

# CLIMATE + HEALTH EXCELLENCE CENTERS (CHEX)

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**Letter of Intent Deadline: August 7, 2025**

**Invitation-only Full Application Deadline: December 4, 2025**

BURROUGHS  
WELLCOME  
FUND 

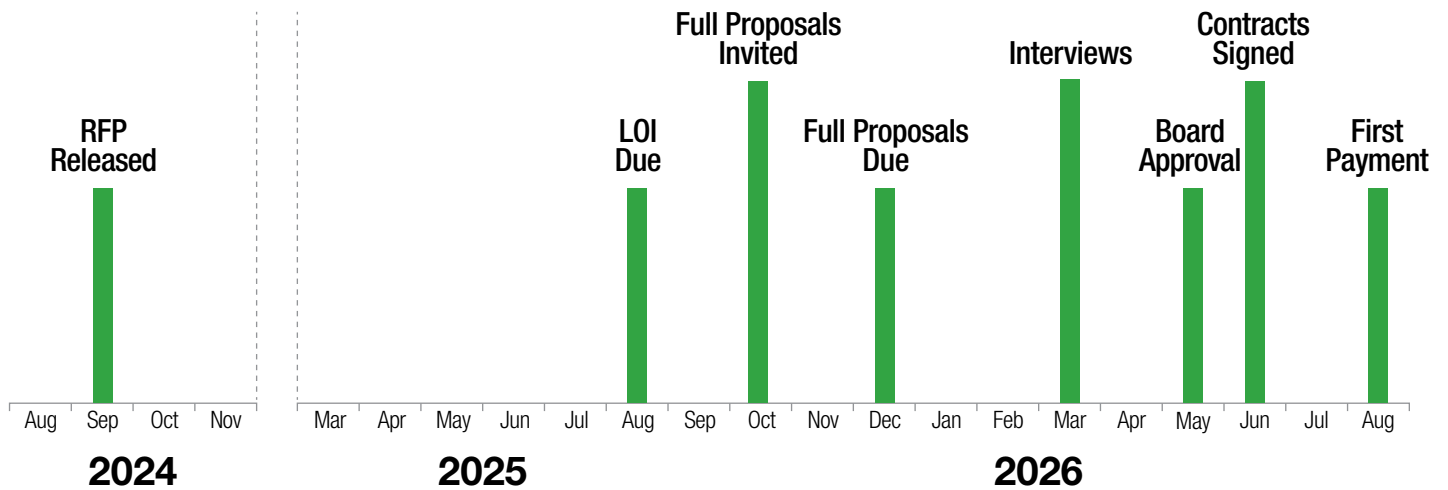
# CLIMATE + HEALTH EXCELLENCE CENTERS (CHEX)

New institutional awards of up to \$10,000,000 to stimulate development of strong research, education, and public communications connections between fields that aim to understand and mitigate the impact of climate change on human health. In general, this award will support institutions or consortia that are already moving toward establishing themselves as centers of excellence for understanding climate change's impact on human health and for leadership in climate education OR public communication

around climate and health. Applications from institutions just starting to integrate Climate + Health into their planning are expected to be uncompetitive. Up to three awards will be made over two rounds of competition.

Providing support for U.S. and Canadian research and educational Institutions or consortia of research and educational institutions.

## PROGRAM TIMELINE



# PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Burroughs Wellcome Fund announces the Climate + Health Excellence (CHEX) Centers award. This is a new institutional research and training opportunity that will help institutions bridge the gaps between fields that will have important roles to play in understanding the impacts of climate change on human health and diminishing their effects. This grant will support new discovery toward defining the health impacts of climate change, developing potential interventions, translating discovery science into practical application, and outward-facing work that can help public understanding of Climate + Health or strengthen connections between research and communities whose health has been harmed by climate change. Our goal is to help these Centers of Excellence achieve their strategic goals by supporting activities that help build stable collaborations between people, departments, and institutions. Building interdisciplinary connections between scholars, between approaches, and between researchers and those outside academe form the bulk of the budget.

## Basic, Applied, and Translational Research

This program is meant to support institutions or consortia that have already begun to work toward taking on the problem of climate's impact on health. Consortia might include neighboring institutions with already established collaborations, but of more relevance to this RFP are consortia of institutions united by common interests, for example in the health of residents of the Appalachian Mountains or the Great Lakes region, an urban focus, or a focus on rural life, etc. Whether collaborators are at a single institution or a consortium, we want to see lasting

connections developed between those working with basic and applied approaches. We anticipate that support from CHEX will accelerate and enhance the cultivation of new common ground for high-impact basic research, invention, and implementation that can practically change the impacts of climate change on human health.

## An Outward Focus

Conveying to the public ideas about how climate change and human health are linked is important for the flow of insights from discovery research into health interventions. For this reason, successful applications will bring general (non-postgraduate) education or public communication into their vision of shared common ground. Either education or communication should be a substantial element of the proposal. Proposals that sacrifice depth to include elements of both may be weakened by the effort: it is better to go deep into one area than to lightly “tag both bases.”

## Post-Graduate Training

Institutions or Consortia supported by these awards will develop new lines of research, training, and graduate education that will both energize faculty collaboration and expand interdisciplinary research opportunities for trainees. What graduate departments learn from exploring post-graduate students' interests in the intersection of climate change and health science may be invaluable to developing educational resources and career guidance for K12 and college students. The training grant element will not be more than 20% of a funded center's budget.

## CHEX will increase awardees' capacity for innovation at the interfaces between Climate + Health by:

- ✓ **Enhancing collaboration** 
- ✓ **Training professional students** 
- ✓ **Valuing outward focus** 

# PROGRAM

The CHEX awards will provide up to \$2,000,000 a year for five years. We anticipate that up to three awards will be made over two rounds of applications.

Creating new lines of research connecting climate change and human health will be the focal priority for the programs that are funded. There is ample room for building on institutional strengths to achieve this focus: institutional interests in planetary science, one health or planetary health, life science, engineering, physics and mathematical science, quantitative social sciences including public health, economics, and demographics, applied fields, and the arts and humanities can all drive dynamic work at the intersection of climate change and human health. Applications from groups that are just starting to integrate Climate + Health into their planning are expected to be uncompetitive. Proposals from consortia face a higher bar, as they need to demonstrate shared interests and convince reviewers that they will be able to overcome the challenges involved in working across multiple institutions.

Applications to CHEX must make clear the core problems on which the proposed Center will focus. Supported centers are expected to both launch what will become long-lasting research partnerships and to have well-planned training and post-graduate training components. The balance of these activities within any proposal are expected to vary depending on other resources available: for example, a university with generous resources already focused on faculty collaboration may have a proposal that leans more

heavily toward training and providing small internal grants that stimulate new collaboration; a consortium bringing together research universities and primarily undergraduate institutions might submit a program that along with training and research puts substantial emphasis on teaching. A group concentrating its activities on connecting bench science and public health research might also propose putting resources into studying outreach to community groups and developing effective approaches to building better, more mutual conversations.

Post-graduate training and the curricular innovations that accompany are a necessary element and are seen as an important way to strengthen interdisciplinary connections. Programs may train PhD students, but may instead or additionally train postdoctoral fellows; medical or veterinary students, residents, or fellows; advanced nursing students; master's students; undergraduates or other kinds of research trainees. We do not expect the bulk of this award to be spent on training. Trainees may be brought together across the spectrum from research to the clinic to the community or may be thoughtfully brought together across a range of sciences (including clinical science) that are concerned with Climate + Health. Applicants should develop a training program that fits their strengths and the goals of their proposed center. Planning to train simultaneously in all the directions described in this RFP is likely to yield a weaker proposal.

**We are not looking for palettes of academic flavors but rather for strategies that can both bring together some traditionally partnering fields and meaningfully engage those who have not typically partnered with health-focused work.**

## PROGRAM – CONTINUED

Education elements might involve work in K12 education, workforce-focused efforts focused on associate or bachelor's degree-level education, or development of significantly new citizen science efforts that illuminate connections between climate change and human health. Some institutions will have appropriate on-campus partners for this work, but we expect many will partner with colleges of education, community colleges, undergraduate institutions including minority-serving colleges and universities, museums and science centers, and other education-focused organizations. Communications elements might include work focused on formal communication—for example, journalism; two-way communication between public health or research practitioners and communities adversely affected by climate change; collaboration with arts organizations; public outreach (“explaining” science to

the public), and citizen science. As noted above, the depth of proposed work in education or communication is more important for selection than trying to do a little of everything.

The goal is better connecting research and communications or education by building robust bridges between departments, centers, and Schools, including those that have not been highly connected to health and medicine or public health in the past. Competitive institutions or consortia will be those whose culture encourages and enables collaboration across administrative units both in research and in spreading factual information about science, whether through education, public communication, or developing respectful approaches to dialogue with those whom climate change has brought harm.



### Each institution will orient its proposal around a core interest

**For example:** How will climate change impact infectious disease, nutrition, pregnancy, marginalized populations, our interaction with the built environment, concerns of a particular region, etc.

# GUIDELINES

- Only non-profit research and training institutes in the United States or Canada may submit applications. Consortia may include institutions outside the US or Canada, but only one institution, the institution submitting the proposal, will be paid. Subcontracts are allowed. Research groups working at national laboratories and within the federal government are allowable as partners.
- Institutions should only submit one proposal that reflects the institution's strategic goals in basic, applied, and implementation research in the area of Climate + Health. Individual departments, centers, etc. within an institution may be part of separate consortium applications—for example, a consortium focusing on shared interests around a region might include participation by several institutions around the region and would not disrupt those institutions own applications as long as there is not significant overlap between the proposals.
- **BWF does not provide overhead.** Personnel costs, including fringe benefits, are allowed. The administrative costs of running the program are allowable direct costs. Pass-through charges on money sent to other institutions are not allowed. Student tuition is allowed only during the time a student is actively supported by the formal training grant elements proposed.
- For-profit companies and government agencies may not apply, but could be valuable partners.

# REQUIRED COMPONENTS:

1. A graphical abstract laying out the application's complete plan and expected impacts and the proposal's relationship to the institution or consortium's Climate + Health strategy. Both the graphical abstract and the proposal narrative should spell out what core problems will be the focus of the Center of Excellence.
2. Interdisciplinary research activities leading to mechanistic insights for climate change consequences for human health, with potential for mitigation or prevention of health effects.
3. A training grant element not to exceed 20% of budget.
4. Education-focused work on Climate + Health OR communication-focused work on Climate + Health.

# POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS:

1. Activities including policy development and implementation.
2. Economic modeling of climate change activities.
3. Convening activities for related stakeholders.
4. In-house pilot grant programs to stimulate new initiatives in Climate + Health.

# SELECTION

## Scoring Rubric

- Fit to BWF program goals
- Value added by BWF's support
- Innovation and creativity
- Capacity to seed long-term faculty collaborations in Climate + Health
- Current activities and resources concentrated in Climate + Health
- Training plan for those to be supported by this award's training grant elements
- Institutional track record(s) in interdisciplinary collaboration
- Institutional track record(s) in research training
- Institutional track record(s) in innovative undergraduate teaching and connection to K-12 education OR institutional track records in science communication, public outreach, or two-way discussions with those facing health harm or disruptions associated with human activities and choices



## Valuing outward focus

CHEX requires community-focused work that serves the broader public by informing, educating, or readying a climate + health aware future.

**For example:** Depending on their institutional strengths, applicants might develop journalism, citizen science, K16 education, outreach to climate-vulnerable communities, or other public-facing work to address this goal.