



Southern California NIOSH Education and Research Center

Occupational Health and Safety Pilot Project Research Training Grants

Detailed Application Instructions

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A. Purpose

The primary goal of the Pilot Project Research Training (PPRT) grants is to foster the development of interdisciplinary research skills, and prepare the workforce to conduct impactful research that advances the health, safety and well-being of workers consistent with the National Occupational Research Agenda (<https://www.cdc.gov/nora/default.html>).

B. Eligibility

Eligible applicants include:

- 1) Students enrolled in Master- or Doctor-level academic programs and engaged in research related to occupational health or safety; and
- 2) Junior faculty members (within 6 years of their original appointment) and post-doctoral scholars engaged in research related to occupational health or safety.

New investigators seeking grant funding for the first time are strongly encouraged to apply. Trainees in NIOSH-sponsored Education and Research Centers and Training Project Grants, including the Southern California Education and Research Center, are eligible to apply. Each applicant may submit only one proposal per funding cycle.

Awardees from the past two funding cycles are not eligible to apply, 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 letter of intent is strongly recommended, as it will facilitate pre-submission consultation with the applicant. The letter of intent should include the name and contact information of the applicant and faculty sponsor, if applicable, study title, and a short description of the study aims or goals (≤ 300 words). Letters of intent should be submitted to Dr. Jian Li (jianli2019@ucla.edu) and Lizbeth Diaz (lizdiaz@ph.ucla.edu) by **December 20, 2024**.

D. Application

Due Date: Applications are due **January 20, 2025**, to Dr. Jian Li (jianli2019@ucla.edu) and Lizbeth Diaz (lizdiaz@ph.ucla.edu)

Application Materials: The application should be single spaced, use Arial font of 11 point, and have 0.5-inch margins. The application should include:

1. A Cover page with study title and applicant and faculty sponsor contact information
2. An unstructured study abstract (≤ 250 words)
3. Specific aims and research approach (≤ 6 pages, plus references).
 - a. Identify how the study responds to the National Occupational Research Agenda (<https://www.cdc.gov/nora/default.html>) and describe the burden, need and impact of the study (<https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2019/05/07/bni/>).
 - b. Include a study timeline (work must be completed within 12 months)
 - c. Include plans for dissemination and future work.
 - d. Describes mentoring plan with faculty sponsor, if required
 - e. It is strongly recommended that this section of the proposal include the standard sections for NIH R-03 grant proposals: Specific Aims, Significance, Innovation and Approach.
4. Human subjects information consistent with NIH requirements, and IRB status (pending, approved, exempt)
5. Budget and budget justification that includes the following categories, if applicable: salary, travel, supplies, equipment, participant incentives. Indirect costs are limited to 8%. Total costs limited to \$10,000.
6. NIH format biosketch for the applicant and faculty sponsor, if applicable. Instructions are available via <https://grants.nih.gov/grants-process/write-application/forms-directory/biosketch>
7. Letter of commitment from the faculty sponsor, if applicable, that describes the mentoring plan and commitment to the applicant.

Budgets: With respect to the budget, a detailed budget and budget justification narrative are required. The budget should include any direct costs to conduct the proposed research. Costs that may be considered include: travel to present research findings at a conference, participant incentives, publishing charges, sample analysis costs for an external laboratory, consumable laboratory supplies, local travel, equipment, salary and other costs necessary to conduct the research activity. For equipment and supplies $\geq \$500$, please include quotes. Applicants are discouraged from requesting computers and tablets unless directly required for data collection. Salary may not be included for applicants receiving tuition or stipend support from a NIOSH Education and Research Center or Targeted Project Grant, including the SCERC.

Transfer of Awards: Awards are made to individuals, not institutions, and cannot be transferred to other individuals. This principle applies for both student applicants and their faculty sponsor.

Related Research Activities: Funds may not be requested to support research activities for projects that are being funded by other sources. Funds may be requested to answer new research questions or aims related to existing work, but the scope of the new and existing / pending research grant must demonstrate non-duplication of efforts (i.e. attach related research proposals including the specific aims section, proposed budget and award notice for confidential review).

Human Subjects or Experimental Animals: If research activities involve human subjects or experimental animals, institutional approvals are required before funds can be released. If the study is likely to be determined as exempt, a formal determination to this effect from the Institutional Review Board is still required. With the application, please include a description and justification related to:

- participant eligibility, inclusion and exclusion criteria;
- participant number and distribution with respect to age, sex, race and ethnicity;
- recruitment and consent procedures;
- risks to human subjects and adequacy of protection against risks;
- potential benefits to participants (which does not include incentives); and
- importance of the knowledge to be gained.

E. Review Process and Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed for eligibility and adherence to application instructions by the PPRT Program Director upon receipt. Applications that do not adhere to instructions may be returned to the applicant for correction if submitted more than 5 days before the deadline; otherwise they may be rejected.

Each proposal will be reviewed by at least two reviewers. Reviewers will consider:

- Relevance to the National Occupational Research Agenda
- Significance as indicated by need, burden and impact of the study, with priority given to studies that address worker groups that experience disproportionate burdens or risk of injury or illness.
- Innovation of the study, as indicated by study research question, methods or population
- Investigator qualifications, with priority given to students and new investigators
- Approach, as indicated by scientific rigor and reproducibility and appropriateness to the study research question
- Environment, as indicated availability of necessary resources, facilities, partnerships and mentorship
- Likelihood that the work will lead to publications in the peer-reviewed literature and /or extramural funding

Scoring will follow the NIH guidelines, with score of 1 being exceptional, 5 being good and 9 being poor.

Applicants will receive copies of reviewer comments and suggestions. Applicants may be required to respond in writing to the reviewer comments prior to a final finding determination.

F. Funding Decisions

Funding decisions will be made by the PPRT Program Director and are contingent on the availability of funds. Delays in funding of the SCERC by NIOSH may result in delays of funding decisions and award notices. Funding decisions will be communicated in writing, and applicants will be provided a deadline by which to affirm their intention to receive the funds and complete the work.

G. Reporting Requirements

After acceptance of the awards, investigators are required to:

- Provide documentation of Institutional Review Board or other required institutional approvals
- Obtain written prior approval from the PPRT Program Director for substantive modifications of the proposed project. Need for modification can be communicated through quarterly progress reports, or via other written communication to the PPRT Program Director.
- Provide written quarterly progress (due Sept 30, Dec 31, March 31, and June 30) to the PPRT Program Director and Assistant Director. The progress report should include descriptions of any challenges that have arisen and introduced delays or required changing the research aims or approach, along with plans to overcome the challenges. Progress reports must use the format shown in Appendix A.
- Provide written quarterly financial reports (due Sept 30, Dec 31, March 31, and June 30) to the PPRT Program Director and Assistant Director. The financial reports should identify accrued expenses and note any need to deviate from planned expenditures. This informal report is used by the PPRT Program Director and Assistant Director to track expenditures. Allowable expenses must accrue by the end of the project end date (June 30). The report must use the format shown in Appendix C.
- Provide a final technical report within 45 days of the project end date to the PPRT Program Director and Assistant Director. The report must use the format shown in Appendix B.
- No-cost extensions may be approved under extenuating circumstances and must be requested in writing in the third quarter progress report (typically March 31).
- Communicate changes in contact information immediately.
- Respond to follow-up surveys or other information requests from the SCERC.
- Present research work at one SCERC event in the subsequent year.
- Include an acknowledgement statement of funding in any publications or presentations. The specific language and grant number will be included in the funding decision communication.
- Provide copies of published manuscripts and presentations that disseminate findings from the funded research project.

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, and description of progress and any challenges for each aim to date.
6. Detailed description of the work plan for the next quarter for each project aim, including deliverables.

Submit 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. National Occupational Research Agenda goals addressed
6. Abstract (max 250 words)
7. Background and Specific Aims (discuss any deviation from the original aims, if any occurred)
8. Research Methods (describe study design and methods, and discuss any deviation from the original approach, if any occurred)
9. Results and Discussion (describe study results using text, tables and figures; interpret the results related to the aim and the work of others; describe implications for occupational safety and health)
10. Future Directions (describe plans for research dissemination and future research proposals)
11. Products (complete citation of published, submitted and planned publications in the peer-review literature; complete citations of completed or planned conference poster or oral presentations; and patents developed).
12. Trainees (identify any students, post-doctoral scholars or other personnel trained through the research study)
13. Name and signature with date by Principal Investigator and by Faculty Sponsor

Submit reports as MS Word documents (not as PDF files).

APPENDIX C: FORMAT FOR QUARTERLY FINANCIAL 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. Total project budget:
5. Reporting period (begin and end dates of the quarter)
6. Accrued expenses for reporting period: *(insert/delete rows as needed)*

Expense Category	Amount
Total Expenses for Reporting Period	

7. Remaining project balance
8. If any planned expenses change, attach a full budget with detailed justification for each item.

Submit reports as MS Word documents (not as PDF files).