

# Pennsylvania Department of Health Final Performance Summary Report Formula Grants

## Overview of the Health Research Project Performance Review Process and Criteria

An applicant that receives a health research grant under Tobacco Settlement Act / Act 77 of 2001, Chapter 9, is subject to a performance review by the Department of Health upon completion of the research project. The performance review is based on requirements specified by Act 77 and criteria developed by the Department in consultation with the Health Research Advisory Committee.

As part of the performance review process, each research project contained in a grant is reviewed by at least three experts who are physicians, scientists or researchers. Reviewers are from the same or similar discipline as the research grant/project under review and are not from Pennsylvania. Reviewers use the applicant's proposed research plan (strategic plan), the annual progress report and final progress reports to conduct the review. A grant that receives an unfavorable performance review by the Department may be subject to a reduction in funding or become ineligible for health research funding in the future. The overall grant evaluation rating is based on the ratings for the individual research projects contained in the grant.

This performance review report contains the outcome of the review for the grant as a whole (outstanding, favorable, or unfavorable), strengths and weaknesses of each research project, as well as recommendations for future improvement.

The following criteria were applied to information submitted by research grant recipients:

- **Criterion 1 - How well did the project meet its stated objectives? If objectives were not completely met, was reasonable progress made?**
  - Did the project meet the stated objectives?
  - Were the research design and methods adequate in light of the project objectives?
  - Consider these questions about data and empirical results: Were the data developed sufficiently to answer the research questions posed? Were the data developed in line with the original research protocol?
  - If changes were made to the research protocol, was an explanation given, and, if so, is it reasonable?
  - Consider (only for clinical research projects) the extent of laboratory and clinical activities initiated and completed and the number of subjects relative to the target goal.
  - Were sufficient data and information provided to indicate or support the fact that the project met its objectives or made acceptable progress?
  - Were the data and information provided applicable to the project objectives listed in the strategic research plan?

- **Criterion 2 - What is the likely beneficial impact of this project? If the likely beneficial impact is small, is it judged reasonable in light of the dollars budgeted?**
  - What is the significance of this project for improving health?
  - Consider the value of the research completed towards eventual improvement in health outcomes.
  - Consider any changes in risk factors, services provided, incidence of disease, death from disease, stage of disease at time of diagnosis, or other relevant measures of impact and effectiveness of the research being conducted.
  - Consider any major discoveries, new drugs and new approaches for prevention, diagnosis and treatment, which are attributable to the completed research project.
  - What are the future plans for this research project?
  
- **Criterion 3 - Did the project leverage additional funds or were any additional grant applications submitted as a result of this project?**
  - If leveraging of funds were expected, did these materialize?
  - Are the researchers planning to apply for additional funding in the future to continue or expand the research?
  
- **Criterion 4 - Did the project result in any peer-reviewed publications, licenses, patents, or commercial development opportunities? Were any of these submitted/filed?**
  - If any of the above listed were expected, did these materialize?
  - Are the researchers planning to submit articles to peer-reviewed publications, file for any licenses, or patents or begin any commercial development opportunities in the future?
  - Consider the number/quality of each.
  
- **Criterion 5 - Did the project enhance the quality and capacity for research at the grantee's institution?**
  - Were there improvements made to infrastructure?
  - Were any new investigators added or were any researchers brought into the institution to help carry out this research?
  - Were funds used to pay for research performed by pre- or post-doctoral students?
  
- **Criterion 6 - Did the project lead to collaboration with research partners outside the institution, or new involvement with the community?**
  - Are the researchers planning to begin any collaborations as a result of the research?
  - For clinical research only: consider the number of hospitals and health care professionals involved and the extent of penetration of the studies throughout the region or the Commonwealth.

## **Overall Evaluation Rating**

An overall evaluation rating is assigned to each research project. The rating reflects the overall progress the project attained in meeting the stated goals and objectives. The rating is based on a scale of 1–3, with 1 being the highest. An average rating is obtained from all the reviews (minimum of 3) of each project and is the basis for the determination of the final overall rating for each project as follows:

1.00 – 1.33 = *Outstanding*

1.34 – 2.66 = *Favorable*

2.67 – 3.00 = *Unfavorable*

The grant level rating is an average rating from all projects as above. The numerical rating appears in parentheses for the grant and each project in the ***Overall Grant Performance Review Rating*** section of the report.

***Overall Grant Performance Review Rating***

**Grant Rating:** Favorable (2.00)

**Project Rating:**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
0990701	The Impact of Masculinity Ideals on HIV Risk among Black and White Bisexually-Active Men	Favorable (2.00)

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**Project Number:** 0990701  
**Project Title:** The Impact of Masculinity Ideals on HIV Risk among  
Black and White Bisexually-Active Men  
**Investigator:** LaPollo, Archana

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### *Section A. Project Evaluation Criteria*

*Criterion 1 - How well did the project meet its stated objectives? If objectives were not completely met, was reasonable progress made?*

#### **STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

##### Reviewer 1:

The overriding goal of the proposed work was to examine how masculinity ideals explain unprotected sexual behaviors among men who have sex with men and women (MSMW). The idea of hypermasculinity as a risk factor for unprotected sex is supported in the literature and through a theory of syndemics, and for this reason an exploration of this relation in a sample of 356 black and white MSMW in Philadelphia has merit as a means of informing interventions that ameliorate HIV risk for both male and female sexual partners of MSMW. While the relations of interest have been examined in the literature among MSM, there is more limited knowledge for the MSMW population. The data were pre-existing in a CDC-funded study.

While the overall scope of the work is important, the approach to the work is relatively weak. The relations of interest are not framed within a theoretical paradigm, and the associations examined in the study aims are not nested within a theoretical stance.

In the first phase of the investigation the researchers conducted a review of the literature. This has merit; however the opportunity was not used to refine the questions of interest or to define a theoretical framing for the work. In the report filed in June 2011, there is only a cursory review of the literature.

The analyses which are undertaken are extremely simplistic and again not derived from a theoretical model. However, some key differences between white and black participants suggest that these constructs are worth exploring and likely contribute to the differences in HIV epidemiology between the groups. Finally, it is likely that the multivariate approach (linear regression) may not be appropriate for the complex modeling. Experience with such data sets indicates that a negative binomial approach to regression may have been more appropriate. Thus the multivariable analyses should be viewed with caution. The only product to be developed is a peer-reviewed manuscript, which is not included in the report.

##### Reviewer 2:

The project seems to have met the stated objectives. The proposal was explicit and clear in its goals and description of methods, and the final report presents the findings in sufficient detail to

assess whether the goals were met. One of the main goals was to study the role of masculinity ideals in MSMW, and this was achieved. Another goal was to prepare a manuscript on the basis of the findings, and this also appears to have happened. The data seemed appropriate to answer the research questions posed, and the data were analyzed in line with the original research protocol.

Two related points warrant some discussion: the use of respondent-driven sampling and the racial comparisons included in the analyses. Since this involves a convenience sample, racial comparisons are problematic and at the very least should be made with care and restraint; the researchers cannot be sure that differences between the two samples are attributable to race or to sampling differences/selection processes. I mention this mainly as a suggestion for the discussion in the manuscript, i.e., to be very clear about the limitation of this comparison. In fact, some journals I know would quite likely ask the authors to keep the analyses separate for the two groups. The respondent-driven sampling, although probably appropriate for the current research goals, does come with the possible confound that more masculine MSMW may also have more masculine friends, which to some degree may lead to a greater likelihood that the researchers will find what they predict. Again, mainly for the manuscript, the investigators might consider in more depth possible problems with the sampling approach for the aims of the current study, since it may have resulted in a more homogenous sample in terms of the variables the researchers wanted to use as predictors.

The researchers report that they did literature searches using a number of terms, but I did not see the term “down low” listed. There are several peer-reviewed empirical publications on this phenomenon that actually use that term in the title.

A final comment involves the fact that there now are several studies that have looked at MSMW and masculinity, and also, older studies exist on bisexuality and masculinity that the researchers may want to make sure they include in their publications.

#### Reviewer 3:

The project largely met the stated objectives and met them well as far as the analysis of the data was concerned. The quality of the paper is high, and it makes a useful contribution to the literature. The authors stated that the paper would be published, and although it is in a form suitable for submission to a journal, there is no evidence that it has been submitted or accepted. There is also no evidence that additional funds were leveraged.

***Criterion 2 - What is the likely beneficial impact of this project? If the likely beneficial impact is small, is it judged reasonable in light of the dollars budgeted?***

#### ***STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES***

#### Reviewer 1:

There are no major translation activities associated with the work, and that is a major shortcoming. While the peer-reviewed manuscript may reach academic audiences, the ultimate impact of the work will be limited. It is unclear how this work will improve health, and there is no suggestion in the annual report regarding how this will occur. While the annual report

provides main statistical findings, it is unclear how one is to make these findings meaningful and how these findings may be interpreted to inform HIV prevention efforts for MSMW.

Reviewer 2:

The phenomenon under study (also known as “down low” in regards to Black MSM, involving largely self-identified heterosexual men who engage in sex with men as well) has important public health implications. This population is a challenge in terms of prevention and intervention, and a better understanding of the variables that explain the phenomenon is crucial. The researchers make a strong and valid case for their research. The findings are important in that they add to our understanding of the role of masculinity ideals in HIV-related risk in MSMW.

Reviewer 3:

The benefit of this project is its identification of the association of internalized homonegativity with risk behavior, especially hypermasculinity and partner numbers. The analysis is clear, well-conducted and of a high scientific standard. A second benefit is that it has made clear that there are considerably different dynamics operating for black and white men in the data set used, thus requiring different approaches. A weakness is that such attitudes are referred to as "contextual" whereas they are essentially personality and attitudinal variables and not "contextual" in the sense of being environmental as the term is usually used. A significant weakness is the lack of any discussion on *how* these data might be used to produce or modify interventions to reduce risk in these populations--the necessary step from science to practice. This is a major weakness; data are not useful unless and until they have been translated into some intervention that has a potential public health impact. The translation of these data, even by way of suggested programmatic approaches, is not apparent.

***Criterion 3 - Did the project leverage additional funds or were any additional grant applications submitted as a result of this project?***

***STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES***

Reviewer 1:

No other funds were leveraged, and there are no plans for leveraging additional funds.

Reviewer 2:

Not applicable

Reviewer 3:

There is no evidence provided that additional funds were leveraged or that there were plans to do so.

***Criterion 4 - Did the project result in any peer-reviewed publications, licenses, patents, or commercial development opportunities? Were any of these submitted / filed?***

***STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES***

Reviewer 1:

In the second reporting period a draft manuscript was created; however it is not provided, and there is no indication where it will be submitted. One is unable to judge quality, but given the analyses that are provided, it is assumed that this manuscript would be rejected from a tier-1 journal.

Reviewer 2:

The investigators indicate that a draft manuscript has been submitted and, "Over the next two months, this draft will be reviewed and revised by the coauthors of the manuscript. The resulting final draft will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal for publication."

Reviewer 3:

There is no evidence provided in the report that the final paper was submitted for publication, accepted or published. However, the paper is in a form suitable for submission, and in my judgement as a journal reviewer, the quality is such that it might reasonably be expected to be accepted for publication somewhere.

***Criterion 5 - Did the project enhance the quality and capacity for research at the grantee's institution?***

***STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES***

Reviewer 1:

Not applicable

Reviewer 2:

Not applicable

Reviewer 3:

There are no direct data to indicate improvements made to infrastructure, but one could assume that carrying out this research did enhance the applicant's ability to conduct similar studies and inform other analyses or prevention studies.

***Criterion 6 - Did the project lead to collaboration with research partners outside of the institution or new involvement with the community?***

***STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES***

Reviewer 1:

A master's in public health student from Drexel University assisted with the literature review. There is no other indication of collaboration.

Reviewer 2:  
Not applicable

Reviewer 3:  
There is no evidence of collaboration outside the organization apart from the fact that the data set used was owned by another organization and was part of a larger study where there was already cooperation.

## ***Section B. Recommendations***

### ***SPECIFIC WEAKNESSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS***

Reviewer 1:

1. The work is atheoretical and needs to be reconsidered in relation to a conceptual framing (e.g., syndemics theory).
2. The data need to be analyzed in relation to a conceptual model.
3. The analyses need to be re-examined in relation to the assumption of the General Linear Model.
4. There needs to be a clearly articulated plan for translation and dissemination.
5. The peer-review manuscript needs to be reconsidered in relation to the suggestions provided above.

Reviewer 2:  
None

Reviewer 3:

1. Provide evidence of submission of the paper to a journal.
2. Provide a description of how the data can lead to an intervention(s) to reduce HIV risk in the target groups, and describe (briefly) the possible structure or approach of such an intervention.
3. Provide evidence of how infrastructure or the ability to conduct research or interventions has been enhanced.

### **Generic Recommendations for the Institution**

Reviewer 3:

This is nice analysis with some important findings, but the project fails to take the step of translating these findings into recommendations for interventions.

## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

### Reviewer 1:

This project is a missed opportunity. Syndemics theory is a powerful model for helping to inform HIV prevention. Had the work been nested in this paradigm, the resulting analyses and findings would have been more robust and meaningful. The statistical analyses are also suspect and must be considered in light of the assumptions of the General Linear Model. There is no apparent collaboration or translation, and it is unclear if this work will be leveraged to secure additional funding. Finally, there is no evidence that the peer-reviewed manuscript will be published.

### Reviewer 3:

There is no evidence of leveraging of additional funds or of infrastructure enhancement. In addition, there is no evidence that the data analysis has led to the design of prevention or risk reduction programs arising from the data, which is the most important outcome that might be anticipated from this analysis.