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**Title of Initiative:** Structured Institutional Needs Assessment and Action Plan Development for Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)

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**Objective:** The purpose of this initiative is to provide research active MSIs with grants to conduct comprehensive and structured institutional research capacity needs assessments and creating action plans based on the results. The initiative's long-term goal is to develop a cadre of MSIs who have completed comprehensive and structured institutional research capacity needs assessments and a strategic plan. Awards are intended to support research active MSIs in quantifying their institutional research capacity needs as well as their strengths.

**Background:** NIH recognizes the need to diversify the scientific workforce by enhancing the participation of individuals from diverse backgrounds, including those from groups identified as nationally underrepresented in the biomedical, clinical, behavioral, and social sciences (collectively termed "biomedical") research workforce. The NIH UNITE Initiative is designed, in part, to help facilitate research to identify opportunities, make recommendations, and develop and implement strategies to increase inclusivity and diversity in science. The UNITE-E Committee focuses on the extramural research ecosystem: changing policy, culture, and structure to promote workforce diversity.

NIH is committed to increasing and sustaining the diversity of the biomedical research workforce by assisting MSIs in building institutional research capacity. MSIs are a vital resource to create a diverse biomedical research workforce. The purpose of this initiative is to support MSIs in conducting comprehensive and structured institutional research capacity needs assessments. Development of structured assessments can offer benchmarks for short-term and long-term action plans and metrics to assess progress in areas such as institutional research capacity and support. These assessments will enable institutions to develop benchmarks and action items for improvement or reconfiguration as they identify NIH, other federal, and foundation funding opportunities.

**Scientific Need:** More than 700 MSIs exist with significant diversity in research infrastructure, and their success and sustainability are critical to NIH's mission to enhance the participation of scientists from Underrepresented Groups (URGs) in the biomedical research enterprise. These diverse MSIs face unique challenges depending on the institution type, resources, infrastructure, and policies to acquire NIH or other federal agency funding. Although NIH supports various programs [such as [Support For Research Excellence](#) (SuRE), [Research Centers in Minority Institutions](#) (RCMI), and [Partnerships to Advance Cancer Health Equity](#) (PACHE)] for MSIs conducting research, the institutional research capacity of the MSIs needs to be further strengthened. There are still many issues at MSIs that need to be identified and addressed to reduce barriers to scientific advancement and increase independent research funding. The success and sustainability are critical to NIH's mission to enhance the

participation of scientists from URGs in the biomedical research enterprise. A fundamental principle for organizational development and change is based on structured assessment to understand the barriers. This NIH-wide initiative, as part of the UNITE-E committee efforts, will provide resources for the assessment of research infrastructure, which, if strengthened, can help the organization overcome challenges, enhance administrative and research resources, institutional policies and ultimately expand opportunities for faculty and students in the biomedical research enterprise.

**Description of Initiative:** The purpose of this NIH-wide initiative is to support research active MSIs to conduct a rigorous needs assessment to evaluate their research capacity and to create action or strategic plans based on their results. Because of the significant diversity in the types of MSIs, two separate categories will be created for this initiative.

The two proposed categories of research active MSIs are: **Low Research Active (LRA)** and **High Research Active (HRA)**. An LRA MSI must be an undergraduate or graduate degree granting institution with less than \$6 million in research project grants (RPGs) in NIH support per year in three of the last five years, and at least 25% of undergraduate students supported by Pell grants. An HRA MSI must be a doctoral degree granting institution with less than \$25 million in RPGs in NIH support per year in three of the last five years. Both LRA and HRA MSIs must have a historic mission of supporting underrepresented groups in biomedical sciences.

Funding support will be used to conduct objective needs assessments, creating, using, and adapting existing instruments to measure research capacity at MSIs. Once the needs assessments are completed, in the second phase of this initiative, the institutions will develop action plans for short and long term goals, including metrics and methods for assessing progress.

### **Research Priorities:**

Needs assessments may include broad categories of focus such as administrative, research, student, and faculty.

- Administrative needs may include establishing or enhancing the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP), personnel, resource support staff, and pre- and post- grant award support.
- Research needs may include research readiness in various areas, grantsmanship support, capacity to conduct human subjects research, partnerships/collaborations with other institutions, lab equipment, and capacity for community engagement.
- Student and Faculty needs may include training, mentoring/sponsorship, and faculty development.