

Sobel-Duncan Border Health Research Award 2026 Request for Proposals

Purpose

The purpose of this program is to stimulate:

- Health disparities research.
- Research that has the potential to translate to clinical applications.
- Collaborative research between UTEP and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) El Paso.
- Research that seeks to understand and/or improve the health conditions of the people in the Paso del Norte border region, with special emphasis on Mexican-origin Hispanics and indigenous populations.
- Development of a foundational research platform in order to pursue extramural funding.

Description

The Sobel-Duncan Border Health Research Award is made available through a generous donation from Dr. Annette Sobel and Dr. Robert Duncan, for the establishment of the Sobel-Duncan Border Health Research Fund. Additionally, the Offices of the Presidents at UTEP and TTUHSC El Paso provided matching funds for this purpose. The intent is to catalyze development of new high-impact research paradigms from existing research programs and to foster new research opportunities through collaborations between the two institutions. Projects can be basic, translational, behavioral and/or clinical, as well as outcomes- and/or community-focused, and must be **hypothesis-driven**. Preference will be given to projects that seek to develop grant submissions aimed at Program Announcements (PAs), future Requests for Applications (RFAs), program projects or new areas of national research priority identified by NIH, HRSA, PCORI (Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute) or other federal and state granting agencies and biomedical research foundations. Funds should not be used for research related to logistical or clinical operations. This award will be managed by the UTEP College of Science.

One award, up to \$40,000, will be available starting on September 1, 2026 for a 1-year project.

Eligibility

- Principal investigators (PIs) must be full-time UTEP or TTUHSC El Paso faculty.
- Research projects must involve two PIs. There must be one PI from UTEP and one from TTUHSC El Paso. Participation by investigators with complementing areas of expertise from different disciplines is encouraged.
- The UTEP PI must serve as the point of contact. An investigator may submit only one proposal as PI, but he/she may be included as collaborator or consultant in other proposals.
- All research projects are eligible; however, preference will be given to projects in the areas of health disparities, Hispanic health, Indigenous health and/or topics focused on Borderplex issues.
- Proposals must include explicit plans for securing external funding to continue/expand the project (specific PAs, potential RFAs or other funding source details).
- Investigators seeking to transition from a pilot grant (e.g. R03) to a major grant (e.g. R01) through collaboration, are eligible.
- Projects should be for new research that expands the funding opportunities of the investigators, within their areas of expertise. Support for the continuation of current extramurally-funded research is discouraged.

Important Dates

Mar 6, 2026- Request for proposals released

April 8, 2026- Letters of intent due by 11:59 pm (MDT)

May 1, 2026- Invitations for full proposal

June 26, 2026- Invited full proposals due by 11:59 pm (MDT)

Aug 3, 2026- Notice of Award

Sep 1, 2026- Earliest project start (all appropriate approvals must be in place for funds to be disbursed and project to begin: IRB, IACUC, etc.)

Budget Restrictions

The maximum allowed budget is \$40,000. All funds must be used in one year; extensions are not allowed. Only direct costs allowed. If a PI leaves, funds must remain at the institution and the PI should be replaced with another investigator at the same institution.

Allowed: Direct support of research (i.e. animal purchases and care, supplies, reagents, minor equipment (under \$2,000), sample analyses, core facility fees), human subjects reimbursement, publication costs, technician salary, graduate student salary/stipend. Travel to conferences to present data resulting from the funded project. Costs to organize a conference.

Not allowed: Principal- and Co-Investigator salaries, administrative salaries, renovations, equipment \geq \$2,000 and service contracts.

Application Process

The application process consists of two steps: **Letter of Intent (LOI)** and **full proposal**. LOIs will be reviewed by members of the Evaluation Committee, composed of a Chairperson, 2 faculty members from UTEP and 2 faculty members from TTUHSC EP. LOIs will be ranked based on the review below, and those with the highest scores will receive an invitation to submit a full proposal.

I. Letter of intent (LOI)

Investigators are requested to submit the following:

1. Completed, signed cover sheet (provided at the end of this document)
2. A 1-2 page summary of the project, highlighting:
 - Background (summarized)
 - Proposed project objectives, hypothesis and aims
 - Anticipated outcomes
 - Plans for securing external funding (including source and program, if known)
 - Key personnel roles
 - Approximate budget total and general categories (summer salary, research assistant salary, supplies, etc.)
 - Relevance to health disparities and/or the importance of health in the Paso del Norte border region

The summary must be typed, single-spaced, have margins of at least 0.5" and use a 11 or 12 size Arial or Times font. Pages must be numbered. References will not count towards the page limit.

3. NIH Biosketch or CV for the PIs and Co-Investigators; must include relevant publications, activities and funding in the past 5 years (not to exceed 5 pages, each).

An electronic copy of the LOI must be received by the CoS Dean's Office (attn: Maria Ordaz, mlordaz@utep.edu) as a **single PDF** before **11:59 pm on April 8, 2026**. Additional pages and

attachments will not be considered. Incomplete LOIs and those that do not meet the requirements will not be reviewed.

II. Full proposal

If the LOI is invited for full application, the following applies:

a) Submission Deadline

A complete, signed (e-signature or scanned PDF) original application must be submitted to mlordaz@utep.edu **before 11:59 pm on June 26, 2026.**

Proposal documents

- i. Cover sheet (you may use the same cover used for the LOI)
- ii. Research Proposal- The research proposal must be typed, single-spaced, have margins of at least 0.5" and use a 11 or 12 size Arial or Times font. Pages must be numbered. The proposal should consist of the following:
 - a. Specific Aims (**1 page**)
 - b. Research Strategy: Background, Rationale, Experiments and Methods (**not to exceed 5 pages**). Must include discussion of: Scientific or scholarly opportunities made possible through this collaboration, innovation and significance. Must include timing and milestones. Be sure to explain how your application fulfills the objectives of the RFP.
 - c. Description of each member's role in the project (**not to exceed 2 pages, total**).
 - d. Pertinent References (no page limit)
 - e. NIH Biosketch or CV for the PIs and Co-Investigators; must include relevant publications, activities and funding in the past 5 years (**not to exceed 5 pages, each**).
 - f. Detailed, itemized budget. Justification of all budget items is required (**not to exceed 2 pages**).
- iii. Attachment 1- Letters of support or collaboration (if applicable). No page limit.
- iv. Attachment 2- Provide a brief summary of a specific Program Announcement, RFA or extramural funding targeted for grant submission within 18 months (must include agency/foundation, RFA number, name and amount). Early contact with the granting agency demonstrating interest in the proposed project is encouraged; proof of communication with granting agency can be included as part of attachment 2 (**not to exceed 3 pages**).

Additional attachments, links or appendices will not be considered in the review process. Incomplete proposals and those that do not meet the requirements will not be reviewed.

Review Criteria for LOI and Full Proposal

Awards will be based on:

1. Significance.

Does the project address an important problem in the field? How will the overall goals of the project advance scientific knowledge? How will successful completion of this project assist in the ability to obtain extramural funding of the research?

2. Investigator(s).

Are the PIs, collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project? How will the unique skills of each collaborator enhance the possibility of success? Is the effort of each PI well justified and the contributions clear?

3. Innovation.

Does the research challenge or seek to shift current paradigms? Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies novel? Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies proposed?

4. Approach.

Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? Indicate how the findings will enhance the ability to obtain extramural funding.

5. Environment.

Will the scientific environment contribute to the probability of success? Are the equipment and other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the project proposed? Will the project benefit from unique features of collaborative arrangements? How will this project leverage existing resources? Will trainees (medical and graduate students, residents, etc.) be involved and benefit from the project?

6. Alignment with Award purpose

Does the project meet the purpose of the Sobel-Duncan Border Health Research Award? Does it advance our understanding of health disparities, Hispanic health and/or indigenous health? Does it contribute to improving the health of Paso del Norte residents?

The following will also be considered during the selection process:

- The intrinsic intellectual merit, scope and potential impact of the project and impact on the research field
- The feasibility of the project, appropriateness of the research plan and reasonableness of the budget
- The collaborative nature of the work
- The potential for securing new grants

Questions regarding the application process may be directed to:

Maria Ordaz, M.S., MPA
Director for Research Initiatives, College of Science
mlordaz@utep.edu
(915) 747-8624

**The University of Texas at El Paso
Sobel-Duncan Border Health Research Award**

Pre-Proposal and Proposal Cover Sheet

This form must be signed and scanned or signed electronically, and submitted as a PDF along with the other required documents listed in the RFP. Please e-mail to mlordaz@utep.edu.

Forms received after the deadline will not be considered.

A. Project Title: _____

B. UTEP Principal Investigator (point-of-contact): : _____

Department/College: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

C. TTUHSC El Paso Principal Investigator: _____

Department: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

D. Other investigators/key-personnel

Name: _____ Role: _____

**E. Relevance to health disparities and/or health of residents of the Paso del Norte border region
(200 word maximum).**

F. Project Components:

Please indicate if any of the following will be used in your project:

- Animal research
- Human subjects research
- Recombinant DNA
- Radiation
- Collection of Tissues, Cells or Organs
- Controlled substances
- Pathogenic organisms (viruses or bacteria)

G. Will this project use UTEP core facilities? Yes No

If yes, please list:

The signatures below signify assurance that the above information is true and PIs confirm their participation in the proposed project:

UTEP PI: _____ Date: _____

TTUHSC EI Paso PI: _____ Date: _____