Specifically outline **next steps** leading from this work to additional funding and research dissemination.

## D. Required appendixes

1. **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**. *See template in Attachment II*
2. **NIH-formatted bio-sketches** from key academic personnel including mentors, and resumes OR bio-sketches from key community partners. *See template at <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>*
3. **Letters of support** from mentors, institutions, project sites, and additional collaborators
4. **Tools** such as questionnaires, surveys, interview guides, etc., used to collect participants' data. Although study tools do not have to be finalized for the initial application, drafts and/or validated tools to be used/adapted should be attached to the proposal
5. **PHS Human Subjects** form including the **Inclusion Enrollment Report** (See [fillable form](#) and [Instructions](#))

**Additional appendixes:** Reasonable appendixes (no more than 5 pages) can be included to describe details related to figures, trainings, etc. and are not counted as part of the 10-page proposal.

## III. Submission Process

1. Combine all completed application materials in the order above (A-D) and additional appendixes into ***ONE*** PDF file.
2. Applications should be submitted on the LA CaTS Center SPARC Request online system at <https://sparc.lacats.org>.
3. First time users need to create a Login and Password as prompted on the LA CaTS Center SPARC Request online system at <https://sparc.lacats.org>. Applicants can also review services and request consultations at any time in the application process with the LA CaTS Center cores and resources through SPARC.

**Submit one application per community-academic team.** Complete application must be received no later than the date/time specified at the KEY DATES Table at the top of this document.

## Application Review Process

All applications are reviewed and scored under a two-step process:

- 1) **Eligibility Criteria Screening Process** – All applications are screened for eligibility by LA CaTS/CEO staff and leadership, based on the online information and completed LACoSP Application submitted. Applications received after the due date are NOT accepted.
- 2) **Panel Review Process** – All applications successfully meeting the minimum eligibility requirements are reviewed and scored by a community-academic review panel. Applications are scored according to the criteria listed below:

1. **Partnership capacity** - strength of partnership to carry out stated goals:
    - a. Ability of partnership to work together to achieve stated goals
    - b. Resources and support available to community and academic partners
    - c. History of partnership
    - d. Experience of both partners in the targeted community and health promotion topic
    - e. Training of community and academic partners
    - f. Quality of the proposed research
    - g. Potential for continued research funding
  2. **Significance** of the community health issue to be addressed in the pilot project.
  3. **Approach** of pilot project:
    - a. Incorporation of participatory methods for community and academic partners
    - b. Innovation
    - c. Scientific sound of research methods proposed
    - d. Appropriateness of approach to meet short-term and long-term goals of project
    - e. Potential for future funding by the team
- 3) **Scoring** – Applications are scored modeled on the 9-point NIH scoring system which weighs strengths and weaknesses and designates if has minor, moderate, or major weaknesses.

Strength	Score	Descriptor
High	1	Exceptional
	2	Outstanding
	3	Excellent
Medium	4	Very Good
	5	Good
	6	Satisfactory
Low	7	Fair
	8	Marginal
	9	Poor

## Notice of Award

Teams with the best scores will be admitted into the LaCoSP. Successful applicants will be notified if they have been accepted into the program. See timeline on the KEY DATES Table at the top of this document

**LACATS/NIH FINAL AWARD APPROVAL AND FUNDS DISBURSEMENT:** Each pilot project full proposal and the associated IRB application submission is peer-reviewed by LaCoSP/LA CaTS and NIH staff. The LA CaTS Center Administrative Core facilitates the administrative and NIH approvals of projects. All community scholar pilot projects **MUST** receive LA CaTS administrative approval (which includes NIH prior approval) *before* the project can begin and funds (up to \$10,000 in total costs) can be released.

## Application Checklist

- ☐ Recommended: Attend Informational Session
- ☐ Recommended: Contact the respective IRB for initial protocol development and submission

- ☐ Required: Email Letter of Intent
- ☐ Required: Submit Online Application (single PDF)
  - ☐ Section A: NIH forms: Face page 1, page 2, page 3, and budget pages 4 and 5
  - ☐ Section B: Community and Academic Partnership
  - ☐ Section C: Research Plan (including all the components of this section)
  - ☐ Section D: Required appendixes
    - Memorandum of Understanding
    - Biographical Sketches (Community and Academic Partners and Mentors, if applicable)
    - Letters of support from sites, mentors and collaborators
    - Study tools (Questionnaires, surveys, interview guides, etc., if applicable)
    - PHS Human Subjects form including the Inclusion Enrollment Report

## Further Information

1. An **informational conference call** will be held previous to the proposal submission deadline. Refer to the first page of this RFA for details.
2. For questions or research support when developing your LaCoSP application proposal, please contact the [LA CaTS Community Engagement and Outreach Core](#), Xavier University office at 504-520-6719/[mechever@xula.edu](mailto:mechever@xula.edu).
3. Further information regarding the Community-Engaged Scholars Program can be found on the LA CaTS Funding Opportunities webpage: <https://www.lacats.org/research-funding/available-opportunities/funding-opportunity-lacosp.aspx>

## Attachment I: Letter of Intent Template

Intention to submit an application responsive to the LA CATS Community Scholars Program Research Awards Request for Application, **Cohort 7 (2025-2026)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Project Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Priority health condition addressed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Investigator:** name, position and contact information

**Community Investigator:** name, position and contact information

**Academic department financial point of contact:** name, position and contact information

**Project abstract in lay language** (please provide a **brief** statement in 2-3 paragraphs describing the research project and methods)

Our team's preferred meeting-time is:

**Day of week** (Rank order with 1 being the most preferred and 3 being least preferred):

☐ Monday    ☐ Tuesday    ☐ Wednesday    ☐ Thursday    ☐ Friday

**Time of day** (Rank with 1 being the most preferred and 2 being least preferred):

☐ 11:30 am to 1 pm                      ☐ 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm

Other suggestions for day and time: \_\_\_\_\_

[Insert Academic Name/Signature/Date]

[Insert Community Name/Signature/Date]

## Attachment II: Memorandum of Understanding Template

Note: A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a formal agreement between two or more parties. Although they are not legally binding, establishing an MOU is a best practice when establishing partnerships, and expectations. Below is the MOU Template to be used in the proposal.

### MEMORANDUM of UNDERSTANDING

Between

**Community Partner and Academic Partner**

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to mutually acknowledge a commitment to a partnership between the community and academic partner related to activities of the Louisiana Clinical and Translational Research (LA CaTS) Center Community Scholars Program (LaCoSP).

Each partner is responsible for attending didactic and consultation meetings scheduled by the LaCoSP. In addition, each partner is accountable for his/her contributions to the development and implementation of their proposed community-based participatory research project on a health promotion topic. It is expected that each partner contributes 50% of the time necessary for development and implementation of proposed project. Details of proposed activities in the conduct of the project will be spelled out during the didactic training and mentorship provided through the proposal preparation phase and conduction of study activities. In addition, each partner is committed to the growth and development of the community-academic partnership with the intent to position the partnership for further grant funding upon the conclusion of the LaCoSP.

This Memorandum of Understanding specifically applies to the duration of the LaCoSP cohort. Should either partner feel the terms of this agreement are not being met, he/she should contact LA CaTS/CEOR Director, Lakeisha Williams at [llgeorge@xula.edu](mailto:llgeorge@xula.edu). Termination of this agreement shall be in consultation with LA CaTS/CEOR leadership. **In the case of termination of the agreement, unspent funds will be returned to LA CaTS.**

NOTE: We understand that if the community partner is to directly receive and manage pilot project funds, the community partner must have or obtain a valid tax identification number prior to managing funds. Otherwise, the funds must be managed by the academic partner.

Your signature below indicates your agreement to the terms outlined above

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Community Partner**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Academic Partner**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed Name**