

**Southern California NIOSH Education and Research Center (SCERC)  
Guidelines for Pilot Project Research Training (PPRT) Program Grant Applicants  
(FY 2022/23)**

**A. Purpose**

The main objectives of this program are to facilitate research training and to promote the development of multi-disciplinary research addressing priorities of the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) formulated for the main industrial sectors and also for cross-sector research areas relevant for different occupational settings (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/programs/>; <https://www.cdc.gov/nora/default.html>). This program is administered by the Southern California NIOSH Education and Research Center (SCERC) at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and Irvine (UCI).

**B. Eligibility**

- 1) Students who are enrolled in Master- or Doctor-level academic programs focusing on occupational health or safety, including but not limited to NIOSH ERC and TPG trainees, are eligible to apply for research support.
- 2) Junior faculty members (within 6 years of their original appointment) are eligible.
- 3) New faculty investigators, who seek, for the first time, funding for occupational health- or safety-related research.

Each applicant may submit only one proposal per funding cycle. Awardees of past two funding cycles are not eligible but there are no restrictions regarding repeat faculty sponsorship of student proposals. However, only one student per faculty sponsor or project can be funded in each cycle.

**C. Letter of Intent**

A one-page Letter of Intent should describe the proposed project. Attach a CV of the applicant and, if the applicant is a student, also the CV of the sponsoring faculty. Letters of intent are to be submitted by e-mail to Dr. Negar Omid ([nomid@ph.ucla.edu](mailto:nomid@ph.ucla.edu)) cc to Dr. Wendie Robbins ([wrobbins@sonnet.ucla.edu](mailto:wrobbins@sonnet.ucla.edu)).

**D. Application: Proposal Text**

- 1) The description of the project should be between 3-6 pages long (single spaced, font Arial or Times, font size 12 point). This page limit includes the specific aims section but excludes abstract, references, budget, budget justification, and appendices. There is no page limit for these latter four items.
- 2) The proposal text should include the following:
  - a) Concise project title

- b) Unstructured abstract (maximum 250 words).
- c) Specific aims and/or hypotheses section describing the overall study objective and the specific aims of the proposed research (maximum 1 page).
- d) Background and significance section summarizing the existing literature on the subject, research gap(s) and specific NORA research areas to be addressed, and describing the significance of the proposed research for occupational health, safety, work ability, productivity, return-to-work and other relevant outcomes or for the development of research methods or tools and future research.
- e) Methods section describing study design, subjects or materials, and all research methods including instrument development, proposed surveys, examinations, laboratory tests, data collection, data management, statistical analyses, etc. If survey instruments have already been developed, please attach copies to your application in the appendix.
- f) Project time schedule with milestones and deliverables by month
- g) Dissemination plans (specify conference for abstract submission, manuscript working title)
- h) Plans for future research (specify objectives and new proposal working title)
- i) Mentoring plan (specify research mentors and frequency and type of contact with mentor(s), attach CV of all mentors)
- j) Letter of support from sponsoring/mentoring faculty with explicit commitment to trainee's mentoring plan.

#### **E. Application: Budget and Budget Justification**

- 1) The typical maximum anticipated funding level is \$10,000 total costs including 8% indirect costs. Projects that do not require the maximum amount of possible funding are also encouraged in order to maximize the number of funded applications. Reviewers will be asked to review the budget and suggest changes if appropriate.
- 2) Please provide a detailed itemized budget together with a budget justification narrative adequately describing all expenses, and their need, for the proposed research. Attach price quotes for any planned purchase of equipment or specialized services.
- 3) It is expected that the applicant will cover any travel and other costs related to the presentation of research results at a SCERC meeting held in Los Angeles (typically in September) and any other scientific meetings or conferences.
- 4) Travel costs for presentation of results at scientific conferences or professional meetings are the responsibility of the applicant and are not allowable costs. Printing costs for publications based on the funded research are allowable costs.
- 5) This is a training program and awards are made to individuals rather than institutions. The awards support qualified individuals to complete a specific

project that will enhance their research skills and prospects for future research funding. As a consequence, awards cannot be transferred to other individuals. This principle applies for both student applicants and their faculty sponsor.

- 6) For student applicants, the mentoring work of sponsors is considered part of their compensated academic teaching and research duties and therefore not eligible for salary support.
- 7) Students who receive tuition or stipend support from a NIOSH ERC or TPG are not eligible for tuition, stipend, or salary support through the PPRT program. However, funds for project-related costs such as specialized equipment, software, survey translation/printing/ mailing/ incentives, field trips for data collection, off-campus lab analyses, data entry etc. may be requested.
- 8) Students who receive stipends from non-NIOSH sources and intend to budget salary support for themselves must disclose and list stipends and all other sources of support and justify their need for additional salary support in the budget justification.
- 9) No funds may be requested for projects that are being funded by other sources. The budget justification should clarify the relationship of the proposed project to other existing or pending research grants and the applicant should provide evidence for non-duplication of efforts (i.e. attach related research proposals including the specific aims section, proposed budget and award notice for confidential review).

#### **F. Application: Biographical Sketches**

- 1) Biographical sketches must be provided for the applicant and, if the applicant is a student, also for any sponsoring faculty, using the standard NIH format (maximum of 4 pages, a sample form can be downloaded from website: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>)

#### **G. Application: IRB Approval for Involvement of Human Subjects or Animals**

- 1) Depending on the campus, receiving IRB approval can take several weeks or even months and should be applied for as soon as possible and no later than within 30 days of submission of the research proposal.
- 2) The cover letter for the research proposal must include information regarding the status of the IRB process and the applicant must attach either a copy of the submitted IRB application or a draft of the IRB application to be submitted within 30 days after submission of the research proposal.
- 3) Distribution of any awarded funds cannot start before completed IRB approval. Electronic copies of human subjects protocols and IRB approval notices need to

be submitted to the ERC before any research can begin and before any funds can be transferred.

#### **H. Review Process and Criteria**

- 1) Letters of Intent (LOI) will be screened for eligibility of applicants and receipt of LOI will be confirmed. Applicants will receive these guidelines for proposal preparation.
- 2) Proposals will be screened for eligibility and adherence to the required format by the PPRT Program Director upon receipt and either returned to the applicant or forwarded to scientific peer reviewers.
- 3) Reviewers are being asked to rate the proposal according to the following criteria:
  - a. Relevance to occupational health and safety, NORA research areas, and, if applicable, relevance to special research topic or population emphasized in current funding cycle
  - b. Scientific merit and methodological quality
  - c. Qualification of applicant, institutional environment, and feasibility
  - d. Stimulation of interdisciplinary research and translation into practice
  - e. Likelihood that results will be publishable in a peer-reviewed journal
  - f. Likelihood that the project will lead to future external funding
  - g. Novelty of ideas, methods, or application in new context
  - h. Appropriateness of proposed budget and evidence that the proposed work is not funded by other grants
  - i. Potential to provide a training experience for applicant or to attract new or young scientists to the field of occupational health or safety research

#### **I. Preliminary Award Notice, Response to Critiques, Final Award Notice**

- 1) All applicants receive redacted (anonymous) copies of reviewers' comments and suggestions.
- 2) Selected awardees receive a preliminary award notice and need to respond in detail to reviewers' critique within 14 days after receipt of the reviews. In their response they should repeat each comment of the reviewers and respond to each comment. They should attach a revised proposal including any changes to their proposed project if applicable. For ease of review, modifications of the original proposal should be submitted both as a MS word document that tracked all changes and as an MS word with all changes accepted. Awards are not final, research cannot begin, and funds cannot be transferred unless the applicant submitted a reasonable response to the reviewer's comments, and if applicable, a revised proposal, and received final approval from the PPRT program director. Failure to submit a satisfactory response in a timely manner may result in loss of the award.

- 3) Final awards are being made contingent on the availability of funds. Delays in federal funding of the program may result in delays of award notices.

## **J. Reporting Requirements**

- 1) Applicants need to obtain prior approval for substantive modifications of the proposed project. Changes in project scope, budget, or sponsorship always require prior approval. Requests for modification should be accompanied by a progress report and CV updates if applicable. (See also section L. Timeline)
- 2) Progress reports are required quarterly (due Sept 30, Dec 30, March 30, June 30). They should state the original aims/work plan for the reporting period and then describe the progress and any challenges, and how they were dealt with or plans how to deal with them going forward. The quarterly report needs to contain a detailed workplan for the next quarter for each specific aim of the project, including deliverables and a timeline for each by month. If a no-cost extension is requested, a progress report is due no later than two weeks before the project end date (see below under N2). Submit all reports as MS word documents (not as PDF files). Use the report format as shown in Appendix A.
- 3) Final technical reports are expected to provide a summary of the project with technical details regarding the methods and results. The contents of the final report should reflect the scope of the originally proposed study and be organized by specific project aims (see Appendix B).
- 4) Final technical reports are due 30 days after the project end date. Please follow report format in Appendix B.
- 5) For projects with approved 3-month no-cost extension, a progress report is due with the request for a no-cost extension no later than two weeks before the original project end date. The final technical report and final invoices for extended projects are due four weeks after the no-cost extension end date.
- 6) Financial reports are required quarterly (Sept 15, Dec 15, Mar 15, June 15, Sept 15). They should include the pilot project account's appropriations, the expenses and the current account balance. Final financial reports are due September 30.
- 7) Applicants are required to report and submit electronic copies of any publications and research awards that are based in part or in total on the results of the proposed project within a month of the publication or award notice. Project-related publications need to mention this funding (see specific acknowledgment wording below under K).
- 8) Applicants are expected to report changes of contact information immediately.

- 9) Applicants are expected to respond to follow-up surveys by the program administrator of the Southern California ERC.

#### **K. Dissemination of Results and Acknowledgment of Funding Source**

- 1) Applicants are required to present results at a SCERC-wide meeting to be held in the fall or winter at the University of California Los Angeles. Travel and accommodation costs are the responsibility of the applicant.
- 2) All applicants are required to submit an abstract on their research findings to a scientific conference by the end of the research project
- 3) PhD and junior faculty applicants are required to submit a manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal one year after the end of their research project. The application proposal should specify the working title of at least one planned paper. This is not a requirement for master students, though encouraged.
- 4) Publications using results of the pilot project need to acknowledge NIOSH-SCERC funding from the program. The suggested specific language is: "This publication was supported by the Pilot Project Research Training Program of the Southern California NIOSH Education and Research Center (SCERC), Grant Agreement Number T42 OH008412 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of CDC."
- 5) Presentations made at conferences or professional meetings including results from the pilot project should also acknowledge funding by "Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through the Southern California NIOSH Education and Research Center (SCERC) Pilot Project Research Training Program."
- 6) All applicants are required to create at least one outreach activity or material by the end of their research project. Some examples include: a presentation of results at a meeting with participants and/or stakeholders, a written lay report for relevant stakeholders, a designed infographic or pamphlet, a series of Instagram or twitter posts, and/or an op-ed or blog post. The application proposal should specify the type of outreach planned.

#### **L. Timeline**

- 1) Due dates for submission of Letters of Intent and full proposals are provided in the program announcement. In 2022, letters of intent are due by April 11, and full proposals are due by May 9.
- 2) Preliminary award notices can be expected during June. Responses to reviewers' critique are due within 14 days after the preliminary award notice.

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- 3) Final funding awards are contingent on satisfactory response to reviewers' comments, IRB approval, and availability of funds. Final award notices will be made in June.
- 4) Earliest project start date is July 1, 2022
- 5) Project end date is between June 30, 2023 and September 30, 2023 (maximum 15 months). Final technical reports are due 30 days after the project end date.
- 6) No-cost extensions are possible in special situations and they may be requested two weeks before the original project end date (see N. below). Final technical reports of extended projects are due 30 days after the no-cost extension end date.
- 7) Project costs should be invoiced quarterly. Allowable expenses must accrue by September 15. Final invoices must be received by September 15. This deadline also applies for projects with no-cost extension. Final financial reports are due by September 30, 2023.

### **M. Checklist for Applications**

- 1) Letter of intent with attached CV of applicant (and sponsor) due by April 11
- 2) Submission of full proposal due by May 9
- 3) Submission of proposal must include (as MS word documents - do NOT send PDF files!):
  - a. Cover letter
  - b. Project title
  - c. Abstract
  - d. Proposal text (using outline in section D)
  - e. References (cited in text, bibliography appended if needed)
  - f. Detailed budget
  - g. Budget justification for each budget item (also attach price quotes for equipment, pdf format or weblink o.k. for price quotes)
  - h. Copy of IRB protocol (and IRB approval if already available)
  - i. Biosketch of Applicant (NIH format, see: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>)
  - j. Biosketch of Faculty Sponsor if applicable (NIH format)
- 4) Proof of submission of IRB protocol within 30 days after proposal submission
- 5) Response to reviewers' critique within 14 days of receipt of reviews

*If funding has been awarded:*

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- 6) Submit quarterly invoices (Sept 15, Dec 15, Mar 15, June 15; final invoice due September 15).
- 7) Submit quarterly progress reports by the end of September, December, March, June, and September (see J2). Follow the report format in Appendix A.
- 8) Plan to present results at SCERC meeting in September (held at UCLA usually during the week before fall quarter instruction begins)
- 9) Submit final technical report within 30 days after the project end date or no-cost extension end date. Follow the format in Appendix B.
- 10) Submit conference abstracts, manuscripts, and research proposals that are based partially or fully on findings from your project to the program administrator.

### **N. Checklist for Requests for No-cost Extensions by Award Recipients**

No-cost extensions of up to 3 months may be requested. Cost-extensions may be considered in special situations but only preliminary approval can be granted by the ERC because federal approval is needed for any cost-extension and will not be available before January or even later.

- 1) Must be submitted two weeks before the current project end date.
- 2) Requests must include the following:
  - a. Interim technical progress report (see above J2, follow format in Appendix A)
  - b. Justification for request
  - c. Modified detailed budget with justification (if original budget changes)
  - d. Extension of IRB approval (if original approval ends during the original project period or during the requested no-cost extension period)

### **O. Inquiries**

Please address any questions you may have about this program per e-mail to Dr. Negar Omid ([nomid@ph.ucla.edu](mailto:nomid@ph.ucla.edu)) and cc Dr. Wendie Robbins ([wrobbins@sonnet.ucla.edu](mailto:wrobbins@sonnet.ucla.edu)). Thank you!



**Appendix A**

**FORMAT FOR QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT**

1. Title of the Project
2. Principal Investigator and Co-investigators (or faculty sponsor if applicable)
3. Implementing Institution and other collaborating Institutions
4. Time period (begin and end dates of the quarter)
5. Original specific aims of the study as approved
6. Work plan for the past quarter (the reporting period).
7. For each specific study aim (listed under item 5 above) and each workplan item and deliverable (listed under item 6 above):
  - I. Description of the progress
  - II. Description of any challenges, how they were addressed, and – if not resolved –plans how to deal with them in the next quarter
8. Detailed description of the work plan for the next quarter for each project aim, including deliverables.
9. If any planned expenses change, attach a revised full budget with detailed justification for each item.
10. Submission of all reports as MS word documents (not as PDF files).

## Appendix B

### FORMAT FOR FINAL REPORT

1. Title of the Project:
2. Principal Investigator and Co-investigators (or faculty sponsor if applicable)
3. Implementing Institution and other collaborating Institutions
4. Time period (begin and end dates)
5. NIOSH NORA goals addressed
6. Abstract
  - I. A brief (one paragraph) description of the Final Report (max 250 words)
7. Study objectives and specific aims as approved
  - I. Detailed description of problem that was addressed
  - II. Objectives and specific aims/hypotheses of the project
  - III. Deviation made from original objectives, if any, while implementing the project and reasons thereof
8. Detailed description of the work that was performed, organized by specific aim: Full details of study design, methods adopted, data collected, methods of data analysis
9. Results and their interpretation
  - I. Results by specific aim
  - II. Detailed analysis of results indicating contributions made towards increasing the state of knowledge in the subject area or discipline
  - III. Implications for occupational health and safety research and practice
  - IV. Plans for dissemination of study results and/or future research proposals
10. Conclusions summarizing the achievements and plans for future work, and the development of follow-up research grants
11. List of completed and planned publications and presentations with complete citation details: Year, (working) title, authors, journal, conference title/date, etc.
12. Trainees on the project:
  - I. GSRs, Research Scientists or Research Fellows
  - II. PhDs or MS/MPHs
  - III. Other Technical Personnel trained
13. Patents developed, if any
14. Name and signature with date by Principal Investigator and by Faculty Sponsor