

# Request for Information (RFI): Establishing Centers of Excellence on Environment and Health Disparities

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## Notice Number: **NOT-MD-13-002**

**Update:** The following update relating to this announcement has been issued:

- [November 16, 2012](#) - See Notice NOT-MD-13-003. Notice of Response Date Extension.

## Key Dates

**Release Date:** October 26, 2012

**Response Date:** (Extended to **December 31, 2012** per [NOT-MD-13-003](#)), Originally November 23, 2012

## Issued by

National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities ([NIMHD](#))

## Purpose

The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) is considering establishing new Centers of Excellence on Environment and Health Disparities with potential Federal partners. These interdisciplinary Centers will lead to new evidence-based strategies for alleviating system drivers of racial and socioeconomic disparities in environmentally mediated health outcomes (environmental health) and access to health and sustainable environments.

The goal of this Request for Information (RFI) is to seek public comment on research topics and approaches these Centers could adopt in conducting the research for consideration in the development and implementation of these Centers. Information obtained via this RFI will help to improve the design of the Centers and ensure utility and productivity, and overall value to the scientific community and the public health.

## Background

In response to the growing environmental justice movement, President Clinton, in 1994, issued Executive Order 12898 requiring all federal agencies to work towards ending the disproportionate exposures of minority and poor people to many environmental hazards. A wide range of activities from various sectors of U.S. society have attempted to address inequality in exposures to environmental hazards, including: federally funded research programs on environmental hazards; initiatives to increase citizen involvement in environmental decisions; and community-based efforts to address local concerns about environmental hazards. While much has been accomplished since the early 1990s, minority and economically disadvantaged populations continue to bear a disproportionate share of environmental exposures and related illnesses. Concern for inequity is based not only on their potentially higher levels of exposure to environmental hazards, but also on the synergistic effect of exposure to multiple environmental hazards and social stressors like poverty, psychosocial stress, discrimination. In response, an important emerging trend among environmental health and health disparities researchers is to blend biological and social science methods with traditional environmental science methods. For example, interdisciplinary approaches and collaboration with sociologists, psychologists, and social epidemiologists are needed to examine the joint effects of social and environmental stressors. New developments in methods of analysis and multilevel approaches that can be combined with the successful community-based participatory research approaches present opportunities to make advances in furthering our understanding of social and environmental factors on population health. This can serve as critical tools in designing interventions to reduce and prevent disparate impacts, particularly among socially disadvantaged groups.

Previously, grant making in the area of environmental justice research by both NIH and EPA has focused primarily on bridging the communication gap between researchers and community members to build trust, to insure that communities had a voice in the identification of environmental health issues and to provide community residents with access to information explaining research results. Over time, community role has matured in such a manner that there are collaborative researcher and community participation in the

identification of environmental research questions and the implementation of policies to reduce exposures and improve public health. One of the best examples of successful models of community-based participatory Research (CBPR) to inform the full spectrum from basic science research, mechanistic and toxicological research, molecular and cellular sciences, clinical and public health research, exposure assessment, behavioral and economic sciences and social policy research, translation and policy intervention research has been the EPA/NIEHS Children's Environmental Health Research Centers. The model of funding centers that fosters collaboration across disciplines, supports basic and applied research, and embraces CBPR is needed to better develop evidence-based solutions for the issues of environmental justice and disproportionate environmental health impacts.

## Information Requested

This RFI invites input from the broader environmental public health disparities research community and other interested parties on the following and other matters relating to the proposed Centers:

1. Research priorities that should be addressed.
2. Lessons learned on successful strategies, including community engagement, for conducting research on environmental health disparities.
3. Strategies and opportunities to reduce environmental health disparities through health care provider networks such as community-health centers.
4. Developing strategies to enhance the translation of scientific knowledge to inform policy, systems change and implementation of environmental health decision-making.

## How to Submit a Response

Responses to this RFI are due by November 23, 2012. Responses should be limited to one or two pages and marked with this RFI identifier NOT-MD-13-002. Responses must be submitted electronically to [NIMHD-EPA@mail.nih.gov](mailto:NIMHD-EPA@mail.nih.gov).

Any personal identifiers (e.g., names, addresses, email addresses, etc.) will be removed when responses are compiled. Proprietary, classified, confidential, or sensitive information should not be included in your response. Replies to individual topics are optional, and anonymous responses are permitted. The information provided will be analyzed and may appear in various reports.

This RFI is for planning purposes only and is not a solicitation for applications or an obligation on the part of the U.S. Government to provide support for any ideas identified in response to it. Please note that the U.S. Government will not pay for the preparation of any comment submitted or for its use of that comment.

## Inquiries

Please direct all inquiries to:

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