



Partners in Education, Evaluation, and Research – the PEER Training Program

Background: Community engagement and rigorous science are both necessary to successfully address community health issues. The translation of scientific findings into community and clinical settings needs strong, culturally sensitive, equitable partnerships between academic centers and community/government agencies. **The PEER Training Program** offers a unique opportunity to strengthen and deepen those partnerships and build capacity to implement and disseminate research in our local communities.

The Program: The PEER Training Program is an 18-month, part-time mentored program designed to increase research partnership capacity in community organizations and facilitate academic/community research partnerships through the training of a selected staff member of that organization. Qualified applicants (fellows) from community organizations engage in a 12-month interactive training based on a health issue relevant to the participating community organization. The training incorporates experience with research process and methodology, and develops increased capacity (knowledge, skills, abilities) to implement, and evaluate research within their own organizations. The fellows also receive training in cultural competency, health literacy, and the social determinants of health. This is followed by a 6-month period dedicated to carrying out a partnered evaluation or research project with an university faculty partner. Fellows are recruited from community-based, nonprofit organizations, neighborhood clinics, governmental agencies, or organizations that have a primary mission of health programming and information dissemination.

The Goals of the Program:

- Increase research capacity in community organizations
- Strengthen community organization/academic partnerships
- Facilitate partnered, translational research

Who is developing and running this program?

PEER is a collaborative program of the CTSA Community Engagement Core, Prevention Research Center at Case Western Reserve University, and community organizations. Funding for the program development is provided by the National Institutes of Health through an administrative supplement of the CWRU Clinical and Translational Science Award.

Who is eligible for the PEER Training Program?

- Fellows are recruited from community-based, nonprofit organizations, neighborhood clinics, governmental agencies, or organizations that have a primary mission of health programming and information dissemination.
- Fellows are recommended by the leadership of their organization and will be matched with a mentor from their organization and a CWRU faculty who will serve as their academic partner.
- Fellows need to be at least mid-level staff in their organization, and ideally be in a position to increase research capacity within their organization.

What benefit does the PEER Training Program provide to participating individuals/fellows?

- Fellows receive an individual stipend (amount TBD) and will receive all instructional materials, access to a program-specific virtual classroom website, and a laptop to use for the duration of the training program.
- Fellows gain knowledge and skills in conducting community engaged research.
- Fellows complete educational requirements for human subjects research.
- Fellows network with other professionals bridging research and practice.

- Post fellowship benefits: Graduating fellows continue to be engaged in developing and supporting translational research through involvement in core activities of the Community Engagement Core and the PRC. Faculty mentoring continues for six months post fellowship. In addition, fellows have continued access to the virtual classroom developed for the program.

What are the benefits to participating organizations?

- Participating organizations receive an organizational stipend to support staff involvement in the program (in addition to the individual stipend).
- Organizations benefit from increased staff knowledge of research to identify and directly impact community needs and program implementation.
- Organizations increase their internal research capacity in terms of staff development, as well as connection to academic research environments and resources.
- Organizations have increased capacity to equitably partner with academic institutions for funding opportunities.
- Organizations gain new knowledge of the populations they serve through data, and can implement new or improved best practices backed by research specific to their communities.

What are the benefits to faculty members who serve as partners?

- Faculty partners receive a stipend (amount TBD) to support their involvement in the program.
- Faculty partners develop a strong working relationship with a community organization with the potential for future opportunities for partnered research.
- Faculty partners have opportunities for joint presentations at the community organization, local and national conferences.
- Faculty partners co-author a publication or grant proposal as a result of the research project.
- Faculty partners receive additional education and support in developing their knowledge of community based participatory research.
- Faculty partners have opportunities to seek unique funding aimed at community partnered research.

What does the PEER Training Program consist of?

- The program is designed with an instructional phase taught within a framework of culturally competent research. Topics include: partnership dynamics, research methods, study design, basic statistics, question/topic development, literature review, researching best practices, IRB protocol, grant writing, data interpretation and dissemination of results and information to diverse audiences.
- Fellows are mentored throughout the program by a faculty member who has similar research interests and by a member of their community organization, which will lay the foundation for continuing community/academic partnerships once the fellow has graduated from the program.

What is the time commitment for the fellow?

- The fellow dedicates a total of approximately 6-10 hours per month.
- The program consists of: bi-monthly classes (3 hour period, day/time tbd) week days, monthly meetings with a faculty mentor, and reading and homework assignments 4 hours/month

For more information, contact:

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