

Tufts Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI) is pleased to announce its *Symposium Plus* program is accepting applications for research related to COVID-19. The program provides planning grants and a package of in-kind support structured to help investigators take a nascent translational research project from the idea stage through to a competitive funding application.

Held twice each year, Tufts CTSI’s *Symposium Plus* seeks to catalyze translational research on significant health problems in a strategic area of focus. Translational science is best conducted through multi- and interdisciplinary collaboration and, increasingly, with the substantial involvement of non-academic partners. This can make starting and maintaining new work difficult, particularly in response to urgent or emerging needs. *Symposium Plus* is predicated on fostering a problem-solving approach to these challenges. In each cycle, two to four project ideas with high-impact potential are selected for the six-to-twelve-month process, which combines the creative ideation of a hack-a-thon with the follow-through support of an incubator.

Teams first present their concepts at a half-day symposium before a panel of expert respondents and a broad group of scientists, clinicians, engineers, and others convened by Tufts CTSI. Following this review, projects are assigned a team of Tufts CTSI-affiliated faculty and professional staff who do a “deep dive” into the project to identify risks and needs. These content and proposal development experts provide hands-on mentoring for all phases of proposal development, helping teams troubleshoot roadblocks, optimally leverage available support across the Tufts CTSI community, and access needed resources, including up to \$5,000 in planning funds.

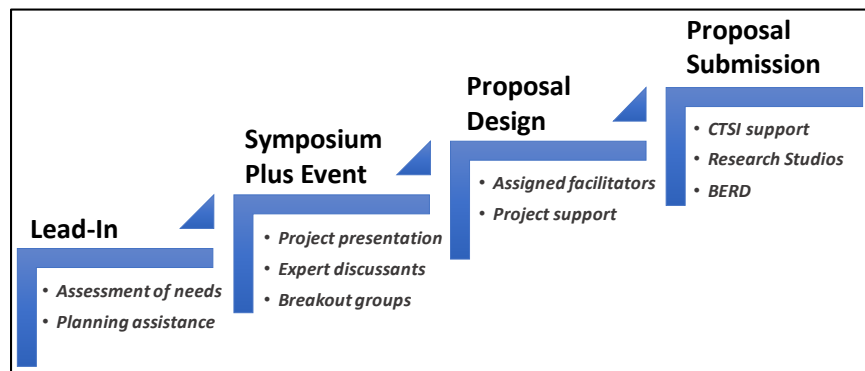
Focus on COVID-19

For the Fall 2020 *Symposium Plus*, we seek to support high-impact proposals for clinical and translational research related to the 2019 Coronavirus (COVID-19) or the causal virus (SARS-CoV-2). Teams and ideas could involve basic, clinical, and/or population health science approaches applied to work at any stage of translation seeking to: (1) advance cutting-edge COVID-19 prevention practices; (2) support translation of new diagnostics, treatments, and behavioral interventions into clinical care; (3) increase the overall effectiveness and quality of COVID-19 health care and public health interventions; or, (4) assess the impact of COVID-19- related health policies.

Why Participate?

The *Symposium Plus* program has helped put teams on an accelerated path to submitting competitive extramural proposals since 2014. Selected research teams receive:

- Project-specific feedback from technical and methodological experts and input from a multidisciplinary audience through interactive discussion at the kick-off workshop.
- Longitudinal mentoring from knowledgeable and innovative problem-solvers who share an interest in helping bring new ideas to life.
- Up to 12 months of facilitated access to relevant Tufts CTSI resources. Assistance Tufts CTSI can provide includes: consultation on optimal study design and statistical analysis plans; guidance on regulatory approvals; help with recruitment feasibility assessment and recruitment and retention tools; advice on research in special populations; and assistance developing collaborations with stakeholder and patient communities.
- Up to \$5,000 in funding for project planning-related costs.



Eligibility and Requirements

- Proposed research projects must have a clear application to human health and can be at any point of translation (a definition of translational science and the translational research spectrum can be found at <https://www.tuftsctsi.org/about-us/what-is-translational-science/>).
- To be eligible, the Principal Investigator (PI) must have a primary appointment or position at a Tufts CTSI academic, medical, not-for-profit, or community partner or collaborator organization. Applicant research teams may include collaborators who are, or who are not, affiliated with a Tufts CTSI partner or collaborator organization.
- The submitting investigator/PI is willing to continue leading further project development through to submission of a grant proposal.

Allowable Costs

- Limited funds are available to support planning related costs such as the purchase of existing data, instrument time, consultations, project management costs, and other research tools and materials. Funds cannot be used for to cover costs related to human research participants. Funding will be allocated at the discretion of Tufts CTSI after reviewing project needs.

Ideal Project Attributes

- Projects will be evaluated by a panel of program leaders and Tufts CTSI affiliated faculty. Selection decisions will be primarily based on the project's significance, translational potential, likelihood of leading to a sustained program of collaborative research, and relevance to program goals. In general, we seek projects with a balance of feasibility and interest. A diversity of study methods and approaches are appropriate, but proposed projects with the following attributes are preferred:
 - Has the primary goal of impacting human health— i.e., near-term application to humans is preferred, although those with longer-term application will be considered.
 - Addresses a challenging and important health problem.
 - Focuses on patient- or community-centered outcomes and/or makes use of novel ways of authentically engaging diverse relevant stakeholders.

Timeline and Key Dates

If selected, you will commit to participating in the following program requirements.

Application Deadline:	July 31, 2020
Lead-in meetings with Tufts CTSI	August 14 – September 4, 2020
Presentation at Symposium	Late September (TBD after projects are selected)
Proposal Development	October 2020 to February 2021 (longer if needed)
Application for Funding	No later than April 2022
Updates to Tufts CTSI	

Proposal Guidelines

- A structured abstract of approximately two single-spaced pages, summarizing Background, Specific Aims, Approach, Significance, Innovation
- Proposals should be emailed by July 31, 2020** to hsantos@tuftsmedicalcenter.org.

Questions about the Program?



Tufts Clinical and Translational Science Institute

Fall 2020 Symposium Plus:
COVID-19 Research Idea Development
Request for Proposals

Please contact Hannah Santos, Senior Project Manager hsantos@tuftsmedicalcenter.org.