

## Request for Research Proposals

### *Religion and Health: Effects, Mechanisms, and Interpretation*

We seek proposals to elucidate how religious involvement (religious attendance, worship, altruistic and caring activities) influences individual and community health. The goals of this research program are to (A) quantitatively document effects on health (where health is broadly defined), (B) clarify the biological, social, psychological mechanisms involved, and (C) interpret what the findings mean for individual, congregational, and community health through trans-disciplinary collaboration and deliberation. This RFP focuses on research that examines the contribution of context and caring as part of the mechanism that accounts for the effects of religion on health, in particular *the effects of membership and practices within a faith community*.

For example, are communities with a high density of religiously involved persons (i.e., those with greater “spiritual capital”) more likely to have interconnections between individuals in the community, a greater level of trust, and a greater capacity to provide care for the needs (emotional and physical health) of those in the community -- outside and independent of formal health care systems? Do religious organizations, by encouraging members to love and care for one another, increase a community’s capacity to foster trust and interconnections between members? How might such factors influence the health of people in that community, and help to explain the religion-health relationship on the individual level? Proposed research should build on previous findings regarding the association between religious attendance and health and enhance our ability to interpret these findings through the engagement of multiple disciplines including theology and others.

Thirteen criteria will be used to judge proposals: (1) degree to which proposal addresses RFP goals and focus; (2) scientific merit – quality of the research plan and quantitative nature of results -- results to which statistical analyses can be applied; (3) creatively sophisticated qualitative methods that will allow for scientifically rigorous assessment of outcomes, (4) scientific environment, academic setting; (5) experience and track record of principal investigator and research team; (6) theological and trans-disciplinary collaboration; (7) potential impact on individual and community health; (8) quality of plan to disseminate the results to opinion leaders in the field; (9) novelty and potential to generate new information; (10) completion of research within two years; (11) willingness to take time and provide travel costs for final meeting; (12) demonstration of strategic impact and cost effectiveness; and (13) degree of cost sharing (special consideration will be given to proposals with matching funds up to 33%, but scientific merit of the proposed research will be the most important criterion). PI and co-PI of project (2 persons) must be willing to pay their own travel expenses to come to Durham, North Carolina for a 1-day meeting to present and discuss their results; lodging and meals will be covered. Thirty finalists will be invited to submit full proposals; seven \$200,000 grants will be awarded to outstanding research proposals.