May 1, 2022

Re: **Call for Proposals for the Carolina Center for Total Worker Health® and Well-being**

**Pilot Project Program (Year 2)**

The Carolina Center for Total Worker Health® and Well-being (henceforth, *Carolina Center*) announces the availability of funding for 2 pilot research projects, as below.

* Two (2) funded pilot projects that align with the Total Worker Health® framework.
	+ Each project will be funded for up to $12,000; to be completed in 12-18 months.

This new Carolina Center (<https://sph.unc.edu/sph-news/unc-chapel-hill-named-niosh-center-of-excellence-for-total-worker-health/>) is based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with an interdisciplinary team of investigators from the School of Nursing, the School of Medicine, the Department of Exercise Science and Sports, the School of Public Health, as well as from the UNC-Greensboro and Research Triangle International, with funding from the National Institute of Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH), a branch agency of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**Goals of the Pilot Projects Program (PPP)**: The goal of the Carolina Center’s Pilot Projects Program (PPP) is to cultivate innovative research that builds an evidence base for Total Worker Health® (TWH), which is defined as “***policies, programs, and practices that integrate protection from work-related safety and health hazards with promotion of injury and illness-prevention efforts to advance worker well-being”.*** The TWH approach *“prioritizes a hazard-free work environment for all workers” by* addressing prioritized, unresolved, and critically important occupational health and safety (OHS) issues. In short, the TWH approach integrates the areas of occupational safety and worker health into a single framework. The TWH framework reflects a more holistic approach to understanding how to promote a healthier workforce. More information on the TWH framework can be found [**here**](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh/default.html)**.**

For investigators interested in expanding their research into the area of **social determinants of health (SDOH)**, the TWH approach offers opportunities for doing so. More information about work as a SDOH can be found [**here**,](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33341740/) as well as on the CDC Healthy People [**website**](https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health)**.**

The pilot projects are intended to (1) support research related to current and emerging worker health issues and threats, (2) engage post-doctoral fellows, junior faculty, and experienced investigators new to TWH to develop or extend their programs of research using a TWH framework, with a special emphasis to support researchers from underserved and underrepresented groups, (3) test a new method or approach for building new knowledge in TWH, (4) test new approaches for building capacity for TWH in the workforce, and (5) engage communities to improve worker health and well-being. Research proposed in pilot project proposals should advance the theory, methods of scientific inquiry, and/or knowledge of the effectiveness (outcomes) and mechanisms (processes driving outcomes) of the TWH approach. Applicants should address how the proposed research addresses the 3rd decade of the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) priorities based on the [**Burden, Need, and Impact (BNI) method**](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/programs/bni.html).

The PPP will provide seed money (up to $12,000) for investigators to conduct short-term projects (12-18-months) that advance worker health and well-being. To build the scientific basis for TWH, projects that incorporate novel methods for understanding TWH will be encouraged. We anticipate funding at least two pilot projects during this funding cycle.

**Eligibility:** Investigators from several universities and/or research institutions in North Carolina are eligible to apply (see list at end of document). Postdoctoral fellows and junior faculty are eligible to apply as PIs so long as they have included a mentor with expertise in TWH and OHS. These pilot funds may be used by new investigators to collect data needed to successfully apply for other larger grants. Senior faculty who want to pursue a new interest in TWH are also eligible to apply because we want to encourage investigators from other fields of study (*e.g.*, economics, law, politics, health services, business, and more) to apply their expertise to TWH research. Investigators who identify from an underserved or underrepresented group, such as Black, Hispanic, Asian-American, and Native American ethnicities, are particularly encouraged to apply.

**Proposal Format:** The application is limited to 5 pages and will follow core elements of a traditional NIH proposal, including Specific Aims (1 page), Significance and Innovation (1 page), and Research Plan (3 pages). Human subjects, references, budget and justification, biosketches ([**NIH format**](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm)) of all investigators, a statement of the funding mechanism investigators plan to apply for upon completion of the pilot proposal, and proposed manuscripts are also required components of the application.

For postdoctoral fellows and junior faculty, a mentoring plan (1 page) is required to identify a mentor and a plan for successfully completing the project and to specify a mechanism to apply for future external funding. Mentoring plans must include approaches for project oversight, mentee/mentor communication regarding project procedures, timeliness of project completion, ethical considerations, and opportunities for presentations, publications, and future funding. The mentor will be required to provide a letter of support and NIH-formatted biosketch. The mentor must have a strong record as researcher and mentor, including peer-reviewed publications and grant/contract funding in areas related to the proposed project.

**Merit Review Process:** All proposals submitted by the deadline will first be screened by the Carolina Center PPP Co-Directors. Applications that are not complete, or do not meet basic standards for scientific rigor will not be selected for going forward with a full review. Pilot projects will be reviewed by a panel comprised of individuals with expertise in the field of TWH and occupational safety and health. Review panel members will be ineligible to compete in this pilot project application process. Review criteria include:

* scientific merit,
* relevance to the goal/objectives of Carolina Center, NIOSH NORA, and TWH,
* creativity related to and innovativeness of the project,
* feasibility to conduct the research,
* likelihood of leading to future work and research funding (developing an R01-like project),

**Award Conditions:** Awards will have a maximum of 12–18-month duration, with **funding up to $12,000 for pilot projects and up to $20,000 for an emerging issue project** inclusive of all costs (direct and indirect cost). Prior to awarding any funds, IRB approval must be obtained for projects including human subjects, after which the project will be reviewed for final approval by the Carolina Center PPP Co-Directors. **Funds awarded must be spent within the current award budget period or by August 30, 2023.**

**Semi-annual reports** of not more than three pages in length are required of funded pilot projects. **A final report** must be submitted no later than 90 days following the award budget period. Awardees are also requested to present their findings/results at the joint Southeastern States Occupational Network/Southeast Regional Research Symposium held yearly. Travel assistance is provided to awardees to attend the conference.

Findings from the pilot studies are intended to support the submission of large-scale interdisciplinary TWH projects to obtain funding from federal, state, philanthropic foundations, and other non-governmental agencies (e.g., NIOSH, NIH, NIEHS, or foundations). All successful applications will clearly articulate specific plans for extramural funding applications. Dissemination of findings and translation of research results are expected outcomes of funded pilots to improve practice in worker health and safety.

To assist investigators who might be less familiar with Total Worker Health (TWH), and who may need some initial guidance in directing a project idea that aligns with TWH, Drs. Kneipp & Nylander-French will host Zoom "open hours", where you may drop in to explore ideas you have for a project and receive some initial guidance.  **The Zoom link**for each of these sessions is:

**Join Zoom Meeting**

[**https://zoom.us/j/93997972482?pwd=UzRvMkhSMEh6UlJXNzNycUhoRFhZQT09**](https://zoom.us/j/93997972482?pwd=UzRvMkhSMEh6UlJXNzNycUhoRFhZQT09)

**Meeting ID: 939 9797 2482**

**Passcode: 271709**

And **the dates & times for drop-in are:**

**Tuesday, May 17, 3p-4p**

**Tuesday, May 31, 3p-4p**

**Tuesday, June 21, 3p-4p**

**Tuesday, July 5, 3p-4p**

**Tuesday, August 2, 3p-4p**

If you have any questions, or would like to speak with us about your ideas but are unable to attend the above open sessions, please do not hesitate to reach out to either Dr. Leena Nylander-French, at leena\_french@unc.edu or Dr. Shawn Kneipp, at skneipp@email.unc.edu.

A letter of intent with a 1 paragraph description of the project must be **received** electronically by **August 1, 2022**.

All proposals must be **received** electronically by the due date of **August 31, 2022.**

LOIs and proposals are to be submitted to Dr. Leena Nylander-French, at leena\_french@unc.edu **and** Dr. Shawn Kneipp, at skneipp@email.unc.edu.

**Universities Eligible to Apply:**

UNC-Chapel Hill

Duke University

NC State University

Appalachian State University

East Carolina University

Elizabeth City State University

Fayetteville State University

North Carolina A&T University

North Carolina Central University

RTI

UNC-Asheville

UNC-Charlotte

UNC-Greensboro

UNC-Pembroke

UNC-Wilmington

Western Carolina University

Winston-Salem State University

Wake Forest University