



Transformative
Consumer Research



ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS
FOR TCR RESEARCH FUNDING 2018-19**

Submission deadline May 30, 2018

Funding notifications will be sent no later than September 8, 2018

This document describes how to submit proposals for Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) project funding, for the 2018-2019 funding cycle. To learn more about TCR, which is part of the Association for Consumer Research, please consult our website at: www.acrwebsite.org/web/tcr/transformative-consumer-research.aspx.

Nature and Mission of Transformative Consumer Research

Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) focuses first and foremost on matters of well-being. TCR projects involve almost exclusively a specific consumption problem or opportunity that is related to consumption and directly impacts well-being. Accordingly, such projects strive to develop insights that can be acted upon by consumers and/or their agents (e.g., family members, professional caregivers, NGOs, policy makers, social enterprises, corporates), for the purpose of upholding and improving well-being for individuals, subgroups, societies, other living entities, and/or the natural environment. Aside from having an immediate practical orientation, TCR strives to employ rigorous and responsible methodology and develop or apply consumer theory.

Examples of TCR-compatible consumption problems and/or opportunities include, but are not limited to: overconsumption; addictive consumption (e.g., drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, television, gaming, Internet); consumer safety; parenting and consumption; product labeling and advertising; social and ecological degradation; low income and other facets of impoverished living in developed and developing countries; vulnerable consumers (e.g. elderly, child, or adolescent), including those who are disadvantaged or challenged (e.g. low literacy or numeracy), or discriminated or empowered in/through the market due to social identities (e.g. gender, ethnicity, class); servicing vulnerable

consumers; micro- and macro-level consumption behaviors in emerging economies; and behaviors/decisions that affect quality-of-life. Examples of topics with direct implications for well-being include, but are not limited to: the environment (pro-environmental consumption such as repurposing or recycling); health (e.g. organ donation; health-regimen compliance, access to/provision of services for physical and mental health), personal and social development (e.g. consumer activities related to the arts, spirituality, exercise); finances (money and credit management); and subsistence (food, water, shelter, clothing).

TCR's success since its inception in 2006 has resulted in a global reach and a greatly expanded scope for its research, due, in part, to the generous research-focused support from the Association for Consumer Research, the Sheth Foundation, and an anonymous donor who supports the mission of TCR. In light of TCR's mission, part of this funding is being made available to support research projects. Two tiers exist. Tier 1 funding generally retains the process we used in the past, encouraging new scholarly projects. Tier 2 funding aims to support high-potential projects that were already vetted through initial inquiry and are seeking to expand on insights already gained.

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TCR's success since its inception in 2006 has resulted in global reach and a greatly expanded scope for its research, and consequently generous research-focused support from the Association for Consumer Research, the Sheth Foundation, and an anonymous donor who supports the TCR mission. For 2018-2019, TCR will again sponsor a two-tier research project-funding framework.

- **Tier 1** funding generally retains the process we used in the past.
- **Tier 2** funding aims to support high-potential projects that were already vetted through initial inquiry and are seeking to expand on insights already gained.

Available Funds

ACR and the anonymous donor have generously provided \$15,000 each, and the Sheth Foundation has provided \$10,000, for a total of \$40,000 in potential funding. The Sheth Foundation has specified that \$5,000 of its funds should be used to support research on vulnerable consumers as defined below. **Therefore, grant proposals addressing vulnerable consumers should be clearly identified so that they can be considered through this initiative.**

The Sheth Foundation's Initiative on Vulnerable Consumers is in line with two enduring priorities: emerging markets and public policy research on disadvantaged consumers. The Sheth Foundation believes that the potential for inquiry that transforms consumers' lives for the better and extends well-being across the globe may often be highest when efforts are directed toward those made vulnerable by life circumstances. To that end, TCR is charged with administering \$5,000 in awards that encourage research on consumers who are made vulnerable by shortages of food, water, or basic medical care caused by economic distress or externalities such as war, genocide, or natural disasters. The goal is to stimulate research excellence across areas that are pivotal to the Sheth Foundation and TCR missions. Both Tier 1 and Tier 2 funding are possible for this initiative, as described below.

Tier 1 Funding

Tier 1 funding seeks to (1) encourage innovative exploratory inquiry that is consistent with TCR's mission (see above) and (2) provide seed or supplemental funding for already-conceptualized projects where early empirical confirmation is likely to facilitate larger grants from other agencies and organizations. Tier 1 funding is not to exceed \$2,500 per grant, and most grants will be in the \$1,500-\$2,500 range.

Covered Research Expenses and Common Funding Levels

The research expenses covered by this funding program include compensation to research participants, costs of preparing research materials and executing studies, travel for the purpose of data collection, transcriptions, data set acquisition, the purchase of equipment and software, and other project-related expenses. TCR asks that Tier 1 funding not be used for researcher compensation purposes, or to fund thesis or dissertation projects.

Submitting Proposals

Tier 1 proposals should be well-crafted and aligned with TCR's mission and priorities as described above. Connections between the proposed research project and TCR's mission and goals must be made explicit in the narrative. An expert panel will review the

proposals and funding notifications will be sent **no later than September 8, 2018**. If questions arise, researchers should contact the ACR/TCR representative listed below. **The deadline for Tier 1 proposals is May 30, 2018.**

The typical format for a Tier 1 proposal is as follows:

- Cover letter (content described in a subsequent section).
- A title page, with the name and contact information and address of the principal investigator, plus a short biographical note (maximum 100 words) about the PI's background, research accomplishments, and so forth.
- A 2-3 page single-spaced proposal narrative that addresses the following:
 - The consumption problem or opportunity being addressed and its seriousness or importance.
 - A short overview of prior research on the topic, focused on how and why prior research has not sufficiently produced insights that can be communicated to and acted upon for improved well-being.
 - A description of the proposed project, including (a) theoretical frameworks to be used a priori or to be inducted from this work; (b) research hypotheses (if any); and (c) the research design and methodology.
 - An overview of the most pragmatic insights related to TCR's mission and goals, and how the researcher intends to disseminate them and their implications, plus any other knowledge advances related to theory, substantive topics, practice or methodology.
- A project timetable, including major mileposts and expected completion dates.
- An item-specific budget that can be verified by reviewers.
- When applicable, detailed explanation of how this project will lead to additional funding from other organizations, and the names of those possible sources of funding (organizations, agencies, etc.).
- Evidence of IRB approval is desirable though not required at the application stage, but it is required before any funds will be dispersed.

The typical Tier 1 proposal will be 5-6 pages in length.

Tier 2 Funding

Tier 2 funding seeks to advance projects already vetted and found consistent with TCR's mission where (1) initial inquiry by the researchers found interesting results with discernible TCR implications and (2) a case can be made that additional funding is needed for the project to maximize its impact potential. Tier 2 funding is not to exceed \$7,500, and most grants will be in the \$4,000-\$6,000 range.

Covered Research Expenses and Common Funding Levels

The research expenses covered by this funding program include compensation to research participants, costs of preparing research materials and executing studies, data transcription, coding, and analysis, travel for the purpose of data collection or solicitation

of additional substantial funding from government agencies (e.g., NSF, NIH), large data set acquisition, and the purchase of specialized equipment and software. TCR asks that Tier II funding not be used for exploratory research projects, researcher compensation purposes, or to fund thesis or dissertation projects.

Submitting Proposals

Tier 2 proposals must be well-crafted and aligned with TCR's mission and priorities as described above. They must also be supported by empirical findings from the researchers' own prior research that affirm the underlying theory and well-being enhancing potential of the research. Connections between the proposed project, TCR's mission and goals, and the already conducted TCR-focused research must be made explicit. An expert panel will review proposals and funding notifications will be sent no later than **September 8, 2018**. If questions arise, researchers should contact the ACR/TCR representative listed below. **The deadline for Tier 2 proposals is May 30, 2018.**

The typical format for a Tier 2 proposal is as follows:

- Cover letter (content described in subsequent section).
- A title page, with the name and contact information and address of the principal investigator, plus a short biographical note (maximum 100 words) about the PI's background, research accomplishments, and so forth.
- A 5-6 page single-spaced proposal narrative that addresses the following:
 - The consumption problem or opportunity being addressed and its seriousness or importance.
 - A thorough overview of prior research on the topic, including the empirical results from initial research by the researchers that make the case for the extended and expanded project being proposed.
 - A summary of why prior research has not sufficiently produced insights that can be communicated to and acted upon for improved well-being.
 - A detailed description of the proposed project, including (a) theoretical frameworks to be used a priori or to be inducted from this work; (b) research hypotheses (if any); (c) the research design and methodology including details about sample size, sample recruitment, measures, manipulations if applicable, and other data collection efforts, (d) analysis plan, and (e) letters from collaborators (e.g., research sites) if applicable.
 - An overview of expected additional insights related to TCR's mission and goals, contributions related to theory, substantive topics, or methodology, and how the researcher intends to disseminate findings, practice and their implications.
- A project timetable, including major mileposts and expected completion dates.
- An item-specific budget that can be verified by reviewers.
- When applicable, detailed explanation of how this project will lead to additional funding from other organizations, and the names of those possible sources of funding (organizations, agencies, etc.).

- Evidence of IRB approval is desirable though not required at the application stage, but it is required before any funds will be dispersed.

The typical proposal will be 8-9 pages in length.

Tier 1 and Tier 2 proposals, due by May 30, 2018, should be sent as a single email attachment to:

Professor Ron Hill
Chairperson, ACR Advisory Committee on
Transformative Consumer Research
School of Business
George Washington University
ronhill@gwu.edu
Phone: 610-217-3587

Proposal Selection

Each proposal will be sent for review to 2–4 knowledgeable experts. Decisions on proposals will be made by members of the ACR Advisory Committee on Transformative Consumer Research (members are listed on the ACR website). All submissions receive comments from reviewers.

Proposals are evaluated in terms of (1) their potential contribution for generating knowledge that can lead to improved well-being regarding the focal consumption problem; (2) their potential to generate additional funding opportunities or decisive action by practitioners, government officials, or organizations; (3) the quality of literature review, conceptual development, and research design; and (4) the qualifications of the principal investigator. Early-career scholars are encouraged to apply, but should generally seek guidance from senior-scholar partners that can help strengthen the project potential. Priority will be given to first time submissions, as compared to work that has been previously funded by a TCR grant.

Cover Letter Content and Requirements

Applicants for TCR funding must comply with the following conditions and should address these issues, as relevant, in a cover letter accompanying the proposal:

- a) The cover letter should clearly state if the proposal is for Tier I or Tier II funding and if the proposal should be considered for the Sheth Initiative on Vulnerable Consumers.
- b) The principal investigator must be a current member of the Association for Consumer Research.
- c) The proposed project must be approved by the IRB (institutional review board) of the principal investigator's institution, and thereby comply with the ethical precepts of leading research universities. This approval can be acquired before

- applying for TCR funds or after receiving a positive evaluation of a proposal. If the applicant is in a setting where no institutional review board exists, he or she should state this and describe plans to comply with ethical precepts. Approved funds will not be disbursed until evidence of IRB approval is provided by the P.I.
- d) If the research involves purchasing or acquiring existing data sets that are not restricted by license or other means for sharing with like-minded researchers, the principal investigator must agree in writing to make the data set available on request from other TCR members.
 - e) The principal investigator must agree in writing (in the cover letter) to serve as an occasional resource to other proposal writers and researchers seeking to conduct TCR, and to share his or her proposal for TCR funding on request.
 - f) The principal investigator must agree in writing to acknowledge the funding support from the Association for Consumer Research, the Sheth Foundation and the anonymous donor to Transformative Consumer Research in any subsequent publications or press releases associated with the research project.
 - g) The principal investigator must agree in writing to proactively inform the Chairperson of the ACR advisory committee on TCR of any presentations, publications and/or grants that arise from the research project.
 - h) It is also considered favorable, though not required, that the principal investigator plans to present the research at a conference of the Association for Consumer Research or another venue where the work can be shared with other scholars and interested individuals.

The 2019 Transformative Consumer Research Conference

We encourage but do not require investigators to explore the potential synergy between the grant data collection and the data-driven research process of the [2019 Transformative Consumer Research Conference](#) (TCR Conference); see the [2017 TCR Conference](#) for details about the most recent conference. For example, a principle investigator or team member on a TCR grant proposal could consider submitting a track proposal on the same topic to the 2019 TCR conference. A call for track proposals will be announced in February 2018 with a **due date of May 30, 2018**. All TCR grant proposals will be judged separately from the process of evaluating 2019 TCR conference track proposals.