

Southeast Community Engagement Alliance (CEAL) Research Initiative

1 GRANT PURPOSE

The ***Southeast Community Engagement Alliance (CEAL)*** represents a partnership of state-based CEAL programs in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama dedicated to working with communities to identify promising strategies that lead to the dissemination and implementation of science-based interventions to improve health in the region. All three CEAL programs serve populations disproportionately burdened by chronic disease, including obesity, hypertension, and metabolic diseases, that are affected by poor diet and limited physical activity. Accordingly, the participating institutions represent multiple complementary and distinguishing strengths:

PROGRAM TIMELINE

Application Open: March 2, 2026

Application Deadline: Friday, April 10, 2026, 5pm CT

Notification to Applicants: May, 2026

Grant Period: June 1, 2026 – May 31, 2027

- Scientific leadership and subject matter expertise in nutrition research and culinary medicine, with state-of-the-art metabolic kitchens
- Community outreach efforts that underscore healthy diets and meal preparation
- Educational initiatives to bolster understanding of the relationship between poor diets, chronic conditions, and health outcomes

The Southeast CEAL consortium seeks to support collaborative, multi-site research teams to advance mission-aligned, community-engaged pilot investigation related to nutrition. Through a competitive selection process, the consortium will prioritize projects that synergize across states and fund one (1) research project per state that will further our understanding of the impact of poor diets in causing common chronic conditions and/or enhance our knowledge of the influence of healthy diets in preventing or managing these conditions in the Southeast as aligned with the NIH's expressed priorities ([Unified Strategy](#)).

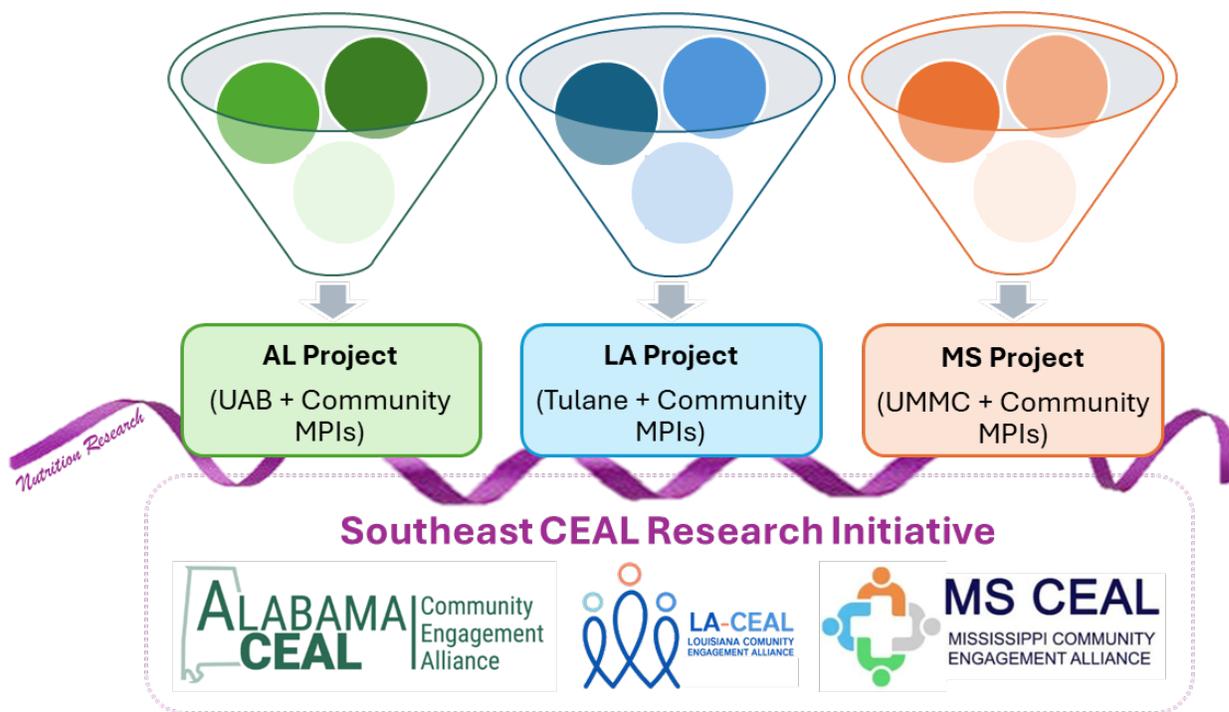
2 ELIGIBILITY

2.1 PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

Projects must represent a scientific approach that involves work by team members (i) from one of the three sponsoring CEAL Hubs: University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC), or Tulane University, and (ii) from an affiliated community group.



One project per site will be selected for funding based on merit. While work in each state is not required to be identical, the efforts should ideally relate as a cohesive strategy that addresses a mission-aligned goal. A Southeast CEAL executive advisory board, drawing on CEAL leaders from each state, may work with selected teams to optimize project goals to enhance integration and collaboration across projects and teams.



Project concepts should address a nutrition-related topic using a community-engaged research framework, which may include (not an exhaustive list):

- Community-driven assessment of nutritional barriers and facilitators
- Implementation and evaluation of culturally responsive nutrition interventions
- Improving healthy food access through community–academic partnerships
- Community-led strategies to address nutritional differences across the life course
- Evaluation of Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) nutrition approaches
- Development of community-engaged digital health tools for nutrition
- Participatory research on food security and resilience
- Nutrition interventions integrated with chronic disease prevention
- Engaging Community Health Workers to promote healthy eating
- Community-based strategies to improve nutrition literacy
- Multi-sector partnerships to support healthy community food environments
- Maternal and infant dietary exposures on health outcomes across the lifespan
- Community-engaged methods for addressing nutrition misinformation

INVESTIGATOR ELIGIBILITY

Southeast CEAL Research Initiative Projects are required to identify at least one (1) academic site lead (principal investigator [PI]) from one of the respective sponsoring sites (UAB, UMMC, Tulane)



and one (1) community-based site lead. Once each project is identified for funding, the PIs for each project and the SE CEAL Consortium executive advisory board will meet quarterly during the pilot project year to foster integration and alignment of project themes.

PIs at each sponsoring institution should be full-time faculty (or institutional equivalents) employed at UAB, UMMC, or Tulane. Faculty at all ranks (Assistant, Associate, Full Professor) are eligible; special consideration will be given to projects that include interdisciplinary early career and senior investigator partnerships. Community-based site leads should be affiliated with a non-profit organization with 501c3 status.

One proposal may be submitted per faculty member. Faculty members with a current grant containing overlapping aims are not eligible. Postdoctoral fellows, staff scientists, clinical fellows, residents, research professionals, health system administrators and trainees are not eligible to serve as PIs. They may be involved as co-investigators or provide technical support on the team.

3 FUNDING

Each of the participating institutions (UAB, UMMC, Tulane) will support up to \$25,000 direct costs that must be budgeted for activities within that site and its affiliated community for the planned project period of one year (June 1, 2026 – May 31, 2027). Indirect costs will not be supported by this program.

- **Allowable Expenses:** Funds can be used for non-faculty personnel expenses (trainee and research staff effort, consultants, analysts, technology support); materials and supplies; research related expenses (analysis costs, participant stipends, lab expenses, etc.); and project-related local and scientific travel.
- **Unallowed Expenses:** Funds cannot be used to support principal investigator (PI, MPI) or other faculty salary. Funds cannot be used for acquiring equipment, other institution-specific limitations on costs or international travel.

The **Southeast CEAL Consortium thanks program co-sponsors**, including the Center for Clinical and Translational Science, the UAB Comprehensive Healthy Living Research Center, and Tulane University's Center for Health Outcomes, Implementation and Community Engaged Science with generous support from the Jack Aron Endowed Chair in Primary Care Medicine.



4 APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Application Deadline: Friday, April 10, 2026, 5pm CT

Submit Proposals as Single PDF Here: ccts@uab.edu

General Application formatting:

- 0.5" margins
- Arial 11 pt.
- > 10 pt. font for tables and figure legends.
- Single spaced

4.1 PROPOSAL COMPONENTS & INSTRUCTIONS AND FORMATTING GUIDELINES

Applications must conform to formatting instructions and include all required components or they will not be reviewed. There will not be an opportunity to edit submitted applications after the submission deadline. Please note specified page limitations.

Submit your application as a single document in PDF format with the sections compiled in the order below to ccts@uab.edu

- 1. Project Narrative (125 words):** Please provide a brief description of your project in lay terms. This is to inform non-scientists of the importance of the proposed work
- 2. Research Plan (2-page maximum):** Please address the topics below (a-e)
 - a. Significance.** Please explain how your project will address a health challenge affecting individuals or communities in the three-state region (AL+MS+LA).
 - b. Approach.** Describe the overall strategy, methodology and analyses to be used to address the scientific question and test the proposed hypothesis.
 - c. Impact.** Describe the potential impact of the proposed work in terms of its influence on clinical, community, economic, and/or policy practices.
- 3. References Cited (no limit).** Provide a bibliography of all references cited
- 4. Complementary expertise and strengths of the team: (1 page):** Provide a description of the unique strengths and complementary expertise of the research team that makes it clear why the investigators are best suited to complete the proposed research.
- 5. Biosketch:** Include NIH biosketches for all academic and community project leads. Use of SciENcv is optional.
- 6. Budget with Budget Justification:** Please create a [PHS398 FP4](#) for the project. The "Total Direct Costs for Initial Budget Period" line should not exceed \$25,000 . Please include a detailed justification for all expenses.
- 7. Project Timeline and Next Steps (1 page)** On the top half of the page, please create a project timeline to define project milestones according to experimental plan. Projects are expected to be completed in one year. On the bottom half of the page, please explain what you plan to do after completing this seed grant (e.g., submit follow-up project to an extramural agency, package information for advocacy efforts).
- 8. Letter(s) of Support** (optional, no page limit) While not required, letter(s) of support and related agreements may be included in the application to substantiate a collaboration, utilization of a resource, etc.



5 REVIEW CRITERIA

Proposals will be administratively checked for completion and eligibility. Reviewers will assess the proposed significance, innovation and approach of the project based on the NIH's Simplified Review Framework factors of (1) Importance of the Research, (2) Rigor and Feasibility, and (3) Expertise and Resources. Reviewers are also empowered to consider strategies for regional collaboration, the study timeline and budget. Reviewers will assign a single overall impact score (NIH 9-point scale) and provide comments for consideration by the Southeast CEAL executive advisory board, who may work with selected teams to refine project goals to enhance collaboration and integration across Project teams and nutrition-related projects.

6 POST-AWARD EXPECTATIONS

6.1 DELIVERABLES:

Selected teams will meet virtually with members of the Southeast CEAL Consortium executive advisory board at the launch of the project and every six (6) months thereafter. Awardees will be asked to provide brief project updates, including an interim progress report after the first six (6) months (due December 2026), which will be included in formal reporting to sponsors. A final report summarizing the team's findings and the outcomes of the projects will be due July 1, 2027. Awardees will be expected to respond to evaluation surveys for a period up to 5 years following the award funding to track project outcomes.

6.2 DISSEMINATION:

Program leads will work with awardees to present their findings at an upcoming CCTS Community Engagement Institute **AND** CEAL-sponsored events.



7 CONTACTS

Southeast CEAL Consortium Executive Advisory Board

Alabama CEAL

Mona Fouad, MD, MPH

Edward E. Partridge, M.D., Endowed Chair for Cancer Disparity Research; Senior Associate Dean for Access & Engagement, Heersink School of Medicine; University of Alabama at Birmingham
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Michael Wesley, Sr., DMin

Senior Pastor, Greater Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church

Louisiana CEAL

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Lakeisha Williams, PharmD, MSPH

Associate Professor of Pharmacy; Director of Community Engagement and Outreach, Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education, Xavier University

Gary Wiltz, MD

Chief Medical Officer, Teche Health (Federally Qualified Health Center in Franklin, LA)

Mississippi CEAL

Caroline E. Compretta, PhD

Professor of Preventive Medicine; Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research; University of Mississippi Medical Center
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Director, Adult Health Services; Mississippi Department of Health Center for Lifespan Health and Wellness

For questions or guidance related to this funding opportunity, please contact:

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