

SIREN Innovation Grants Call for Proposals

The Social Interventions Research and Evaluation Network (SIREN) was created in 2016 to catalyze and disseminate high quality research on how to address patients' basic resource needs as part of high quality clinical care. To advance these goals, SIREN's Innovation Grants program will support research projects that advance work in this area. Our first *Call for Proposals* focuses on projects that add to our understanding of the health care cost and utilization impacts of interventions initiated in the context of health care delivery that target patients' social and economic hardships.

Background

Spurred by the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) payment reforms and evidence indicating that social contexts affect health outcomes, delivery systems across the country are exploring ways to identify and address patients' basic resource needs, like food, housing, and economic security. Health care systems developing such programs require evidence to ensure limited resources are invested in effective interventions. This need is more acute given the current uncertainty about the future of health care coverage, which if diminished could lead to fewer safety-net health resources for low-income populations.

While there are many reasons to believe that health care interventions targeting patients' social and economic hardships will impact components of the Triple Aim—individual health, population health, and health care costs—empirical evidence is needed to demonstrate these effects and to determine the most cost-effective approaches. Few programs targeting patients' basic resource needs have been rigorously evaluated, including those undertaken as adjunct components of behavioral and psychological interventions. As a result, significant evidence gaps remain about the added value of efforts inside the health care system that address patients' social and economic hardships. Since arguments about costs are primary drivers for decision-making, evidence about economic costs and benefits is especially critical.

Innovation Grant Details

SIREN seeks applications for research projects that will contribute rigorous evidence about health care cost and/or utilization impacts of clinical interventions addressing patients' social and economic hardships. This *Call for Proposals* is specifically designed to fund studies that: 1) examine the impact of these interventions on health care costs and/or utilization; 2) include cost-benefit analyses comparing the economic impacts of the interventions to their implementation costs; or 3) conduct cost-effectiveness analyses comparing the costs of different social and economic needs interventions.

Preference will be given to projects that utilize rigorous study designs. At a minimum, intervention evaluations should include an appropriate control group or other mechanism for ensuring study results can provide rigorous evidence of impact. *Given the relatively small size of the anticipated awards, we encourage applicants to seek opportunities to add a cost and/or utilization analysis onto an existing study.*

For the purposes of this CFP, social and economic needs, a subset of social determinants of health, are addressable non-medical basic resource needs that influence health outcomes. Examples include but are not limited to financial, food, or housing security; employment; healthy housing conditions; personal safety; or educational attainment. Physical, mental, and behavioral health outcomes are considered relevant health outcomes, but are not considered social and economic hardships for the purposes of this CFP. Eligible projects can focus on addressing a single need or a range of needs and can take place in

any population and any clinical setting. All projects must be focused on addressing basic resource needs as part of health care delivery. Examples of types of clinical interventions that could be used to reduce patients' social and economic hardships include but are not limited to written or electronic referrals to outside services and resources; active navigation services to help patients connect with outside services and resources; and direct provision of resources to address needs.

Applicants should ensure that analyses isolate the impact of the social or economic hardships intervention from other concurrent medical or health behavior interventions.

Size of grants and grant periods

Our aim is to fund approximately 3 to 6 applications from a total pool of \$530,000, with a maximum grant award of \$150,000. In making funding decisions, we will balance the desirability of maximizing the number of awards with the goal of supporting high impact and high quality research and projects that lay the groundwork for such research.

Grant periods should not exceed 24 months. Grants are anticipated to start on or after September 1, 2017.

Applicant Eligibility

Preference will be given to applicant organizations that are either institutions of higher education, public entities, or nonprofit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, although other types of nonprofit and for-profit organizations also are eligible to apply. Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories.

Recognizing that diverse perspectives strengthen research, especially research with populations experiencing social and economic hardships, we encourage applicants from underrepresented backgrounds to apply.

Application Process

The application deadline for this funding opportunity is **June 15, 2017 at 5:00pm PDT**.

Interested applicants must signal their intent to apply by sending an email to siren@ucsf.edu by May 15 at 5:00pm PDT. This indication of intent is non-binding and will only be used to plan the review process.

To apply, applicants must submit a proposal of up to six pages describing their research question and research plan, along with a description of the research team, budget, and budget justification using the templates available on the [SIREN website](#). (The research team description, budget, and budget justification do not count as part of the 6-page limit.)

Proposals should be submitted via email to siren@ucsf.edu.

Applications will be reviewed by SIREN staff and an external reviewer using the criteria described below. Applicants may be given the opportunity to revise their proposal if reviewers feel the proposal has merit but cannot be funded as initially submitted.

Every effort will be made by the SIREN national office to make decisions within 8 weeks of the application deadline.

Review criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by SIREN staff and an external reviewer based on the following criteria:

- **Significance** of the question being asked for informing knowledge about cost and/or utilization impacts of clinical social and economic hardship interventions: Does this project help to answer return on investment questions that are important to those implementing these types of programs?
- **Rigor** of the proposed study methods to adequately answer the question: Does the study use a design that maximizes the potential for causal inference (e.g. RCT or other controlled design)? Does the study use validated measures and instruments and appropriate rigorous analytic methods?
- **Feasibility** of accomplishing the stated goals of the project: Do the qualifications and expertise of the research team match the project needs? Are the project budget and timeline realistic and appropriate for the project goals?

Work-in-Progress Webinar

To foster collaboration and learning between researchers in this field, all grantees will be asked to present their research plans to SIREN's Research Advisory Committee and other SIREN grantees during a work-in-progress (WIP) webinar within the grant term. The webinar will provide an opportunity to share research approaches, seek feedback for challenging study issues, and identify opportunities for collaboration to enhance research impact and future research efforts. For more information about the composition of the RAC, please visit [SIREN's website](#).

Use of Grant Funds

Grant funds may be used for project staff salaries, consultant fees (limit to \$500 per day unless a justification is provided for a higher amount), data collection and analysis, dataset procurement, meetings, supplies, project-related travel, and other direct expenses, including a limited amount of equipment deemed essential to the project. Grant funds may not be used to subsidize individuals for the costs of their health care, to support clinical trials of unapproved drugs or devices, to construct or renovate facilities, for lobbying, for political activities, or as a substitute for funds currently being used to support similar activities. *Indirect costs may be included at a maximum rate of 12% of direct costs.* If costs for consultants and contractors exceeds 33% of direct costs, the limit for indirect expenses on the consultant/contractor portion is 4%.

Key Dates and Deadlines

April 13, 2017 – 12:30pm – 1:30pm PDT/3:30pm – 4:30pm EDT

April 24, 2017 – 9:00am – 10:00am PDT/12:00pm – 1:00pm EDT

Twitter "Office Hours." Ask us questions about the CFP by tweeting to @SIREN_UCSF. Program staff will be available to respond. Questions and answers will subsequently be made available on the [SIREN website](#).

April 19, 2017 9:00am – 10:00am PDT

Optional webinar providing the opportunity for interested applicants to ask questions about the CFP. Please visit the [SIREN website](#) for more details.

May 15, 2017 5pm PT

Deadline for receipt of non-binding indication of intent via email to siren@ucsf.edu.

June 15, 2017 5pm PT

Deadline for receipt of proposals via email to siren@ucsf.edu.

Contact information

For any questions about this grant opportunity and SIREN in general, please email us at siren@ucsf.edu or go to <http://sirennetwork.ucsf.edu/funding-opportunities/siren-innovation-grants>.

About SIREN: Improving the evidence base for integrated social services and medical care

The Social Interventions Research and Evaluation Network (SIREN) was established in 2016 with input from a diverse group of research thought leaders to catalyze and disseminate high quality research on how to integrate social services with medical care to address patients' social determinants of health (SDH). SIREN is housed at the Center for Health and Community at the University of California, San Francisco and is supported by Kaiser Permanente and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

To learn more about SIREN visit sirennetwork.ucsf.edu. To receive updates about SIREN activities sign up for our [monthly newsletter](#).

SIREN Leadership

- Laura Gottlieb, MD, MPH, Director
- Nancy Adler, PhD, Co-Director
- Caroline Fichtenberg, PhD, Managing Director

SIREN Executive Committee

- Andrew Beck, MD, MPH, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
- Jeffrey Colvin, MD, JD, University of Missouri-Kansas, Children's Mercy Hospital
- Arvin Garg, MD, MPH, Boston University School of Medicine
- Maria Raven, MD, MPH, University of California, San Francisco
- John Steiner, MD, MPH, Kaiser Permanente

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