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ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH

## **CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR TCR RESEARCH FUNDING 2017-18**

**Submission deadline May 30, 2017**

*Funding notifications will be sent no later than September 8, 2017*

This document describes how to submit proposals for funding for Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) projects, for the 2017-2018 funding cycle. To learn more about TCR, which is part of the Association for Consumer Research, please consult our website at [www.acrwebsite.org](http://www.acrwebsite.org).

### **Nature and Mission of Transformative Consumer Research**

Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) focuses first and foremost on matters of well-being. TCR projects involve almost exclusively a specific consumption problem or opportunity (e.g., decision, behavior) that is related to consumption and directly impacts well-being. Accordingly, such projects strive to develop insights that can be acted upon by consumers and/or their agents (e.g., family members, professional caregivers, NGOs, policy makers), for the purpose of upholding and improving well-being for individuals, subgroups, societies, other living entities, and/or the natural environment. Aside from having an immediate practical orientation, TCR strives to employ rigorous and responsible methodology and develop or apply perceptive theory.

Examples of topic areas where TCR-compatible consumption problems and/or opportunities arise include, but are not limited to: overconsumption; addictive consumption (e.g., drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, television, Internet); consumer safety; product labeling; social and ecological degradation; parenting and consumption; low income and other facets of impoverished living in developed and developing countries; vulnerable consumers including those who are disadvantaged, challenged, low literacy, elderly, child, or adolescent; servicing vulnerable consumers; micro- and macro-level consumption behaviors in emerging economies; and quality-of-life enhancing behaviors. Examples of topic areas with direct implications for well-being include, but are not limited to: pro-environmental consumption (e.g., repurposing or recycling); organ

donation; health-regimen compliance; money and credit management; and consumer and service activities that enrich personal and social development (e.g., art or exercise).

TCR's success since its inception in 2006 has resulted in global reach and a greatly expanded scope for its research, and consequently generous research-focused support from the Association for Consumer Research, the Sheth Foundation, and other organizations. TCR will sponsor a two-tier research project-funding framework. Tier 1 funding generally retains the process we used in the past. Tier 2 funding aims to support high-potential projects that were already vetted through initial inquiry and are seeking to expand on insights already gained.

## **Available Funds and the Sheth Initiative on Vulnerable Consumers**

ACR and the Sheth Foundation have generously provided \$10,000 each, for a total of \$20,000 in potential funding. However the Sheth Foundation has specified that \$5,000 of its funds should be used to support research on vulnerable consumers as defined below. **Therefore, if a grant proposal addresses vulnerable consumers, it should be identified as such, so that it can be considered under this initiative.**

The Sheth Foundation's Initiative on Vulnerable Consumers is in line with two enduring foundation priorities: emerging markets and public policy research on disadvantaged consumers. The Sheth Foundation believes that the potential for inquiry that transforms consumers' lives for the better and extends well-being across the globe may often be highest when efforts are directed toward those made vulnerable by life circumstances. To that end, TCR is charged with administering \$5,000 in awards that encourage research on consumers who are made vulnerable by shortages of food, water, or basic medical care caused by economic distress or externalities such as war, genocide, or natural disasters. The goal is to stimulate research excellence across areas that are pivotal to the Sheth Foundation and TCR missions. Both Tier 1 and Tier 2 funding are possible for this initiative, as described below.

### **Tier 1 Funding**

Tier 1 funding seeks to (1) encourage innovative exploratory inquiry that is consistent with TCR's mission (see above) and (2) provide seed or supplemental funding for already-conceptualized projects where early empirical confirmation is likely to facilitate larger grants from other agencies and organizations. Tier 1 funding is not to exceed \$2500 per grant, and most grants will be in the \$1000-\$1500 range.

### *Covered Research Expenses and Common Funding Levels*

The research expenses covered by this funding program include compensation to research participants, costs of preparing research materials and executing studies, travel for the purpose of data collection, data set acquisition, the purchase of equipment and software,

and other project-related expenses. TCR asks that Tier 1 funding not be used for researcher compensation purposes, or to fund thesis or dissertation projects.

### *Submitting Proposals*

Tier 1 proposals should be well crafted and aligned with TCR's mission and priorities as described above. Connections between the proposed research project and TCR's mission and goals must be made explicit in the narrative. An expert panel will review the proposals and funding notifications will be sent **no later than September 8, 2017**. If questions arise, researchers should contact the ACR/TCR representative listed below. **The deadline for Tier 1 proposals is May 30, 2017.**

The typical format for a Tier 1 proposal is as follows:

- Cover letter (content described in a subsequent section).
- A title page, with the name and contact information and address of the principal investigator, plus a short biographical note (maximum 100 words) about the PI's background, research accomplishments, and so forth.
- A 2-3 page single-spaced proposal narrative that addresses the following:
  - The consumption problem or opportunity being addressed and its seriousness or importance.
  - A short overview of prior research on the topic, focused on how and why prior research has not sufficiently produced insights that can be communicated to and acted upon for improved well-being.
  - A description of the proposed project, including (a) theoretical frameworks to be used a priori or to be inducted from this work; (b) research hypotheses (if any); and (c) the research design and methodology.
  - An overview of the most pragmatic insights related to TCR's mission and goals, and how the researcher intends to disseminate them and their implications, plus any other knowledge advances related to theory, substantive topics, or methodology.
- A project timetable, including major mileposts and expected completion dates.
- An item-specific budget that can be verified by reviewers.
- When applicable, detailed explanation of how this project will lead to additional funding from other organizations, and the names of those possible sources of funding (organizations, agencies, etc.).
- Evidence of IRB approval is desirable though not required at the application stage, but it is required before any funds will be dispersed.

The typical Tier 1 proposal will be 5-6 pages in length.

### **Tier 2 Funding**

Tier 2 funding seeks to advance projects already vetted and found consistent with TCR's mission where (1) initial inquiry by the researchers found interesting results with discernible TCR implications and (2) a case can be made that additional funding is

needed for the project to maximize its impact potential. Tier 2 funding is not to exceed \$7500, and most grants will be in the \$4000-\$6000 range.

### *Covered Research Expenses and Common Funding Levels*

The research expenses covered by this funding program include compensation to research participants, costs of preparing research materials and executing studies, data transcription, coding, and analysis, travel for the purpose of data collection or solicitation of additional substantial funding from government agencies (e.g., NSF, NIH), large data set acquisition, and the purchase of specialized equipment and software. TCR asks that Tier II funding not be used for exploratory research projects, researcher compensation purposes, or to fund thesis or dissertation projects.

### *Submitting Proposals*

Tier 2 proposals must be well-crafted and aligned with TCR's mission and priorities as described above. They must also be supported by empirical findings from the researchers' own prior research that affirm the underlying theory and well-being enhancing potential of the research. Connections between the proposed project, TCR's mission and goals, and the already conducted TCR-focused research must be made explicit. An expert panel will review proposals and funding notifications will be sent no later than **September 8, 2017**. If questions arise, researchers should contact the ACR/TCR representative listed below. **The deadline for Tier 2 proposals is May 30, 2017.**

The typical format for a Tier 2 proposal is as follows:

- Cover letter (content described in subsequent section).
- A title page, with the name and contact information and address of the principal investigator, plus a short biographical note (maximum 100 words) about the PI's background, research accomplishments, and so forth.
- A 5-6 page single-spaced proposal narrative that addresses the following:
  - The consumption problem or opportunity being addressed and its seriousness or importance.
  - A thorough overview of prior research on the topic, including the empirical results from initial research by the researchers that make the case for the extended and expanded project being proposed.
  - A summary of why prior research has not sufficiently produced insights that can be communicated to and acted upon for improved well-being.
  - A detailed description of the proposed project, including (a) theoretical frameworks to be used a priori or to be inducted from this work; (b) research hypotheses (if any); (c) the research design and methodology including details about sample size, sample recruitment, measures, manipulations if applicable, and other data collection efforts, (d) analysis plan, and (e) letters from collaborators (e.g., research sites) if applicable.

- An overview of expected additional insights related to TCR’s mission and goals, contributions related to theory, substantive topics, or methodology, and how the researcher intends to disseminate findings and their implications.
- A project timetable, including major mileposts and expected completion dates.
- An item-specific budget that can be verified by reviewers.
- When applicable, detailed explanation of how this project will lead to additional funding from other organizations, and the names of those possible sources of funding (organizations, agencies, etc.).
- Evidence of IRB approval is desirable though not required at the application stage, but it is required before any funds will be dispersed.

The typical proposal will be 8-9 pages in length.

**Tier 1 and Tier 2 proposals, due by May 30, 2017, should be sent as a single email attachment to:**

Professor Connie Pechmann  
 Chairperson, ACR Advisory Committee on  
 Transformative Consumer Research  
 The Paul Merage School of Business  
 University of California Irvine  
[cpechman@uci.edu](mailto:cpechman@uci.edu)  
 Phone: 949-824-4058

**Proposal Selection**

Each proposal will be sent for review to 2–4 knowledgeable experts. Decisions on proposals will be made by members of the ACR Advisory Committee on Transformative Consumer Research (members are listed on the ACR website). All submissions receive comments from reviewers.

Proposals are evaluated in terms of (1) their potential contribution for generating knowledge that can lead to improved well-being regarding the focal consumption problem; (2) their potential to generate additional funding opportunities or decisive action by practitioners, government officials, or organizations; (3) the quality of literature review, conceptual development, and research design; and (4) the qualifications of the principal investigator. Early-career scholars are encouraged to apply, but should generally seek guidance from senior-scholar partners that can help strengthen the project potential. Priority will be given to first time submissions, as compared to work that has been previously funded by a TCR grant.

**Cover Letter Content and Requirements**

Applicants for TCR funding must comply with the following conditions and should address these issues, as relevant, in a cover letter accompanying the proposal:

- a) The cover letter should clearly state if the proposal is for Tier I or Tier II funding and if the proposal should be considered for the Sheth Initiative on Vulnerable Consumers.
- b) The principal investigator must be a current member of the Association for Consumer Research.
- c) The proposed project must be approved by the IRB (institutional review board) of the principal investigator's institution, and thereby comply with the ethical precepts of leading research universities. This approval can be acquired before applying for TCR funds or after receiving a positive evaluation of a proposal. If the applicant is in a setting where no institutional review board exists, he or she should state this and describe plans to comply with ethical precepts. Approved funds will not be disbursed until evidence of IRB approval is provided by the P.I.
- d) If the research involves purchasing or acquiring existing data sets that are not restricted by license or other means for sharing with likeminded researchers, the principal investigator must agree in writing to make the data set available on request from other TCR members.
- e) The principal investigator must agree in writing (in the cover letter) to serve as an occasional resource to other proposal writers and researchers seeking to conduct TCR, and to share his or her proposal for TCR funding on request.
- f) The principal investigator must agree in writing to acknowledge the funding support from the Association for Consumer Research and the Sheth Foundation in any subsequent publications or press releases associated with the research project.
- g) The principal investigator must agree in writing to proactively inform the Chairperson of the ACR advisory committee on TCR of any presentations, publications and/or grants that arise from the research project.
- h) It is also considerable favorable, though not required, that the principal investigator plans to present the research at a conference of the Association for Consumer Research or another venue where the work can be shared with other scholars and interested individuals.