

**Southwest Center for Occupational and Environmental Health  
Pilot Project Research Training Program  
Request for Proposals**

**Application Due Date: November 15, 2024**

### **Funding Opportunity Announcement**

The Southwest Center for Occupational and Environmental Health (SWCOEH) announces the availability of funds to support graduate students and early career investigators as they develop the skills and experience needed to become successful researchers in occupational and environmental health through mentored research training. The Pilot Project Research Training Program (PPRTP) has a regional focus to foster inter-institutional ties and capacity in occupational health research within Public Health Region 6 (PHR 6) in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

### **Eligibility**

The PPRTP provides funding for pilot research projects through two types of awards:

- **Research Trainee Awards:** Graduate students or postdoctoral fellows in an occupational health and safety-related discipline.
- **Junior Investigator Awards:** Junior investigators with research interests in the general area of occupational health and safety. Junior investigators are defined as having completed their terminal degree or postdoctoral training within the past 7 years and not previously served as Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) on a substantial independent research award other than Public Health Service research grants R03, R15, R21, K01, K08, or K12.

Graduate students and other junior investigators with research interests in occupational health and safety are invited to submit applications for short-term research projects that serve the needs of worker populations in PHR6. To increase research literacy and foster community-academic collaboration, we encourage proposals that include a partnership with a community organization with worker health, safety, or well-being interests in PHR6. Research projects that advance the priority of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) goals (<https://www.cdc.gov/nora/default.html>) will be given priority.

### **Funding Support**

Researchers may request up to \$10,000 in direct costs. Indirect costs are limited to 8%, and sponsoring institutions are encouraged to waive the indirect cost to optimize the impact these funds may have on developing research capacity.

Support for these projects is available through a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to the SWCOEH at UTHealth Houston School of Public Health (T42 OH008421).

### **How to Apply**

Applications to the SWCOEH PPRTP must use the application form and be submitted electronically by the published due date. We recommend that you complete your application and then access the online submission portal. You will not be able to save your work and return to the online submission portal. Links to the application form and submission portal are below.

Application form: <https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/swcoeh/pilot-projects/>.

Online submission portal: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/1a190727e6d6427686086bf7f30e7b7a>.

## General Instructions for Completing the Application

Instructions are embedded throughout the application form and additional information is provided here. Please read all instructions in [brackets] in the application form and comply with page limits. Use Arial or Calibri 11pt font and maintain the 0.5" pre-set margins in the application form.

Complete all sections of the application and attach additional materials and obtain required attestation and signatures of the Principal Investigator (PI), Faculty Mentor, and applicant organization's signing official. These signatures must accompany the application.

Save the final application and all attachments as a single PDF and upload the PDF to the submission portal, following the online instructions.

## Specific Application Instructions

The application form has the following sections and [page limits].

- A. Budget Request [1 page] and Justification [1 page]
- B. Project Summary [1 page]
- C. Specific Aims [1 page]
- D. Research Strategy [2 pages]
- E. Plan for dissemination of results and follow-on research [1 page]
- F. References [2 pages]
- G. Additional Materials [no limit]
- H. Research Qualifications [1 page]
- I. Mentoring Plan [2 pages]
- J. Researcher, Faculty Mentor, and Administrative Official Attestations [N/A]

Specific instructions for each of these sections are embedded in the application form [in brackets]. Additional guidance is provided here.

- A. Budget Request and Justification. PPRTTP budgets are limited to \$10,000 in direct costs. Indirect costs are limited to 8%, and sponsoring institutions are encouraged to waive the indirect cost to optimize the impact these funds may have on developing research capacity.

The budget covers a 12-month period for a project period of July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026. Allowable expenses within the \$10,000 in direct costs limit include:

- Project personnel including salary support for the Principal Investigator and other support personnel. PPRTTP funds may not be used to support Faculty Mentors.
- Consultants
- Small equipment (<\$5,000)
- Supplies
- Other Expenses as justified

PPRTTP funds may not be used for food and beverage.

- B. Project Summary. This is a one-page summary of the proposed research that should provide a brief background for the proposed study. The background should include reference to the burden to be addressed by the project and the need the proposed project. Succinctly state the overall objectives and specific aims of the proposed study. Briefly describe the research design and methods for achieving the stated objectives and aims of the project. Concisely explain the anticipated impact(s) of the project.

- C. Specific Aims. Concisely state the goals of the proposed study and summarize the expected outcome(s), including any intermediate and end outcomes that may result for the proposed study's target scientific field(s) or worker groups.

Succinctly list the specific objectives of the proposed project (e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm, improve safety and health of workers, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop new technology).

D. Research Strategy. Research Strategy will be evaluated by the following criteria that have been adapted from review criteria at [NIH](#) and [NIOSH](#). Reviewers will provide an overall impact/priority score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to achieve its aims.

1. Significance:

- Does the research address an important problem or critical barrier to progress in the field of OSH?
- Does the research address an important regional problem in Public Health Region 6?
- Does the project address [NORA sector/cross sector goal\(s\)](#)?
- If the aims are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability and/or clinical practice be advanced?
- Does the project address the [burden, need, impact](#) (BNI) of the occupational exposure and hazards that are the focus of the proposed research?

2. Investigator(s):

- Are the Principal Investigators (PIs), collaborators, and other researchers well-suited to the project?
- Does the research team have complementary and integrated expertise relevant for the project?
- If early-stage or new investigators, do they have appropriate experience and training? Do they have suitable mentors?
- If established investigators, are they new to the field of OSH research?

3. Innovation:

- Does the application challenge and/or seek to shift current research or practice paradigms?
- Does the research project involve novel concepts, approaches, methods, or interventions?
- Does the application refine or improve existing concepts, approaches, methods, or interventions?

4. Approach:

- Are the overall strategy, conceptual framework, research design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well-integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project?
- Does the study involve multiple stakeholders (e.g., employees, employers, and academia)?
- Is there interdisciplinary interaction or potential?
- Does the proposal include graduate students or others who will benefit from training in research methods in occupational health and safety?
- Are potential problems, alternate strategies, and benchmarks for success presented?

5. Environment:

- Does the environment in which the work will be performed contribute to the probability of success?
- Are the institutional support, equipment and other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the project proposed?
- Can the project be accomplished in the timeline presented?
- Will the project benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, subject populations or collaborative arrangements?

6. Additional Criteria:

- Does the research project have the potential of obtaining pilot data that may increase the probability of developing fundable larger grants or contracts in the future?
- Is the budget appropriate to complete the scope of the work proposed?

- E. Plan for dissemination of results and follow-on research. Describe plans for the dissemination of the results of the proposed research in the peer reviewed literature, scientific conferences, and potential for follow-on research.
- F. References. Provide references for all cited work within the 2-page limit.
- G. Additional Materials. Include the following additional materials in the single PDF application.
- A biosketch is required for the Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-PIs using the NIH biosketch form: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>. Follow NIH instructions and do not exceed the 5-page limit per biosketch.
  - IRB determination letter, if available. IRB approval is not required to submit an application. However, funds will not be released until IRB approval has been obtained. IRB approval should be built into the project timeline. A final IRB determination letter is required when available.
  - Letters of Support
- H. Research Qualifications. Provide justification of PI's eligibility for the category of award requested. See category descriptions here: <https://go.uth.edu/pilot-project>
- I. Mentoring Plan. This section is only for Research Trainees. Please provide a detailed mentoring plan that describes the following aspects of research trainee mentoring.
- Mentor qualifications
  - Goals of mentoring process
  - Frequency of interaction between mentor and student researcher
  - Plan for supervision and feedback
  - Mentor's role in proposed research
  - Degree of mentor oversight of project outputs and outcomes
- J. Researcher, Faculty Mentor, and Administrative Official Attestations. Signed attestations are required by the PI, Faculty Mentor, and the Signing Official of the Applicant Organization. Certified electronic signatures are allowed. These signatures must accompany the completed application.

### **Review Committee**

Complete applications will be evaluated by a single review panel, consisting of members representing collaborating institutions in PHR6, including the UTHealth Houston School of Public Health, as well as other members with appropriate expertise. At least two members of the review panel will review each proposal. Meritorious applications will be assigned a priority score based on the applicable criteria described above.

### **Progress Report**

A brief written progress report is due 6 and 3 months **prior** to the end of the proposed budget period. This report should indicate the progress of the study including preliminary results and any problems encountered. A template will be provided.

### **Final Written Report**

A final written report needs to be submitted 3 months **after** the end of the budget period, with results outlined. This report should also document all presentations, publications and extramural funds that have resulted, in part, directly or indirectly from this award. A template will be provided.

### **Publications and Acknowledgement**

Publications resulting from this work should meet the NIH Public Access Policy and have an associated PMCID number. More information is available here: <http://publicaccess.nih.gov/index.htm>.

The investigator must acknowledge support from the Southwest Center for Occupational and Environmental Health Pilot Research Training Program in all their related publications. Specific language will be provided if project is funded.

### **Annual Research Symposium**

Awardees will be required to present their findings at the Annual Southwest Centers PPRTTP Symposium. This event is a collaborative effort between UTHealth Houston School of Public Health SWCOEH and the University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler Southwest Center for Agricultural Health, Injury Prevention and Education, a NIOSH Center for Agricultural Safety and Health. These two NIOSH funded Centers organize an annual research symposium where pilot project investigators share their research project results and plans for future work.

### **Resulting Work**

Funded investigators will be contacted periodically for up to 5 years after their project concludes to provide an update about follow-on work that resulted from this pilot project.