

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Education and Research Center

Request for Pilot Research Applications

Application Deadline: April 12, 2024, 5 pm ET

Award Announcement: by May 31, 2024

Background

The NIOSH-funded Harvard Chan Education and Research Center (ERC) announces the availability of funds to support pilot projects in Region I. The program will support small research projects conducted by student investigators (trainees) at the predoctoral or postdoctoral levels and/or by new/junior faculty investigators. **The maximum allowable budget request for total direct costs is \$18,400. The project start date is July 1, 2024. Projects must be completed and expensed by December 31, 2025. Project extensions are not allowed.**

Purposes

The purposes of the Pilot Project Research Training Program are:

To foster new research at the pilot project level that enhances the research training capacity of Harvard Chan's ERC and other occupational safety and health training institutions in Region I.

- To promote research in one or more of the sector/cross-sector programs as defined by [The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#) as [Priority Areas and Emerging Issues](#) or [the NIOSH Future of Work Initiative Research Agenda](#).
- To encourage research to understand, address, or incorporate consideration of [occupational health equity](#).
- To promote increased interdisciplinary interaction in occupational safety and health.
- To promote research that addresses regional occupational safety and health concerns.
- To promote collaborative research and training activities among Training Program Grantees and other institutions and entities in Region I that focus on occupational safety and health.

A. Nature and Scope of Projects

Project proposals should address concerns in one or more of the occupational safety and health areas of occupational hygiene, occupational epidemiology, occupational health services, occupational medicine, or occupational health nursing. Proposed projects should address one or more of the NORA and NIOSH sector/cross-sector programs listed below.

Sector Programs:

- Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing
- Construction
- Healthcare and Social Assistance
- Manufacturing
- Mining
- Oil and Gas Extraction
- Public Safety (including Wildland Firefighting)
- Services (except Public Safety and Veterinary Medicine/Animal Care)
- Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities
- Wholesale and Retail Trade

Cross-sector Programs:

- Cancer, Reproductive, Cardiovascular Disease
- Hearing Loss Prevention
- Immune, Infectious, and Dermal Disease Prevention
- Musculoskeletal Health
- Respiratory Health
- Traumatic Injury Prevention
- Healthy Work Design and Well-Being

Interdisciplinary proposals that couple occupational safety and health with other disciplines, such as health and social behavior, epidemiology, and health policy and management, are strongly encouraged. In addition, we strongly encourage applications that focus on occupational health inequities, as defined by NIOSH: *Occupational health inequities are avoidable differences in work-related disease incidence, mental illness, or morbidity and mortality that are closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage such as work arrangements (e.g., contingent work), socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., age, sex, race, and class), and organizational factors (e.g., business size).*

Examples of the type of research that is eligible include but are not limited to:

- Data collection in support of contemplated or pending extramural grant applications.
- Feasibility studies to develop and test new methods, approaches, or applications.
- Pilot laboratory or biomarker development or application.
- Research with new or underserved populations.

B. Eligibility

Investigators eligible for pilot project support are:

- Predoctoral candidates or postdoctoral fellows. Trainees must have a faculty sponsor who will serve as the Principal Investigator and be held responsible for the scientific and fiscal integrity of the project.
- New or Junior Faculty involved in occupational health training at academic institutions in Region I are encouraged to apply but must also include a trainee (predoctoral or postdoctoral) in the project.

All applicants must be affiliated with institutions in NIOSH Region I (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island). As it is our intent to focus on the needs of the New England region and promote collaboration among researchers in the field of occupational safety and health within Region I, proposals from academic institutions and other entities within Region I but external to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health are strongly encouraged. These proposals must address an issue relevant to the New England Region and may address issues that are relevant beyond the region. Preference will be given to research conducted within Region I.

C. Human Subjects and Laboratory Animals

All projects involving either human or animal subjects must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). The IRB must be registered with the DHHS Office for Human Research Protections and have a current Federalwide Assurance Number.

Please make careful note of the following requirements:

1. The project title and PI on the IRB or IACUC application and approval letter must be an exact match to the project title and PI on the pilot project proposal.
2. The letter from the IRB or IACUC must document the names and roles of key research participants. If the project is performed by a predoctoral candidate or postdoctoral fellow, the IRB letter must list the faculty member as the Principal Investigator and the student as the Research Trainee.

In situations where the investigator's institution does not have a Human Subjects Committee, a Human Subjects application must be made to the Office of Human Research Administration (OHRA) of Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Documentation of IRB or IACUC approval of protocols and copies of approved consent forms must be provided to Harvard Chan ERC before project funding. **NOTE: Although IRB/IACUC approval is not required at the time of the proposal submission, approval must be submitted before the research and use of funds commences. Investigators should recognize that considerable time will be required for such approval and initiate approval requests at the earliest possible time.**

D. Accounting, Reporting, and Publications Requirements

Each applicant for these pilot project research funds must agree to comply with OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. **Please note that indirect costs are not allowed for these Pilot Project Awards.** Pilot projects must be completed by December 31, 2025;

expenses incurred after this date will not be paid.

Each investigator will also prepare and present a report describing the project to other scientists and to the non-scientific community. The presentation will take place at an annual Pilot Project Symposium designed to share results, enhance interactions across institutions, and discuss regional needs. The Symposium will take place in Winter 2026.

Any published materials resulting from this research will contain the following acknowledgement: "This investigation was made possible by Grant No. T42 OH008416 from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the NIOSH." Reprints should be provided to Dr. Gregory Wagner at gwagner@hsph.harvard.edu.

Investigators are responsible for submitting their manuscripts to [PubMed Central](#) and listing Grant No. **T42 OH008416** as the funding source. For publications resulting from pilot project awards, it is strongly encouraged that investigators add the ERC grant number as the Award in their [NCBI My Bibliography](#).

E. Budget Requirements and Restrictions

The maximum allowable budget request for total direct costs is \$18,400. Each application must provide a detailed budget and budget justification using the provided ERC application format. Allowable items include but are not limited to salary for a research assistant, travel to the field site to collect data (not for meeting or conference travel), printing and reproduction of data collection instruments (surveys), subject incentives, and necessary equipment and project or laboratory supplies.

Budget restrictions - the following items are not allowed:

- Funds for meeting/conference travel
- Faculty/Investigator salary
- Computer/software purchases
- Student stipend and/or tuition

F. Award Criteria

Pilot project proposals will be evaluated by individuals selected from a panel designated by the ERC Director, Dr. David Christiani, and PPRT Director Dr. Gregory Wagner. The panel will include faculty members chosen from the Harvard-NIOSH ERC cores as appropriate, one or more faculty from a Region I institution with a NIOSH training program grant, and other appropriate professionals external to HSPH.

Panelists with a conflict of interest with a given proposal will recuse themselves from evaluating that proposal.

Evaluation Criteria will include whether the proposal:

- Addresses a scientifically important problem in occupational safety and health,
- Is relevant to NIOSH and NORA sector/cross-sector programs or the changing nature of work and safety and health of working people research priorities, or other research priorities noted in the NIOSH strategic plan,
- Is scientifically sound in design,
- Is ethically sound,
- Considers or addresses occupational health equity,
- Addresses a need in the New England region, and
- Enhances the research training capacity in Region I.

In addition, the panel will evaluate whether the investigator team:

- Has the appropriate expertise to undertake the project,
- Has access to appropriate resources and facilities,
- Has developed a realistic and appropriate budget and
- Can complete the project by December 31, 2025.

G. Proposal Format and Submission

Deadline for Applications – April 12, 2024, 5 pm ET. *There will be no deadline extensions.*

Applicants will be notified of an award decision **by May 31, 2024.**

All proposals submitted to the Pilot Project Research Training Program must use the following ERC Pilot Project Application format:

- Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health ERC Pilot Project Cover page.
- Abstract (limit 14 lines).
- Project Description: Aims, Significance, and Method (limit 3 pages).
- References cited in the proposal.
- Timeline showing start/completion times of major activities.
- Detailed Budget and a Budget justification that provides the rationale for each item in the budget.
- Biosketch (2 pages) for each faculty investigator/PI and Trainee.
- Suggested reviewers.

Application submission: *Electronic submission of applications is required. Please send one PDF file of the entire application package to the ERC Administrator, Mr. Mircea Filimon, at mlfilimon@hsph.harvard.edu.*