MIDWEST CENTER FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CENTER (MCOHS-ERC)

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES

PILOT PROJECTS RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAM SPRING REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Funding Period: 7/1/2022 - 6/30/2023

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 29, 2022

Grants ranging from $5,000 to a maximum of $20,000 are available to occupational health and safety (OHS) researchers in **Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin**. Areas of OHS include industrial hygiene, occupational and environmental health nursing, occupational and environmental epidemiology, occupational and environmental medicine, occupational health services research and policy, injury epidemiology, safety, ergonomics, toxicology, health physics, and occupational health psychology.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) is applicable only to educational institutions and targets (1) newly-independent principal investigators (PIs); (2) experienced PIs pursuing OHS as a new direction for research; and (3) doctoral research trainees working under the supervision of a PI. Priority will be given to:

- Research proposals with a high potential for affecting the practice of OHS;
- Projects that focus on OHS disparities and vulnerable workers;
- Research ideas that have the potential for: (i) resulting in peer-reviewed publications; and (ii) being developed into proposals for more substantial funding, based on results from this research grant;
- PIs working in complementary or non-traditional disciplines who wish to become more actively involved in addressing occupational safety and health issues;
- PIs attempting to develop innovative research efforts in collaboration with faculty from the MCOHS-ERC;
- Junior PIs needing initial support for innovative research areas who lack support from other sources; and
- Doctoral students undertaking research required for their degree.

Research must be relevant to the occupational health and safety field and focus on the NIOSH National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) objectives. Potential types of projects include intervention studies, risk factor analyses, and exposure assessments affecting a broad range of employee groups, including construction workers, farmers, industrial process workers, and small business owners.

Doctoral students applying for funds must list an advisor, who must have faculty ranking at the same institution. The faculty advisor will be responsible for overseeing the expenditure of funds.

An annual/final progress report summarizing research activities and results must be received within two months of the end of the grant funding period. As part of the final reporting, awardees are required to create a research-to-practice (r2p) product related to their project. Investigators

will be expected to complete a poster and/or provide a short presentation of their project results at the annual NORA Symposium held at the MCOHS-ERC, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. As required by the funding agency, those receiving awards must agree to respond to follow-up for at least five years regarding all presentations, publications, grant applications submitted, and grants received that are relevant to results of this funding.

Because we are requesting proposals from researchers who may not have traditionally engaged in research or who are in complementary or non-traditional disciplines, the project teams may not have expertise in all the required areas for their proposal. In such cases, the investigators must seek collaborators from the MCOHS-ERC faculty with the required expertise.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

To apply for these grants, the following materials must be received by Friday, April 29, 2022, by 5:00pm. Applications will be accepted in electronic format only. The entire application should be submitted as a single PDF in the order outlined below:

1. **Application Cover Page from PI with the following information:**

    a. **Title of project**

    b. **Funding request**

    c. **Principal Investigator(s): name, title, organization, address, email, telephone**

    d. **On your cover page, please include the following statement:**
    This pilot project application is not currently under review by any other grant administering program. If I submit this pilot project application (or an application with similar aims) to another funder while it is under review by the MCOHS-ERC, I will notify the MCOHS-ERC. 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.

2. **Abstract:** A 300-word abstract that includes a summary of the proposal.

3. **Proposal:** A short, single-spaced proposal outlining the proposed research project using 11 point (or larger) Arial font, **five page maximum for items a-e below**. Use ½ inch margins and single-spaced narrative. Required elements include:

    a. Objectives and Specific Aims.

    b. Significance: how the project is important to the field and Upper Midwest region.

    c. Innovation: what new knowledge or ideas this project will develop.

    d. Methods for accomplishing the research: research design, population to be studied (if applicable), data collection methods, data analysis methods and plan.

    e. Expected results and importance of research: including dissemination through professional presentations, peer-reviewed publications, and anticipated opportunities for future funding.

f. Timetable *(not included in five page maximum)*

g. Mentorship plans: PhD students and postdoctoral associates should identify one or more faculty mentors at their institutions to help guide their research. Junior faculty should identify a mentor at the rank of Associate Professor or higher who can advise them on their projects. If junior faculty do not have suitable colleagues at their home institutions, they are encouraged to seek mentorship from one of the faculty members affiliated with MCOHS. *(not included in five page maximum)*

h. References *(not included in five page maximum)*

4. **Application/Budget Form** (word) (pdf)

   The grant period will be July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023. Funding is contingent upon continued support of the Midwest Center for Occupational Health and Safety by NIOSH.

   Eligible Expenses: If there is clear justification of the need for expenditures and a clear explanation of their direct relevance to the proposed research, these awards may be used for any category of research-related expenses, with the following limitations:

   - Faculty salary support may not exceed 5% for each faculty member.
   - Travel to professional meetings will not be funded with the exception of travel to the annual NORA Symposium held at the MCOHS-ERC, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, during spring to present results from the research project.
   - Indirect costs capped at 8% MTDC (exclusive of tuition and equipment).

5. **Budget justification**: Should not exceed one page; a description of each item listed in the budget should be included with an indication of its relation to the proposed work.

6. **Biographical sketch:** A short **(no more than two pages)** biographical sketch or resume for key personnel detailing qualifications to conduct research. Provide: (a) name, degrees, title, institution; (b) personal statement identifying experience/expertise that is pertinent to the proposed research; (c) positions and honors in chronological order; (d) selected peer-reviewed publications; (e) current other support (title, funding source, funding period, percentage effort on each type of support)

7. **Human or Animal Subjects:** Statement addressing plans for use of human or animal subjects in research. IRB approval must be received prior to distribution of funds. The IRB must be registered with the DHHS Office of Human Research Protections and have completed a Federal-wide Assurance.

8. **Letters of Support:** (a) Letter from a faculty advisor is required for all students, indicating the student's research ability. (b) Letters of support from co-investigators and collaborators indicating their agreement to collaborate and the nature of their roles and responsibilities on the project. (c) Applications requiring data analysis should either include a statistician co-investigator on their research team or the applicant should provide a letter of support from someone qualified to conduct or give guidance on the proposed analysis.

9. **Compliance Form:** Completed and signed Compliance and Signature Form (word) (pdf)

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Applications will be accepted in electronic format only. The entire application should be submitted as **a single PDF document** in the order listed in the APPLICATION GUIDELINES section above.

Submit all application materials no later than 5:00 pm on **Friday, April 29, 2022** to Dr. Peter C. Raynor, Ph.D., Professor, at praynor@umn.edu.

TIMELINE

February 1, 2022	RFA announced
April 29, 2022	Full proposals due. Submit as a single PDF document to praynor@umn.edu.
May 2022 – June 10, 2022	Proposal review process
On or before June 10, 2022	Funded awards announced
July 1, 2022	Start date for awards
1 year after award	Project completed
Within 2 months of project completion	Final report submitted
Annually for up to 5 years	Brief post project updates

REVIEW PROCESS/CRITERIA

A Scientific Review Board will review all the proposals that are received for scientific and programmatic merit (according to criteria described below) and make funding recommendations. The Scientific Review Board members will be experts from academia, government, and industry who have research and professional interests in occupational health and safety. They will represent a range of professions, such as engineering, medicine, epidemiology, industrial hygiene, nursing, and safety/injury prevention. Members of the Board will include representatives from outside the University of Minnesota.

Criteria Used to Assess Awards: The following criteria will be used in determining these competitive awards:

1. Research Score (50%), including an assessment of:

a) **Overall scientific merit:** The applicant must submit an original and feasible proposal that demonstrates the applicant's understanding of the proposed field of research. Prior

research experience is not necessary.

b) **Purpose:** A clear statement and description of the purpose of the research project must be included.

c) **Objectives, aims, and hypotheses:** Specific objectives/aims/hypotheses of the project must be listed and defined.

d) **Methods:** The methods proposed for carrying out the research must be defined and described clearly.

2. **Health Disparities Score (25%)**, including consideration of:

   a) **Study populations:** The application addresses occupational health and safety topics relevant to workers who experience health disparities based on gender, race, ethnicity, immigration status, English-speaking ability, age, disability, and other factors that enhance vulnerability to disparities.

   b) **Hypotheses:** The hypotheses for the application indicate that results will have a bearing on recognizing, evaluating, or reducing disparities in exposures and health and safety outcomes among workers.

3. **Programmatic Score (25%)**, including an assessment of the following factors:

   a) **Builds research capacity among new investigators and trainees**: The research funded by this proposal will facilitate investigators working in complementary or non-traditional disciplines to become engaged in occupational safety and health research, junior investigators needing initial support for innovative research areas, and doctoral or postdoctoral trainees undertaking research. Junior investigators and doctoral and postdoctoral trainees have identified mentors willing to advise them during their research.

   b) **Proposal is likely to lead to further research activities:** Greater weight will be given to research ideas that are innovative and have the potential for being developed into proposals for more substantial funding, based on results from this grant. Applicants should describe plans for additional funding.

   c) **Research has a high potential for impacting the practice of OHS:** Translational research ideas or research-to-practice (r2p) projects and research on prevention or intervention will be given high priority for funding.

   d) **Research addresses NORA priorities:** Applications must identify research needs that their research will address among those described in NORA sector and cross-sector research agendas.

   e) **Research involves multiple stakeholders:** Proposals for pilot funding that seek to involve multiple interested parties – workers, organized labor, trade groups, companies, government officials, and other organizations – are encouraged. Similarly, proposals that include investigators at academic institutions throughout the Upper Midwest region of

Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and South Dakota are specifically encouraged.

f) **Researchers have access to adequate resources and environment:** Reviewers will assess if the project can be accomplished in the timeline presented, if the environment in which the research will be carried out is conducive to success, and if the research team has the expertise and guidance needed for carrying out the work.

g) **Budget:** The budget must be appropriate to complete the scope of the work proposed.

PROGRESS REPORT AND FINAL REPORT

1. **Progress Report:** A Progress Report is due at the end of the first year of funding if it is a 2-year project. Include preliminary results and any relevant issues encountered.

2. **Final Report:** A Final Report is due within two months following the end of the proposed budget period. The report should include: (a) the title of the project, (b) the names of the investigators and the institutions to which they belong, (c) a 150 word abstract of the research findings, (d) specific objectives and goals, (e) research methods used including study design, population characteristics, data collection methods, data analysis methods, (f) results including all tables and figures, (g) discussion and implications of findings. The report should list publications, presentations and other research-to-practice products arising from this work, as well as proposals submitted for further funding on the basis of the pilot study results. Attachments must include all: (a) documents used in the research effort (e.g., cover letters, survey and other research instruments); (b) presentations; (c) publications; (d) other research-to-practice products (e.g., factsheets, policy briefs, media reports, white papers); and (e) extramural funds that have resulted, in part, directly or indirectly from this award.

3. **Acknowledgement:** The NIOSH-funded MCOHS-ERC Pilot Research Training Program (OH008434) must be acknowledged in all associated publications. In addition, **the following statement must be included in all publications arising from this research: *"The contents of this effort are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or other associated entities."***

Programmatic Questions:
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