

Request for Proposals

The Healthier Workforce Center of the Midwest (HWC) at the University of Iowa is pleased to announce the availability of pilot project research grant funding for new investigators (including students/trainees) and researchers looking to expand their research to the area of worker safety and health.

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
- 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 and burnout
- occupational considerations with respect to mental health and substance use

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 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. Questions about eligibility should be directed to Dr. Jon Davis (jonathan-a-davis@uiowa.edu).

Funding

The maximum permitted budget is \$25,000 (direct costs). 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 faculty, laboratory supplies, equipment, data analysis, and travel associated with executing the research. However, 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. Investigators are encouraged to discuss with their respective institution officials the indirect cost rate that will be applied. All requested expenses must be fully justified and tied directly to the project.

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

Applications must be received by October 31st, 2025. Funds will be available beginning December 2025. Awards for applicants outside of the University of Iowa will be available after approval by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Each award can be for a maximum duration of 9 months. The work scope of funded projects must be completed and all expenses incurred by August 31st, 2026.

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 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.

Human Subjects

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.

Project proposal *must* include a Human Subjects Statement. Detailed instructions for preparing the Human Subjects Statement can be found at: <https://grants.nih.gov/policy/humansubjects/pre-and-post-award-processes/considerations.htm>

For projects involving human subjects, the proposal *must* include the "PHS Inclusion Enrollment Report." When completing the form, be sure to select "Planned Enrollment" as the enrollment type. A fillable version of this form can be found at: https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/readonly/PHS_Inclusion_Enrollment_Report-V1.0.pdf

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) regarding scientific questions and to contact Meg TePoel (megan-tepoel@uiowa.edu) with questions concerning administrative procedures.

Application Content

Applications must conform to the format below:

Required Proposal Sections		Page Limits
1) Cover letter		1
2) Front page		1
Date, title, investigator(s)/affiliation(s), contact information of the principal investigator, and project summary		
<p>By submitting this proposal, you agree to the following which should appear on the front page of your application:</p> <p><i>"The 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."</i></p>		
3) Research Plan	A) Specific aim(s) B) Significance C) Innovation D) Approach	5
<p>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.</p>		
5) Potential for future funding and plans for dissemination of results		1
6) References		No page limit
7) Human subjects statement		No page limit
8) Budget and budget justification		No page limit
9) Timeline and milestones		1
10) Planned enrollment report (if applicable)		Required table
11) Biographical sketches (NIH format)		5 (per investigator)
12) Letter(s) of support		No page limit
<p>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.</p>		

Send by electronic mail one copy of the cover letter and one complete electronic version (PDF) of the full application to Meg TePoel (megan-tepoel@uiowa.edu) by October 31st, 2025, to receive full consideration.