# **SPORE Best Practices**

HDFCCC leadership and administration want to ensure strong SPORE applications that align with HDFCCC strategic goals, avoid competing with other HDFCCC SPORE grants at the time of NCI review if possible, and receive adequate pre-award support. In order to obtain the required institutional commitment and letter of support from the HDFCCC Director, prospective SPORE leaders must meet the milestones listed below. Each step represents a go/no-go decision point from HDFCCC and SPORE leadership.

**Optimal timeline for any potential SPORE application\***

1. One year prior to submission: Schedule an exploratory pre-application meeting with Alan Ashworth, Eric Small, Kate Shumate, and Erin Bank. This meeting is required to review these guidelines and to secure institutional support. Prepare a high-level outline of proposed themes, projects, investigators, and cores to be discussed.
2. Six months prior: Convene an external advisory committee to review potential projects (an EAC is a requirement for SPOREs). HDFCCC leadership (Ashworth, Small, Shumate, and Bank) should be involved in this review process.
3. Four months prior: Meet with the NCI to discuss requirements, feasibility, and proposed projects and cores.
4. Three months prior: HDFCCC Leadership will convene an internal review panel. Preliminary written versions of the projects will need to be available for review, and SPORE leaders and project leaders should be available for an in-person review meeting.
5. One month prior: Near-final grant proposal circulated to HDFCCC Leadership, along with draft letter of support, for Director sign-off.
6. In general, HDFCCC leadership (Ashworth, Small, Shumate, and Bank) should be included in planning meetings, EAB meetings, NCI correspondence, etc. Provide regular (at least monthly) updates to HDFCCC point person identified in the pre-application meeting.

*\*Deviations from this timeline will limit HDFCCC’s ability to provide administrative and logistical support and may prohibit commitment of institutional funds.*

**Pre-award Guidance**

Knowledge of the funding mechanism

Read the current NOFOs: [PAR-23-284](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-23-284.html), [RFA-CA-24-020](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-CA-24-020.html)

Arrange a pre-application consultation with NCI Program Officer (required 4-6 months before application due date).

*We suggest multiple conversations with the PO to determine eligibility, likelihood of success, current funding environment and pay lines, etc.*

Building your team

Establish a mechanism to select projects that involves internal and external review, is open HDFCCC-wide, and is transparent.

*We suggest an early meeting with the EAC to review potential projects, and a later meeting after projects have been selected and are being polished.*

*Calls for projects must be accessible to the broader HDFCCC community.*

*Recommend proposing one additional project with the expectation that one project will get cut in the final funding allocation.*

Develop an IAB and EAB that will meet once before application deadline and at least annually post-award.

*We suggest including either Dr. Ashworth or Dr. Small, and any of the HDFCCC Associate Directors and at least one current SPORE PI (see below), in addition to other relevant UCSF faculty with appropriate scientific expertise.*

Identify synergies with UCSF HDFCCC

Develop a mechanism and funding source to fund pilots before the SPORE is funded, which can be adopted into the Developmental Research Program/Career Enhancement Program.

*We suggest running these competitions through RAP, when applicable, or through central HDFCCC admin.*

*HDFCCC “matching funds” can be used to increase the number of possible awards given.*

Meet with Ben Braun, Associate Director for Shared Resources, to discuss leveraging current HDFCCC Cores.

Get feedback from the experts

Consult with current SPORE PIs (Eric Small, Kevin Shannon, Mitch Berger/Susan Chang) or previous applicants (Margaret Tempero, Jenny Grandis).

Pre-award support

Contact the Research Development Office’s [Large Grant Development Program](https://rdo.ucsf.edu/large-grant-development-program-lgdp) to request their support.

Work with Erin Bank to coordinate internal review, alignment with HDFCCC goals and timelines, institutional commitment discussions, and budget review; understand scope of HDFCCC support during the application process; and obtain support to supplement what is offered by RDO.

For applications in which another institution is the lead and there is not an HDFCCC MPI, Co-Is should engage their departmental [Office of Sponsored Research](https://osr.ucsf.edu/) team.