

Revision Date:
June 1, 2022

Research Grant Application and Management Guidance Manual

Ohio Occupational Safety and Health Research Program

Contents

Introduction	3
Purpose of Program	3
Application Process Summary	3
Eligibility Guidelines and Restrictions.....	3
Research-to-Practice (r2p) Focus.....	4
Research Proposal Elements and Guidelines.....	4
Grant Proposal Submission.....	5
Questions about Preparing the Proposal	5
Frequently Asked Questions	5
Proposal Review	6
Scoring	6
Review Criteria Influencing the Score	6
Additional Review Consideration Not Influencing the Score.....	7
Notification	7
Contract and Initial Payment	7
Contract.....	7
Initial Payment.....	7
Fiscal and Progress Reporting	8
Progress Reports.....	8
Fiscal Reports	8
Request for Extensions and Amendments.....	8
Final Report Submission/ Project Wrap-Up	9
Final Report and Final Expenditure Report	9
Projects Not on Track to be Completed	9
Appendix	10

Introduction

This manual provides applicants and awardees with summary information about the Ohio Occupational Safety and Health Research Program and additional guidance about the grant application process, the process to initiate the research grant contract, and the administration of the grant. This manual supplements the [Ohio Occupational Safety and Health Research Program application and guidelines](#), hereafter referred to as the “Application Guidelines.”

Purpose of Program

The Ohio Occupational Safety and Health Research Program is administered by the Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation (BWC). It is a competitive research program with an emphasis on maximizing the impact of research efforts in the areas of occupational safety and health on the overall safety, health, productivity, and competitiveness of Ohio’s workforce. BWC has modeled the program, with minor modifications, after the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health’s (NIOSH) National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA). The program provides funding for research projects up to \$300,000 per project. The duration of each research project is limited to 24 months. The program is an open competition for researchers in Ohio’s not-for-profit higher education institutions and research organizations.

Application Process Summary

For full instructions on how to apply and information about the required elements for research proposal submissions, applicants should refer to the [Application Guidelines](#). These guidelines can be found at the [Research Program page](#) on BWC’s website.

To be added to the mailing list for notifications when future cycles of the program are announced, please contact BWC at BWCResearchProgram@bwc.state.oh.us.

The application process is summarized here.

Eligibility Guidelines and Restrictions

This program is limited to not-for-profit higher education institutions and research organizations located in Ohio.

There are several causes for which proposals can be rejected without detailed review. These causes include, but are not limited to:

1. Sponsoring college /university /research institution or organization is not in Ohio.
2. Proposal is not received by the submission deadline.
3. Proposed research project is too broad or disjointed.
4. Proposal fails to meet the format requirements described in the [Application Guidelines](#).
5. Proposal substantially duplicates a research project previously completed or currently under way by another research team or organization.
6. Proposal substantially duplicates a proposal from a previous funding cycle that was not awarded a Research Grant.
7. Proposed research project or associated budget is not feasible or reasonable.
8. Proposal is in a focus area that is excluded from funding during the current program funding cycle.

Research-to-Practice (r2p) Focus

Successful research proposals to be funded by the program must demonstrate: 1) a high probability for short- or long-term impact for the proposed research project (basic or applied); 2) a commitment to achieving optimal dissemination of research products, including knowledge, interventions, recommendations, and technologies; and 3) a commitment to engaging internal and external partners throughout the process. BWC encourages researchers to consider the following r2p elements, established by NIOSH, as they develop their research proposals:

1. List external partners involved in the research project and their expected contributions, including roles and responsibilities.
2. Identify the primary target audience(s) intended to use the new research findings (i.e., knowledge, intervention, recommendations, technology) generated by the project.
3. Identify relevant outputs/products that will be used to effectively communicate research findings to the target audience(s).
4. Describe the methods/channels of communication that will be used to disseminate the research findings and associated outputs to the target audience(s).
5. Identify intermediate outcomes that could potentially occur as a result of the research findings and related outputs.
6. Outline methods that may be used to capture the potential impact that the research findings have on improving worker safety and health.

Research Proposal Elements and Guidelines

Proposals must meet general guidelines for formatting that are explained in the [Application Guidelines](#) and must include the required seven major sections:

1. Project Summary/Abstract
2. Performance Site(s), Resources, and Equipment
3. Key Personnel
4. Biographical Sketch(es)
5. Study Plan
 - a. Specific Aims
 - b. Study Strategy
 - c. Human Subjects
 - d. Bibliography and References Cited
6. Budget, Personnel Plan, and Project Timeline
7. Deliverables

Each section must be limited to the number of pages allowed for that section. Website addresses may not be used to provide information necessary to the review. However, URLs are acceptable in citation listings, the biosketch, and the references.

Grant Proposal Submission

Proposals must be submitted by the deadline to the BWC Research Program email box:

BWCResearchProgram@bwc.state.oh.us. BWC will send a confirmation email to each applicant upon receipt of the application/proposal.

Questions about Preparing the Proposal

Prospective applicants are encouraged to address questions to BWC using the email and phone contact information provided in the [Application Guidelines](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are some examples of the types of organizations that are eligible and not eligible to apply?
 - A. Some examples of eligible organizations include not-for-profit state-funded Ohio colleges, not-for-profit private Ohio colleges, and not-for-profit research organizations in Ohio. Some examples of organizations that are not eligible to apply include federal government agencies, military institutions, and hospitals not affiliated with universities.
2. Can I partner with an institution located outside of Ohio?
 - A. The sponsoring institution must be located in Ohio. Collaboration with individuals and institutions located outside of Ohio is allowed. However, keep in mind that BWC as an organization is focused on Ohio's workers and employers, so we encourage you to focus your topics on improving occupational safety and health for Ohioans.
3. What types of research topics would be of interest to BWC?
 - A. [The Application Guidelines](#) include a list of priority research focus areas that are updated each time another cycle of the program is announced. However, applicants are not limited to these focus areas and may submit other types of proposals as well that address occupational safety and health, reducing accidents and injuries, and disability prevention among injured workers. BWC will not consider topics that do not meet the criteria in the Eligibility Guidelines and Restrictions.
4. I applied last time and my proposal wasn't funded. Can I revise my proposal and apply again next time?
 - A. We will consider proposals on the same topic, but the aims and methods would have to be changed substantially.
5. I'm not sure if my topic is appropriate for the requirements. What should I do?
 - A. If you aren't sure if your topic fits the requirements, feel free to reach out to us at BWCResearchProgram@bwc.state.oh.us and we can discuss your topic.
6. Do I have to include letters of support from partners?
 - A. If you are partnering with other institutions or businesses to conduct your research, letters of support are strongly encouraged, though not required for submission. You can place them in an appendix to the proposal.
7. Can I submit an alternative timeline besides the Gantt chart requested in section VI of the [Application Guidelines](#)?
 - A. Yes, an alternative timeline will be acceptable if it clearly shows the schedule for each phase of the research project.

Proposal Review

This section provides an overview of BWC's Division of Safety and Hygiene (DSH) processes used when receiving and reviewing research grant applications/proposals and awarding the grants.

Scoring

Once the proposal submission deadline has passed, the proposals that were received prior to the deadline will be evaluated to determine whether they meet the eligibility criteria specified in the [Application Guidelines](#).

Those that meet the eligibility criteria will be scored by a group of reviewers. The scoring team will consist of safety/ergonomics/industrial hygiene experts and Research Department staff members from DSH as well as researchers from NIOSH. Reviewers perform independent evaluations of each proposal using the review criteria and scoring system described below. In addition to assigning the scores, the reviewers will be asked to provide comments regarding strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, both overall and directly related to each scoring criterion. Each proposal will be scored by three or more reviewers.

Review Criteria Influencing the Score

Reviewers are instructed to score the proposal based on the following criteria, weighing the criteria as they deem appropriate for each proposal.

- Significance
- Project Officers and Key Personnel
- Innovation
- Approach
- Impact on Workers
- Performance Site(s), Resources, and Facilities

The reviewers will use the scoring definitions in the table below (adapted from the National Institutes of Health).

Overall Merit	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 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

Minor weakness: An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen the overall merit of the work
 Moderate weakness: A weakness that lessens the overall merit of the work
 Major weakness: A weakness that severely limits the overall merit of the work

The proposal does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to make a major contribution and thus deserve a good overall scientific/technical score. For example, a principal investigator may propose to carry out important work that by its nature is not innovative but is essential to move a field forward.

Additional Review Consideration Not Influencing the Score

The reviewers will assess the reasonableness of the proposed budget and the requested period of support in relation to the proposed work. The scientific/technical merit score will not be affected by the evaluation of the budget.

Notification

After the proposals are scored, BWC will send applicants a letter indicating whether a project will be funded, not funded, or if BWC needs additional information before making a funding determination. The letter will also include a compilation of the strengths and weaknesses our reviewers identified in the proposal.

Contract and Initial Payment

Once a proposal is selected for funding, the next steps involve establishing a contract between BWC and the recipient and then transmitting the initial payment.

Contract

BWC will create a draft of the contract and send it to the recipient for review/acceptance. The contract will include major elements such as a task description, the amount of remuneration and method of payment, the time of performance, and required deliverables. The contract will also include legal terms and conditions on topics such as travel and expenses, confidentiality, workers' compensation, etc.

To initiate the contract process, after the recipient is notified that their proposal is selected for funding, the BWC Research Department administrative professional will contact BWC's Finance Division and copy BWC's Legal Division to begin the contract drafting process. The BWC Research Department is responsible for ensuring that the contract is completed before any applicable deadlines. The Finance Division must approve the creation of the contract because it involves the expenditure of BWC funds. The Legal Division will work with the recipient to draft a contract with mutually acceptable terms between BWC and the recipient. The recipient should provide BWC with an appropriate contact person to work with the BWC Legal Division on the contract.

The BWC Legal Division will send the contract draft to this contractual contact person. The BWC Legal Division will work with this contact directly to make any necessary revisions to the contract before it is signed.

Initial Payment

After the contract has been signed by both parties, the recipient will provide BWC with an appropriate financial contact to work with the BWC Finance Division to make the arrangements for the initial payment. BWC will require the grant recipient to issue an invoice for the initial payment. BWC will pay Recipient by Electronic Funds Transfer ("EFT") to ensure payments are sent to the correct location.

Projects that were initially funded in fiscal year 2019 and prior will be issued a payment representing 40% of the total at the commencement of the project, 30% at the midpoint of the dates of service, and 30% upon BWC's receipt/acceptance of the deliverables including the final report.

For projects funded in fiscal year 2020 and going forward, BWC will issue a payment for a predetermined percentage (e.g., 40%) at the start of the grant agreement. Then, recipients will be required to submit quarterly fiscal reports and invoices quarterly to receive reimbursement of approved expenses.

Fiscal and Progress Reporting

Once a project is underway, the recipient will be responsible for submitting timely progress and fiscal reports. The recipient will also be required to review BWC's [Safety and health research program webpage](#) quarterly for updates about the research program.

Progress Reports

The recipient will be expected to provide quarterly progress reports as well as an interim (mid-term) report.

- Quarterly reports should not exceed three pages and should address the progress of the project during the quarter. The primary investigator should include a brief description of work completed, describe the project timeliness in terms of completed tasks up to date and the percent of progress toward the completion of the project as a whole, and describe any challenges and/or obstacles to the project progress and strategies for addressing these challenges/obstacles.
- The interim report shall not exceed seven pages in length and shall address the progress of the project during the first 12 months. The interim report shall provide a brief description of the work completed during the past twelve months, brief description of the results from the tasks completed during the past twelve months, describe the project timeliness in terms of completed tasks up to date, and percent of progress toward the completion of the project as a whole, any expected challenges and/or obstacles to the project progress during the next 12 months of the project and strategies for addressing these challenges and obstacles. If the project duration is less than two years (e.g., 18 months), then the interim report will be completed at the midpoint of the project (e.g., nine months).

Fiscal Reports

The recipient will be required to provide quarterly fiscal reports (financial activity reports) as well as a final expenditure report at the completion of the project. These reports should be categorized in the same way as the budget plan the grant recipient was required to submit (i.e., personnel, equipment, travel, etc.). In conjunction with submitting the quarterly fiscal reports, BWC will also require recipients to invoice BWC on a quarterly basis to receive reimbursement of approved expenses.

As with the initial payment, BWC shall pay by electronic funds transfer to ensure subsequent payments are sent to the correct location.

BWC will conduct desk or on-site reviews of all active grants to evaluate documentation maintained to support the expenditures of grant funds. BWC will disseminate noncompliance issues or unallowable costs identified during the reviews by posting them periodically to BWC's [Safety and health research program webpage](#). Information included will describe the general issues discovered without identifying any individual projects or institutions.

Request for Extensions and Amendments

Requests for extensions or other amendments to the contract must be submitted in writing in a timely fashion. For extension requests, the primary investigator should detail how much time is needed for the extension and should provide a justification of why an extension is necessary.

If it appears likely the grantee will exceed the spending in a budget category, the grantee should request an amendment to the agreement to reallocate funds between the spending categories.

Final Report Submission/ Project Wrap-Up

Final Report and Final Expenditure Report

The final report should document the motivation for the work, previous efforts (literature review), experimental methods used, results and findings, discussion of the findings and their relationship to previous research, and conclusion/recommendations, as well as any other agreed upon deliverables. Researchers must submit proposals in electronic format by their specified deadline to BWCResearchProgram@bwc.state.oh.us. Upon receipt, the final report will be reviewed by members of the DSH Research Program team. Questions and comments about the final report will be sent to the principal investigator to address. The project will be determined to be complete when the final report is accepted by the Research Program team.

In addition to the final report, there may be other deliverables identified in the proposal that must be remitted to BWC prior to completion of the grant. Delivery dates for these items may be the same as the final report or may be scheduled for a different date. All deliverables, including the final report, must be received prior to the final payment.

In addition to the final report and any other agreed upon deliverables, the recipient must submit a final expenditure report. This report should be categorized in the same way as the budget plan the grant recipient was required to submit (i.e., personnel, equipment, travel, etc.).

BWC will use the final expenditure report to determine the amount of the final payment. BWC will reconcile the total payments issued with the final expenditure report to ensure all funds were either spent for research or returned to BWC. If a discrepancy is found during the reconciliation, BWC will work with the grant recipient to resolve it, including asking funds to be returned to BWC if necessary.

Once the work is completed, BWC may work with the recipient to identify appropriate tools or information to share on the BWC website to help disseminate the results.

Projects Not on Track to be Completed

If the research project is not on track to be completed, the recipient must submit additional progress reports and participate in additional conference calls or site visits as may be necessary on a case-by-case basis.

In situations where the university does not provide all research deliverables, BWC will seek return of funds if the percentage of the project completion is less than the percentage of project funds that has been paid. If the percentage of project completion is more than the percentage of funds that has been dispersed, BWC will issue a final payment for the difference.

Appendix

A. Ohio Occupational Safety and Health Research Program application and guidelines