VCU
Community Engagement

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
Academic–Community Partnerships Planning Grants 2024

Division of Community Engagement

Office of the Provost

community.vcu.edu

01. FULL PROPOSAL SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

The Division of Community Engagement (**COMMUNICATIONS.VCU.EDU**), in collaboration with the Council on Community Engagement, is inviting proposals from VCU faculty and research program staff to secure funding for planning grants supporting community-engaged projects. Community engagement entails the collaborative exchange of knowledge and resources between institutions of higher education, like VCU, and their broader communities, fostering partnership and reciprocity. This approach may encompass forming alliances and coalitions to leverage resources, influence systems, and act as catalysts for instigating or reforming policies, programs, and practices to achieve equitable impact (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching).

02. PURPOSE

In the realm of community engagement and community-engaged research, collaboration, co-learning, mutual benefit, and reciprocity are fundamental principles. Developing partnerships requires time and careful planning. This funding opportunity is unique in that it provides support specifically for partnership development and acknowledges the critical work necessary to develop mutually beneficial partnerships.

Whether you are new to community-engaged research, currently collaborating with a community partner, or seeking to establish a new community partnership, this planning grant offers the opportunity to develop an intentional, mutually beneficial relationship. Such partnerships can serve as the foundation for future collaborative research or programmatic initiatives. More and more funders, including federal agencies and foundations, emphasize the need for robust academic-community partnerships. This funding opportunity emphasizes the fundamental principle of community-engaged research, where the community must be at the forefront in identifying their needs.

In this Request for Proposals, we seek to fund projects that align with the core values of building authentic partnerships https://ccphealth.org/partnering/principles-of-partnering/. We encourage proposals that prioritize community partnership while recognizing the importance of authentic engagement, reciprocity, and building community capacity. We value collaborative decision-making, co-creating the research question or issue to be addressed, and translating research into actionable impact. We strongly encourage proposals that prioritize community partnership, recognizing authentic engagement, reciprocity, and the building of community capacity. We place high value on collaborative decision-making, co-creating research questions or issues to be addressed, and effectively translating research findings into actionable impact within the community.

Proposals should aim towards developing long-term, collaborative partnerships and embrace a transdisciplinary approach to address community issues. This initiative aligns with VCU Quest 2028, which emphasizes the university's commitment to fostering innovation, promoting diversity and inclusion, and achieving excellence in research and scholarship. Furthermore, it is closely in sync with the Thriving Communities Theme, which seeks to create sustainable, resilient, and thriving communities through collaborative efforts. You can find more information about VCU Quest 2028 goals at https://quest.vcu.edu/university-goals/.

We look forward to receiving proposals from researchers across diverse disciplines, including those who may not have previously engaged in community outreach and engagement efforts. Applications from both established and emerging community-engaged researchers are equally encouraged.

The Academic-Community Partnership Planning Grants aims to:

- Strengthen and expand academic-community partnerships, fostering collaboration and mutual benefit.

- Facilitate community identification of the research problem in collaboration with the academic partner.

- Strengthen the science of community engagement in promoting Thriving Communities as outlined in Quest 2028, and increasing coordinated programs in priority partner communities.

03. CULTIVATING ACADEMIC-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The DCE defines partnerships as "a sustained collaboration between institutions of higher education and communities for the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration and application of knowledge, information, and resources." This planning grant allows for dedicated time to developing a strong and trusting partnership with the community partner. The nature of this partnership will vary depending on the unique dynamics of each collaboration, but it should be rooted in core partnership principles such as respect, co-learning, mutual benefit, and shared goals.

04. PRIORITY PARTNER COMMUNITIES

We encourage partnerships with a community partner in one of VCU's priority partner communities as referenced in the Thriving Communities goal.

- Carver
- Jackson Ward
- Blackwell/Manchester/Southwood
- Petersburg
- East End
- Charles City

*Applications focusing outside these communities are also welcomed.

05. PRIORITY AREAS

1. Health equity and disparities
2. Art, social, technological development
3. Economic and workforce development
4. Pre-K-16 student success
5. Youth development
6. Partnership development and collaboration
7. Transformative student engagement
8. Richmond's history

06. AWARDS

The DCE will provide 10 one-year seed grants of up to $10,000 to support academic-community partnerships. Each proposal must have a designated community partner as a co-partner on the grant. **Applications are due March 29 at 11:59 pm.**
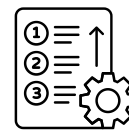
07. ELIGIBILITY

01. VCU Full-time faculty or staff

02. Upon selection, must participate in a mid-year grantee meeting with community partner

03. The planning grant activities must be focused on building or enhancing a partnership to promote future mutually beneficial engagement.

04. Focus on at least one of the **priority areas**

07. DELIVERABLES

These deliverables are designed to track the project's progress, facilitate knowledge sharing and learning among participants, and ensure clear and engaging communication of outcomes to all involved, including the community.

> **Mid-Term Progress Meeting**

Attend a meeting halfway through the grant year, where grantees and community partners can share their progress. This meeting will be hosted by the Division of Community Engagement, and it is a chance for everyone involved to discuss progress and challenges

> **End-of-Grant Year Report**

Submit a report on the past years activities, including outcomes achieved, and the work plan (next steps) for the partnership.

> **Data Dissemination**

Awardees will be required to provide evidence regarding the dissemination of their scholarship to the academic and/or local communities (i.e., academic paper with the community partner as a co-author, conference presentation, community data dissemination event). Scholarship can include creative products or more formal presentation contributing to the science of academic-community partnership building. It is important that the community partner is engaged as a co-author or collaboratively involved in planning presentations.

08. Informational Session & Technical Support

Three virtual informational sessions will be offered to provide guidance and answer any questions applicants may have specific to the RFP, community engagement or community-engaged research.

Information session Registration Link

01 > **February 12**
12:00pm - 1:00pm

02 > **March 4**
12:00pm - 1:00pm

03 > **March 15th**
10:00am - 11:00am

09. SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Required Application Components:

- **Project Length:** Your complete proposal should be no more than four pages.
- **Formatting:** To ensure uniformity, please utilize Arial 11-point font size, 0.5-inch margins, and single-spacing.
- **Proposal Structure:**
  - The project title and abstract should occupy a separate page, and this page will not be counted in the four-page limit.
  - The timeline and budget justification are separate pages (see item G).

Final proposals must be electronically submitted as a combined PDF to dcegrantsinfo@vcu.edu.

BE SURE TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING:

- **Project Title**
  - Brief and descriptive
- **VCU Project Leader**
  - Contact information
  - Department/Unit
- **Community Partner/Community Location**
  - Partner Contact information
  - Community organization
  - Community Location
- **Project Abstract (150 words)**
  - Provide a concise summary of your project's objectives and the expected outcomes.

A. Overview of the Partnership Description and Specific Aims

- Clearly outline the specific aims or objectives for this planning grant.
  - Please provide a detailed account of how the partnership was initiated or will be established, with particular emphasis on the partner selection process.
  - Emphasize the mutual research interests and strengths demonstrated by this partnership.
  - Include information about any previous collaboration or working relationships with the partner.

B. Alignment, Priority Partner Community and/or Issue Area, and Quest 2028 Thriving Communities

- Explain how the project aligns with core principles of partnership, community engagement, and Quest 2028's Thriving Communities.

C. Planning and Partnership Activities

This is the most extensive section of your proposal; therefore, a comprehensive narrative is critical.

- Describe planning and partnership activities, including student engagement.
- Describe the project's intended outcomes.
- Describe your governance structure, explicitly defining mutual reciprocity and decision-making processes relevant to the partnership-building process and activities.

D. Priority Partner Community

If your project is centered around one of VCU's specific Priority Partner Communities or issue areas, provide details about this community or area. Explain its significance in the context of your project and how it relates to the goals of Community Engaged Research. Please provide a justification if it is not centered around one of the identified Priority Partner Communities.

E. Community Engagement and Impact

- Discuss the potential impact of this partnership and methods for assessing its influence on future grant opportunities.
- Explain how this partnership could shape future engagements between VCU and the community, as well as impact the formation of other partnerships.

F. Data Dissemination Activities

- Present your data dissemination plans for both internal (within VCU) and external (within the community) audiences.

G. **Budget, Goals, and Timeline**

- Use this link to make a copy and complete the budget template.
- Download the completed budget as a PDF and include it in your application.
- Provide a brief breakdown of the proposed budget (no word limit, but must be concise).
- In your budget narrative, elaborate on how the mutual reciprocity with the partner and community extends to the budget distribution.

H. Timeline

- Project timeline with key milestones and activities.

I. Community Partner Support Communication

- A letter, video, or audio recording from the community partner expressing their support and understanding of the collaborative design and intended project outcomes. If a letter, please limit it to one page. If a video or audio recording, please limit it to no more than 5 minutes. You can provide both if so desired.

Review Process and Criteria

1. **Initial Screening:** Proposals will first undergo an initial screening by the Division of Community Engagement staff to ensure they meet all eligibility criteria and adhere to the guidelines specified in the RFP, including completeness of the application, adherence to the word/page limits, and inclusion of all required documents.

2. **Evaluation by Review Panel**: Eligible proposals will be evaluated by a review panel composed of experts from various fields, community engagement professionals, and community stakeholders. This panel will assess each proposal based on predefined criteria aligned with the goals of the grant.

3. **Criteria for Evaluation**:
   a. **Alignment:** How well the proposal aligns with collaborative partnership development, Quest 2028 Thriving Communities Goals, consideration of VCU's priority partner communities, and the potential of this partnership development process to enhance VCU's coordinated efforts in the community.
   b. **Strength of Partnership and Partnership Activities**: The depth and quality of the academic-community partnership, the tailoring of partnership activities, and how mutual benefits and shared goals are illustrated in project activities.
   c. **Planning and Feasibility:** The extent to which the proposal demonstrates joint planning with the community partner and the potential for future collaborative programs and/or research.

4. **Community Partner Support**: Special attention will be given to the community partner's letter of support or video/audio communication, assessing the genuine collaboration and mutual enthusiasm for the project.

5. **Department Chair Support:** Although not required, letters of support by department chairs are highly recommended.

6. **Interviews or Presentations (if required)**: In some cases, applicants may be invited for interviews or asked to present their proposals to provide further insights and address any queries from the review panel.

7. **Final Decision and Feedback**: The final decision on funding will be made based on the panel's recommendations.

Timeline

DATE	ACTIVITY
February 6	Application Release
February 12 March 3 March 15	Informational Session (Zoom) Informational Session (Zoom) Technical Assistance (Zoom)
March 29	Proposals Due
May 6	Awardees Announced
June 6	Project Start Date
Dec 5, 3-5pm	Six-month joint partner meeting
May 30, 2025	Project completion
July 2025	Final Written Report and Data Dissemination

RESOURCES

- **What is Community Engaged Research?**

- **Collaborative Partnerships**

- **Community Engaged Research Approaches and Design**

- **Dissemination and Translation of Findings**

- **Community Engagement - CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

- **Principles of Partnering | Community-Campus CCPH** Board of Directors. Position Statement on Authentic Partnerships. Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, 2013.

Additional Information

Types of Planning & Partnership Activities

Please note that the suitability of these planning activities may vary depending on your research issue, the community, partnership dynamics, and other contextual factors. In community engagement, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. The choice of planning activities should be tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of your project, emphasizing the importance of a flexible and adaptable approach to community-engaged research. Below is a list of potential activities which may not be relevant to your partnership. Identify activities relevant to your partnership and areas of focus.

1. **Identifying Community Challenges:** Collaboratively engage with the community to identify significant issues, obstacles, and priorities that will serve as the foundation for the project. Ensure that this process is data-driven and involves informal stakeholder meetings, community discussions, and active involvement within the community, all while closely working alongside community leaders. This collaborative effort should be focused on understanding and addressing community-engaged research.
2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Identify and engage relevant stakeholders within the community, such as community leaders, organizations, and residents, to establish engagement strategies and cultivate a shared understanding of the problem and its approach.
3. **Protocol Development:** Depending on the stage of your partnership development, you may begin working together to draft a research protocol, discussing the research design, outcomes, and ensuring a mutual understanding of potential challenges, priorities, and timelines.
4. **Partnership Agreement:** Develop a partnership agreement that outlines the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of both academic and community partners. It is essential to formalize this agreement, but preliminary discussions and building toward this formal agreement are crucial. This agreement should also address how potential challenges will be handled, the communications plan, and realistic expectations from both academic and community perspectives.

7. Training and Capacity Building: Recognizing the need for training in both academic and community contexts, provide training and capacity-building opportunities for community members and academic partners to enhance their skills and knowledge relevant to the research project. This training should encompass the academic and community context, history, and specific aspects related to the research issue.

6. **Community Asset Mapping:** Embrace an asset-based approach in community engagement, which involves identifying and valuing the assets within a community. Therefore, as a partnership-building activity, consider collaboratively identifying community assets, including resources, knowledge, and skills that can be leveraged for the research project.

7. **Project Planning and Timeline:** Organize and implement planning sessions with community stakeholders to collaboratively develop a project plan and timeline. Identify milestones, deadlines, and deliverables for your collaborative work.

8. **Data Collection Strategy:** Design a data collection strategy, including data sources, instruments, and data collection methods, with input from the community.

9. **Communication Plan:** Develop a communication plan outlining how the partnership will disseminate project updates, findings, and engage with the broader community.

10. **Resource Mobilization:** Explore funding opportunities to support the partnership's work. Investigate local resources to sustain efforts associated with non-research-related aspects of the defined issue.

For Any Questions, Please Contact Us:

email: dcegrantsinfo@vcu.edu

or

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community.vcu.edu