

Improvement Scholars Program Application

UNC Institute for Healthcare Quality Improvement

Purpose

The UNC Institute for Healthcare Quality Improvement (IHQI) is soliciting applications from UNC School of Medicine and Health Care System clinical leaders who want to develop clinical improvement skills by participating in the IHQI **Improvement Scholars Program**. Applications from all UNC Health Care System entities are encouraged as this program is not exclusive to the Chapel Hill-based entities.

Improvement Scholars Program

The Improvement Scholars Program is a structured, experiential learning program. Improvement Scholars learn clinical improvement leadership by proposing, designing, and leading a project with guidance and support from experienced clinical improvement leaders.

Improvement Scholars receive training, mentorship, and guidance from IHQI Faculty Coaches as well as half-time support of an IHQI project manager for 12 months. Improvement Scholars and project managers meet with IHQI Faculty Coaches monthly except for the three months when all Improvement Scholar project teams meet together for half-day learning sessions. Improvement Scholars present project results at the annual IHQI Improvement Scholars Symposium and are expected to publish project results in an academic or professional journal.

As a result of participating in the program, Improvement Scholars gain experience with the following:

- [Lean](#) and [IHI-QI](#)
- Project Leadership
- Partnering with Patients and Families
- Statistical Process Control
- Teamwork (TeamSTEPPS™)
- High- and Low-Fidelity Simulation
- Presenting and Publishing Improvement Results

Improvement Projects

Projects are intended to improve clinical care and outcomes for a population of patients by implementing proven and/or expert-recommended strategies and approaches. Projects should consider strategies for reducing cost of care. Proposals to research new interventions for efficacy and/or effectiveness will not be funded.

Projects must align with UNC HCS entity improvement goals. Project applicants should discuss project ideas and seek guidance and approval from clinical leads of UNC HCS entity improvement goals prior to submitting a letter of intent. Selected projects must be approved by clinical leads of prioritized improvement initiatives. IHQI can help potential applicants connect with the appropriate clinical leads.

If you have a project idea that aligns with an institutional improvement priority not listed on the [UNC HCS Intranet FY19 Goals](#) pages (may require HCS domain ID login), please contact Laura Brown at IHQI to discuss the feasibility of IHQI support for the proposed project.

Application Process

The first step in the application process is to submit a one-page letter of intent outlining a problem in clinical care or outcomes and a proposed improvement strategy. If your letter of intent meets initial selection criteria, you will be invited to submit a full project proposal.

Dates

RFP Published	Oct 11, 2018
Competitive Letter of Intent Due	Nov 7, 2018
Invitation to Apply	Nov 14, 2018
Proposals Due	Jan 16, 2019
Notification of Awards	Feb 22, 2019
Project Start	Sep 1, 2019

Competitive Letter of Intent

Please submit a one-page letter of intent (single-spaced, minimum 11-point font, 1-inch margins) that addresses these questions:

1. What is the problem or gap in quality you seek to improve?
2. Which UNC HCS improvement priority will this project address?
3. Where is this problem occurring (specify hospital unit, outpatient practice setting, etc.)?
4. How has this problem been addressed successfully in other settings?
5. How do you propose to solve this problem/close the gap in quality?
6. How will you know if you have improved (what is the main outcome to be measured)?
7. Who will comprise the improvement team?

Submit your letter of intent to Laura Brown (laura.brown@unchealth.unc.edu) by 5pm on Nov 7, 2018.

Proposal Format and Length

If you are invited to submit a full proposal, please include the items below in your proposal. Format proposals using 11-point font, 1-inch margins and double-spaced text.

1. Project Lead/Key Contact (name, email & phone number)
2. Which UNC HCS improvement priority is your project aligned with?
3. What are you trying to accomplish? What is the gap in quality you are trying to address? What is the specific patient population your project will impact? (1/2 page)
4. How will you know if you have improved? Briefly describe your measurement approach as part of the proposal narrative; a completed "[Measures Table](#)" is required. Please describe the outcome measure(s), 2-3 process measures and at least one balancing measure. (1 page plus table)
5. What changes can you make that will result in improvement? How will you test those changes? (1-2 pages)
6. What aspects of cost of care will your project address? (1 page)

7. Improvement team: List names, roles and QI experience (if any) of each team member, describe how the improvement team will function and how the team's work impacts other teams/units and/or is impacted by other teams/units. (1 page)
8. Improvement facilitators and barriers: Describe the QI leadership, QI culture, capability for improvement and motivation to change within the unit/department. How does the proposed project align with institutional and/or departmental goals? (1 page)
9. Sustainability plan: Describe the plan for sustaining the improvement and conducting ongoing improvement after the end of the project (1 page)
10. Implementation Timeline (1 page)
11. References
12. Non-personnel Budget and Justification
13. Letters of Support: Two letters of support are required. One from the project sponsor (defined below) and one from your supervisor.

Project Sponsor

The project sponsor (e.g., Division Chief, Service Leader, Department Chair, Nursing Supervisor, Vice President, etc.) has executive authority and provides liaison with other areas of the organization, serves as a link to senior management and the strategic aims of the organization, and provides resources and removes barriers on behalf of the team.

The Improvement Scholar and project team are accountable to the Project Sponsor for project results. The sponsor is not a day-to-day participant in team meetings and testing. The sponsor reviews the team's progress on a regular basis. The sponsor must meet at least quarterly with the project team.

The project sponsor's letter of support should describe his/her commitment to supporting change within the unit and working to facilitate changes outside the unit as needed.

Improvement Scholar's Supervisor

The supervisor's letter of support should describe his/her commitment to ensuring that the Improvement Scholars will have sufficient time to:

- a. Attend IHQI meetings and just-in-time training
- b. Conduct the improvement project

IHQI Support

IHQI intends to include up to six projects in the Improvement Scholars Program for the period Sep 1, 2019 – Aug 31, 2020.

IHQI will provide the following:

- 0.5 FTE IHQI Project Manager dedicated to your project
- IHQI faculty mentorship
- Just-in-time training
- Non-personnel project support funds

Improvement Scholars does not provide salary funding. Typically, Improvement Scholars use academic or administrative time to lead project work and rely on the half-time IHQI Project Manager to manage day-to-day project operations. Improvement Scholars should plan to dedicate an average of 2 hours per week over the course of the year. This time should be discussed with the Improvement Scholar's supervisor during the application process to reach a shared understanding of time available for the project. Recipients who hold clinical leadership positions such as medical, program, or service line director positions may integrate Improvement Scholars program participation with their existing leadership role. If you anticipate needing additional non-clinical administrative time to lead an IHQI Improvement Scholars Project you should approach your supervisor about salary support.

Non-personnel Budget

Please submit a project budget and narrative justification for non-personnel expenses. IHQI funds are not used for personnel expenses.

Travel may be allowed to conduct improvement work, but not to attend professional meetings unless awardee is a trainee. IHQI cannot purchase hospital or clinic supplies and equipment.

Applications will be strengthened by the commitment of additional resources from the applicant's home department. Such an investment is not required, but is desirable as a demonstration of departmental support of the proposal.

All funds should be spent within 12 months of the project start date. Requests for no-cost extensions will be considered by IHQI staff on a case-by-case basis.

Review Process

The primary review criterion is likelihood of sustainable improvement in clinical care and outcomes in areas of organizational clinical improvement priorities. Proposals without a viable plan for sustainability beyond the 12-month project period will not be selected. Secondary criteria include:

- the project's impact on developing provider capacity to lead healthcare improvement
- the project's impact on reducing waste and/or cost
- clarity of the improvement strategy

Each project proposal will be evaluated by at least three reviewers, using a 1-5 scoring system with 1 being the best score. After initial scoring, IHQI faculty and staff will review scored proposals and categorize them into 3 groups: 1) support as is; 2) consider supporting after revisions; 3) do not support at this time. Those categorized as "consider supporting after revisions" will have 30 days to revise their proposal for reconsideration during the same cycle.

Application Procedure

Please submit a one-page letter of intent by 5pm on Nov 7, 2018 to Laura Brown (laura.brown@unchealth.unc.edu).

Invitations to submit a full project proposal will be extended by Nov 14, 2018.

Improvement Scholars Project Proposal Guidelines
UNC Institute for Healthcare Quality Improvement
Project Period: Sep 1, 2019 – Aug 31, 2020

If you are invited to submit a proposal, please submit two email attachments to:
laura.brown@unchealth.unc.edu by 5pm on Jan 16, 2019.

Email attachment 1: Application including everything except budget and budget justification

Email attachment 2: Budget & budget justification

Late applications will not be reviewed.

Please address questions about the Improvement Scholars Program to Laura Brown
laura.brown@unchealth.unc.edu, 919-818-3558.