Award Information and Instructions for Proposal Submission

University of Cincinnati Education and Research Center
Pilot Research Project Training Program

1. Deadline to submit: **Friday, February 12, 2027**
2. Submit application and complete survey here
3. The award limit is $7,000 for regular proposals and $8,000 for priority focus areas (contingent upon the availability of funds)
4. The budget period is from 7/1/27 to 6/30/28. **All funds must be expended by the end of the budget period**. Please see Budget section below for allowable and disallowable expenses.
5. If awarded, the successful candidate and/or mentor will be required to attend the annual PRP Symposium at UC in the Fall; the first year to present a poster of their study design and the second year to present the results of their project. Travel expenses will be reimbursed for one presenter to attend the annual symposium (which is not part of the project budget).

Eligibility Requirements

1. Only one Principal Investigator (PI) is allowed (no Co-PI).
2. PI must be at the PhD student, DNP student, postdoctoral, medical resident or junior faculty level. Occupational Safety and Health professionals cannot exceed the rank of assistant professor. A professor of any rank, however, can apply as long as they are new to the occupational safety and health field and wish to apply their expertise from another field to occupational safety and health issues.
3. PRP Grantees cannot receive more than two pilot research grants as a PI. Grantees who are new to the occupational safety and health field cannot receive more than one pilot research grant as a PI if their rank is higher than Junior Faculty level.
4. Preference will be given to members of the ERC-PRP consortium; AFIT, BGSU, CSU, EKU, KSU, MSU, OU, PU, UC, UK, UT, and WKU. Submissions outside these institutions are encouraged to contact the ERC Coordinator prior to submitting applications.

Interdisciplinary Focus or ERC Strategic Priorities Focus

Applicants will have the option to select the proposal type they are submitting. Options are regular or one of the two specialty focus areas below.

- **Interdisciplinary Focus:** The proposed application must have a research focus that deals with at least two areas of ERC and/or related disciplines (e.g., all disciplines of engineering and medicine, psychology, physics, chemistry, geography, hospital management, fine arts, public health, construction management, veterinary science, firefighting science, nursing, rehabilitation science, etc.). If the applicant institution does not have the above mentioned specific disciplines, then at least two disciplines of any field addressing occupational safety and health problems should be included. There should be at least one person on the research team representing each discipline.
- **ERC Strategic Priorities Focus:** The proposal must address an occupational safety and health issue among one of the following occupational groups (identified as priority areas for Cincinnati ERC): Firefighters and first responders; Healthcare workers; Low wage workers.

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Application Format

In general, it is expected that your application follow the NIH PHS 398 format. You may obtain the PHS 398 forms by going on the NIH website. In addition, please convert the electronic version of your proposal into a single PDF file.

NOTE – The UC Submission Checklist must be completed and submitted with your proposal. Please review this checklist carefully to make sure your proposal contains all of the items listed (mark each item after you check that it is complete). Incomplete proposals with missing checklists will be returned without review. If you have any questions, please contact the ERC coordinator before your submission at erccoor@uc.edu or 513-558-5710.

1. **PRP Grant Application Cover Sheet**
    a. Download cover sheet from Pilot Project Research (PRP) Training Program website
2. **Face page (PHS 398 Face Page) with official signature**
3. **Abstract (PHS 398 Form Page 2, maximum 1 page)**
4. **Key Personnel (PHS 398 Form Page 2, continued)**
    a. List PI, Mentor, Collaborators (Research assistants, student helpers, etc.)
    b. Consultants can be listed under Other Significant Contributors
5. **Budget and Justification (PHS 398 Form Page 4 and Page 5)**
    a. Provide budget justification consistent with proposed study and timeline.
    b. Allowable expenses include all relevant project expenses including support personnel, supplies and travel necessary to conduct research and small equipment items or portions thereof. It is not customary for 100% of equipment cost to be covered. Equipment purchased for the project becomes the property of the university sponsoring the PI. Funds allocated for computer equipment cannot exceed $500, and a budget justification must be provided.
    c. Disallowable expenses include overhead/indirect costs, investigator and mentor salaries, student tuition and stipends, technical conference travel, routine clerical assistance and computer equipment exceeding $500. No fees are allowed for consultants who are faculty members. On budget page, list PI and Mentor under Personnel but do not fill in effort and list salary as 0. Only RAs and student helpers should have salaries listed; include Fringe Benefits.
    d. All PRP awardees are to make a poster presentation at the symposium held in the fall after their award notice. If you cannot access free poster printing through your college or another source, please include funds in your budget to print a poster.
6. **Biographical Sketch (PHS 398 Biographical Sketch Format Page)**
    a. Provide a biographical sketch, including personal statement, for the PI, mentor, research assistants, and consultants. If applying for Interdisciplinary Focus, the research team must include 2 or more areas of ERC and/or related disciplines which should be documented in their respective bio sketches.

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Application Format

7. Project Description (PHS 398 Continuation Format Page) - Refer to Submission Checklist

a. **Interdisciplinary Focus Option, ERC Strategic Priorities Option –** include rationale and names of the research team with their expertise in a clearly labeled sub-section in the Research Design and Methods section (include bio sketches in previous section).

8. Human Subjects/Vertebrate Animals Research - Institutional Review Board Approval

a. If humans or vertebrate animals are used in the project, then a section on this matter must be included. (This section will not be part of the 5 page limit).

b. See PHS 398 Instructions. For human subjects, see sections 5.5.6 – 5.5.9. For vertebrate animals, see section 5.5.10. A copy of the Human or Animal Research Review Board form showing approval or exemption must be sent to the University of Cincinnati Education and Research Center (ERC) before funds can be expended. **It is strongly recommended to apply for approval while your proposal is under review.** For additional requirements regarding human or animal research, please contact your institution's Human or Animal Research Review Board. If neither human nor vertebrate animals are involved in the project, a statement verifying no human research will be required from IRB, if funded.

9. Letters of Support

a. From Mentor if PI is a Student
   i. If the PI is a PhD student, post doc or medical resident, a faculty mentor must be listed. Include a letter of support from the mentor indicating the student investigator's ability to complete the proposed study in the timeline given, the student investigator's potential as a researcher, and the potential for future funding. The letter from the mentor should also verify the student investigator's status (enrolled in or accepted into PhD program, post doc, medical resident).

b. From Collaborators
   i. Additional collaborators should indicate their agreement to collaborate and describe their role in the project. If applying for one of the specialty focus areas, the letters of support should justify the proposed Interdisciplinary or ERC Strategic Priorities project and the research team with appropriate Interdisciplinary or ERC Strategic Priorities backgrounds.

c. Letter of Commitment from the PI
   i. The letter of support from the PI should state one of the following: 1) The proposal has not been submitted elsewhere, 2) the proposal has been submitted elsewhere but there is no significant overlap between proposals, or 3) if there is significant overlap between the proposals, funding for only one will be accepted.
   ii. The letter of commitment from the PI should also state the following:

"In the event that the grant is funded, I (PI) will attend the Pilot Research Program (PRP) Symposium during the first year of funding and then again at the end of my project to present the findings of my project. In the event I am not able to attend the symposiums, it will be my responsibility to have my mentor or another colleague attend the PRP Symposiums and carry out the above responsibilities on my behalf."

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Review Process

A merit review process will evaluate the proposals. At least two members of the review panel will review each proposal. The list of eligible reviewers will include at least one member from each of the participating NIOSH Pilot Research Training Project institutions (University of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, Eastern Kentucky University, Western Kentucky University, Purdue University, Murray State University, University of Toledo, Air Force Institute of Technology, Ohio University, Bowling Green State University, Central State University and the University of Cincinnati). Additionally, there may be reviewers from other institutions.

The program director will serve as the non-voting chairperson of the review panel and will only vote to break a tie. Reviewers may include those with expertise that may not be directly in your field. Please keep this in mind when preparing your application and avoid the use of jargon. Explain technical terms and include sufficient background information to enable reviewers to judge the soundness of your experimental plan and the significance of your hypothesis.

Review Process

Each proposal will be evaluated according to the following criteria (each criterion will be rated on a scale of 1 =Exceptional to 9 =Poor; see attached Nine Point Proposal Rating Scale):

1. **Significance (weight = 15%)** Does this study address an important problem? If the aims of the application are achieved, how will scientific knowledge be advanced? How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?
2. **Investigator(s) (weight = 15%)** Investigator is evaluated on the adequacy of the individual's background in terms of appropriate training and ability to carry out this work. If the project is collaborative, do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise; are their leadership approach, governance and organizational structure appropriate for the project?
    a. Important: Remember that the PI of a Pilot Grant application must: be at the pre-doctoral (PhD student or higher), postdoctoral, medical resident or junior faculty level (DNP students will be eligible)
    b. Not exceed the rank of assistant professor if they are in the field of occupational safety and health. A professor of any rank can apply as long as they are new to the occupational safety and health field and wish to apply their expertise from another field to occupational safety and health issues. Please note that an applicant who qualifies under this category can only be a PI once if their rank is higher than Junior Faculty level. Other applicants cannot receive more than two pilot research grants as a Principal Investigator.
    c. Be able to complete the project within limits of visa if not U.S. citizen
    d. Name a mentor assisting with project if PI is a PhD student, post doc, or medical resident
    e. Provide a biographical sketch on self, co-investigators, and consultants
3. **Innovation (weight = 10%)** Does the project employ novel concepts, approaches or methods? Are the aims original and innovative? Does the project challenge existing paradigms or develop new methodologies or technologies?

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Review Process

4. **Approach (weight = 30%)** Does this project involve multiple stakeholders (employees, employers, and academia)? Are the conceptual framework, design (including composition of study population), methods, and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics? If the project involves human subject research, are the plans for 1) protection of human subjects from research risks, and 2) inclusion of minorities and members of both sexes/genders, as well as the inclusion of children, justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed?
5. **Environment (weight = 15%)** Does the proposed study contribute to ERC research training objectives? Does the proposed project increase the institution's ability to conduct occupational health and safety research and contribute to regional needs? Does the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Do the proposed experiments take advantage of unique features of the scientific environment or employ useful collaborative arrangements? Is there evidence of institutional support?
6. **Future Funding Potential (weight = 15%)** Does the project have the potential of obtaining pilot data that may increase the probability of developing a fundable larger RO1-type or other type of grants or contracts in the future?

Overall Evaluation

Reviewers will briefly summarize the most important points of the critique, addressing the strengths and weaknesses (major, moderate, and minor) of the application in terms of the six review criteria, recommend their level of enthusiasm (very high, high, average, low, very low) for the proposal, reflecting the overall impact of the project on the field, weighting the review criteria as they feel appropriate for each application, make a comment regarding the acceptability or changes necessary in the budget requested, and identify any critical issue(s) that need to be clarified regarding the proposal.

Progress Reporting Requirements

1. Investigators are required to present a poster of the study design of their project during the fall after their award notice and a podium presentation of the results of their project the following year at the annual PRP Symposium. The **2027 PRP Symposium will be on October 21-22** at the University of Cincinnati. In the event that extenuating circumstances prevent the PI from presenting at the Symposium, it is the PI's responsibility to have a representative (preferably the PI's mentor or co-investigator) to make the presentation on his/her behalf.
2. **A final written report needs to be submitted by Friday, August 18, 2028**
    a. This report should also document all presentations, publications and extramural funds that have resulted in part, directly or indirectly from this award. Report instructions will be sent to awardees.
    b. A statement of actual disposition of funds needs to be included in the final report.
3. Upon acceptance of the award, PI must agree to provide future updates to the PRP on publications and additional grant awards resulting from their PRP grant. The PI must acknowledge support from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the University of Cincinnati Education and Research Center's Pilot Research Project Training Program in all their related publications, which resulted from the pilot grant award. The acknowledgement shall read as follows: ***"This research study was (partially) supported by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the Pilot Research Project Training Program of the University of Cincinnati Education and Research Center Grant #(fund number to be provided at a later date)."***

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NIH Grant Proposal Scoring System: Nine Point Rating Scale

Impact	Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses
High	1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
	2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
	3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
Medium	4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
	5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
	6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
Low	7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
	8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
	9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses

For more information or questions, please contact:
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PRP Website: http://med.uc.edu/eh/centers/erc/programs/prp