

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION AND QUALIFICATIONS (RFI-09) **Mickey Leland National Urban Air Toxics Research Center**

Release Date: September 8, 2009

I. INTRODUCTION

This announcement is a request for information (RFI) that will be used to generate a request for proposals. The Mickey Leland National Urban Air Toxics Research Center (NUATRC or "the Center") is requesting informational submittals from qualified institutions and individuals. These submittals will lead to the development of a request for proposals (RFP) to perform short-term, focused studies that will elucidate human exposure, health risk, and related risk factors to residents of selected areas of Texas. These projects will be funded in part by a special appropriation from the Texas Legislature through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to the Center.

The Center, located in the Texas Medical Center, was authorized by the U.S. Congress in the [Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 \(Title III, Sec. 112\(p\)\)](#), as a public/private research organization. The Center was incorporated in 1991. It is named after the late Congressman Mickey Leland, whose efforts on behalf of public health contributed significantly to the passage of key amendments to the Clean Air Act.

The Center is a research facility that has been specifically charged to sponsor research related to and gather scientific information about the human health effects caused by exposure to hazardous air pollutants, also referred to as air toxics. As established by law, the Center is governed by a nine-member [Board of Directors](#), and receives scientific guidance from a nationally-based thirteen-member [Scientific Advisory Panel](#) (SAP).

The Texas Legislature recognizes through this appropriation that Texans want to know whether they are at risk from pollutants in the air they breathe. Texans who live near sources of air toxics, such as major roadways, industrial facilities, or small businesses, are often especially concerned about their risk. High quality research is the most credible and responsible way to assess public health risks and provide policymakers with needed information to make informed public policy.

II. RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVE OF INFORMATION REQUEST

The Center has previously commissioned a number of studies involving personal exposure, health effects, and air quality modeling. It has supported the development of air toxics database tools, sponsored symposia and workshops, and developed state-of-the-science personal exposure monitors. A complete list of previous projects funded by the Center is available at:

The current RFI is soliciting submittals that will lead to the development of an RFP for short-term, focused research projects. In May of 2009, the Center's SAP developed a strategic vision statement about how to integrate the Texas Legislative appropriation into the existing and planned future research program of the Center. That statement is consistent with the following principles contained in this RFI. The Center will consider submittals that:

- Meet the intent of the funding appropriated by the Texas Legislature during the 2009 Term.
- Maintain consistency with the research mission, charter, objectives, and previous studies conducted by the Center.
- Focus on exposures of Texans in vulnerable or underserved communities to air toxics compounds of concern.
- Translate research into usable information by regulators, policymakers, and elected officials that allow them to assess and, if necessary, reduce resident exposure to air toxic compounds of concern.
- Build and maintain ties to study communities, elected officials, and stakeholders through the use of a communication, outreach and education plan, to enhance the community's understanding of their risks from air toxic compounds.
- Provide themes or presentations for future symposia or workshops to be sponsored by the Center.

III. Research Topics of Interest

The Center will consider informational submittals that will lead to proposals with a variety of study objectives and methodologies that meet the above principles. However, the Center is particularly interested in receiving submittals that address the following issues:

1. Improved understanding of air toxics compounds of interest within the State of Texas, including a determination of exposure sources for selected air toxics compounds of interest and an evaluation of the effects of selected air toxics emissions on public health.
2. Evaluation of exposures, including measurements of air quality and potential human health effects, of air toxics emissions from oil and gas well production in Texas (particularly in dense production regions such as the Barnett Shale) on nearby populations.
3. Evaluation of exposures (including measurements of air quality and potential human health effects) with a focus on vulnerable and underserved populations, including schools and schoolchildren. Projects that focus on specific geographic regions, such as the Texas/Mexico border region, are of particular interest.

4. Studies that leverage existing data sets (such as the Houston Exposure to Air Toxics Study, conducted in and near the Houston Ship Channel) to address questions relating to exposure or health effects.
5. Studies that focus on communities, particularly those with vulnerable and underserved populations located in close proximity to air toxics emissions sources such as roadways, ports, and industrial communities.
6. Air toxics health effects synthesis overviews to elucidate the strengths, weaknesses and appropriate uses of available research findings¹, identify research gaps and recommend research priorities useful to policymakers and regulators for future air toxics assessment and control strategies.

The Center also invites responses to this RFI which discuss projects which may be smaller and of shorter duration, and focused on a narrower sub-topic of the broader research topics listed above.

IV. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

ELIGIBILITY

Project Leaders: Principal Investigators who are either faculty members with appointments at academic research institutions or scientists of equivalent rank in research centers and private consulting companies (minorities and women are particularly encouraged to apply). Foreign institutions are not eligible.

MECHANISM OF SUPPORT

A seven-month contract will be awarded to successfully competing applications/research teams. Potential for continued support (beyond the initial seven-month funding period) is subject to availability of funds and progress achieved.

FUNDS AVAILABLE

The estimated total funds (direct and indirect costs) available are \$800,000. It is anticipated that several projects may be funded in response to the RFP. The number of projects awarded, selection and funding of a proposal, and the actual amount available will be dependent on the receipt of a sufficient number of meritorious proposals, selection priorities determined by the Center's review process, and availability of funds.

The Center was created by Congress as a research organization funded by public and private sources. Therefore, while it is required that research funded from the responses to

¹ Please see the Center's report on Strategic Health Effects Review Panels (SHERPs) for more information about this task. <http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/mleland/Webpages/research.htm>

this RFI produce discrete, relevant, and complete research, it is expected that research ideas that also attract, encourage or promote supplemental funding for additional related research or analysis by federal, local government, foundation, or private sector sources for subsequent phases of the research will be preferred.

REPORT

Contractors will provide an Interim Progress Report three months after the project start date. A Draft Final Report will be required by August 15, 2010, or as specified in the project contract. A Final Report will be required at the conclusion of the project. In addition to the Final Report, the contractor should prepare a manuscript based on the project for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. When the project manuscript is submitted for publication, a copy should also be submitted to the Center. As a condition of the Texas Legislative appropriation to the Center, research must be completed and all funds must be expended by August 31, 2010.

INFORMATIONAL SUBMITTAL PROCESS

- Prospective applicants must submit a pre-application on or before September 30, 2009.
- The pre-application should not exceed 10 pages and should include the following:
 - Names and titles of the Principal Investigators and any Co-Investigators
 - A brief description of the proposed study
 - The description of the potential study should be supported by citations to pertinent literature and similar studies performed by the assembled research team.
- Pre-applications will be reviewed by Center staff and/or a subgroup of the Center's Scientific Advisory Panel and will lead to the development of an RFP. The Center may choose to develop RFPs for some or all of the research topics listed above at its sole discretion.
- **Only respondents to the Request for Information will be eligible to receive the RFP and submit proposals in response to the RFP.**
- The Center will publish an RFP and solicit formal proposals on or about November 15, 2009. The proposals received will be reviewed by the SAP subgroup.
- Responses to the RFP will be judged for:
 - Responsiveness to the objectives of the RFP
 - Qualifications of the Investigators
 - Previous research performance and experience with similar work
 - The investigators ability to meet the schedule
 - Reasoned justification for time and budget management plans

RESPONSES AND INQUIRIES

Please submit electronic responses to:

NUATRC@uth.tmc.edu
The Mickey Leland National Urban Air Toxics Research Center
P. O. Box 20286
Houston, Texas 77225-0286
Telephone: (713) 500-3450
Fax: (713) 500-0345

Please direct inquiries to the NUATRC at: NUATRC@uth.tmc.edu, or (713) 500-3450

PRELIMINARY TIMELINE

A preliminary timeline for this project is as follows:

Release of Request for Information:	September 8, 2009
Response to RFI:	September 30, 2009
Request for Proposals Issued:	November 16, 2009
Response to RFP:	December 15, 2009
Issue Contract and Commence Work:	January 15, 2009
End work:	August 15, 2010