

CLINICAL RESEARCH REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS – ART THERAPY
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I. ART THERAPY RESEARCH SUBAWARD OVERVIEW

SUBAWARD TITLE: Art Therapy Research with Military Populations

OVERVIEW: Over the next five years, Creative Forces®: National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Military Healing Arts Network intends to provide \$2.5 million in new research funding to support feasibility/pilot studies and subsequent randomized-controlled trials (RCTs) or other large-scale studies to address priority research questions identified by Creative Forces in art therapy and music therapy. The primary goal of the RCTs or other large-scale studies is to yield generalizable findings about the impacts of including art therapy¹ or music therapy² in common clinical practice. Creative Forces is initially issuing two Requests for Applications (RFAs) for feasibility/pilot studies: one RFA addressing a priority research question about art therapy, and the other RFA addressing a priority research question about music therapy. Up to four subawards will be made across these two announcements, for up to \$325,000 per subaward in support of feasibility/pilot studies of 18-24 months in duration. Upon completion of those

¹ **Art therapy** is defined by the [American Art Therapy Association](#) as a mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, the creative process, and applied psychological theory and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship facilitated by a qualified, credentialed art therapist.

² **Music therapy** is characterized by the [American Music Therapy Association](#) as the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program, clinical internship, and earned board-certification as a music therapist.

studies, the teams will be invited to apply for funding for subsequent RCTs or other large-scale studies that build on the results of the feasibility/pilot studies. The entire research budget for each subsequent study is an additional \$650,000 for a period of 2.5 years. No additional funding for indirect costs is available. Any funding for indirect costs must come out of the research budget. Up to two subawards will be made for these subsequent studies.

ART THERAPY PRIORITY RESEARCH QUESTION: Proposed studies must address the priority research question identified in the Creative Forces Conceptual Frameworks Phase 2 Final Report [<https://www.creativeforcesnrc.arts.gov/resources/results?id=304>]:

How and to what extent does art therapy affect emotional processing and self-regulation for service members and veterans?

It is strongly preferred (but not required) that *experimental* research activities (i.e., feasibility/pilot studies or RCTs/other large-scale studies) take place primarily at Creative Forces clinical sites serving military populations and occur in collaboration with art therapists in the Creative Forces program. Military populations in this context include service members and veterans. Guidance related to partnerships with Creative Forces sites is included in Section III.

ISSUING ORGANIZATION: Creative Forces is managed in partnership with the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine (HJF) (<https://www.hjf.org>).

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS: Creative Forces (<https://www.arts.gov/initiatives/creative-forces>; <https://www.creativeforcesnrc.arts.gov/>; National Endowment for the Arts (<https://www.arts.gov/>).

RFA NUMBER: CF-2021-AT-001

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: This is a one-time, phased award opportunity for feasibility/pilot studies leading to potential RCTs or other large-scale studies. It is not part of an ongoing award cycle.

SUBMISSION: Applications must be submitted via PDF, per instructions in Section VI. Applications may not be submitted in paper format.

REQUEST AN APPLICATION: Required application forms will be available for download from the [Creative Forces National Resource Center](#) or can be obtained by contacting Aimal Rahimzai at MRahimzai@hjff.org.

RFA CONTACTS: General RFA contacts:

Scientific/research contact: Dr. Donna Betts, Creative Forces Clinical Research Director, dbetts@hjff.org

Financial management contact: Aimal Rahimzai, HJF Subcontracts Administrator, MRahimzai@hjff.org

II. KEY DATES

KEY DATES: Key dates for this RFA are provided in the table below.

QUESTIONS: We welcome all questions from applicants. Refer to the table for details.

| Event | Date | Additional Information |
|---|---|--|
| Virtual Discussions | March 4, 12:00-1:00 pm (EST) March 11, 12:00-1:00 pm (EST) April 1, 12:00-1:00 pm (EST) | RSVP required to access the April 1 Virtual Discussion: RSVP at https://forms.gle/2saS1jA7GokmhKVQ7 An FAQ sheet based on the discussions will be available on the Creative Forces National Resource Center |
| RFA release | Wednesday, March 17 | Download RFA and application forms on the Creative Forces National Resource Center or contact Aimal Rahimzai at MRahimzai@hjf.org |
| Questions – via email Submitted via email Answers posted | Accepted until June 9, 5:00 pm (EDT) Weekly through June 7 | Submit questions to dbetts@hjf.org . Posted answers will be updated every Wednesday in the FAQ sheet through June 9 on the Creative Forces National Resource Center Questions after June 9 will be addressed by phone. |
| Questions – via phone call | Until June 14, 5:00 pm (EDT) | Contact dbetts@hjf.org to schedule an appointment to speak with members of the research team per availability |
| Application period opens | June 2 | Per instructions in Section VI |
| Application period closes | June 16, 3:00 pm (EDT) | Per instructions in Section VI |
| Subaward notification | July 15 | |
| Study period | August 15, 2021 - August 15, 2023 | |

III. ELIGIBILITY/REQUIREMENTS

ELIGIBILITY: U.S. states and territories-based organizations, and researchers or clinicians with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research as the Principal Investigator (PI). All applicants must have a DUNS number (www.dnb.com), be registered with the System for Award Management (SAM, www.sam.gov), and maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete, and should a subaward be made, throughout the life of the subaward.

PARTNERSHIP PREFERENCE: It is *strongly preferred* (but not required) that proposals indicate a partnership with a Creative Forces network site and include at least one Creative Forces art therapist on the research team. **For an introduction to potential DoD or Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Creative Forces partners**, contact Dr. Donna Betts, Creative Forces Clinical Research Director, at dbetts@hjf.org, by April 15. Applicants who are partnering with a Creative Forces site are required to submit a letter of collaboration to acknowledge a partnership formed with their Creative Forces partner with their application. Relevant (DoD) and (VHA) Creative Forces sites can be found at

<https://www.creativeforcesnrc.arts.gov/what-we-do/locations>. **If, however, a non-Creative Forces site is designated, please provide justification.** A similar letter of collaboration to acknowledge a partnership formed with non-Creative Forces clinical partners is required in this instance.

A Creative Forces art therapist may serve as an interventionalist to the study population (provide experimental and/or control therapy services) and may serve in other research roles, as determined by the art therapist and other members of the research team. The art therapist's salary and benefits are already accounted for by existing arrangements between Creative Forces and HJF. Thus, a Creative Forces art therapist's research activity will be provided at no cost to the subaward budget. Please note that the Creative Forces art therapist's amount of effort may be limited due to other assigned clinical duties beyond the research effort. The team may include other art therapists/interventionalists, depending on the necessity as articulated in the research protocol. These therapists should be accounted for in the research budget.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT: Applicants are required to submit a letter of institutional support with their application, demonstrating the commitment of their institution and summarizing the agreements they have, or will have, in place to support the study. Full requirements are in Section V.D.

IV. RESEARCH SUBAWARD DETAILS

CREATIVE FORCES RESEARCH: Creative Forces invests in research on the physical, emotional, and social benefits of creative arts therapies as innovative treatment methods. Creative Forces is committed to the pursuit and promotion of clinically-relevant biomedical and behavioral research on the effectiveness of creative arts therapies for service members and veterans, as well as for their family members and caregivers. Several strategies are critical to the success of our research program. They include: informed selection of rigorous research designs; support for multisite studies; funding of research opportunities at Creative Forces sites, and collaboration with other health/rehabilitation disciplines and partners. See <https://www.creativeforcesnrc.arts.gov/our-impact/clinical-research-findings> for additional information, including the Creative Forces Clinical Research Strategic Framework and Five-year Agenda, and existing research at Creative Forces sites. The Creative Forces Conceptual Frameworks Phase 2 Final Report, a **pertinent resource for subaward applicants**, can be found at <https://www.creativeforcesnrc.arts.gov/resources/results?id=304>. With this funding opportunity, Creative Forces is investing in research that ultimately aims to lead to generalizable findings about **the impacts of art therapy and music therapy in common clinical practice, including the scalability of such interventions and benefits across multiple treatment sites.**

PURPOSE AND STRATEGY: This subaward is intended to advance **systematic art therapy research for military populations**. As noted in Section I, Creative Forces is seeking proposals to address the following research question:

How and to what extent does art therapy affect emotional processing and self-regulation for service members and veterans?

This opportunity supports feasibility/pilot studies designed to lead to credible and meaningful RCTs or other large-scale studies, which will be funded through a subsequent application process. Applicants should select the feasibility/pilot design that is most appropriate to their research question and provides the foundation for an RCT or other large-scale study that will evaluate the effectiveness of an art therapy intervention or will examine the mechanisms underlying the effects of art therapy on emotional processing and self-regulation for service members and veterans.

POTENTIAL NUMBER OF SUBAWARDS: A similar RFA is concurrently offered for research in music therapy. Creative Forces will make up to four subawards for feasibility/pilot studies across the two RFAs, according to the following timeline. Additional funding is anticipated to support subsequent RCTs and other large-scale studies.

| 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|------|
| Proposal Selection | Feasibility/pilot Studies (up to 4) | | | |
| | | Proposal Development and Submission | Randomized Controlled Trials or Other Large-Scale Studies (up to 2) | |

FUNDS AVAILABLE: Initial subawards up to \$325,000 for 18-24 month feasibility/pilot studies, with distribution of funds in three phases to be coordinated with the recipient in the subaward agreement process.

V. APPLICATION

This application is for a subaward for a feasibility/pilot study. It includes a preliminary design for a subsequent RCT or other large-scale study. An additional application will later be required to advance to that stage.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS (see required application form for word and page limits by item):

A. Description of Participating Entities

1. **Principal Investigator(s):** Name, title, address, phone number, email.
2. **PI Institution/Organization:** Name, address, website; authorizing official name, title phone number, email.
3. **Creative Forces Partner (if applicable):** Creative Forces site; lead contact name, title, phone number, email; art therapist name, title, phone number, email.

Creative Forces Collaboration/Partnership Description: Describe the roles and responsibilities and what each partner brings to the collaboration. Include information of the history of collaboration between partners, if any.

4. **Additional Partner (if applicable):** Name, institution, title, address, phone number, email.

Collaboration/Partnership Description(s): Describe the roles and responsibilities and what each partner brings to the collaboration. Include information of the history of collaboration between partners, if any.

5. **Letter(s) of Collaboration:** (attach document; see Section D).
6. **Biosketches:** For Principal Investigator(s) and all collaborators/partners, supervisors central to creation of the proposal (attach document; see Section D).

7. **Letter(s) of institutional support:** At a minimum, letters should be signed by 1) the PI, 2) the facility director, 3) the chief of research, or clinical supervisor, or equivalent

B. Research Strategy: Sections B3 – B5 should not exceed 6 pages. All other sections should adhere to specified word limits.

1. **Title:** Study title.
2. **Abstract:** Briefly describe the feasibility/pilot study leading to an RCT] or other large-scale study.
3. **Background and Significance:** Briefly sketch the background for your research question. Critically evaluate existing knowledge (published literature, clinical trials, etc.) and identify specific gaps the project intends to fill. How will this research advance scientific knowledge and/or clinical practice? Describe the effect of this research on the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventive interventions that drive this field. Consider describing any new methodology and its advantage over existing methodologies, and/or novel concepts, approaches, tools, or technologies. Describe how your feasibility/pilot study will align with and inform the RCT or other large-scale study. Explain how the proposed study helps to answer the Creative Forces priority research question in art therapy.
4. **Question/Hypotheses:** Identify the research question(s) for the feasibility/pilot study and identify the research question and hypothesis for the RCT.
5. **Research Design and Methods for Feasibility/Pilot Study:** This section should provide a clear understanding of the research design, procedures, and analyses. A power analysis is not required for the feasibility/pilot study (but should be addressed for the RCT or other large-scale study in Section B.7). This section must include:
 - a. Description of design including the specific aims and the study population(s). Include an explanation as to how the results of the feasibility/pilot study will support or answer a key question necessary to launch a relevant RCT or other large-scale study.
 - b. Number of subjects.
 - c. Description of intervention including activity; number, length, and frequency of sessions; and the length of follow-up period if applicable.
 - d. Location of study/intervention activities.
 - e. Participant recruitment strategies, including control groups if applicable.
 - f. Participant selection: including data describing inclusion/exclusion criteria at the recruiting site(s) and number(s) of potential participants available. The proposal should provide evidence of the feasibility of recruiting the sample, based on recruitment timeline, the number of participants needed to reasonably evaluate feasibility goals, and potential budget restrictions.
 - g. Data collection and measures: Describe data to be collected and data collection procedures. Identify measures and describe equipment to be used for data collection.
 - h. Data analysis plan: Describe the statistical approach and interpretation that will be used to answer the questions under investigation.
 - i. Data management plan: Describe plans for data access, sharing, protection/privacy, and archiving.
 - j. Potential results and interpretations.

- k. **Timetable:** Provide a timetable for the project (preparation for feasibility/pilot study, IRB, recruitment, intervention, data analysis, preparation for RCT). Use a Gantt Chart or other similar format.
 - l. **Limitations and alternative approaches:** Describe potential difficulties and limitations of the proposed procedures and alternative approaches to achieve the aims.
 6. **Research Facilities/Resources/Equipment:** Describe facilities and other physical resources for the research.
 7. **Risk Assessment:** Identify any procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to participants and the precautions to be exercised, and activities and strategies to minimize risk.
- C. Budget:** Feasibility/pilot studies will be incrementally funded over the subaward period. The total budget for the 18-24-month feasibility/pilot study cannot exceed a total of \$325,000, including indirect costs. Note that no additional funds are available to pay for institutional indirect costs. No cost sharing or matching is required. Detailed budget guidelines and required templates for the budget and justification can be obtained on the [Creative Forces National Resource Center](#) or by contacting Aimal Rahimzai at MRahimzai@hjf.org. Note that Creative Forces clinicians' salaries and benefits are already covered by pre-existing employment arrangements by Creative Forces/ Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine. This subaward cannot be used to pay federal salaries.
1. Provide an itemized budget and budget justification for the feasibility/pilot study.
- D. Preliminary³ Research Design and Methods for RCT or Other Large-scale Study: Section D should not exceed 2 pages.**
- a. Provide an abstract for the RCT that will follow the feasibility/pilot study, including: introduction, hypothesis, research methods, analysis, results, and potential outcomes.
 - b. Provide a power analysis or plans for a power analysis based on the results of the feasibility/pilot study, including how the feasibility/pilot study will contribute to the power analysis.
 - c. It is expected that the feasibility/pilot study outcomes will impact the eventual RCT or other large-scale study design and method. Describe how each potential outcome from the feasibility/pilot study listed in "a" will influence the hypothesis and design of the RCT or other large-scale study.
 - d. Cost feasibility of conducting proposed RCT or other large-scale study may not exceed \$650,000 for the 2.5-year period of the subsequent grant. Applicants are asked to acknowledge this in the application.
- E. Additional Required Materials: To be submitted as email attachments.**
1. **Biosketches:** (5-page max in format provided in the attached template) for each Principal Investigator and all collaborators/partners.

³ Plans for the RCT or other large-scale study will be guided by outcomes of the feasibility/pilot study. An additional application with a full description of the RCT or other large-scale study will be required to advance to that stage.

2. **Itemized Budget and Justifications:** The attached templates for the budget and justification provide detailed budget guidelines.
3. **Letter(s) of Collaboration:** Signed by the PI and 1) for partnerships with Creative Forces, by the site's Creative Forces director and art therapist(s) providing services for the study; 2) for other partnerships, signed by equivalent personnel.
4. **Institutional Letters of Support:** At a minimum, letters should be signed by 1) the PI, 2) the facility director, 3) the chief of research, or clinical supervisor, or equivalent.
5. **Additional Letters of Support (optional):** Attach any additional letters necessary to demonstrate the support of key contributors, senior personnel, and/or collaborators.

NOTE: At a minimum, letters/agreements should stipulate expectations for level of effort, responsibilities, co-authorship, access to core facilities/resources, and fees-for-service *as appropriate to the relationship*. Institutional Review Board approvals and data-sharing agreements are not expected at the time of application but should be addressed in the study timeline and implementation plans.

VI. SUBMISSION PROCESS

APPLICATION: Applications (required application form and Section E attachments) will be accepted from June 2, 2021 through June 16, 2021 and **must be received by June 16 by 3:00 pm (EDT)**. Submit applications via PDF to MRahimzai@hjf.org. **NOTE:** Submission packages less than 10MB it can be submitted via email. If larger than 10MB, please contact MRahimzai@hjf.org for a secure link to upload your proposal.

VII. SELECTION AND NOTIFICATION

Creative Forces is investing in advancing **systematic, rigorous art therapy research for military populations**. We are seeking robust projects that will create new knowledge and enable breakthroughs in understanding how art therapy affects outcomes for military populations. To identify which projects to support, Creative Forces will rely on a merit review process that incorporates consideration of both the scientific and technical aspects of a proposed project and its potential to contribute to the Creative Forces research mission.

Applications that are complete and responsive to the RFA will be evaluated for scientific and technical merit by an appropriate peer review group convened by the Creative Forces Research Leadership Team in accordance with the review criteria stated below. Creative Forces will make every effort to conduct a fair, competitive, transparent review process for the selection of projects. Reviewers will consider each proposal's aims, justification, methods, data analysis, and potential benefits: *Is the plan for carrying out the proposed research well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate mechanisms to achieve success? How well qualified are the individuals/ team/organization to conduct the proposed activities? Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?*

The following will be considered in making funding decisions:

- Scientific and technical merit of the proposed project as determined by peer review.
- Availability of funds.
- Relevance to program priorities.

Applications submitted in response to this funding opportunity will compete for available funds with all other recommended applications. Proposals will be evaluated for the following scientific and technical merit criteria, according to the weights indicated for each criterion.

Scientific Merit: Proposals will be reviewed for their alignment with Creative Forces research and clinical priorities and the priority research question for art therapy listed in section IV. The following criteria will be considered for the proposal overall (combined feasibility/pilot and RCT or other large-scale study).

- **Significance/Relevance to Military Populations (15%):** Will this research significantly advance knowledge as to what extent and how art therapy impacts military populations?
- **Research Question/Hypothesis, Rationale, and Progression (20%):** Is the research question of the feasibility/pilot study responsive to the Creative Forces prioritized research question? Is it backed by a strong rationale? Is the progression from the feasibility/pilot study to an RCT or other large-scale study logical? Is the research question/hypothesis of the RCT responsive to the Creative Forces prioritized research question?
- **Research Design and Methodology (15%):** Is the research design scientifically justified and appropriate to address the research question(s) for the feasibility/pilot study and the RCT or large-scale study hypotheses? Are the methods and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, well reasoned, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Is the approach feasible in the timeframe provided? Is the approach rigorous?

Technical Merit: Proposals will be reviewed for their technical merit; specifically, the technical properties needed to carry out the proposed study with rigor and excellence.

As indicated in the Application Section (V), a thorough and detailed description is required for the feasibility/pilot study (Section V.B.5), and a preliminary design is required for an RCT or other large-scale study (Section V.B.7). The technical merit of the feasibility/pilot study and RCT or other large-scale study will be considered separately, based on the information required in their respective sections.

- **Investigative Team and Project Management (15%):** Is the investigative team appropriately trained and well suited to carry out the study? Does the investigative team bring complementary and comprehensive expertise to the project (if applicable)? Is the experience level of the PI and other team members appropriate to the proposed study? For newly-formed teams, is there sufficient evidence that the team can collaborate successfully? Are project management roles defined?
- **Partnerships (10%):** Are the necessary partnerships in place and of sufficient strength to support the research? Are partnerships defined, with designated roles and responsibilities consistent with and justified by the aims of the project and the expertise of each partner? If applicable, is the partnership with the clinical/research site established and defined?
- **Research Environment (10%):** Does the research have sufficient institutional support? Does the scientific/clinical environment (or environments) in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Is the availability of resources such as equipment, facilities, and trained staff to use the equipment/facilities demonstrated? Do the proposed studies benefit from unique features of those environments, or subject populations, or employ useful collaborative arrangements?
- **Data Management Plan (5%):** Are the types of data and the methods of data capture identified? Are plans for access, sharing, protection/privacy, and archiving appropriate and in place?

- **Limitations and Alternative Approaches (5%):** Does the proposal identify potential difficulties and limitations of the proposed procedures? Are alternative approaches appropriate to achieve the aims?
- **Risk Management Plan (5%):** How are procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to participants addressed? Are there precautions to be exercised, and activities and strategies to minimize risk appropriate and feasible?

VIII. CONDITIONS OF THE SUBAWARD

FUNDING DISTRIBUTION: Feasibility/pilot studies will be incrementally funded over the subaward period.

TECHNICAL REPORTING: Subrecipients will be required to submit brief progress reports at the end of the first and second funding periods and a final report at the end of the subaward, including plans for sharing research outcomes. The Henry M. Jackson Foundation will provide reporting templates.

AGREEMENT TYPE: Subaward Agreements will be issued in accordance with Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200 - UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR FEDERAL AWARDS).