



## LA CaTS Center Community Scholars Program (LaCoSP) Request for Applications 2026-2027 (Cohort 8)

KEY DATES	
<i>Dates are subject to change (Revised 9/29/25)</i>	
Release Date	Oct 3, 2025
Informational Session (Zoom meeting) <a href="https://xula.zoom.us/j/99120056052">https://xula.zoom.us/j/99120056052</a>	Oct 10, 2025 Recording posted on the LACaTS YouTube channel
LaCoSP Proposal Preparation Webinar Series Webinars with respective links are listed below: <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 Definition of a Clinical Trial</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">NIH checklist and templates</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Budget guidelines and NIH templates</a></li> </ul>	Available on LACATS YouTube Channel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webinars were designed to provide support during the proposal preparation.</li> <li>• Meetings to review learning topics and/or ask questions can be requested at any time before proposal submission. Email <a href="mailto:mechever@xula.edu">mechever@xula.edu</a></li> </ul>
Letter of Intent Due ( <i>required</i> )	Nov 10, 2025 (5:00pm CST)
Invitation for Full Application	Nov 11, 2025
Mentorship personalized sessions	Nov 11 to Jan 19, 2026
Project presentations to LACATS's Community Advisor Boards (CABs) ( <i>required</i> )	Dec 1-15, 2025 or Jan 12-16, 2026 Meetings are scheduled as needed
Full Applications due	Jan 19, 2026 (9:00am CST)
Notice of award announcement	Mar 16, 2026
Kickoff Retreat: Are we Ready?	TBD (Week of Apr 10-20)
IRB approval, Human Subjects Form, and CITI certificates due	May 1, 2026
NIH approval and start of pilot projects *	July 1, 2026
End of pilot projects	Jun 30, 2027

\* Grant award disbursement requires NIH and IRB approvals. The dates to start project activities vary according to the grant status and the respective university's administrative process.

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

## LaCoSP Request for Applications 2025-2026 (Cohort 8)

### Purpose

The [LaCoSP](#) is a research opportunity developed by the Community Engagement and Outreach Core ([CEO](#)) of the Louisiana Clinical and Translational Science ([LA CaTS](#)) Center to increase the capacity of community-academic partnerships to conduct community-engaged research with mutual ownership of the processes and products. The LA CaTS CEO Core is accepting applications for the LaCoSP **Cohort 8 (2026-2027)**. 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. LACoSP pilot projects are intended to inform future grant applications for state, federal, foundation, and other sponsor funding considerations. More specifically, data collected in the LACoSP pilot projects could be used to submit applications to the LA CaTS Pilot Grants Program.

The LA CaTS Community Advisory Boards (CABs) and results of community needs assessment identified the following health issues as priorities for research in Louisiana:

- Obesity
- Cardiovascular disease
- Social determinants of health
- Maternal and child health
- 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

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, LSU A&M, Xavier University of Louisiana, LSU Health-Shreveport. Clinicians from Children's Hospital or Ochsner Health should have faculty appointments in any of the LA CaTS academic institutions.

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 this program, a *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.*

- *Due to the size of this program, proposals considering clinical trials are not allowed. Please review the [NIH definition of clinical trial](#) when designing your study.*

**Project management and performance:** Following the principles of community-engagement research, both the academic and 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.

## 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 the instructions provided in this document.

### 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 during the conduct of the project activities.

As the formal training is developed to ensure that LaCoSP scholars and prospective applicants gain the necessary skills to carry out a community-engagement project, it is divided into two components: The **LaCoSP Proposal Preparation Webinar Series**, already available in the LACATS YouTube channel and recommended to be reviewed *before* the deadline to submit full proposals, and the **LA CaTS/CEO Seminar Series** that is conducted *after* the awardees are confirmed.

The sessions in the Seminar Series would be approximately 60-90 minutes each. They 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.

### III. Mentorship

Prospective LaCoSP applicants may take 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 email, as needed. Mentorship

may include revising the proposal, consents, IRB applications, budgets, study materials (e.g., surveys and interview scripts), 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 do not have one identified and/or committed to the project, contact the LaCoSP staff during the *Mentorship for proposal preparation* and describe the expertise required. LaCoSP staff will help you to find one.

## Application Process

LaCoSP application materials are available for download at the LA CaTS Center website:

<https://www.lacats.org/research-funding/available-opportunities/funding-opportunity-lacosp.aspx>

### I. Letter of Intent

Email a **Letter of Intent** (LOI) to [info@lacats.org](mailto:info@lacats.org), using the template provided in *Attachment I*.

### II. Full Application

Details for completing each section and the 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 and should follow the academic partner and NIH's financial policies. The budget amount awarded is dependent on NIH funds and/or available institutional funds, and determined by the LA CaTS's Executive Council. Each team should discuss budget details with the LaCoSP leaders.

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

1. Team members and purpose of the partnership
2. Description and dates of the work you have previously completed as partners
3. The process of identifying project health issues and developing the proposal
4. 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.

Attach the signed **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** using the *template in Attachment II*.

#### 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 the 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 an appendix any questionnaires, surveys, interview scripts, and any other tools to be used.*
- Include a timeline for project completion with major milestones for the project 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
- 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 team in contact with research participants must complete the training required by the academic organization through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Community partners will receive instructions on how to access the CITI training once accepted into the program.

**The PHS Human Subjects form -including the Inclusion Enrollment Report (See [fillable form](#) and [Instructions](#))-, the IRB approval, and the CITI certificates, are 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 appendices

1. **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).** *See template in Attachment II*
2. **NIH-formatted bio-sketches** from key academic personnel, mentors, and community partners

**Note:** A biographical sketch, also known as a bio-sketch, is a standardized format summarizing 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 more information. LaCoSP Community partners are encouraged to submit an NIH-formatted bio-sketch; however, it is acceptable for them to submit a resume of their experience, education, and accomplishments.

3. **Letters of support** from mentors, institutions, project sites, and additional collaborators
4. **Tools** (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

**Additional appendices:** Reasonable appendices (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

All application materials must be approved through each PI's campus Sponsored Program's Office before submission. PIs must adhere to their institution's established policies and procedures for grant submission.

1. Combine all completed application materials in the order above (**A-D**) and additional appendices 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 with the LA CaTSCores through SPARC at any time.

**Submit one application per community-academic team.** The complete application must be received by 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 meeting the minimum eligibility requirements are reviewed and scored by a community-academic review panel. Applications are scored following the criteria below:
  1. **Partnership capacity** - strength of partnership to carry out stated goals:
    - a. Ability of the 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 the pilot project:

- a. Incorporation of participatory methods for community and academic partners
- b. Innovation
- c. Scientifically sound research methods proposed
- d. Appropriateness of approach to meet short-term and long-term project goals
- e. Potential for future funding by the team

**3) Scoring** – Applications are scored following the 9-point NIH scoring system, ranging from 1.0 (outstanding, few weaknesses) to 9.0 (major weaknesses). Reviewers are asked to provide scores and include comments on the significance and potential impact of the proposed work, relevance, and overall project strengths and weaknesses

## 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.

**LA CaTS/NIH FINAL AWARD APPROVAL AND FUNDS DISBURSEMENT:** Each full proposal and the associated IRB application submission are peer-reviewed by LaCoSP/LA CaTS and NIH staff. The LA CaTS Center Administrative Core facilitates the administrative and NIH approval 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
- ☐ Recommended: Contact the CEO LaCoSP staff for mentoring during proposal preparation
- ☐ Required: Email Letter of Intent
- ☐ Required for **proposal submission**: 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 appendices
    - Memorandum of Understanding (signed)
    - Biographical Sketches (Community and Academic Partners and Mentors, as applicable)
    - Letters of support (from sites, mentors, and collaborators, as applicable)
    - Study tools (questionnaires, surveys, interview guides, etc., as applicable)
- ☐ Required for **final award**:
  - ☐ IRB approval letter
  - ☐ PHS Human Subjects & Clinical Trials Information form, and the Inclusion Enrollment Report
  - ☐ CITI training certificates



## Attachment I: Letter of Intent Template

Intention to apply to the LA CATS Community Scholars Program Research Awards, **Cohort 8 (2026-2027)**

**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)

### Statements:

The academic PI reviewed the NIH definition of clinical trials Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

The academic PI reviewed the topics of the LaCoSP Proposal Preparation Webinar Series Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

The community PI reviewed the topics of the LaCoSP Proposal Preparation Webinar Series Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

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):

☐ 9:30 am to 11:00 am ☐ 11:30 am to 1 pm ☐ 1:00 pm to 2:30 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 the proposed project. 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/CEO Director, Lakeisha Williams, at [llgeorge@xula.edu](mailto:llgeorge@xula.edu). Termination of this agreement shall be in consultation with LA CaTS/CEO 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 before managing funds. Otherwise, the funds must be managed by the academic partner.

Your signature below indicates your agreement to the terms outlined above

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**Community Partner**

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**Date**

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**Printed Name**

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**Academic Partner**

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**Date**

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**Printed Name**