July, 2022

Equity in Access Research Program

Full Application Guidelines & Instructions

Effective Dates for these Guidelines & Instructions:
July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

General Information

About The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's (LLS) mission is to cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and improve the quality of life for patients and their families through research, policy advocacy, education, and support. We are the largest nonprofit funder of blood cancer research, investing nearly $1.3 billion in the most pioneering science worldwide since 1949. We drive policy and regulatory changes that accelerate the development of new blood cancer treatments and break down barriers to care.

About LLS's *Equity in Access Research Program*

This funding opportunity is part of LLS's *Equity in Access Research Program,* which is designed to generate evidence that will guide changes in healthcare policy and practice to ensure that all blood cancer patients with and survivors of a blood cancer achieve access to the cancer care and services they need throughout their lives. This program is based on the concept of health equity as "the principle underlying a commitment to reduce – and ultimately, eliminate – disparities in health and its determinants, including social determinants"[1]. We define a health disparity as "a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social or economic disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater social or economic obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, mental health, cognitive, sensory, or physical disability, sexual orientation, geographic location, or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion"[2]. Although substantial evidence links economic and social disadvantage to avoidable illness, poorer health-related quality of life, and greater untimely death; it is possible to mitigate the impact of economic and social disadvantage on health through social policy reform[1].

The *Equity in Access Research Program* seeks to improve access to care across the cancer care continuum, beginning with diagnosis, encompassing treatment (which may include a clinical trial), and continuing through post-treatment survivorship, including supportive and palliative care during all phases of the continuum. For some patients, the continuum also includes end-of-life care. The LLS *Equity in Access Research Program* aims to deepen understanding of access barriers and identify modifiable factors that contribute to these barriers, factors that can be addressed through policy reform and changes in healthcare practice.

Maximum Award Duration & Value

We welcome research study proposals with a maximum duration of two years. The award amount you are granted will reflect the amount you request in the budget section of your application. Any requests to modify the budget must be made in writing to LLS.

Duration	Maximum Annual Direct Costs	Maximum Annual Indirect Costs (11.1%)	Maximum Annual Total Costs	Maximum Total for 3 Years
Maximum 3 years	$225,022.50	$24,977.50	$250,000.00	$750,000.00

Who Can Apply

Applicant Eligibility

The application will require a Principal Investigator who is responsible for proposal submission and conduct of the study, including adherence to all stipulations made by LLS in a Funding Agreement (see Funding Agreement at LLS.org/EquityinAccess). The study team may also include a co-Principal Investigator and co-Investigators. Applicants who are offered an *Equity in Access Research Program* award will be sent a Funding Agreement outlining the terms and conditions of the award.

LLS welcomes Principal Investigators at all stages of their careers, as well as Principal Investigators who have not previously conducted research in the area of blood cancer. Principal Investigator(s) must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The Principal Investigator(s) must be affiliated with a public or nonprofit institution (tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code).
- The sponsoring institution must be based in the United States or its territories.
- The Principal Investigator must have a PhD, MD, ScD, JD, or equivalent doctoral degree.

The Principal Investigator and other study team members may come from a variety of disciplines, including but not limited to health services research, public health, economics, sociology, public policy, political science, public administration, medicine and law. We encourage multi-disciplinary teams.

The study team must include an individual with expertise in the area(s) of public policy most relevant to the proposal (e.g., Medicare, Medicaid, etc).

Consistent with LLS's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, we encourage applications that have investigators and/or research team members from backgrounds historically underrepresented in research disciplines as a result of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, or other factors.

Review Process & Applicant Notification

Action	Date
• Deadline to submit Letters of Intent	• September 16, 2022 (3:00 p.m. ET)
• LLS notifies applicants whether they are invited to submit full proposal	• November 4, 2022
• Deadline for receipt of full proposals (invited applicants)	• January 13, 2023 (3:00 p.m. ET)
• Notification of awards	• April 7, 2023
• Grant start date	• June 1, 2023

Review Criteria for Full Proposals

LLS will convene a panel of external subject matter experts to review the full proposals. The panel will consider the following criteria in reviewing proposals:

- Significance to the Field: Extent to which the study addresses critical, unanswered questions and increases understanding of key issues related to insurance and equity in access to care for patients with and survivors of a blood cancer.
- Policy Significance: Potential for the study's findings to shape public policy, specifically state and federal laws and regulations, aimed at improving equity in access to care. (See additional notes regarding policy significance below.)
- Methodology: Strength of the methodological plan for bringing the research to fruition; methodologies and data sources must be described in detail and be appropriate for and available within the timeframe of the study.
- Investigators and Study Team: Experience, expertise, and qualifications of the Principal Investigator(s) and strength of the study team. The proposal should describe relevant previous studies by the Principal Investigator(s).
- Dissemination Plan: Strength of a stated plan for timely, wide dissemination of findings to policy stakeholders and other relevant audiences. (See additional notes regarding dissemination of findings below.)
- Feasibility: Feasibility of the study within the budget and timeframe.
- Potential Challenges: Identification of potential challenges to study implementation and inclusion of feasible solutions.

Policy Significance

The proposal should clearly describe public policy implications—this feature is an important consideration in the review process for both the Letter of Intent and full proposal. Public policy initiatives are a critical component of LLS's strategic approach to improving patients' access to care and their quality of life. For more than a decade, LLS has championed evidenced-based health policy reforms at both the state and federal levels to improve access to care and quality of life for patients with and survivors of a blood cancer. To this end, the proposal must discuss the relevance of potential findings to policymaking at the state and/or federal levels. Deliverables at the end of the study must speak to the steps that policymakers ought to consider taking to reduce or eliminate healthcare access barriers that emerge among the study's findings and improve quality of life and outcomes among patients with and/or survivors of a blood cancer. Policymakers include elected officials and political appointees serving at the state and/or federal levels, in a legislative, regulatory, or judicial environment.

Dissemination of Findings

LLS will give preference to proposals that demonstrate the research team's ability to make initial or full findings available to LLS, and as appropriate the scientific community, during the grant period and to effectively disseminate findings to policy stakeholders and others as relevant. Applicants should consider the timeliness of the research topic and question(s) to ensure that the findings will be relevant at the time of dissemination.

Applicants should consider drawing on a variety of types of expertise to inform and guide effective dissemination and maximize the impact of the study's findings.

To ensure LLS-supported research is made accessible to a wide and diverse audience, grantees who publish findings in peer-reviewed publications must do so in open access journals and/or must commit to covering the cost of making the resulting publications open access. Applicants can include these costs in their budget.

Scoring

Criteria Scores: A score of 1-9 will be assigned to each of the seven criteria: significance to the field, policy significance, methodology, investigators and study team, dissemination plan, feasibility, and potential challenges.

Overall Impact Score: An overall impact score will be assigned to the research study proposal. Consistent with NIH scoring guidelines, the impact score will reflect the reviewer's overall evaluation, not a numerical average of individual criterion scores. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major impact. Overall impact will represent the likelihood that the research project will have a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved, practice, and/or policy, but may be defined differently for different types of applications.

Impact	Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses
High	1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
	2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
	3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
Medium	4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
	5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
	6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
Low	7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
	8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
	9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses

Instructions for Submission of Invited Full Proposals

To submit the application, please log-in to the LLS Research Portal (**https://lls.fluxx.io**). The following information will be collected in the LLS Research Portal. Some of this information will be required in pre-set fields. **In addition, in the Research Portal section labeled PROJECT AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, please upload a single PDF file that includes all of the following information, with each section clearly labeled in the order below.**

Applications that do not comply with the following instructions will not be considered. For questions, please contact researchprograms@lls.org.

Organization Information

Sponsor Institution: Name of institution that is responsible for the conduct of the study and its location

Principal Investigator: Name of primary Principal Investigator

Institutional Signing Official: Name of institutional representative responsible for the signing and agreeing to the accuracy of the application and to the Funding Agreement (for Funding Agreement see LLS.org/EquityinAccess) terms and conditions, should the application be selected for funding)

Financial Officer: The institutional representative responsible for the financial administration of externally-funded research

Additional Access (Admin/Assistant): Access may be given to personnel to assist in the application process. This is the institutional representative responsible for the day-to-day administration of externally-funded research.

Zip Code of Sponsor Institution: Enter the zip code of the Sponsor Institution.

Grant Information

Title: 150-character limit (including spaces)

Lay Project Summary: 500-character limit (including spaces)

Scientific Abstract: Briefly describe the proposed research in 3,000 characters or less (including spaces). Include the following sections: Background, Aims, Study Design, and Policy Significance

Proposed Start and End Dates: The start date for this is award is June 1, 2023. The end date can be no later than three years after the start date; the latest possible end date is May 31, 2026.

Amount Requested: The total amount, including both direct and indirect costs. The total may not exceed $250,000 annually and $750,000 for a 3-year project period.

Key Personnel and Collaborators Information

Key Personnel/Collaborators: Indicate any personnel, with their titles and their affiliations, who will be involved in your proposed study, including Co-Principal Investigators, Co-Investigators, and collaborators. This information will assist in identifying potential conflicts of interest during the reviewer assignment process.

Project Description and Supporting Documentation

Project Description (Maximum 8 pages, font must be at least 11-point Arial, margins must be at least 1 inch, and single or greater spacing must be used):

- Specific aims
- Background and significance
- Previous studies and preliminary data
- Study design and methods
- Relevance for health policy and potential for the study's findings to guide policy reform in increase health equity
- Dissemination plan
- Potential challenges and solutions

References: References may be in any standard format and do not count in the 8-page limit for the Project Description.

Biosketches: Provide a biosketch(es) for the Principal Investigator(s) and all other Investigators. Please use the most recent NIH Biosketch format as of July 1, 2022. ERA Commons username is not required.

Human Subjects: State if human materials or subjects will be involved in the proposed research. The status (approved, pending, or exempt) of Institutional Review Board (IRB or equivalent oversight entity) approval must be provided. The Human Subject Assurance Number (OHRP) must be included. If the research project has received IRB approval, the date must be provided and documentation must be included in the single PDF of the application.

Budget and Budget Justification: Provide itemized detail for each major category for all years of the project. **See budget templates at LLS.org/EquityinAccess. Please do not exceed three pages for the budget justification.** The maximum annual cost (direct and indirect) is $250,000. The total cost over 3 years cannot exceed $750,000. The following are guidelines for permissible and impermissible costs.

Permissible Direct Costs:

- Personnel Expenses: Includes salary, wage, or stipend with fringe benefits. LLS does not have a salary cap.
- Supplies and Materials: Requests must be itemized.
- Equipment Purchases: Requests must identify each item of equipment with an acquisition cost of more than $1,000.
- Travel Expenses: Requests cannot exceed $4,000 per year.
- Journal Fees: Costs may only include those necessary for making publications open access.
- Other Direct Costs: Requests can include patient participation compensation, site participation compensation, compensation for participation in advisory boards, etc.

Permissible Indirect Costs (often referred to as Institutional Overhead, IDC, M&A, G&A or pooled costs) are those costs incurred for common or joint objectives that cannot be readily identified with a particular project (e.g. general maintenance, utilities, library, etc.) as defined in Office of Management and Budget Circular A-21. Indirect costs are limited to 11.1% of total costs. For sponsoring institutions that do not choose to use these funds for indirect costs, LLS allows the funds to be applied to the Grantee's/Principal Investigator's stipend or fringe benefits costs.

Impermissible Costs include membership dues, tuition, books, and journal subscription costs.

Additional Research Support for the Project: Please state whether other sources of funding have been received or are being sought from another organization to co-support this project or a portion of this project, including from investigators' own institutions. If a funding decision about co-support becomes available following submission of this application, LLS must be notified within 5 business days of the applicants' receipt of this information.

LLS recognizes that some investigations may require multiple funding sources, co-funding for this project or a portion of the project may be appropriate and acceptable. The need for and details about such overlapping support should be clearly explained in the application. However, LLS will

consider an applicant's other current grant support in funding decisions. This may result in LLS funding only part of the grant or none of the grant, depending on the level of overlap. In addition, LLS reserves the right to adjust the level of funding of an awarded grant should another overlapping or potentially overlapping grant that was pending at the time of grant submission be awarded to the applicant.

Failure to abide by LLS's rules on disclosure of current or pending support may jeopardize the funding of the current grant applicant and may affect future LLS funding.

Additional Research Support: Please complete the Other Research Support template (for template see LLS.org/EquityinAccess) to list any active or pending research support received by the Principal Investigator and other investigators and include the template in the single PDF upload.

Appendices: Include only essential information for review of the proposal that does not fall within the scope of the application (e.g., tables or figures, including data from prior studies). **Appendices should not exceed 3 pages in total.**

Letter of Support: Provide any Letters of Support as relevant from collaborators and/or organizations providing resources (e.g., data) for the project.

Signature Page: All applications must be signed by the Principal Investigator (and Co-Principal Investigator, if applicable) and Institutional Signing Official. See LLS.org/EquityinAccess for a signature page template.

Instructions Post Submission

After the grant has been submitted, and prior to the award notification, the following new information should be provided as relevant to the proposed research study:

- Manuscripts that have been accepted for publication; the following must be provided:
    - List of authors
    - Title
    - Journal
    - A copy of the acceptance letter from the journal
- Updates regarding any transfers to a new institution
- Funding received for the proposed research

If the PI or Co-PI changes institutions or leaves the sponsoring institution after the grant has been submitted, LLS must be notified; the PI cannot be changed following grant submission. If you plan to withdraw your application at any time during the application cycle, please inform LLS staff of your decision by writing to researchprograms@lls.org.

References

1. Braveman P. What are health disparities and health equity? We need to be clear. *Public Health Rep*. Jan-Feb 2014;129 Suppl 2(Suppl 2):5-8. doi:10.1177/00333549141291s203.
2. Carter-Pokras O, Baquet C. What is a "health disparity"? *Public health reports (Washington, DC: 1974)*. Sep-Oct 2002;117(5):426-434. doi:10.1093/phr/117.5.426.