

**Alliance for Research in Chicagoland Communities/  
Northwestern University Clinical & Translational Sciences Institute  
Announcing ARCC 2020 Partnership Development Seed Grants- Cycle 1  
Community-Academic Research Collaboration to Improve Health Equity**

The [Alliance for Research in Chicagoland Communities](#) (ARCC)/Northwestern University Clinical & Translational Sciences Institute (NUCATS), in partnership with Northwestern Memorial Hospital (NMH) announces the recipients of seed grant funds that support the development of partnerships that engage communities and stakeholders in research collaboration with Northwestern research teams. ARCC believes that using the tools of science to achieve health equity can best be done when academic researchers and communities work together. The goal of these awards is to support the development and increase the number of community-academic partnerships that are prepared to collaborate to design and conduct community-engaged research projects to improve health equity. This is the first cycle of Partnership Development Seed Grants in ARCC's thirteenth round of seed grant funding. Each award (up to \$5,000) supports a partnership that includes a community lead from a local community organization and an academic lead from Northwestern University for a project lasting 12 months. Partnership Development grants support newly developing partnerships in relationship building, creation of partnership structure, exploration of shared areas of interest, and research capacity development. Priority was given to applications that address priority health needs identified by the Northwestern Memorial Hospital ([NMH](#)) 2019 [Community Health Needs Assessment](#) and focus on addressing health inequities in Chicagoland communities identified by [Healthy Chicago 2.0/2025](#). Applications are being accepted for [ARCC 2020 Research Pilot and second cycle of Partnership Development Seed Grants](#).

Over 12 years of seed grant funding, ARCC has distributed over \$1 million to over 70 community-academic partnerships. The funded partnerships have led to increased community and academic capacity for engagement and research, new health improvements and policy changes, more than \$18 million in subsequent grant funding, and almost 40 peer-reviewed publications. Grants are supported by funds from Northwestern Memorial Hospital ([NMH](#)) and the Northwestern University Clinical & Translational Sciences ([NUCATS](#)) Institute.

**ARCC 2020 Partnership Development Seed Grant- Cycle 1 Project Summaries**

*Building a Community-Research Partnership to Implement an Ethically Sound APOL1 Genetic Testing Program for African American Living Donors*

Jacqueline Burgess-Bishop, National Kidney Foundation of Illinois, and Elisa Gordon, Surgery, Feinberg School of Medicine

The proposed partnership aims to establish a foundation for future collaboration on research projects designed to reduce kidney disease disparities in African Americans, and increase African American's trust in organ transplantation and the healthcare system. African Americans experience significant disparities in access to kidney transplantation and to living donor kidney transplants. Compounding this problem is that African American living donors experience a higher chance of getting kidney failure 15 years after donating than do white donors: 74.7 versus 22.7 per 10,000 donors. Mounting evidence suggests that *Apolipoprotein L1* ("APOL1") gene variants (mutations), found predominantly in African Americans and known to contribute

to kidney failure, contribute to this disparity. We anticipate applying for future research grant support through the NIH in June 2020 (PA-17-325), and October 2020 (RFA-TR-20-001) to develop and evaluate an *APOL1* genetic testing intervention for African American potential living donors at Northwestern Medicine. The proposed partnership will be instrumental for developing a Stakeholder Advisory Board to foster community engagement in future research. Engaging the African American community will be critical for ensuring that the intervention study design and methodology are culturally and socially acceptable, and ultimately, more African Americans can learn about kidney health.

*Cultivating PEAs: A Partnership to Develop Positive Emotion Ambassadors in Violence Prevention Programs on the South and West Sides of Chicago*

Soren Larsen-Ravenfeather, READI Chicago (Rapid Employment & Development Initiative), and Elizabeth Addington, Medical Social Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine

READI Chicago is an innovative program designed to reduce gun violence by providing paid transitional jobs, wrap-around support services, and cognitive behavioral therapy to adults living in Chicago neighborhoods with some of the highest rates of unemployment, poverty, and violence. This exposure to chronic stress and trauma places READI Chicago staff and participants at risk of poorer psychological and physical health. At Northwestern, the Positive Psychology and Health Investigators Group (PPHIG) has developed a program that teaches skills for increasing positive emotions, even in the midst of stress. PPHIG has shown that these positive emotion skills can improve well-being, for example, by decreasing depression, anxiety, and pain. Related research suggests that these skills might also prevent burnout and job turnover, which is a concern for sustaining the intensive programs at READI Chicago. In cultivating the READI-PPHIG partnership, we will: collaboratively establish our team's goals and procedures; build shared understanding of (a) the experience of living and working in communities with high exposure to gun violence, and (b) the science of stress and positive emotions; and plan research aimed at improving social determinants of health in staff and residents of high hardship communities on the South and West sides of Chicago.

*Language and Culture as barriers and opportunities to improving the health of refugee women*

Suzanne Akhras Sahloul, Syrian Community Network, and Melissa Simon, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Feinberg School of Medicine and Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center

This partnership development application teams the Syrian Community Network with its in-depth experience and breadth of knowledge in working with Arabic-speaking refugee women with Dr. Melissa Simon at Northwestern University, who has extensive expertise in health equity-focused partnership development as well as the mixed methods research and implementation science methods required to meet the goal of the proposed partnership, which is to address barriers to optimal health faced by refugee women who do not speak English as a first language. Significant questions the partnership will address include the following: How does the language barrier impact access and quality of healthcare for refugee women? What are the most urgent barriers to healthcare non-English speaking women face, according to the women themselves? How does a lack of English affect the overall health of refugee women and those who rely on them for care, including infants, children, and elderly family members? In the proposed one-year funding period, the Partnership will create an Advisory Board of government agencies, community partners, and other stakeholders that will identify key

priorities and goals to be addressed through build out of a sustainable infrastructure that will support the conduct of future community-based research initiatives focused on refugee women.

ARCC is a program of the Center for Community Health, serving the Northwestern University Institute for Public Health and Medicine (IPHAM) and the Northwestern University's Clinical and Translational Sciences (NUCATS) Institute. ARCC strives to grow community-engaged research partnerships between Chicagoland communities and Northwestern University to improve health and health equity. ARCC's goals and objectives are jointly defined by a steering committee comprised of community and faith-based organizations, public agencies, and Northwestern University faculty.

Community-engaged research is an approach to conducting research in a collaborative way involving partnerships between communities and academics in an exchange of expertise between academics, as scientific experts, and communities, as local, cultural, and lived experience experts.

For more information, [www.ARCCOnline.net](http://www.ARCCOnline.net) or [ARCC@northwestern.edu](mailto:ARCC@northwestern.edu)

ARCC Steering Committee members:

Community Organizations: Access Living, Apostolic Faith Church, The Blue Hat Foundation, CALOR, Cambodian Association of Illinois, Chicago Youth Programs, CJE SeniorLife, EndeLeo Institute, HANA Center, Health & Medicine Policy Research Group, The Night Ministry, Puerto Rican Cultural Center, Renz Addiction Counseling Center.

Public Agencies: Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago Public Schools.

Academic & Clinical Partners: Inger Burnett-Zeigler PhD, Rebecca Carl MD, Tara Gill PhD, Prakash Jayabalan MD, Lisa Kuhns PhD MPH, Tarneka Manning MPH, Holly Manprisio MPH, Matthew O'Brien MD, J.D. Smith PhD, Theresa Sukal-Moulton DPT PhD, Sarah Welch MPH.