Request for Proposals

The Healthier Workforce Center of the Midwest (HWC) at the University of Iowa and Washington University is pleased to announce the availability of *academic-track* pilot project research grant funding for new investigators (including students/trainees).

The HWC is a Total Worker Health® (TWH) Center of Excellence funded through the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The HWC is dedicated to protecting and preserving worker safety and health through knowledge generation and dissemination of evidence-based TWH practices. As a regional Center, the HWC serves the occupational safety and health needs of employees and employers in HHS Federal Region VII (IA, NE, KS, MO).

NIOSH defines TWH as "policies, programs and practices that integrate protection from work-related safety and health hazards with promotion of injury and illness prevention efforts to advance worker well-being." Topics relevant to TWH include, but are not limited to:

- the contribution of occupational stressors to the burden of chronic health conditions among employees (e.g., diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health outcomes)
- the contribution of work organizational factors to employee health and well-being
- the health and well-being implications of non-standard and/or precarious work arrangements
- optimizing the physical and cognitive design of work to maximize worker health and well-being as well as productivity, particularly with respect to aging
- occupational stress
- working hours, sleep and fatigue
- occupational considerations with respect to opioid misuse

Additional resources and information can be found using the following links

NIOSH Office for Total Worker Health: **https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh/**

NIOSH Center for Productive Aging and Work: **https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/productiveaging/**

NIOSH Healthy Work Design and Well-being Program: **https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/programs/hwd/**

NIOSH Future of Work Initiative: **https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/future-of-work/default.html**

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Pilot Project Grant Program Objective

The objective of the HWC pilot project program is to encourage development of new and creative research oriented towards prevention/intervention and dissemination/implementation with the strong potential to lead to more comprehensive studies addressing TWH. Applications for academic-track awards should have a specific scientific hypothesis and should aim to advance the state of scientific knowledge relevant to TWH.

Investigators may include junior faculty, scientific staff, post-doctoral trainees, medical residents and fellows, graduate students (MS and PhD), and professional students (e.g., MPH), among others. Senior faculty newly interested in TWH may also apply. If the principal investigator is a student or trainee, a faculty sponsor must be identified.

Eligibility

All persons with interest in TWH, affiliated with an "eligible institution," and possessing appropriate knowledge, skills, and resources are invited to prepare an application. Eligible institutions include:

- for-profit, non-profit, and public or private institutions,
- units of local or state government and eligible federal agencies,
- units of local and state tribal government, and
- faith- or community-based organizations.

As a regional Center, the HWC serves the occupational safety and health needs of employees and employers in HHS Federal Region VII (IA, NE, KS, MO). Projects from outside HHS Federal Region VII will be considered to the extent that they address the needs of employers and employees within this region.

Questions about eligibility should be directed to Meg TePoel (**megan-tepoel@uiowa.edu**).

Funding

The maximum permitted budget is $25,000 (direct plus indirect). Availability of funds for these proposals is conditional on continued funding of the HWC by NIOSH.

Funding is available for the usual categories of NIH grant direct costs, such as salary and fringe for research assistants and graduate students, laboratory supplies, equipment, data analysis, and travel associated with executing the research. However, salary and fringe support for faculty is not allowed, and no meeting/conference travel can be covered.

Investigators affiliated with the University of Iowa should not include indirect costs in their budgets.

Investigators affiliated with institutions other than the University of Iowa are permitted to include indirect costs in their budgets. However, because of the limited funding available, investigators should carefully consider the impact

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of indirect costs on the scope of work proposed. Investigators are encouraged to discuss with their respective institution officials the indirect cost rate that will be applied. Many applicants to the HWC New Investigator & Student Pilot Project Program have received waivers or reductions in the indirect cost rate from their institutions' sponsored programs offices.

All requested expenses must be fully justified and tied directly to the project. Additional information and justification should be provided within the budget justification for select items of cost, including:

- equipment in excess of $5,000 – must be project-specific, fully justified, directly allocable to the project, and necessary for completion of aims.
- technological/IT equipment (i.e. laptops, IPADS, Fitbits, etc.) – must be project-specific, fully justified, directly allocable to the project, and necessary for completion of aims.
- software or software licenses – must be project-specific and necessary for completion of aims.
- research-related food/meals – must be directly related to completion of aims; food for meetings/conferences is not allowable.

Investigators are *strongly encouraged* to contact Mindy Sickels Sterbenz (**mindy-sickels@uiowa.edu**; 319-335-4411) for guidance in preparing budgets.

Deadlines and Review Process

We will accept complete applications at any time (see Application Content, below, for details and submission instructions). While funds remain available, applications received by the first Monday of each month will be reviewed on or about the first Monday of the subsequent month. As examples:

- Applications received between May 1 and close of business on June 5 will be reviewed on July 3.
- Applications received between June 5 and close of business on July 3 will be reviewed on August 7.

The status of funding availability and this RFP will be updated regularly on the HWC website (**https://hwc.public-health.uiowa.edu/**).

Pilot project grant applications will be evaluated by internal and external HWC Advisory Committee members and others with the appropriate scientific expertise. Reviewers follow procedures similar to those used by federal scientific review panels (see **http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-od-09-024.html**) and consider relevance of the proposed project to TWH, originality, scientific quality of the approach, the potential for future funding, and the appropriateness of the budget. A written critique will be provided to the principal investigator of each pilot grant application, regardless of funding decision.

Review criteria are appended to this RFP.

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Optional Project Concept Submission and Review

Investigators are invited to submit at any time a brief project concept for review by HWC personnel (see **Project Concepts**, below, for details and submission instructions). The purpose of the concept review is to provide the HWC a concise but detailed scientific overview of a potential pilot project. Concept reviews are not used to "select" projects and do not supersede the full application. Rather, the HWC will provide feedback regarding (i) the extent to which the proposed project aligns with the objectives of the Pilot Project Grant Program, (ii) the relevance of the proposed project to Total Worker Health®, and (iii) the proposed specific aim(s) and approach.

Project concepts will be reviewed within two weeks of receipt by HWC staff.

Awards

Each award will be for a maximum duration of 18 months. The work scope of funded projects must be completed and all expenses incurred within 18 months of the release of funds to the applicant organization.

The release of funds to an applicant organization is contingent upon compliance with federal regulations. Investigators conducting research involving human subjects and/or animals should initiate any applicable human subjects (IRB) or animal care review approval or certification processes as soon as possible. The pilot project PI must submit documentation of IRB approval before the HWC will release funds. For projects not involving human subjects and/or animals, a statement as such from the IRB is required as documentation. Most IRBs have a "Human Subjects Research Determination" mechanism that can be used for this purpose.

Documentation should be submitted to Meg TePoel (**megan-tepoel@uiowa.edu**).

In addition, the project proposal *must* include a Human Subjects Statement. Detailed instructions for preparing the Human Subjects Statement can be found at:

https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-e/general/g.500-phs-human-subjects-and-clinical-trials-information.htm

Planned Enrollment

For projects involving human subjects, the proposal *must* include the "PHS Inclusion Enrollment Report." A fillable version of this form can be found at:

https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/readonly/PHS_Inclusion_Enrollment_Report-V1.0.pdf

When completing the form, be sure to select "Planned Enrollment" as the enrollment type.

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Reporting Requirements

Each funded investigator is required to submit a mid-year progress report and a final report. These reports shall be submitted according to instructions provided by the HWC. Investigators will be required to report activities including, but not limited to: grants and contracts developed as progeny of the project, students mentored, MS theses and PhD dissertations generated, presentations and publications emanating from the project, and collaborations established as a result of HWC-supported work. In addition to the mid-year and final progress reports, investigators will be contacted annually for a period of three years following completion of the project and asked to provide updated information regarding the outcomes and/or impacts of the pilot project.

Publications, journal articles, presentations, and similar works relating to HWC-supported pilot projects are to include the following statement: "*This project was supported, in part, by a pilot project grant from the Healthier Workforce Center of the Midwest (HWC) at the University of Iowa and Washington University. The HWC is supported by Cooperative Agreement No. U19OH008868 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) / National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The contents are solely the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC, NIOSH, or the HWC.*"

Additional Assistance

Applicants are invited to contact Dr. Jon Davis (**jonathan-a-davis@uiowa.edu**), Dr. Diane Rohlman (**diane-rohlman@uiowa.edu**), or Dr. Bradley Evanoff (**bevanoff@wustl.edu**) regarding scientific questions, and to contact Meg TePoel (**megan-tepoel@uiowa.edu**) with questions concerning administrative procedures.

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Application Content

Applications must conform to the format below:

Required Proposal Sections	Page Limits
1) Cover letter Signed and on official organization letterhead	1
2) Front page Date, title, investigator(s)/affiliation(s), contact information of the principal investigator, and project summary (150 word limit) By submitting this proposal, you agree to the following (which should appear on the front page of your application): *This pilot grant application is not currently under review by any other grant administering program. If I submit this pilot grant application (or an application with similar aims) to another funder while it is under review by the HWC, I will notify the HWC. I understand that failure to comply with this policy is grounds for rejection of the application and withdrawal of any funds that may be awarded.*	1
3) Introduction to revised application (if applicable) If submitting an application previously submitted but not funded, use this section to describe how the application has been modified in response to reviewers' critiques. The HWC will accept a maximum to two revisions to an original application.	1
4) Research Plan A) Specific aim(s) B) Significance C) Innovation D) Approach Note: the Significance and Innovation sections must establish the **burden** of the occupational health problem to be addressed, the **need** for the proposed research, and the potential **impact** of the research. For more information, see the following: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/programs/bni.html	5
5) Potential for future funding and plans for dissemination of results	1
6) References	No page limit
7) Human subjects statement	2
8) Budget and budget justification	No page limit
9) Timeline and milestones	1
10) Planned enrollment report	Required table
11) Biographical sketches (NIH format)	5 (per investigator)
12) Letter(s) of support Letters of support are useful to demonstrate access to an employer/employee population needed for success of the research. For applications with a student/trainee PI, a letter of support from the faculty sponsor is required.	No page limit

Send by electronic mail one copy of the signed cover letter and one complete electronic version (PDF) of the full application to Meg TePoel (megan-tepoel@uiowa.edu).

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Project Concepts

Investigators requesting an optional project concept review should prepare a document of no more than two pages in length describing the potential project. References should be included as needed but do not count toward the 2-page limit.

The **Project Concept** document should include the following elements:

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1) Basic Information

- Principal investigator (PI) name, affiliation (institution/department), and contact information
- If the PI is a student or trainee, identify the faculty advisor
- Title of project

2) Project Information

Provide a narrative summary of the potential research project to include the following information:

- What is the occupational health problem the project will address?
- What is the target occupational group and/or industry sector?
- What is(are) the specific aim(s) and hypotheses?
- Briefly describe the Significance and Innovation of the project (address burden, need, and impact).
- Briefly describe the Approach (include information about data sources and/or data collection procedures, independent/dependent variables, and anticipated statistical procedures).
- Briefly describe the relevance with respect to the HWC and to Total Worker Health®.

Send by electronic mail one complete electronic version (PDF) of the Project Concept document to Meg TePoel (**megan-tepoel@uiowa.edu**).

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REVIEW CRITERIA - HWC Academic-Track Pilot Grant Applications

Significance

- Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field?
- If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or workplace practice be improved?
- How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventive interventions that drive this field?
- Does the application justify and provide data to describe the burden of problem being addressed, sufficiently justify the need for the project, and identify appropriate impacts?
- Does the project address specific NIOSH strategic priorities for extramural research and/or specific goals/objectives within the National Occupational Research Agendas for Total Worker Health®, Healthy Work Design and Well-being, or other relevant agenda?

Investigator(s)

- Are the PIs, collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project?
- Does the PI have appropriate experience and training relative to the aims of the project?
- If applicable, do the collaborators have expertise complementary to the PI that benefits the project and maximizes the likelihood of successful completion of the aims.
- If the PI is a student or trainee, has support been demonstrated from a faculty advisor with relevant expertise?
- If the PI is established but new to the HWC and Total Worker Health®, does the PI's record of scholarly achievement suggest a high likelihood of success with respect to the pilot project?

Innovation

- Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by using novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions?
- Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel to one field of research or novel in a broad sense?
- Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, or interventions proposed?

Approach

- Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses methods well-reasoned and appropriateto accomplish the specific aims of the project?
- Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented?
- If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility and will particularly risky aspects be managed?
- Are the plans for 1) protection of human subjects from research risks, and 2) inclusion of minorities and members of both sexes/genders, as well as the inclusion of children, justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed?

Environment

- Will the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success?
- Are the institutional support, equipment and other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the project proposed?
- Will the project benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, subject populations, or collaborative arrangements?

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