**Spring 2022 Requests for Proposals**

In the following pages you will find five different “Requests for Proposals” based on your feedback on the Getting to Know You survey.

Each of these requests asking for something specific but allows room for creativity, flexibility, and interpretation – just like real RFPs!

For your proposal project in this course, you should choose *one* of the following RFPs and come up with a more focused research question that will help you to design a study (including background research, sampling, data collection, and sharing results) that will satisfy the grant funder and give them the information they need to help our local communities.

**Request for Proposals #1:**

*Research to improve Boston’s intersecting issues of housing insecurity, mental health, and substance use*

Recently, headlines in Boston have been dominated by stories of encampments of unhoused people, the ongoing drug overdose crisis, and the complex health needs of Boston’s unhoused/homeless communities.

We are requesting proposals for research that will give us more information on how to best meet the needs of people living in Boston’s encampments. We would like to see research that uses survey and/or interview designs to produce both quantitative and qualitative data. That is, we would like some descriptive information about the demographics of this population (age, race, gender, health conditions, and other important characteristics) as well as some in-depth, detailed responses directly from those impacted about what they need and how we can reduce barriers to housing and healthcare.

We expect proposals to draw on existing research about homelessness, mental health, and substance use. As stated, we are looking for some combination of surveys and interview data, but the exact research design is left up to the researcher. We would like to be sure that the results properly represent the unhoused community, but we understand that this population may be difficult to reach – creative sampling strategies are encouraged.

**Request for Proposals #2**

*Research to promote environmental justice and reduce the impact of climate change in Boston*

As a city on the coast, Boston is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, especially rising sea levels. It is not well-understood exactly how climate change will impact Boston residents. Though climate change is a global issue, Boston leaders are interested in making the city a leader in issues of green technology, sustainability, and reduced environmental impact.

We are requesting information to help Boston make important changes to achieve this goal. As our interests are quite broad, we will consider proposals that address just one of our research interests.

One of our interests is to better understand Boston residents’ concerns about climate change and how warming temperatures, rising sea levels, and severe weather events will impact residents *along race and class lines*. That is, who will be most impacted by climate change and what do they need (in terms of action, resources, policy change, etc.) to prepare? For this research interest, we expect the study might involve collection of secondary data (e.g. census information on race and class in neighborhoods, weather data, tax records, property records) and surveys of Boston residents to get their feedback.

A second interest is to understand how transforming Boston as a city might move us toward sustainability. We would also like to see proposals for studying how people use Boston’s transportation system and what we could do to encourage more use of public transportation and less driving. This project would likely involve surveys, interviews, focus groups, and/or other approaches. We would like to use this information to guide our decision-making around policies impacting government spending on public transportation, highway construction, incentives for drivers vs. public transportation users, and other key policy choices.

**Request for Proposals #3**

*Research to reduce youth gun violence in Boston*

Boston has long been home to world-class research on violence prevention. In the interest of continuing this tradition, we are soliciting proposals to study causes and consequences of youth gun violence. We need research results to help us understand the causes of youth gun violence (why do youth carry guns, what causes gun incidents, etc.), and also the outcomes of gun incidents involving youth, which include both the shooter (often criminal justice consequences) as well as the victim(s) and their families.

There is a lot of research on this topic already, especially here in Boston, so applicants will need to figure out a new, refreshing angle on the question of youth gun violence. Applicants might consider exploring the needs of specific populations (e.g., specific races or ethnicities, LGBT youth, specific communities, gang vs. non-gang members), or the relationship between offender and victim, or the needs of victims and their families (e.g. youth victim advocacy and other post-incident support).

The design choices for this solicitation are quite open. Research may involve the use of surveys, secondary data analysis (e.g., use of police, school, or court records), interviews, ethnography, or a combination of these approaches. Importantly, the proposal must be grounded here in Boston and draw on the wealth of research on youth gun violence to demonstrate that the researchers know the topic well and are prepared to design a useful study.

**Request for Proposals #4**

*Research to inform our understanding of internet use for social interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic*

Much has been written about the promises and pitfalls of social media and other forms of online interaction. Online relationships and communities can do a lot of good in bringing people together, forming connections and gathering people with shared interests. On the other hand, social media use can be harmful to mental health and fuel polarization, misinformation, and other huge social problems.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us have come to rely on the internet more than ever. We used it to go to school and work, we used it to keep in touch with friends and family, we used it to order food and other supplies. Many in-person activities moved online – but we don’t know much about how people adapted to that change and what it meant.

We are soliciting research on peoples’ use of internet-based apps and social media platforms during the pandemic. We want to know if use of these tools increased and how, which specific tools or platforms saw the biggest increases, and how this has changed the pattern of daily life in the US. Proposals may focus on this issue broadly, or choose specific areas of life, like: dating and relationships, education, work, religious service attendance, shopping, etc.

We want the information to reflect the US as a whole, so we are looking for a nationally representative sample large enough to give us a good understanding of Americans’ behavior and to allow for some exploration of subpopulations like different genders, races/ethnicities, and social classes (e.g., high- vs medium- vs low-income people). Due to the larger sample size, survey and secondary data designs are recommended, though they may be supplemented by interview data from smaller subsamples.

**Request for Proposals #5**

*Research to improve the implementation and outcome of social programs*

Massachusetts offers a number of social programs to help its residents lead happier, healthier lives. These programs include different types of social support, youth interventions, healthcare and treatment options, and others.

In the interest of making sure that taxpayer and donation money is going towards programs that are actually helping people, we are requesting proposals to *evaluate* the implementation and outcome of any one policy or program. The evaluation should use an **experimental or quasi-experimental design** to determine if what the program is doing is actually achieving its goals. Sources of data may include surveys, interviews, secondary data (e.g. organizational records), and others.

Applicants for this grant must first identify a local program or policy initiative they wish to evaluate. The research proposal should describe the mission of the policy/program (what is their goal?) and what the policy or program actually does (what do they do to reach that goal?). The proposal should then clearly outline the research design and planned research products to share the results with important stakeholders.

Below, we suggest some possible programs to evaluate. Other possibilities exist but should be cleared with the grant program manager (your professor) before you begin your proposal.

* WIC (Women, Infants and Children)
* Police body-worn cameras (BWCs)
* Massachusetts Head Start
* Immigration assistance programs
* Reentry organizations like the Gavin Foundation, Coming Home, St. Francis House Moving Ahead program, the Boston Reentry Initiative
* Employment assistant programs like Project Place, The Work Place
* Women/family support organizations like Casa Myrna, DOVE, PAVE
* Programs for LGBT individuals like Camp Lightbulb, BrAGLY, Kids in Crisis, Safe Homes, Youth on Fire, Impact Boston