

## **Concept Clearance: Reissue of Short Courses on Innovative Methodologies and Approaches in the Behavioral and Social Sciences R25 Program**

The OBSSR's 2025–2029 Strategic Plan highlights the importance of developing the scientific talent and skills of the next generation of behavioral and social sciences (BSS) researchers. Training and capacity building are foundational to an effective BSSR workforce poised to address the complex research challenges of today and advance health-related BSSR in the future. It is particularly important to provide BSS investigators with exposure to cutting-edge methodologies, designs, and measures.

For more than a decade, OBSSR has supported short courses on innovative methods aimed at cultivating skills crucial for advancing BSSR through innovative methodologies and analytics. OBSSR first issued *Short Courses on Innovative Methodologies in the Behavioral and Social Sciences* R25 program ([RFA-OD-13-009](#)) in 2013, then again in 2019, 2021, and 2023 as *Short Courses on Innovative Methodologies and Approaches in the Behavioral and Social Sciences* (R25; [RFA-OD-19-012](#); [RFA-OD-21-005](#); [RFA-OD-23-003](#)). OBSSR plans on reissuing the RFA every two years to keep the pool of short courses as current and timely as possible.

Responses to this program have been robust, giving us the opportunity to fund 6–8 highly meritorious, unique short courses each summer.

- The first RFA was issued in 2013; there were 48 applications, and 8 awards were made. Program topics funded included: causal analysis; epidemiology and population health; dynamic systems modeling; Community-Based Population Research (CBPR); mixed methods; and power calculations in multilevel and longitudinal studies.
- The RFA issued in 2019 received 27 applications and 8 awards were made. Programs included: randomized clinical trials; dissemination and implementation; mixed methods, mHealth; and multiphase optimization strategy (MOST) for behavioral intervention development.
- Participation in 2021 was decreased due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We still received 8 applications and made 4 awards. Programs this year focused on machine learning for quantification of behavior; recruiting and sampling of hard-to-reach populations; translation of basic research to behavioral treatments; and community health intervention research.
- The RFA was most recently reissued in 2023. There were 17 applications, and 6 awards were made. Awarded programs are focusing on MOST; data management; community engagement; mHealth; and randomized clinical trials.

The R25 program is well-received by the broader NIH community and has been able to fund educational opportunities that might not otherwise be supported (e.g. an intensive course on mixed methods). All courses have received high ratings in their evaluations, and all programs have shown agility in tailoring their courses based on suggestions made by students and instructors. All actively recruit underrepresented populations both as instructors and participants.

Possible future educational topics include but are not limited to: neuroimaging methods related to behavioral and social sciences (BSS); approaches to make better use of big data; open science paradigms for BSS; computational approaches for multilevel data; approaches for translating basic BSS into the development and testing of prevention and intervention programs.