

RFQ Response Form

RFQ for Participation in a University/Government Research Partnership

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Applicant Name: University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work

Authorized Representative Name & Title: Elizabeth M.Z. Farmer, PhD, Dean and Professor

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Partners included in this Application: University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work

How did you hear about this RFQ? Personal communication from DHS employees

REFERENCES

Provide the name, affiliation and contact information [include email address and telephone number] for three references who are able to address relevant experience with your organization.

Please do not use employees of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services as references.

Esther Bush
President and CEO
Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh

[Redacted contact information for Esther Bush]

Sharon McDaniel, EdD
President and CEO
A Second Chance

[Redacted contact information for Sharon McDaniel]

Michael Yonas, DrPH
Senior Program Officer
Research and Special Initiatives
The Pittsburgh Foundation

[Redacted contact information for Michael Yonas]

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CERTIFICATION

Please check the following before submitting your Proposal, as applicable:

By submitting this proposal, I certify and represent to the County that all submitted materials are true and accurate, and that I have not offered, conferred or agreed to confer any pecuniary benefit or other thing of value for the receipt of special treatment, advantaged information, recipient's decision, opinion, recommendation, vote or any other exercise of discretion concerning this RFP.

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REQUIREMENTS

Please respond to the following. The maximum score a Proposal can receive is 75 points. Your response to this section should not exceed 10 pages.

Background (30 points)

Describe your experience and/or interest in conducting research on topics related to improving local government/social services

The social work profession is inherently invested and involved in improving local government and social services. Social Work trains the majority of practitioners who work in public social service agencies across the entire nation (and in Pittsburgh). Social work's focus on micro, meso, and macro factors means that we are concerned with the full range of factors, processes, policies, and structures that influence service provision, outcomes, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

The University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work brings particular strengths to the table: it is ranked in the top 5% of schools of social work in the nation (#11 out of over 230 accredited programs nationally) and is currently celebrating its 100th anniversary (making it one of the oldest schools in the country). The school has a strong focus on both direct practice and broader macro (policy, system, community) issue. The faculty are consistently among the most productive (per capita) of any school of social work and have established research centers focused on key issues relevant to Allegheny County Department of Human Services. As the oldest and largest school of social work in the region, Pitt is continuously involved with the majority of social service agencies in the city and county (via student internships, alumni network, and ongoing collaborative projects). At present, it also has a new dean who is particularly keen on fostering increased collaboration and connections with the surrounding community agencies, government, and citizens to utilize the school's resources and capacities to improve lives, functioning, and outcomes of systems, communities, families, and individuals within the greater Pittsburgh area.

Faculty and staff within Pitt's School of Social Work have experience, expertise, and interest in a wide range of issues that are directly relevant to improving services across the range of departments and domains covered by the Allegheny County DHS. As discussed in more detail below, we have faculty and staff with extensive histories of working with Allegheny County DHS on a wide range of research projects. We also have newer faculty and staff who bring additional expertise and potential to key domains, and we are well-positioned to expand our involvement in both DHS-driven initiatives and university-government partnerships to advance knowledge, practice, and outcomes for children, youth, families, seniors, persons with mental health conditions, with addictions, and other vulnerable populations within Allegheny County.

The University/Government Research Partnership will allow the School of Social Work to more fully coordinate efforts (internally and with the county) to more effectively and efficiently utilize its considerable resources to address and improve local services. The internal support in response to this RFQ has been overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic: 14 faculty members immediately sent lists of projects they have conducted with/for the county over the past decade. Clearly, the School welcomes the opportunity to be more fully engaged and involved with future directions for research on issues relevant to DHS services. This type of work is the heart of what social work research is all about, so

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having a close working relationship between the county and the school is certainly a priority as the school enters its second century.

Taken together this set of experiences, relationships, capacity, and expertise provide a rich environment to support and foster the proposed Partnership. In addition, our proximity to DHS offices, our established relationships with key stakeholders in the region, our nationally-recognized excellence in research, and our substantive alignment with the focal areas of DHS seem to undergird the relevance, potential, and synergy that the Pitt School of Social Work brings to the Partnership.

Previous Experience and Relevant Expertise

Individual faculty members within the School of Social Work have long-standing and productive relationships with Allegheny County DHS. These include a range of faculty-initiated projects, collaborative projects between the county and the school, analysis of large-scale data, demonstration projects, and small-scale exploratory studies. It is actually difficult to list and capture the extensive work that Pitt School of Social Work faculty have conducted with Allegheny DHS and/or within Pittsburgh on topics that are relevant to DHS's domains and interests. The following highlights some of these initiatives and provides a flavor of the range of projects and extensiveness of the existing collaborations and joint efforts between Pitt School of Social Work and Allegheny County DHS and research that touches on critical issues under the purview of DHS. The following list and brief descriptions capture some of this work over the past decade (and the faculty members who have led these initiatives):

Child Well-being and Child Welfare

- Homewood Children's Village (John Wallace): extensive program, inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone model, to improve neighborhood environment, services, supports, and outcomes.
- Allegheny County CYF Training and Professional Development Department (Helen Cahalane): Pitt School of Social Work already oversees training and professional development for CYF staff. This has not been used for research purposes, but could certainly incorporate workforce development projects within its approach.
- Child Welfare Education and Research Program (Helen Cahalane, Mary Beth Rauktis): This multi-million dollar annual contract with the state provides training and research around child welfare. It also includes CYF Training and Professional Development for Allegheny County. Expertise and capacity to explore wide range of issues related to child welfare practice, training, and outcomes.
- Child Welfare Caseload Assessment (Hide Yamatani): Examined patterns and effects of child welfare workers' caseloads.
- Evaluation of Drug/Alcohol Programs (Hide Yamatani): Evaluated collaboration-based drug/alcohol programs for addicted mothers with young children.
- Understanding Transition-aged Youth (Sara Goodkind, Jeff Shook): Series of studies using administrative data coupled with in-depth interviews and focus groups to understand pathways and experiences of youth aging out of foster care in Allegheny County.

Mental Health

- Follow-up Outcomes and Experiences of People Discharged from Mayview Hospital (Katie Greeno): Four-year follow-up study of individual experiences and outcomes.
- Allegheny Behavioral Health Service Coordination (Katie Greeno & Shaun Eack): Research that advanced workforce capacity building in light of new commonwealth-level professional standards.
- Community Integration of Cognitive Enhancement Therapy for Schizophrenia (Shaun Eack): Newly-funded study that builds from NIH-funded trials of CET (the only evidence-based cognitive rehabilitation intervention for schizophrenia) to develop online low-cost effective training to disseminate and implement CET in Pittsburgh.

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Health

- Integrated Health Care Training (Valire Copeland, Danny Rosen): Utilized Federal and local grants to develop and implement training for integrated health care in Allegheny County.
- AIDS Free Pittsburgh (Darren Whitfield). Assessing awareness and use of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis in Allegheny County.

Aging

- Assessment and Training for Agency on Aging (Beth Mulvaney, Ray Engel, Tracy Soska, Fengyan Tang): Collaborated with DHS to assess needs and develop variety of training programs for workforce development around issues related to Care Management, Alzheimer's, etc.

Other

- Gambling Addiction Initiative (Tracy Soska, Ray Engel, Danny Rosen). Assessed readiness of areas' human service sector to respond to impact of table gaming in PA, developed training, trained Gambling Counselors.
- Evaluation of Allegheny County Jail Collaborative Initiative (Hide Yamatani): Cost-benefit analysis of collaboration-based human services for individuals incarcerated in Allegheny County jail.
- Neighborhood Assessment (Hide Yamatani): Assessment of public housing residents' service needs and satisfaction.
- Wage Study (Ray Engel, Sara Goodkind, Helen Petracchi, Jeff Shook): Study of low-wage workers in Allegheny County to better understand issues and potential solutions (resulted in 2-day symposium in September 2018 that brought together national experts, local leaders, Pitt faculty and students, and low-wage workers).

Additional Expertise

The initiatives and projects discussed above provide an overview of the types of work that Pitt School of Social Work has conducted with, for, and in the county. Previous and ongoing work, by definition, is conducted by faculty who have been at Pitt for a while. In addition to the types of projects and faculty collaborators listed above, Pitt School of Social Work has been fortunate to hire several talented and relevant faculty in the past few years who are just beginning to get engaged with the county and who provide additional areas and strengths of expertise for the years ahead.

This new cadre of faculty brings increased expertise and experience in child welfare, child mental health, health disparities, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, service use issues for individuals who are LGBTQ, justice systems and individuals who have experienced incarceration, and the relationship between schools and child welfare/mental health. The school's new dean, Elizabeth M.Z. (Betsy) Farmer, is a nationally-recognized expert in children's mental health and child welfare, with a particular focus on improving out-of-home treatment for youth who are served via the child welfare and mental health systems. Over the past three decades, Dean Farmer has conducted community-based research on systems and services; developed and tested interventions; worked with policy makers, agencies, families, and youth on research; designed and implemented evaluations; integrated trauma-informed services and systems; and led teams of policy makers, administrators, practitioners, and community members. Further, Dean Farmer is the developer of one of only two models of Treatment Foster Care (TFC) that are recognized as evidence-based at present. This model, Together Facing the Challenge (TFTC), has been shown to result in improved practice and outcomes in TFC and is being implemented in over 23 states across the US (including parts of PA). In her previous work, she has worked with many local governments (particularly in NC and VA, two other states that operate county-based administrations for providing social services), has worked on numerous demonstration projects, and has

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collaborated with local and state officials. She is looking forward to ways to becoming directly involved in research on service systems and practice in the Pittsburgh area.

In addition, there are a number of newly-hired faculty members who bring expertise and potential resources in critical domains. Dr. Leah Jacobs has been at Pitt for 1.5 years and brings expertise and experience in criminal justice, factors related to recidivism, and alternatives to incarceration. Two new faculty (Jamie Booth, Darren Whitfield) bring expertise in health disparities. Dr. Whitfield focuses on intersectionality and outcomes for LGBTQ populations, while Dr. Booth focuses on the intersections of stress, health disparities, substance use and protective factors for health outcomes in minority populations. Dr. Booth's work has already garnered her a NIH K-01, while Dr. Whitfield is planning to submit a K-01 in the near future. The school's newest faculty member, Dr. Brianna Lombardi comes from UNC, and brings a strong background in the intersection of children's mental health and child welfare as well as extensive experience analyzing large longitudinal data sets.

Methodological and Research Expertise

It is expected that the Partnership will require a range of both substantive and methodological skills and knowledge. The highlights above suggest that the Pitt School of Social Work has personnel who cover this range on both fronts. Available faculty have an array of substantive foci, with experience both in research on these topics as well as practice experience (at the micro and/or macro levels – i.e., individual, group, community, policy). In addition, the faculty have well-honed skills on quantitative approaches, complex statistics, and big data as well as expertise in qualitative approaches and analysis. The School could create teams of researchers who have experience working with diverse groups of children, adults, professionals, administrators, policy makers and others. They are experts in research methodology, survey construction, data collection (in many different settings and with a wide range of populations and in complex settings), project management, establishing and sustaining excellent working relationships, collaborating with colleagues across and beyond academia, and producing results with a focus on impact, "usability," dissemination, and implementation.

Infrastructure (45 points)

Describe the specific resources (academic/administrative staffing, materials, etc.) that will be dedicated to this project

The Pitt School of Social Work is prepared to support this initiative and to support the types of activities envisioned in the RFQ. From the RFQ, it appears that there are 6 categories of activities that will require support from the Qualified Applicants to meet the objectives of the partnership. These include: (1) designated representative/participant on the Partnership Steering Committee; (2) conduct analyses of existing DHS data; (3) create products that share information from this work and about DHS; (4) propose, fund, and conduct additional research relevant to DHS; (5) provide implementation support; and (6) work collaboratively with DHS and other Qualified Applicants to accomplish all of the above. The following outlines how Pitt School of Social Work is prepared to address each of these resource needs.

All of these tasks will be supported by the general research infrastructure and support services at the School of Social Work. The School is well equipped to handle a wide variety of research approaches and projects. There are currently 52 funded projects operating within the school, with annual total awards of \$4.5 million dollars (and total awards (across all years of the currently-funded studies) of approximately \$12.4 million). These awards include ongoing awards with Allegheny County, as well as funding by National Institutes of Health (NIH) institutes (National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), National Institute on Drug Abuse), other federal funders (Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, , Health Resources and Services Administration, National Science Foundation, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), and local and national foundations (e.g., The Fine

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Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, The Pittsburgh Foundation, The Richard King Mellon Foundation, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Spencer Foundation). This is in addition to the nearly \$27 million contract that the Child Welfare Education and Research Program conducts annually for the Commonwealth.

The school has a wide range of faculty, staff, and students who are actively engaged in research. The growth of externally funded research in recent years has resulted in corresponding increases in personnel – the school is presently hiring an additional post-award person to better support its funded studies. Its new dean, Dr. Betsy Farmer, comes with a strong research background, and over 25 years of experience. During this time, she has run an NIMH-funded program of research at Duke, been involved in a wide range of federal and foundation funded studies, developed infrastructure and built the research culture at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Social Work (in Richmond, VA), and worked closely with state, local, public, and private entities to conduct community-based research on complex questions related to service use, systems, and outcomes in human services (particularly child welfare and mental health). Overall, the school is in an excellent position to enter into a partnership and to support a range of activities with Allegheny County DHS.

Designate Representative/participant on the Steering Committee. *Dr. Betsy Farmer, Dean of the School of Social Work, will serve as the lead representative to the Steering Committee.* In her role as Dean, Dr. Farmer is well-acquainted with the school's expertise, resources, interests, and capacity. In addition, she has been involved in many previous steering committees for various research-related consortia, so she is very familiar with both the time demands and required contributions to make such a group productive, effective, efficient, and collaborative. In addition to Dr. Farmer, Dr. Shaun Eack, the School's Associate Dean for Research, will be designated as a potential second member and alternate, in case Dr. Farmer is ever not available for a meeting.

Conduct Analyses of Existing DHS data. *Dr. Hide Yamatani, Professor of Social Work, will provide leadership for this aspect of the School's activities in the partnership.* As noted above, Dr. Yamatani has a long history of analyzing DHS data, has established productive relationships with colleagues at DHS, and has extensive experience and expertise in the types of questions and available data that are likely to be considered and included in activities conducted under the auspices of the partnership. The school has a cadre of well-trained faculty who have extensive data management capabilities on a full range of basic and cutting-edge statistical techniques. The school has also developed a network of associated/collaborating research colleagues who provide part-time/flexible support for data analysis and statistics. These include Dr. Satish Iyengar (Department of Statistics), Ms. Giovanna Porta (MS-level statistician), and Dr. Xiaoyan Zhang (visiting faculty in Social Work). Dr. Yamatani will engage and involve these additional faculty as needed, depending on the project and topical area. Depending on the project, extent of effort required, and likelihood of potentially beneficial products from the individual efforts, Dr. Yamatani will work with Dean Farmer to determine whether compensation (buy-out; overload payments) is required to support a given faculty member's involvement. In addition, Dr. Yamatani also has a staff member who currently works with him on data-related activities (such as creating surveys, distributing electronic surveys, data cleaning) and support from the school's Director of IT. Both of these individuals will be available to work with Dr. Yamatani on partnership-related activities. In addition, Dr. Yamatani works with many of the school's doctoral students to support their acquisition of data analytic knowledge and skills and to conduct appropriate analyses. As described below, assessments will be made at the beginning of each academic year of anticipated workload for partnership activities and appropriate number of doctoral students will be assigned to the initiative.

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Create Products that Share Information. Under the direction of Dean Farmer and Associate Dean for Research, Shaun Eack, the school's Director of Communications, Shannon Murphy, will work with faculty and assigned doctoral students to design visually appealing and substantively informative materials to distribute to key internal and external stakeholders across the schools' media platforms (e.g., website, Bridges Magazine, social media, weekly internal newsletter, alumni updates, etc.). These materials will include partnership updates, research opportunities and outcomes, accomplishments and activities of the DHS/Pitt partnership. Finally, dissemination of findings from larger-scale projects will be coordinated with DHS and other Qualified Applicants in the Partnership. We expect that this will include presentations locally, regionally, and nationally; publication in media and professional outlets; and, potentially, workshops/symposia with relevant stakeholders to impact local practice and uptake.

Propose, Fund, and Conduct Additional Research Relevant to DHS. *Dr. Shaun Eack, the School's Associate Dean for Research, will spearhead and coordinate efforts in this domain.* Pitt School of Social Work faculty's interests span much of the breadth of DHS's focal areas. Accordingly, we expect that many of them will participate in the DHS Partnership and actively pursue local, state and federal funds to conduct research. As a part of the Partnership, it is expected that ideas underlying applications to external funders would be initiated via discussion with DHS representatives and, ideally, collaborating members of the Partnership. True collaborative work that involves conceptual and empirical contributions from partners across academic disciplines and the broader community tends to produce better applications than more unifocal proposals. The development process would include iterative meetings and drafts to develop proposals that are scientifically rigorous, methodologically feasible, and focused on questions designed to significantly improve systems, practice, and/or outcomes.

Provide Implementation Support as Appropriate. Such support could be of two types: implementation of research protocols and implementation of interventions that are being studied. Requests for implementation support will be assessed and triaged by *Dean Farmer and Dr. Eack*. As noted above, there are faculty within the school with a wide range of experience and expertise in direct practice interventions, system-level assessments and interventions, and conducting research with complex public human services settings, providers, and populations. For example, Dr. Farmer has decades of experience working with partnering agencies and collaborators to implement research protocols in the complexities of "real world" settings. Dr. Cahalane's team within the Pitt School of Social Work already oversees the Allegheny County CYF Training and Professional Development Department, so it is likely that interventions that are developed and tested under the partnership may fall within this realm. Dr. Copeland is the PI of the School's current HRSA workforce training grant around integrated healthcare and is well-acquainted with the demands and complexities of implementing interventions across settings and sectors. Dr. Copeland, as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, also oversees the MSW and Field Education components of the school, and, therefore, has direct authority and ability to work with the Director of Field Education and the MSW Program Director to involve students and field placement sites throughout Allegheny County as appropriate in potential initiatives. Dr. Wallace and Dr. Huguley have extensive experience and expertise in research within Pittsburgh neighborhoods and schools. And, as noted above, many of the school's faculty have previously worked with Allegheny County and are well acquainted with key stakeholders, critical issues, and local norms and possibilities.

Work Collaboratively with DHS and Other Qualified Applicants. The Pitt School of Social Work has existing working relationships with many of the DHS personnel who are likely to be involved in this initiative. The faculty also have a wide range of professional contacts and networks across the region and nation. As social workers, the faculty and staff of the school of social work are very familiar with approaches for facilitating productive group meetings, work extensively with collaborators from a wide

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range of backgrounds and disciplines, and adhere to a code of ethics that encourages collaboration and coordination.

Describe the governance structure within your organization that will support this project, integrating other faculty, students, etc.

As noted above, there is a great deal of enthusiasm within the school to participate in this partnership. Therefore, if the school is selected as a Qualified Applicant, a Partnership Coordinating Committee (PCC) within the School will be developed. The PCC will function as an extension of the School's existing Research Advisory Committee (which is chaired by Dr. Shaun Eack, the School's Associate Dean for Research). The PCC will include personnel named above as leaders of specific activities: Farmer (Partnership Steering Committee Representative), Yamatani (data analysis), Eack (proposals/funding), Copeland (implementation and coordination), Wallace (community-engaged research), plus staff to assure coordination and continuity: Murphy (Director of Communications), and Soltesz (Director of Administration). Additional members may be appointed to the PCC, based on focal activities and current needs. As Partnership Steering Committee Representative, Dr. Farmer will be designated as Chair of the PCC.

Dr. Farmer, as Chair of the PCC, will be responsible for communicating with all other faculty about the Partnership's activities, opportunities, and needs. Ms. Rosie Rinella and Ms. Shana Stein, two members of Dean Farmer's administrative team, will work with Dr. Farmer to coordinate activities, meetings, and communication. Ms. Rinella will provide primary administrative support to Dr. Farmer to accomplish all tasks required in the Partnership Steering Committee Representative role. Ms. Stein will provide support to Dr. Yamatani to coordinate all data-related activities. Ms. Kelsey Cowles and Ms. Laura Mejia (two grant administrators within the school) will support Dr. Eack on all activities required for coordinating external funding submissions. Ms. Soltesz, the School's Director of Administration, will work closely with Dr. Farmer to ensure that adequate staff support is allocated for all Partnership activities and to supervise staff who are thus involved.

The Partnership Coordinating Committee will meet monthly (on the standing Wednesday meeting day) to assure that all members are kept abreast of activities, to allow face-to-face communication among key participants, and to plan future activities. In addition, Ms. Rinella will serve as the primary contact for all Partnership-related inquiries and activities, to assure that Dr. Farmer is aware of all activities and requests.

Broader faculty will be integrated into the Partnership via regular reporting at monthly Faculty/Staff meetings (3rd Wednesday of each month). When particular projects or initiatives arise, faculty will be involved via a global announcement via email and by individual invitation to faculty who have particularly relevant expertise. All faculty will be eligible to participate, dependent on available time, relevant interests, and willingness to work collaboratively with other participating Partnership collaborators.

As noted above, each year the School will determine expected volume of Partnership work and will assign a relevant number of doctoral students to the initiative as their primary Graduate Research Assistantship. Additional students may get involved in Partnership activities if a faculty member with whom they work becomes involved and assigns them to the project/activities. Additionally, graduate students often work on miscellaneous research activities during the summers – the Partnership could be a selected/assigned activity during this period. The School is also exploring options for increasing research opportunities for MSW and BASW students – the Partnership appears to provide a variety of opportunities that may be ideally suited to students at these levels. In addition, if Partnership activities are occurring in DHS facilities or provider agencies throughout the county, students who are

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participating in field placements in these settings may be involved in interventions and research activities (as appropriate, based on the project and the students' needs/competencies).

Governance of the Partnership within the School will proceed like all other groups within the School. The PCC will collaboratively make decisions about direction and initiatives via standard Roberts Rules of Order. Any conflicts or impasses will be resolved by the School's Executive Committee (Dean Farmer, Associate Deans Eack and Copeland).

Describe activities, such as internships and fellowships that will support this project

The School of Social Work will continue and develop a number of internships and fellowships to support this project.

1. **Doctoral Student Research Assistants:** The school already supports all doctoral students for 4 years. Students' assignments for each year are made at the beginning of the academic year. Each year, assessment will be made by the Partnership Coordinating Committee within the school about expected levels of work and required GSA's to conduct the work. Dean Farmer will work with the school's Doctoral Program Director, Dr. Jeff Shook, to make individual student assignments accordingly. (Note: For the first year, the doctoral student currently assigned to Dr. Farmer will be re-assigned to this initiative. Other students will be assigned to efforts as appropriate, based on faculty participation.)
2. **Post-Doctoral Fellows:** Dr. Farmer currently has funding to recruit a post-doctoral fellow. This recruitment is focused on community-based research focused on children involved with the mental health and social service sectors. A portion of this fellow's time will be allocated to Partnership activities.
3. **Faculty Fellows:** It is expected that faculty will be eager to participate in Partnership activities/projects, but may not have sufficient time to allow this. Hence, the School will set aside flexible funding annually to allow up to 3 faculty members to buy-out of a course to provide additional time for Partnership-related work.
4. **Student Hourly Research Assistants:** The school also will use the Partnership as an opportunity to increase research involvement of MSW and/or BASW students in research endeavors. The school will designate \$10,000 to support hiring MSW/BASW students as hourly research employees to support research initiatives headed up by faculty or post-doctoral fellows.