COVID-19 LAUNCHPAD GRANT
Understanding and Mitigating the Health Equity and Social Justice Dimensions of COVID-19

Request for Applications

Who is eligible: Full-time faculty or staff from across Johns Hopkins University: Applied Physics Laboratory, Berman Institute of Bioethics, Bloomberg School of Public Health, Carey Business School, Jhpiego, Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Peabody Institute of Music, School of Education, School of Medicine, School of Nursing, Whiting School of Engineering

Grant Award Amount: Minimum of 5 grant awards of up to $25,000 per award
Start date: Early April, 2020 (potential for rolling awards announcements)
Grant Period: Up to 12 months from selected start date
Application Deadline: 11:59 PM Sunday, April 5, 2020

Program Background
The Alliance for a Healthier World (AHW) is an initiative integrating diverse expertise and perspectives to unlock groundbreaking knowledge and resolve the most complex global health equity challenges of our time. Scholars, researchers, and leaders from all disciplines—medicine, nursing, public health, bioethics, international relations, engineering, education, business, policy, and other social sciences, humanities, and creative arts—work side-by-side with partners and disadvantaged communities around the world to create a healthier, more equitable, and more just world.

COVID-19 and health equity dimensions
The COVID-19 global pandemic is forcing societies, communities, and households around the world to rapidly adapt to a new set of social practices. Widespread social distancing, remote workplaces, and suspension of schools and childcare centers are upending social “normalcy” without offering solutions to many of the resulting gaps. The Johns Hopkins University community has stepped forward amidst this unprecedented event to contribute expertise and capacity toward many aspects of the pandemic response both in the United States and globally.
The initial foci of JHU’s COVID-19 research and practice response has been in the areas of health security analyses and guidance, preparation for testing and clinical care, disease dynamics, data visualization, and development of serum and vaccine candidates. This work is happening at an incredibly accelerated pace and will continue for the foreseeable future.

**The Alliance seeks to focus attention on key equity dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic.** Specifically, the Alliance is interested in understanding and mitigating the health equity and social justice dimensions of the pandemic. This includes the psycho-social, behavioral, epidemiological, economic, and policy impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as it upends many of the activities of daily life in the United States and in countries around the world. Drastic measures taken to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus will impact virtually every system (food, health, education, environment, etc.) depended upon for social stability, and will disproportionately impact marginalized members of society, including low-income, minority, immigrant, disabled, and the recently unemployed.

Important lessons from the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic response can be shared widely across communities and countries to blunt social disruptions and potentially innovate new paradigms. Additionally, the lessons learned can serve as a foundation for future epidemics and health crises requiring sweeping actions by governments and health authorities. JHU faculty and staff can play a critical role in setting up research studies and applications to guide government and societal responses.

**Why focus on healthy equity?**

**Health equity** is about the fair achievement and capability for good health, and not simply the equal distribution of health care. Health equity is a multidimensional concept that is a central concern of social equity and justice. More broadly, social justice concerns the fair and equal access to wealth, opportunities, and privileges within society. Inequities in the social determinants of health—including socioeconomic status, education, the physical environment, employment, and social support networks—have wide-ranging effects on people’s health and survival. For example, public health experts will stress the importance of social distancing and frequent handwashing during the COVID-19 outbreak. Those concerned with health equity will note that both in high-income and low-income countries:

- Many individuals—including refugees, prisoners, and residents of some long-term care facilities—are forced to live in close quarters and may not be able to practice social distancing, or don’t have access to running water, soap, or sanitizer;
- The social safety net infrastructure for addressing health inequity—from school lunch programs to care for the homeless, the frail elderly and those with mental illness—face unique challenges with the mandate for social distancing;
- Information and guidelines disseminated by authorities may not be in a form understandable to low-literacy populations, or ethnic and linguistic minorities, and distrust of authority may impede acceptance and adoption of guidelines for prevention, testing, and treatment;
- Low-income, minority, and vulnerable populations may not be included in the measurement of disease indicators in monitoring systems. Exclusion from the data
may occur due to lack of access to testing, or because people are seeking care from pharmacies, informal sector providers, or traditional healers. Exclusion may also occur for immigrant, displaced or ethnic minority people who are not counted as full members of the society. In either case, authorities may fail to appreciate the full extent of epidemics or other health problems, and fail to identify those in greatest need of services.

- The economic and political repercussions of the novel coronavirus pandemic are not ordinary problems that macroeconomics can solve. Rather, the world could be witnessing a fundamental shift in the very nature of the global economy and political relationships. In times of rising nationalism around the world, how do we produce an effective response to this global crisis that is inclusive and cooperative?

**Eligibility Criteria**

Project eligibility criteria include the following:

1. Applications should articulate how their research will address a potential health equity and social justice impact related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. The research should demonstrate potential social, psychological, behavioral, epidemiological, economic, or policy impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, and should not focus on the conduct of basic research.

3. Applicants may focus their proposal on a single country or multiple countries, in the United States or in low- and middle-income countries.

4. AHW has a strong preference for multidisciplinary teams with researchers from different JHU divisions, and with the inclusion of students on the study team.

5. Grants that are smaller than $25,000 and can be completed in fewer than 6 months are preferred.
**Funding Opportunity Description**

The purpose of the **Launchpad Grant** is to provide initial startup funds for investigators and provide a short-term opportunity to address a health equity and social justice challenge related to COVID-19. Funding is available for up to $25,000 for use within 12 months. Applicants can propose new projects or projects that supplement ongoing projects to enable COVID-19 learning. Applications designed to supplement existing research support should clearly describe the parent research study and the ways in which the proposed work builds upon, but does not duplicate, activities that are already funded.

Successful proposals will clearly identify a health equity and social justice challenge posed by COVID-19 response and describe an approach and research pathway to fully explore the challenge.

The outputs of a Launchpad Grant can take many forms including but not limited to:

- conducting preliminary formative research
- developing a toolkit to address a specific issue
- adding a qualitative or quantitative research phase to document health, social and economic impact of COVID-19 and mitigation measures
- prototyping a mobile app
- drafting a policy-options analysis
- developing and implementing a novel strategy to mitigate social isolation resulting from COVID-19 mitigation measures.

All proposed research must comply with JHU contingency IRB and research guidelines currently in place. Applicants proposing research, including supplemental research to an existing study, must demonstrate their ability to contact participants safely (e.g. remotely) in accordance with JHU contingency research plans.

Our hope for all Launchpad Grants is that the funding will enable follow-up proposals to further explore their topic, build out the prototype, or pilot or evaluate a program in the field. AHW can assist in the proposal-writing and fundraising process at the completion of the [Launchpad Grant timeline](#).

**Award Information**

Funds are intended to cover direct project costs budgeted for up to a 12-month period. Funds can be used to support student wages, or consultant and/or partner organization salaries. There are no indirect costs associated with the award.

Funds cannot be used for lobbying activities or retrospective payments (e.g., travel or other costs that were incurred prior to the signed/agreed start date for the grant).
The proposal review committee may seek budget adjustments or clarifications before making final decisions.

Post-Award Requirements

At the end of the grant period, recipients are asked to engage with AHW to discuss opportunities for progression of the Launchpad concept and to produce a brief report describing key lessons from the activities undertaken as a result of the grant award.

How to Apply

Please upload your materials to our Fluid Review page (https://jhualliance.fluidreview.com) no later than 11:59 p.m. EST on April 5, 2020. Please note naming convention and formatting requirements described below.

Full proposals should be submitted as one PDF file in the following order:

1. Cover page
2. Project Description and equity angle
3. Project narrative
4. APPENDIX A: Budget and narrative
5. APPENDIX C: Biosketches or resumes of key personnel, including external partners.

Format

Applications should follow the word and page limit guidelines below. Please use 12pt Calibri, Arial, or Times Roman font, 1-inch margins on all four sides, and single- or double-spaced narrative. Written content should be submitted as a single PDF document saved with the following naming convention: 2020 AHW COVID-19 LAUNCHPAD–[investigators’ last names].

COVER PAGE (1 page)

• Title of the proposal
• Principal investigator(s) and any collaborators. Must indicate: lead faculty, students, and, if any, partner(s) in the USA or in a low- or middle-income country setting.
• Contact information for the applicant team members (phone and email)

DESCRIPTION and EQUITY IMPACT (400 words)

1. A summary of the project (200-300 words) in lay person’s terms for AHW communications and fundraising purposes.
2. A separate explanation of how the project addresses a **health equity** and **social justice** dimension of COVID-19 response specifically (200 words or fewer).

**PROJECT NARRATIVE (no more than 2 pages)**

All proposals must clearly include the following (use clear, recognizable section headers):

1. **Problem statement**: The problem statement should succinctly describe the nature of the health equity or social justice challenge to be addressed, the setting of the proposed work, and the proposed approach to intervening or otherwise addressing the challenge, while demonstrating current knowledge about the issues.

2. **Potential for innovation and impact**: Describe the project’s potential for innovation and impact related to health equity. If the project is untested, applicant should describe the envisioned impact. If the project is further in development, applicant should provide evidence from pilot studies or trials.

3. **Ability to implement project within 12 months**: Explain how the project can be completed within 12 months of its start date. If able to complete the project in less than 6 months, please explain how.

4. **Multiple disciplinary and collaboration approach**: If utilizing a multidisciplinary research team and students (preferred), describe how multiple disciplines and students will be involved in and contribute to the project, or the process used to determine how this would be accomplished.

A budget and resumes/CVs should be submitted in the following appendices:

**APPENDIX A: BUDGET TEMPLATE & NARRATIVE**

Please use the budget template below. Note that indirect costs are NOT charged for this grant. Include a narrative below the budget table. Your narrative must indicate other sources and amounts of funding for this project and/or for parent projects. If you have other funding, explain how the Launchpad grant builds on current related funding.

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<th>Category</th>
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<th>Total cost</th>
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<td>Fringe</td>
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<td>Student related expenses</td>
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APPENDIX B: RESUMES OR CVs
Please attach biosketches (up to 5 pages per person) for the Principal Investigator(s) and main Co-Investigators. This can include key international partners.

Application Review Process

All applications will be reviewed by a review committee who represent various academic divisions at Johns Hopkins. Applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. **Clarity of problem statement**: The extent to which the proposed project describes a health equity and social justice challenge related to COVID-19 and how it will be addressed.
2. **Potential for impact with respect to health equity**: What is the potential impact of the project with respect to health equity and social justice?
3. **Innovation**: What is the potential innovation or contribution to knowledge of the project?
4. **Positioning for implementation & timeliness**: Can the grant be initiated rapidly and completed within the proposed time frame? How does the grant position the team for larger implementation or other new funding (or how does the grant position itself as a new approach for scale-up by other agencies or groups)?

Questions?
Contact Ashley Boston ([aboston7@jhu.edu](mailto:aboston7@jhu.edu)).