**Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA)**

**Request for Proposals**

**Research Grant Funding Opportunity**

**Introduction**

The Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA) is offering a funding opportunity for research grants (up to $25,000) to advance the field of health literacy. Although there has been tremendous progress made in the field, we recognize additional research is needed to estimate the direct impact of health literacy interventions on patient and population health outcomes. IHA is committed to seed funding for scientific discovery aimed at generating evidence that **directly links** health literacy best practices with desirable outcomes - cost savings, improved provider-patient shared decision-making, and/or reduction in health care disparities as examples.

IHA’s small research program will contribute to ‘real-world’ evidence by providing funding for new information discovery on the impact of explicated health literacy interventions Every health literacy study contributes to the body of knowledge seeking to answer the yet unmet research questions. The IHA research program will:

* Facilitate more rigorous study of community health literacy initiatives and programs that incorporate health literacy interventions through small research grants;
* Support wrap-around research funding for healthcare systems to examine processes and services reengineered with health literacy best practices;
* Provide ‘seed funding’ for research that supports the early career development of researchers committed to pursuing HL research; and
* Build strategic partnerships for collaborative research between IHA and our partners to address the difficult unanswered research questions in the field of heath literacy (i.e. ROI).

**Timeline**

* RFP Announced: December 13, 2021
* **Due Date for Full Proposals: January 17, 2022**
* Selection Committee Review and Scoring: January 18 through February 8, 2022
* IHA Executive Team Decisions: February 9 through February 11, 2022
* Grant Awardees Announced: February 14, 2022
* Commence Projects (anticipated project start date): February 14, 2022
* Duration of Projects: 12 to 24 months

**Background**

Healthy People 2030 describes two components of health literacy ─ personal health literacy and organizational health literacy. Individual health literacy is defined there as “the degree to which individuals have the ability to obtain, understand, and act upon health information and services needed to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.” Organizational health literacy is defined as “the degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand and use health information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.” Despite the attention given to health literacy by the federal government over the last several decades and the research within the field, most organizations today are not health literate organizations. The lack of organizational resource allocation for building health literacy expertise and diffusion is partially fueled by the gaps in health literacy research.

Many research studies have found the **association** between limited health literacy and:

* More frequent ED visits,
* Hospitalizations and readmissions,
* Poor medication adherence, and
* Lower rates of preventive care services.

However, less is known about the specific components of health literacy interventions that result in successful, replicable, and scalable outcomes. Research is lacking in establishing a **causal relationship** between health literacy interventions and desirable health outcomes as these studies are high cost requiring RCTs and accessible population data.

Many healthcare experts and researchers have cited the need for high quality, implementation research to inform interventions that are effective for mitigating limited health literacy. Research is needed on the aspects of critical health literacy that are linked to better outcomes such as the appropriate receipt of preventive care services and care access at the right time and in the right care setting. Studies are needed to assess the effectiveness of processes and products in health care that have been reengineered using health literacy best practices.

More research is needed testing the organizational health literacy guides for applicability and effectiveness in practice, and evaluating “skills-based” health literacy interventions for specific populations (older adults, immigrants, at-risk youth and young adults, etc.). Rigorous research linking such practices as teach-back and clear patient communication to a reduction in hospital readmissions is needed to facilitate broad adoption and diffusion by managed care and hospital systems.

Today, more than at any other time, there is also a need for research that links improvements in health literacy with a reduction in health disparities and an increase in health equity. Copy and design adaptations of patient education and information for web and patient portals must be studied to ensure such practices do not further increase health disparities.[[1]](#footnote-1)

IHA is dedicated to empowering people to better health through advances in health literacy and health equity. IHA fulfills its mission through numerous activities. IHA hosts national and regional conferences on health literacy in practice, policy, and research; publishes the *What To Do For Health* series of plain language self-care books and micro-pubs on health topics of emergent need such as COVID-19 and anxiety; administers the Health Literacy Solutions Center with more than 10,000 members from all over the world; and publishes a peer-reviewed, open access journal, *Health Literacy Research and Practice*. IHA is offering these research grants to provide some funding for studies of health literacy interventions (programs, processes, or policies). IHA is committed to ongoing research in health literacy and hopes this research grant program will provide some funding for more rigorous evaluation of the innovative work being done in our communities.

**Requirements of the Proposed Research**

* Submitter may be an individual or an organization (non-profit status is not required; can include international collaboration, but must include a US [junior] investigator or organization as lead PI)
* Address an established research gap in the health literacy field
* Involve a population with known health risks as a result of social, economic, and environmental life circumstances
* Include a defensible and rigorous research component
* Support and commitment from the researcher’s organization/institution and study site (if applicable)
* Evidence of IRB approval (or letter stating the study is exempt)

**Use of IHA products (*What To Do For Health* series and MicroPubs):**

Applicants may (but are not required) to incorporate the use of any of IHA products at no cost to the organization and without inclusion in the proposed budget. Your use of IHA products will not influence your score one way or another.

**Selection Criteria:**

Proposals will be reviewed initially for completeness. Incomplete submissions will not be reviewed and will be returned to the applicant noting the omission(s). Completed applications will be reviewed and scored by an independent panel of academic and healthcare professionals who are subject matter experts in the field of health literacy.

**Standardized selection criteria will be used** to ensure all proposals are evaluated in a manner that is fair, equitable, timely and free of bias. Key selection criteria include the:

1. Potential to fill an unmet research need in advancing health literacy as evidenced by proposed rigorous research methods and analyses
2. Feasibility of the project and the potential for tangible results within 12 to 24 months
3. Expertise of the project director, principle investigator and other proposed team members
4. The quality and extent of patient/participant engagement and with populations experiencing known health risks as a result of social, economic, and environmental life circumstances
5. Potential to scale and impact innovation in health literacy programs

The IHA Executive team will review all scored proposals and make final decisions on awardees.

**Grant Awardee Requirements:**

* Submit biannual progress reports and end of study report and meet with IHA research officer as needed and scheduled throughout the project
* Share data and research findings consistent with academic open-access standards
* Follow all state and federal laws to protect individual privacy, personal health information, and the rights of human subjects
* Submit a manuscript for publication (*HLRP: Health Literacy Research and Practice* or other similar peer-reviewed journal).

**Questions:** If you have any questions about this funding opportunity please contact Marian Ryan, PhD, Chief Policy and Research Officer for IHA at mryan@iha4health.org.

**Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA) Research Grant Application**

[Instructions: Please follow all instructions for your application. Include all headings below (bolded) in your document. Use 1 inch margins, 12-point font (Times Roman, Garamond) or 11-point (Arial), single-spaced. Please bundle your application including attachments into a single PDF and send via email to IHA\_RFP at RFP@iha4health.org. Your email will be date/time stamped as your submission date/time.

**Reminder: deadline for submission:** January 17, 2022, no later than 9 p.m. PDT

**Study Title:**

**Abstract (Description of the Study [1 page]):** summary of your proposed research at a high level concisely describing how the proposed study will address the identified gap in knowledge.

**Organizational Capacity and Key Personnel [1-2 pages]:**

* Describe your organization and the study/population site.
* Describe key study team personnel and the nature and scope of work for each person on the team
* Explain the support the study team will receive including but not limited to personnel resources, equipment/software, access to a study population and/or data, and other expertise. A strong commitment from awardee’s and study site’s organizations should be portrayed.
* Describe the leadership of the project (Principal Investigator) to lead the study, monitor study progress and ensure its success.

**Research Plan [up to 6 pages]**

* Hypothesis and Aims (Study Goal and Objectives)
* Relevance and significance (how this project will fill a gap in the field and why the study is important)
* Study approach, design and methods (linked to and appropriate for each aim/objective; call out any potential difficulties and explain how you will address them; describe data components, anticipated sample size and statistical analyses to be conducted)

**Project Budget Narrative [1 page]**

* Explain how the line items of fund allocation will be used to fulfill the respective aims of the study.
* Tell us how organizational supports will be used to wrap-around the funding allocation for particular categorical expenses (indirect costs cannot be funded via the grant).

**Milestones and Deadlines [1 page]**

* Produce a high level work plan across time (12, 18, or 24 months from the award date)
* List **key** milestone activities and their associated anticipated dates
* Highlight critical activities of dependency for the successful completion of the study

**Attachments:**

* Organization Chart
* A biosketch for Principal Investigator and each key member of the study team
* Project Budget [excel spreadsheet]
* Letter of commitment from any study partner on whom the proposed study is dependent

1. The gaps in health literacy research described in this section of the RFP are examples and not intended as an exhaustive list of all studies for consideration. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)