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 funds for community-track pilot project grants. The HWC is a Total Worker Health® (TWH) Center of Excellence funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The HWC protects and preserves worker safety and health through knowledge generation and dissemination of evidence-based TWH practices.

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." According to NIOSH, "the TWH approach prioritizes a hazard-free work environment for all workers. It also brings together all aspects of work in integrated interventions that collectively address worker safety, health, and well-being." Beyond hazards addressed through traditional safety programs (e.g., noise, chemicals, material handling), TWH considers non-traditional workplace hazards (e.g., stress, bullying, sleep) and how the conditions of work impact broader risks to health and well-being (e.g., substance use, aging-related illnesses, cardiovascular disease). For employees, TWH offers a roadmap toward safer and healthier work. For employers, TWH approaches can lead to fewer workers' compensation claims, reduced health care costs, increased productivity, and lower employee turnover.

We are particularly interested in projects that move *beyond* the focus on the individual behavior changes. For example, a project designed to improve resilience to workplace stress should also consider how the conditions of work or organizational policies contributing to stress can be modified. We encourage proposals from employers and intermediary organizations (i.e., those that help other organizations, such as safety or health organizations, insurance companies, or chambers of commerce), as well as collaborative proposals that include multiple employers or organizations.

See the NIOSH resources below for useful information:

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

"Let's Get Started" web pages: **https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh/letsgetstarted.html**

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

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

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

Community-track pilot projects should emphasize *practical application* of TWH knowledge to improve worker safety, health, and well-being. Applications for community-track pilot projects likely to be funded are those that will result in (i) improved health and/or safety practices or (ii) enhanced service delivery by the applicant organization(s). We will not review applications requesting funds for usual operating expenses.

When requested, we will make efforts to link applicant organizations with appropriate academic specialists in TWH to promote collaboration between research institutions and community organizations and to assist in the development of successful applications.

Eligibility

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

- for-profit, non-profit, and public or private institutions or organizations,
- 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 workplace 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.

Funding and Budget Considerations

Availability of funds for these proposals is conditional on continued funding of the HWC by NIOSH.

The maximum permitted budget is $25,000, which includes both direct and indirect costs.

Direct costs are those explicitly allocated to the project, including: salary and fringe for project team members, supplies, equipment, data collection and analyses, and travel associated with executing the project. However, no meeting/conference travel can be covered unless attendance is required to perform project activities.

Indirect costs (also referred to as "facilities and administrative" costs, or F&A) are infrastructure and/or overhead costs not directly related to the project itself. Institutions of higher education frequently have an indirect cost rate that has been negotiated with the federal government. Please use the following guidance:

- Project directors affiliated with organizations without a negotiated indirect cost rate should apply indirect costs at a rate of 10% of the project direct costs (i.e., the de minimus rate). For example, if the direct costs are $20,000, then the indirect costs should be $2,000, for a total cost of $22,000.
- Project directors affiliated with institutions of higher education with a negotiated indirect cost rate are encouraged to discuss with appropriate institution officials the indirect cost rate that will be applied. Many applicants have received waivers or reductions in the indirect cost rate. In any case, please provide evidence supporting the indirect cost rate to be applied to the project, for example, by providing a link in the budget justification to the institution's indirect cost guidelines or a letter from an institutional official authorizing a waiver or reduction in indirect costs.
- If the project director is affiliated with the University of Iowa, indirect costs should not be included.

Project directors are strongly encouraged to contact Mindy Sickels Sterbenz (**mindy-sickels@uiowa.edu**) for additional guidance in preparing budgets.

Application Deadlines and Review

Applying for a community-track pilot grant from the HWC is a two-step process involving first, submission of a brief (two-page maximum) project concept and second, submission of a full application. Please see the *Application Instructions* below for complete details.

The two-step application process can be initiated at any time while funds are available by submitting a project concept by email to Meg TePoel (**megan-tepoel@uiowa.edu**), the HWC Pilot/Feasibility Projects Program Coordinator. The status of funding availability will be updated regularly (**https://hwc.public-health.uiowa.edu/**).

Awards

Each award will be for a maximum duration 18 months, assuming continued allocation of funds by NIOSH to the HWC. *The release of funds to an applicant organization is contingent upon compliance with federal regulations.* Every HWC pilot project must be reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). An IRB ensures that the rights and welfare human research subjects are protected. Many community-track pilot projects do not involve human subjects research, typically because no personally identifiable information will be collected. Even so, a determination from an IRB that the project does not meet the criteria for human subjects research will be required. Most IRBs have a "Human Subjects Research Determination" mechanism that can be used for this purpose. The HWC is happy to assist or otherwise facilitate in this process.

Additional Assistance

Applicants are encouraged to contact Dr. Nate Fethke (**nathan-fethke@uiowa.edu**), the HWC Pilot/Feasibility Projects Program Director and/or Dr. Shelly Campo (**shelly-campo@uiowa.edu**), the HWC Outreach Director, to discuss a proposal idea before initiating the application process.

Application Instructions

The HWC supports pilot projects addressing a broad range of topics. However, a key consideration is whether the project has a compelling connection to workplace policies, programs and practices that potentially influence worker safety, health, and well-being.

Before preparing and submitting an application, ask yourself:

- Does the project address workplace policies, programs and practices that contribute to worker safety, health, and well-being?
- Will the project increase your organization's or organizations' capacity for more comprehensive projects or delivery of services relevant to TWH?
- Is the funding amount adequate to complete your project objectives?
- Do you have adequate support from your organization(s) to conduct the project?
- Is the project idea innovative? Projects that repeat past activities or support ongoing, everyday organizational functioning will not be considered innovative.

Applying for a Community-Track Pilot Grant is a Two-Step Process

Step 1: Submit a Project Concept

Prior to preparing and submitting a full application, we'd first like to learn about your project idea. *In no more than two pages*, please briefly describe the following:

1. You and your organization(s)
    a. Tell us a bit about your organization and the industries/workers it serves
    b. Tell us about your team and expertise
2. The potential project
    a. What workplace health or safety problem will the project address?
    b. What is(are) the goal(s) of the project?
    c. How is the project something new and why is it important to your organization?
    d. What you are planning to do to achieve the project goals?
    e. How will you know if the project has been successful?
    f. Do you have key collaborators (e.g., another organization or an academic specialist)?

Project concepts can be submitted at any time by email to Meg TePoel (**megan-tepoel@uiowa.edu**). We will review the project concept within two weeks and then schedule a time to meet with you to provide feedback. For example, we may be able to help you refine the project objectives, connect you to resources for help in designing and preparing the required "evaluation" section of the full application (see below), and/or help you strategize approaches for disseminating the eventual results of your project.

Step 2: Submit a Full Application

The required sections for community-track pilot grant applications are listed below, followed by additional details and instructions for each section.

1. Cover letter
2. Front page (1 page)
3. Introduction to revised application (if applicable, 1 page)
4. Project plan (5 pages)
    a. Objectives
    b. Background and Significance
    c. Approach and Evaluation
    d. Evaluation
5. Potential for future funding and plans for dissemination of results (1 page)
6. References (no page limit)
7. Budget and budget justification (no page limit)
8. Timeline and milestones (1 page)
9. Resumes or curriculum vitaes (2 pages per project team member)
10. Planned enrollment table (if applicable, standard format)
11. Letters of the support (optional, no page limit)
12. Appendices (optional, no page limit)

1) Cover letter

Include a cover letter, signed by the project director and written on your organization's letterhead. Address the letter to Dr. Nate Fethke, PhD, HWC Pilot/Feasibility Projects Program Director. In your cover letter, include the date of submission and the title of the proposed project. It is helpful to describe in 1-2 sentences how the successful completion of the project will advance the HWC's mission. Finally, identify whether the application is a revised version of a previous application.

2) Front page (1 page limit)

The front page of your pilot grant application should include the title of the proposed project, project director(s) and organization name(s) with contact information, proposed project duration (up to 18 months), date of the submission, total dollar amount requested, and a Project Summary. The Project Summary is a narrative description of the project (150 words maximum length). In the summary, provide a description of (a) the workplace health or safety problem the problem will address, (b) your objectives, and (c) your approach or method.

3) Introduction to revised application (if applicable, 1 page limit)

If you are submitting a revised version of an application previously submitted but not funded, use this section to (a) describe changes you have to the application in response to reviewers' comments and/or recommendations, and/or (b) explain why reviewers' comments and/or recommendations have not been or could not be addressed. The HWC will accept a *maximum* of two revisions to an original application.

4) Project plan (5 page limit)

a. Objectives

In this section, describe the objectives or achievements to be accomplished upon completion of the proposed project. It is common for applicants to identify who will be targeted for TWH activities, what activity/service/intervention will be implemented, and to briefly summarize how the project outcomes will be measured. Typically, pilot grant applications accepted for funding include no more than three objectives, each written in 1-2 sentences. The objectives should have clear and measurable endpoints. For example, "Reduce workplace bullying among Missouri retail businesses" would not be considered an appropriate objective because it does not describe *what* will be done and *how* success will be measured. Alternatively, the following objectives are specific and actionable:

1. Within the first six months of the project, assess and describe the readiness for workplace bullying policy change among 200 small retail businesses in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

2. By the end of the project, develop evidence-based workplace bullying policy templates for the six most common retail subsectors represented among our organization's membership.

b.   Background and Significance

The purpose of this section is to provide information about the TWH problem that the proposed project will address. The successful applicant will explain why the problem is relevant to TWH, and to the HWC. Typically, this section will include information about the magnitude of the problem among members of the target community group (i.e., the worker safety and health burden). When describing the worker safety and health burden, it may be appropriate to provide information about the number of people in the target community who have been affected by the hazard or situation that your proposal will address. Consider using information like medical admission records, examples of cases identified in the media, or information on regional injury or illness trends. Sometimes, a search of recent academic literature can provide information about the overall burden of injury or illness. Recent scholarly papers can be found in the PubMed Central® database and should be freely accessible to the public. **https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/**

In addition to describing the worker safety and health burden, the Background and Significance section will also include an explanation of how the proposed project fills an unmet need for safety and health knowledge, skills, technology, or other solutions (e.g., workplace administrative policies and changes to the built environment) necessary to address the burden. If you have an existing relationship with the community or group, details of the relationship should be described. *Make the case for why your organization(s) and the project team are uniquely positioned to carry out the proposed project.*

c.   Approach and Evaluation

Community-track pilot projects are expected to collect information (from questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, interviews, direct observation, or other methods) that will allow the project team to evaluate the extent to which the project (a) was successful in achieving the Objectives and (b) had (or is expected to have) an impact on the problem described in the Background and Significance section.

Of relevance to the Approach section is information about (a) the specific members of the community/organization who will be engaged or targeted and how you plan to recruit or otherwise engage them in the project, (b) the specific activities proposed to achieve the stated Objectives, (c) the distribution of tasks and responsibilities to members of the project team, and (d) the information to be collected by your team so that you can assess the extent to which the project met the stated Objectives. Some common pitfalls that should be addressed include:

Access. Describe how your team has unique access to people or data you need to complete your project. If your approach involves surveying workers, describe how many you plan to recruit and how you will recruit them. If applicable, including letters of support from an employer whose workers you plan to engage in the project is important to demonstrate access. If your approach involves analyses of an existing dataset, such as workers' compensation claims, describe how you will have access to the data. Is there a cost?

Surveys, Questionnaires, or other Data Collection Materials. Describe the methods being used to assess whether the Objectives have been met. This might include methods to successfully design an intervention/approach (e.g., focus groups, interviews, surveys, benefits data, turnover) as part of a needs assessment. It is also important to collect descriptive information about people and/or organizations the project engaged, such as the age and gender distribution of workers surveyed or the size and industry characteristics of employers trained. It is recommended that applicants provide a samples or drafts of all data collection materials in an Appendix. For additional information on how to develop effective surveys, Rutgers University Extension has put together a useful fact sheet: **https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs995/**.

Policies. If the proposed project intends to alter existing workplace policies or add new ones, include relevant information such as the description of the change/adoption of new policy, justification for these changes, drafts of proposed policy(ies) as appropriate, timeline for steps to alter policies, etc.

Education and Training. If the proposed project has an education and training component, then the applicant should include relevant information, including descriptions of the (a) training content or curriculum, (b) details and background of the individuals conducting the training (c) training format (video, webinar, in-person) (d) materials to be distributed to trainees, and (e) plans to advertise and promote the training. Identify what resources you will be relying on to develop your training materials and highlight how the training is designed to have impact on the target worker group.

Evaluation. The goal of Evaluation is to demonstrate that the Objectives have been met. The Evaluation portion of the Approach and Evaluation section should clearly describe how the collected information will be summarized, analyzed, or otherwise interpreted. The Evaluation narrative should link clearly and directly to the Objectives; if there are multiple Objectives, using subheadings to help readers is a good strategy. If the project involves an intervention, the evaluation should assess whether the intervention was implemented as planned (was new equipment installed? were new benefits offered? did supervisors complete new training?).

Contingency Plans. No matter how carefully planned, significant barriers to progress can be encountered. It is important to think about what might go wrong and describe how you might change your approach so that your Objectives can still be met. In the past, the HWC has helped organizations advertise and promote participant recruitment and training programs online, via social media, and with press releases.

5) Potential for future funding and plans for dissemination of results (1 page limit)

Pilot project grant recipients are expected to propose projects that have the potential for future development. In this section, briefly explain how project outcomes and experiences will be communicated to others. Such information can include the identification of other funding sources for continuation or expansion of the project, efforts by the project team to disseminate their experience or observations to other organizations, or direct media campaigns. Again, the HWC has helped organizations in such efforts. Awardees will also be expected to participate in HWC outreach activities such as webinars, podcasts, and other ongoing communications campaigns. Previous community-track pilot grant recipients have become NIOSH Total Worker Health® Affiliates (**https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh/affiliate.html**) and developed formal, ongoing partnerships with the HWC.

6) References (no page limit)

Provide a list in alphabetical order of all references cited in the pilot grant application. A citation will include author, title, publication, and date. The following web link at the University of Iowa has some useful information about citations: **https://guides.lib.uiowa.edu/citationhelp**. The most important aspect of a citation is that the reader can find the cited document (or internet address) by using only the information provided in the list of references.

7) Budget and budget justification (no page limit)

The Budget should account for every dollar requested. Legitimate budget items include staff salary, supplies, necessary equipment, materials, travel required to complete project activities, and other expenses. The budget justification is a written narrative that explains the purpose of every item in the budget. If the budget item is for salary support, then an explanation of the role of that person should be provided. If the budget item is for materials,

then explain why they are necessary for completion of the project. As described previously, budgets may include both direct and indirect costs, and you are *strongly encouraged* to contact Mindy Sickels Sterbenz (**mindy-sickels@uiowa.edu**) for budgeting guidance.

8) Timeline and milestones (1 page limit)

List each activity and the months of the anticipated award period (i.e., month 1, month 2, etc.) during which they will be conducted. It helps to organize activities by objective.

9) Resumes (2 page limit per individual)

The qualifications of each project team member are described in this section. Standard information includes academic degrees, clinical and/or professional credentials, current employment status and prior relevant employment. If personnel have relevant past experience, it should be highlighted here. Publications, relevant experience as an educator or trainer, and other credentials can be provided.

Below are some possible considerations for personnel on your project:

- Ability to recruit community members: given how you plan to interact with your community, who among the team has skills to motivate community members to participate?

- Training: If you are developing training materials, who among the team has relevant skills?

- Cultural and linguistic relevance: Do you need an interpreter? Do you need to provide materials in a language other than English?

- Educational materials development: If you are planning to develop training or educational materials, you will need to identify who on your team has the technical skills to ensure the training materials include evidence-based information. If you don't have that expertise, how will you find it?

- Policy changes: If you are planning to develop new or to alter existing policies, is there prior evidence these changes worked elsewhere or should be promising to alter desired outcomes?

- External expertise: If your team is lacking in technical expertise in workplace safety and health or other skill essential to the success of your project, identify a person who has this expertise and secure their participation in the project.

10) Planned enrollment table

Any project in which data are collected and analyzed is required to submit a standard "planned enrollment table," which can be accessed at the following link:

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

If your project does not involve collecting data from individuals, you may skip this section. As described previously, the HWC cannot release funds to your organization until your project has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). However, even if an IRB has determined that your project does not meet the NIH definition of "human subjects research" (typically because no personally identifiable information will be collected), we still need the table in order to fulfill our reporting requirements to NIOSH. Please contact us with questions on this issue, and we will be happy to provide assistance.

11) Letters of support (optional, no page limit)

If people external to your organization have committed to work on the project, it is important to request a letter of support from them. Letters should specifically state how their expertise is relevant to the project, what their role will be to support the project, and that they have time and approval to commit to the project.

While letters of support are not required from project team members within your organization, a letter of support from your organization's CEO (or similar executive) will provide assurance that the project will receive appropriate organizational resources and priority.

12) Appendices (optional, no page limit)

Provide materials that are important to understanding the application and that were not included in other sections of the grant proposal. Some useful items to include as appendices are surveys/questionnaires (especially those planned for use in the proposed project), interview protocols, background information on web tools or smartphone apps proposed for use, previously developed training materials, public service announcement scripts, and press-releases. Note that reviewers are not obligated to read appendices and information critical to understanding the proposal should not be included solely in an appendix.

Reporting Requirements

Each funded applicant will be required to submit brief mid-project and final reports. These reports shall be prepared according to instructions provided by the HWC. The primary purpose of the mid-project report is to identify and help awardees overcome barriers to project progress. The primary purpose of the final report is to evaluate the success of the project with respect to the objectives of the application.

Publications, white papers, journal articles, presentations, and similar products developed by HWC-supported pilot projects are to include the following statement: *"This [product] was supported, in part, by a pilot project grant from the Healthier Workforce Center (HWC) of the Midwest. 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."*

REVIEW CRITERIA - HWC Community-Track Pilot Grant Applications

Background and Significance

- Does the project address an important TWH problem or a critical barrier to the safety, health and well-being of employees in Federal Region VII?

- How will successful completion of this project change the services, approaches, and methods used to protect and promote safety, health and well-being of employees?

Project Personnel

- Are the proposed project leaders well suited to the project?

- If project leaders lack experience, do they have appropriate competence and training to complete the project? If not, has a partnering specialist been identified?

- If the project leaders are established, have they demonstrated a record of accomplishments that has advanced the field of Total Worker Health®?

Innovation

- Does the application involve the use of new concepts, approaches, methodologies, or interventions?

Approach and Evaluation

- Are the overall strategy, approach to address the problem, and evaluation methods well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the objectives 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 (likelihood that it is a promising approach)?

- If completed successfully, will the project enhance provider or organizational capabilities for delivering evidence-based workplace policies, programs or practices consistent with TWH? Will workers ultimately benefit?

Environment

- Has the applicant made a compelling case for why the organization(s) and the project team are uniquely positioned to carry out the proposed project?

- Other than Center funding, are other resources uniquely available to the applicant organization to allow for successful completion of the project?

- Has the applicant documented access to the people/population or data necessary to implement the proposed project?

- Does the application include letters of support from named collaborating individuals and/or organizations?

Additional Review Considerations

- Is the budget and time to completion justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed project?

- Does the proposal address plans for broader or ongoing application of the proposed services, approaches, and/or methods beyond those funded by the pilot project?

- Does the proposal promote collaboration of TWH stakeholders in Federal Region VII?

- If the application is revised from a previous version, were the reviewers' critiques adequately addressed?

- Are the potential for future funding and plans for dissemination adequate?

- Does the project address a topic outside those addressed through formal HWC research projects?