

The New York Community Trust

Heiser Program for Research in Leprosy Request for Proposals 2024

(Proposals due by 5:00pm EST on Thursday, October 3, 2024)

I. Overview

The New York Community Trust's (The Trust) Heiser Program for Research in Leprosy (Heiser Program) was established by the will of [Dr. Victor G. Heiser](#), an American physician and researcher who spent his professional life studying and caring for people with leprosy.

The Heiser Program is part of The Trust's biomedical research competitive grants program. Since it began making grants in 1975, the Heiser Program has made approximately 200 grants totaling more than \$20 million. Grants supported Fellowships for early-career researchers as well as seminal research projects led by senior scientists. Grants helped increase available tools for diagnosis and blocking leprosy transmission; develop new and improved treatment with a leprosy elimination goal; and expand dynamic "seek-and-treat" surveillance programs. In addition, Heiser Program grants were a primary source of support for the whole genome sequencing of *M. leprae*. For a brief period, the Heiser Program also supported research in Tuberculosis. The Heiser Program is now solely focused on leprosy research.

A volunteer Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of expert leprosy researchers review proposals and make funding recommendations to The Trust's Board of Directors. The SAC sets priorities for funding, monitors projects, and convenes grantees for shared learning. SAC members are listed at the end of this RFP.

II. Request for Proposals

The New York Community Trust's Heiser Program invites proposals to support two-year Fellowships in leprosy research conducted by an early-career scientist. Grants totaling \$1.3 million will support five (5) to seven (7) Fellowships to conduct research in one or more of the following areas including human experimental medicine studies:

1. investigate mechanisms of nerve damage and reactions in patients with leprosy;
2. develop more effective chemoprophylaxis, immunoprophylaxis, and rapid bactericidal drugs to treat active disease;
3. understand the organism, and/or its pathogenicity to identify the immunological spectrum the bacilli can induce and/or to identify new drugs or drug targets;
4. investigate host-directed therapies for leprosy, including a range of approaches from pre-clinical to clinical areas of research.

III. Eligibility Criteria

Potential Fellows must investigate the pathogenesis of leprosy in a post-doctoral position, a non-tenured associate/assistant professor position, or an early-career scientist at an independent research institute. Grants will be made to United States-based non-profit colleges, universities, or

other research institutes. The official applicant will be the institution at which the proposed Fellow is employed. Leprosy research can focus cases in the United States and/or other parts of the world, with preference for geographies with high levels of incidence and/or transmission. Fellows must have existing legal authorization to be employed in the United States and at the applicant institution.

The Fellowship can cover salary and fringe for the Fellow; research equipment and supplies; and travel to research sites (if applicable). Other staff from the applicant institution or partner institutions involved in the research are expected to cover their own costs. Budgets must include sufficient allocations to cover travel costs for the Fellow to two (2) mandatory one- or two-day meetings with the SAC in New York City over the course of the grant.

Applicant institutions should note The Trust policy for overhead costs for grant administration for projects at universities, hospitals, academic medical centers, and affiliated nonprofit fiscal sponsors (e.g. foundations that receive private funds on behalf of the institution). Overhead costs for grant administration may not exceed five (5) percent of the total project budget/grant. Administrative costs related to carrying out the grant activities, such as space, supplies, and technology for project staff, are not subject to the five percent limit, and should be identified and itemized separately in the budget. Grants will range from \$175,000 to \$250,000 over two-years or \$87,500 to \$125,000 a year (including overhead grant administration costs).

IV. Submission Materials

A completed proposal submission should include the following:

Required materials of all applications (items 1 to 9)

1. A **Proposal Cover Sheet**. Please make sure the top of the Proposal Cover Sheet you fill out says it is for the National: Heiser Fund for Leprosy Research 2024 RFP, not The Trust's regular competitive grants program or another RFP. Details on how to complete this form are provided in Section V of this RFP (Submission Directions).
2. A **cover letter** on the applicant institution's letterhead signed by the principal investigator (i.e., potential Fellow) **and** department chair and/or other institutional official authorized to request and receive grant funds on behalf of the institution.
3. An **executive summary in layperson's language** (up to 500 words) which outlines:
 - need for the grant;
 - specific research to be conducted and its importance to the leprosy research community;
 - why the Fellow and applicant institution are well positioned to conduct the research; and
 - measurable outcomes by the end of the grant period (3 to 6 bulleted items).
4. A **proposal detailing the research to be conducted by the Fellow**. This proposal should not exceed six (6) single-spaced, typewritten pages, exclusive of bibliography, reference

tables, figures, charts, budgets, and other required attachments detailed below. Please follow the National Institute of Health guidelines for margins, font and size of type.

5. An **itemized project budget** with expenses and (if applicable) other confirmed or pending sources of support for the research project. Please identify any in-kind time provided by the institution or partner institutions to support the project. Budget can cover salary or research costs.
6. **Proposed Fellow’s curriculum vitae or NIH-style bio sketch (required)** and, if applicable, those of other researchers involved with the project.
7. **Current year departmental and institution annual operating budgets.**
8. **Applicant institution audited financial statements or signed IRS Form 990.** Statements or 990 must be for fiscal year 2022 or 2023 (most recent available).
9. **Applicant institution board of directors.** Note any directors that are paid.

If applicable, also include items 10 and 11:

10. If the applicant institution/Fellow has an affiliation with any Heiser SAC members, please note specific affiliation (e.g., employee, advisor, co-PI, relative, etc.).
11. If human studies are involved, a statement of intention to apply for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Note that IRB approval will be required before funds are released. IRB approval is not needed prior to submission.

V. Submission Directions

1. Assemble and merge items **2 to 9 (and 10 to 11, if applicable)** from the Submission Materials section into a single PDF file no more than 25 MB in size. Name it in the following format: *“Fellow Last Name, Fellow First Name, Applicant Organization Name.pdf”*.
2. Complete a Proposal Cover Sheet for the Heiser Program for Leprosy Research RFP available through The Trust’s website.
 - a. For purposes of the staff and board ethnicity breakdown, please provide information for the entire institution, not just the department where the Fellow works. These fields cannot be left blank. Applications without this information will not be considered.
 - b. If you are applying from an academic institution or research university, your department administrator can provide the EIN, staff composition, and/or other information requested on the Proposal Cover Sheet. Some applicants prefer to have

the funds go to a funds administrator. The proposal coversheet allows this option. You will need to (i) check the box noting that is your preference, and (ii) enter the funds administrator EIN on the form in the appropriate location.

3. Please make sure that all the Submission Materials (items 2 to 9 or 2 to 11) are in a single PDF prior to starting the Proposal Cover Sheet. The Submission Materials and Proposal Cover Sheet are submitted at the same time. You will know your submission has been successful when after uploading the document you see “You have successfully uploaded your PDF.” on your screen.
4. Once uploaded, check the certification box at the end and click submit. You will get an email confirming the proposal was received and include a PDF of the Proposal Cover Sheet you just completed. The email will be sent to the email address entered in the “Information about Person Completing this Form” field on the Proposal Cover Sheet.
5. Please note Trust’s communications about the result of your submission will be by email, whether notification of a decline or grant. Please add noreply@nycommunitytrust.org to your address book so important communications do not get caught in your spam filters.

VI. Timeline for Proposal Submission and Funding Decisions

- Proposals due by **5pm (EST) Thursday, October 3, 2024.**
(Submit electronically via The New York Community Trust’s website)
- Grant approvals and declines issued by **Monday, February 17, 2025.**
- Grant period is from **March 1, 2025 to February 28, 2027.**

VII. Scientific Advisory Committee (affiliations as of July 15, 2024)

1. Gilla Kaplan, PhD (Chair); Former Director, Global Health Program/Tuberculosis, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
2. Stewart Cole, PhD; Former Director General, Pasteur Institute, Paris France
3. Rhea Coler, PhD; Senior Investigator, Seattle Children’s Hospital
4. Sabine Ehrt, PhD; Professor of Microbiology and Immunology, Weill Cornell Medical College
5. Thomas Hawn, MD, PhD; Professor of Medicine, Allergy and Infectious Diseases, University of Washington
6. David Scollard, MD, PhD; Former Director, National Hansen’s Disease Programs

VIII. Questions

For questions about this RFP, please email questions: Irfan Hasan, The Trust’s Deputy Vice President for Grants, at iha@nyct-cfi.org.