Request for Proposals for Pilot Projects

Deadlines:
Letter of Intent October 15, 2012
Application November 30, 2012

Award Period: February 1, 2013 – January 31, 2014 (anticipated)

A. Background/Purpose
The Center for the Promotion of Health in the New England Workplace (CPH-NEW) has been awarded funding by NIOSH to develop a Pilot Projects program. This program will support small research projects, with a one-year budget of up to $11,000 (direct costs only). We expect to fund a maximum of three projects this year.

B. Nature and Scope of Projects
The purpose of the Pilot Project program is to conduct preliminary research in any area of workplace health and safety related to the NIOSH “Total Worker Health” (TWH) program (http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/TWH/) (formerly the WorkLife Initiative) and CPH-NEW, i.e., the integration of occupational safety and health (i.e., changes to the work environment) with workplace health promotion (i.e., change in personal health behaviors), to prevent injury/illness and to advance health and wellbeing of workers. Acceptable topics can range from macro-organizational to shop-floor issues. In keeping with the Research-to-Practice (R2P) emphasis of the Center, we encourage projects that actively engage external partners such as employers, unions, community groups, public health agencies, and insurers. Interdisciplinary proposals (epidemiology, occupational safety or ergonomics, health behavior, industrial hygiene, health policy, economics, etc.) are also encouraged.

Examples of eligible research include (but are not limited to):
- Feasibility studies to develop and test new intervention approaches or applications
- Pilot laboratory or biomarker development or application
- Study of effectiveness of R2P translation of prior research findings
- Research with newly defined or underserved at-risk populations

Applications are particularly encouraged for data collection, methods development, or other work in support of a future extramural grant application (K01, etc.), and from graduate students for thesis/dissertation research or thesis-related preparatory work.

It must be possible to complete the project within one year of the effective award date.
C. Eligibility

Investigators eligible for pilot project support include: 1) Graduate students at accredited academic institutions; 2) Post-doctoral trainees, including physicians and nurses and those in medical residency programs; 3) Faculty members, visiting scholars, and research staff at accredited academic institutions; and 4) Other individuals from non-academic institutions who have a demonstrated interest and research capability in relevant field(s). Priority will be given to investigators who do not have other pilot grants underway at the time.

Although the Center’s mission is to address the needs of the Northeast regional workforce, proposals will be accepted from institutions in any area of the United States. Proposals that involve research in foreign countries are not eligible.

D. Human Subjects and Laboratory Animals

Federal regulations require that if human or animal subjects are to be used in the conduct of research, the protocol must be approved by the human subjects or animal care committee of the investigator’s home institution and submitted to CPH-NEW for verification by the UMass Lowell Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

In situations where the investigator’s institution does not have a federally approved Human Subjects Committee, an application must be submitted to the UMass Lowell IRB to review and approve any research activity that involves human subjects. (Since the Pilot Projects are federally funded, all collaborating institutions that are engaged in research must operate under a valid federalwide assurance. Please refer to http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov.) The prospective applicant who needs to use this process at UML must state that need in the Letter of Intent and is advised to discuss the situation with Dr. Laura Punnett, Center Co-Director, as far in advance as possible of submitting the pilot project application.

The use of vertebrate animals in the conduct of this research will comply with applicable portions of the Animal Welfare Act (P.L. 89-544 as amended) and will follow guidelines prescribed in the DHHS Publication No 72-73 (NIH), “Guide to the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals,” 1985 edition.

All human subjects and animal use applications and dispositions will be kept on file at UML. All proposals along with their Human Subjects or Laboratory Animal Approval (if indicated) must be submitted to NIOSH for final funding approval.

Awardees will not receive any funds until the human subjects review, animal use review, and NIOSH approval have been granted.

E. Accounting, Reporting, and Publications Requirements

Each applicant for these pilot project research funds must agree to comply with OMB Circular A-21 for accounting and OMB Circular A-133 pertaining to audit of records. Please refer to www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/. For each pilot project funded, a subcontract agreement will be issued as a Cost Incurred award, using the “reimbursement model.” Each awardee must coordinate with the CPH-NEW Administrator, Ms. Sandy Sun (Sandy_Sun@uml.edu), regarding availability of funds. Indirect costs are excluded from these Pilot Project awards.
If any income is generated from this research activity, the investigator will inform the CPH-NEW Administrator. All appropriate Public Health Service Grant Policies regarding Program Income will apply.

Each investigator funded under this program will be required to provide an accounting of the use of the funds within 6 weeks after the close of the support period.

Each investigator will prepare and present a report describing his/her project to other researchers and to the non-scientific community. The presentation will take place at an annual symposium, the CPH-NEW “Research to Practice Forum,” which is designed to share results, enhance interactions across institutions, and discuss regional needs. The target audience will be broad, including all CPH-NEW partnering employers, unions, and other agencies; Center Affiliates and External Advisory Committee members; and members of professional organizations. The Forum will take place in the fall of each year following termination of the award period.

All material published as a result of this research will contain the following acknowledgement: “This investigation was made possible by Grant No. 2U19-OH008857 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 of all resulting articles and conference abstracts should be forwarded to the Center Administrator.

F. Budget

Allowable costs: Funds may be used to support research-related expenses such as payment of participants, printing/copying of research materials (e.g., questionnaires, consent forms), travel for data collection, specialized equipment (e.g., micro-cassette recorder/transcriber), or paying research assistants with specialized skills necessary for the proposed project (e.g., fluency in another language). Funds may not be used for conference travel, purchase of routine office equipment (e.g., computers), institutional indirect costs, or student tuition or fees. Funds may be used for the investigator’s salary only if the investigator is a student (in which case RA tuition costs might also be justifiable) or if s/he would otherwise be unable to carry out the proposed research. In this instance, the budget justification must include a clear statement of the investigator’s employment/salary situation, to justify the request.

G. Application

a. Letter of Intent

Prior to submitting the proposal, a letter of intent is required providing a descriptive title of the proposed project, a short abstract (maximum of 250 words), the research area (e.g., nutrition and social behavior at work, epidemiology of obesity, work organization and health policy, etc.), an estimated total cost for the project, and the name, phone number, e-mail address, and mailing address of the corresponding investigator.

If the investigator is a student, the letter should identify his or her advisor or sponsor and include a statement by that individual that s/he has read and approves of the proposal and will collaborate with the student to ensure the completion and quality of the work. The letter of intent should be submitted electronically to cphnew@uml.edu.
b. Proposal Format
The proposal should be prepared in an abbreviated NIH-type format. The following sections must be included, in a maximum of 10 pages (including references):
1. Cover Page with Abstract: Project title; Investigators’ names and institutions; and abstract of the project summarizing the goals, methods, and expected deliverables.
2. Specific Aims
3. Background and rationale: Explain the significance for worker health and how the work is innovative.
4. Research strategy: A description of the research project methods (experimental design, subjects, data collection and analysis, timeline).
5. Facilities: A description of the facilities to be used in the conduct of the research plan.
6. Bibliography

The following must also be included but do not count toward the 10-page limit:
7. Detailed line-item budget with accompanying budget justification
8. Biographical Sketch (4-page NIH format*) for the Principal Investigator and for each collaborator (up to 3 biosketches maximum in addition to the PI).

* NIH forms and instructions for budget and biographical sketches are available on-line at: http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html

The earliest start date is February 1, 2013. All awards are contingent upon NIOSH funding. In particular, please note that funds for the second six months of the pilot project grant period are conditional upon NIOSH annual renewal of CPH-NEW for the following year (8/1/2013 – 7/31/2014).

H. Proposal Review and Award Criteria
Each proposal will be reviewed by a minimum of 2 researchers who are CPH-NEW investigators, External Advisory Committee members, Center Affiliates, or other scientists who have expertise in the relevant field(s) for each application and no conflict of interest.
Funding will be awarded based on:
- Scientific merit of the research plan, including both goals and methods (30%)
- Importance of the research question and potential for improvements in worker health from the proposed project (30%)
- Extent to which the project is novel or innovative, especially proposals that test new methodologies and/or theories or examine new research areas in need of pilot data (15%)
- Relevance to the mission and priorities of CPH-NEW and NIOSH TWH (25%)

In addition the panel will evaluate whether the investigator(s)
- Has the appropriate expertise to undertake the project,
- Has access to appropriate resources and facilities,
- Has developed a realistic and appropriate budget and timeline, and
- Can accomplish the project within one year.