

**DATE:** January 20, 2009

The Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety Education and Research Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health (Illinois ERC) is soliciting proposals for the next round of Pilot Project Research Training funds. The funds are intended for new occupational safety & health investigators in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009-2010. The availability and amount of funding for this initiative is contingent on the Pilot Project award provided by NIOSH.

The purpose of the awards is to support new, short-term projects that will:

- 1) Develop research expertise and capacity in ERC research trainees and new investigators;
- 2) Support new investigators in establishing new research areas; and,
- 3) Encourage established investigators from other fields to apply their expertise to National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) sectors or topics. For more information about NORA, go to: [www.cdc.gov/niosh/nora/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nora/)

Examples of pilot/small projects may include, but are not limited to projects that:

- Provide initial support to develop innovative approaches/lines of investigation in the program areas.
- Allow exploration of possible innovative new directions in OSH sciences.
- Stimulate investigators from other fields to apply their expertise to OSH issues.
- Develop new mechanisms for external or multi-ERC collaborative partnerships to address emerging safety and health concerns.
- Provide initial support for a translational/research to practice project.
- Support trainee capstone projects.

**The awards are intended to provide investigators with the resources needed to develop pilot information about a research hypothesis, with the expectation that investigators will subsequently develop fully formed extramural research applications on the basis of this pilot information.**

Proposal applications must address a NORA priority area and include one or more of the following:

- Research capacity building in trainees and new investigators;
- Regional occupational safety & health needs;
- Participation of multiple stakeholders, including employers, employees, labor unions, professional trade associations, private non-for-profit organizations, and academia;
- Workplace intervention and intervention effectiveness;
- Scientific merit; and,
- Multi-disciplinary approaches.

Questions concerning the applications and funding may be addressed to:  
Salvatore Cali, Research Coordinator

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### **DEADLINE AND COPIES REQUIRED**

Illinois ERC requires ONE ORIGINAL, signed by the department head and principal investigator, PLUS 8 COPIES (of the entire application, proposal, and attachments) AND ONE ELECTRONIC COPY (of the application, budget, budget justification, & proposal narrative). Applications must be received on or before **Wednesday, April 1, 2009** at the address above. Late applications will not be accepted. Application forms and instructions may be **downloaded from the following web site:**

<http://www.uic.edu/spha/glakes/funding.html>

### **ELIGIBILITY**

**Eligible:** New occupational safety & health investigators, including investigators from other disciplines who have recently begun targeting occupational safety & health topics. Applicants are limited to junior faculty, new investigators, or research trainees. NIOSH has traditionally defined research training as being at the doctoral level with the objective of helping to prepare trainees for research careers.

**Not eligible:** Tenured faculty, RO1 investigators, and non-junior faculty members are not eligible as principal investigators. Previously funded projects are not eligible for renewal.

### **TYPES AND CATEGORIES OF SUPPORT**

Three to five awards ranging from \$6,000 to a maximum of \$20,000 are available per project, with completion of all funded expenditures and substantial completion of project objectives by June 30, 2010 required. Funds must be utilized by June 30, 2010, or they will be forfeited, as there is no mechanism for continuing funding beyond that date. These projects must be on a NORA topic and may not be renewed. The availability and amount of funding for this initiative is contingent on the Pilot Project award provided by NIOSH. It should be noted that NIOSH strongly recommends that individual salary costs be minimized.

### **FORMAT OF APPLICATION**

The application form provided with these instructions must be completed. In addition, a maximum of ten pages of text for the full research proposal must be attached to the application forms. No more than ten pages of proposal narrative will be accepted. The narrative should be organized as follows:

- Introduction/background
- Objectives
- Methods
- Expected outcomes/contribution to field/significance
- Anticipated difficulties and approaches to overcoming them
- References

The appendix is not limited in length and should include:

- Budget (A generic budget calculation spreadsheet is available on this web site);
- Budget justification;
- Timeline for the proposed research;
- External Funding Plan: A description of how the results will be leveraged into external applications, a time-line for proposal grant submission to external funding agency (specify), and a plan for expanding the work as a line of research
- NIH Biosketch for the Principle Investigator and co-investigators;
- A certificate of completion of continuing education in a human subjects protection program dated within the last two years for all investigators;
- Applicants must also identify and complete arrangements for a research mentor who will provide guidance for the research. A signed agreement to mentor from a senior investigator is required (see application). Further information on the role of a research mentor is available at:  
<http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-04-105.html> under the Special Requirements section.

## **RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**

Among the challenges that new researchers face is the time and effort required to comply with requirements relative to the protection of human subjects. If the proposed project involves research on human subjects, the applicant must comply with the Department of Health and Human Services Regulations (45 CFR Part 46) regarding the protection of human research participants. Assurance must be provided to demonstrate that the project will be subject to initial and continuing reviews by an appropriate institutional review board. Please see Illinois ERC's Research Policy at:

<http://www.uic.edu/spha/glakes/funding.html>

It is strongly recommended that applicants familiarize themselves with the policy statement and with the human subjects review process at their sponsoring organization.

For all proposals, after scientific review is complete, eligible applicants will be ranked in order of overall merit. Investigators with proposals that are recommended for funding will be notified, but actual award will not be made until the completion of recommendations or requirements set by the scientific review committee. For proposals that involve research on human subjects, one of these conditions will be a successful review of protection of human subjects protocols by an organization that has an Assurance of Compliance with the Office for Human Research Protections per U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) requirements.

All ERC pilot/small projects, including those being conducted by other institutions, that involve human subjects must be reviewed and approved by an IRB in advance of project funding to ensure protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects. (See 45 Code of Federal Regulations 46.) The IRB must be registered with the DHHS Office of Human Research Protections and have completed a Federalwide Assurance. Documentation of IRB approval of protocols, as well as copies of currently approved consent forms, must be provided to the Illinois ERC prior to the award. "IRB Approval" means full, final IRB approval. In

addition all ERC project protocols must comply with all applicable Federal and State regulations.

**Awards will not be made until Mr. Cali receives documentation of human subjects review or exemption reviews and approves the required documentation, including OMB Form 310.** Previous awards under this program have been disallowed or delayed because grantees did not begin their human subjects review application promptly. Therefore, applicants must provide a letter of completed review within two months of the notification of funding recommendation or the award recommendation will be withdrawn, Please contact Mr. Cali if you have questions about requirements relative to the protection of human subjects.

### **PROPOSALS FOR RESEARCH AT FOREIGN PERFORMANCE SITES**

Projects involving research at foreign performance sites are discouraged for a number of reasons, including IRB approvals required at both your institution and in the performance site country, and prior Program Grant Official (PGO) approval for each case of foreign travel involved. Review of such projects has proven to be very time-consuming and not consistent with the usual short time frame for pilot projects. Proposed projects also must have a clear justification of the relevance to worker protection issues in the U.S. given the focus of the OSH Act on the U.S. workforce.

### **RESEARCH AT INSTITUTIONS OTHER THAN THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS:**

Illinois ERC strongly encourages proposals from institutions outside of the University of Illinois (UI) system. However, it should be noted that it is necessary to establish a sub-contract between UI and other institutions. This usually takes a few months, so non-UI proposals should budget this delay into their project. Project completion after the preferred one-year project period is allowed, but all funds must utilized within the one-year period without exception.

### **OTHER SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS**

Research funded by Illinois ERC must also meet DHHS and NIH requirements regarding inclusion of women, minorities, and children, and use of animal subjects, and use of funds for lobbying activities. Please see Illinois ERC's Research Policy at:

<http://www.uic.edu/spha/glakes/funding.html>

### **BUDGET GUIDELINES**

Request the minimum amount of funds that will allow you to conduct the research. Justify each item clearly. Indirect costs will be allowed to a maximum of 8% of direct costs excluding equipment and tuition and/or tuition remission. A maximum of \$500 of this funding may be requested for equipment costs, with matching funds required for equipment costing more than \$500. Equipment costing more than \$2,000 will not be funded in whole or in part, due to the limited funds available under this program. Applications that include matching funds should detail those funds on the application budget worksheet.

Be sure to include personnel fringe benefits and indirect costs as part of the budget. Check with your employer's business office to confirm fringe rates; indirect costs are capped at 8% for these awards. It is not necessary to add tuition remission charges to the budget for research

assistants at UIC for these awards. Other institutions may have tuition charges that must be included in the budget but are not included in the calculation of indirect costs.

**All fund awards must be utilized in full by June 30, 2010, the end of the fiscal year.** There is no mechanism to extend the award beyond June 30, 2010.

## **REVIEW PROCESS**

- Proposals will be reviewed by a subcommittee of occupational safety and health professionals. The full committee includes representatives from Industrial Hygiene, Occupational Health Nursing, Occupational Medicine, Occupational Safety, Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology, and Agricultural Safety and Health. The subcommittee reviewing individual proposals in detail will include representatives most appropriate to the proposal. Investigators will receive a priority score and written critique of the proposal.

## **REVIEW CRITERIA:**

In their written critiques, reviewers will be asked to comment on each of the following criteria. Each of these criteria will be addressed and considered in assigning the overall score, weighting them as appropriate for each application. Note that an application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact and thus deserve a high priority score. For example, an investigator may propose to carry out important work that by its nature is not innovative but is essential to move a field forward.

**Significance:** Does this study address an important occupational safety and health problem? If the aims of the application are achieved, how will scientific knowledge or clinical practice be advanced? What will be the effect of these studies on the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?

**Approach:** Are the conceptual or clinical framework, design, methods, and analyses of occupational safety and health adequately developed, well integrated, well reasoned, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?

**Innovation:** Is the project original and innovative? For example: Does the project challenge existing paradigms or clinical practice; address an innovative hypothesis or critical barrier to progress in the field? Does the project develop or employ novel concepts, approaches, methodologies, tools, or technologies for this area?

**Investigators:** Are the investigators appropriately trained and well suited to carry out this occupational safety and health work? Is the work proposed appropriate to the experience level of the PD/PI and other researchers? Does the investigative team bring complementary and integrated expertise to the project (if applicable)?

**Environment:** Does the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Do the proposed studies benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, or subject populations, or employ useful collaborative arrangements? Is there evidence of institutional support?

### **ADDITIONAL REVIEW CRITERIA:**

- Relevance to occupational safety and health by contributing to achievement of the research objectives described in NORA.
- Potential contribution to applied technical knowledge in the identification, evaluation, and/or control of occupational safety and health hazards
- Magnitude of the problem in terms of numbers of workers affected
- Severity of the disease or injury in the worker population
- Likelihood that the proposed work can be accomplished by the investigators in one year.
- Preference will be given to proposals from the following states in the Illinois ERC's region: Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Missouri

Previous year award recipients may apply for continuation funding by indicating previous award, explaining current project progress, and indicating the purpose of the additional funding. However, priority will be given to new applicants.

### **ADMINISTRATION OF AWARDS**

Investigators with proposals that are recommended for funding will be notified, but actual award will not be made until the completion of recommendations or requirements set by the scientific review committee. The amount of prospective funding will be noted in an e-mail. Once recommendations or requirements are completed, an award e-mail will be sent.

UIC will establish award accounts for UIC recipients and subcontracts for non-UIC recipients. Accounts will be managed by award recipients and/or their business offices. Recipients will be required to provide periodic reporting of research progress and expenditures. Prior written approval must be obtained from the Research Committee before modifications are made to the budget or research focus. Allowable expenditures must be incurred only within the project period. **Award decisions will be announced by July 1, 2009 or earlier. It should be noted that in previous years, the official notice of award has been delayed pending notice of award from NIOSH to UIC.**

Please note that progress reports may be requested periodically after projects are awarded, and post-project completion reports on publications, presentations, and other project outcomes will be requested semi-annually.

### **PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

NIOSH-funded research presentations and publications are required to include an acknowledgement and disclaimer. Typical disclaimer wording is as follows: "This publication (or journal article, presentation, etc.) was supported by Grant # xxxx from NIOSH. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of NIOSH."