COVID-19 Response Grant Program

Research and Education
Request for Proposals
and
Application Guidelines

March 2021
**Background**

The Wisconsin Partnership Program at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health is committed to improving health and health equity in Wisconsin through investments in research, education and community partnerships. It was established at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health through a gift from Blue Cross Blue Shield United of Wisconsin as a result of its conversion to a stock insurance corporation.

In collaboration with faculty and community-based organizations, the Partnership Program supports health-improvement and disease-prevention initiatives seeking to reduce morbidity, mortality and systemic disparities in health. The Wisconsin Partnership Program’s vision, mission and values as well as its goals and grant-making strategies are described in the 2019-2024 Five-Year Plan.

With the unanticipated rapid emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the Wisconsin Partnership Program took swift action to create a new COVID-19 Response Grant Program awarding $3.2 million in April 2020 to Wisconsin community organizations and UW-Madison faculty to take immediate action to fight the pandemic. The Wisconsin Partnership expanded its commitment in December 2020 by establishing the COVID-19 Response Reserve Fund. This fund makes an additional $5 million available immediately, and into the future as the needs of the people of Wisconsin and their communities in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic evolve.

**Goal and Description**

Through this Wisconsin Partnership Program COVID-19 Response Request for Proposals, the Partnership Education and Research Committee (PERC) will allocate up to $1.2 million to support innovative research and education projects to fight the COVID-19 pandemic now and to address the health consequences of the pandemic, which are likely to persist for years to come. Although proposals are not limited to the topics below, the committee has prioritized the following:

- Reducing or eliminating the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 among racial and ethnic minorities and vulnerable populations
- Addressing mental, behavioral, or physical health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Testing and surveillance to support efforts to prevent cases and spread of COVID-19

COVID-19 Response grants are up to $200,000 over one or two years. The maximum budget for a one-year grant is $100,000. Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria.

The proposal:

- Shows innovation and has outstanding rigor, merit and potential impact
- Describes plans to improve the health of the people of Wisconsin by lessening the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through scientific, clinical, or applied public health approaches, including how the proposal addresses, as appropriate, the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 among racial and ethnic minorities or vulnerable populations
- Where appropriate, includes evidence of engagement with partners having the necessary experience, influence, and expertise to accomplish project aims and objectives and with appropriate stakeholders, such as policymakers, local health service practitioners, health systems, community organizations, or those likely to be affected by the virus
- Includes specific quarterly metrics to benchmark progress toward the stated goals and objectives and plans to disseminate research outcomes or project results

The Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigators:

- Have an established record of independent scholarship or experience developing, administering or evaluating research, education and/or community-engaged programs
**Eligibility**

A Principal Investigator (PI) is required and must have an appointment as a UW-Madison faculty member or academic staff with permanent PI status. The PI must have demonstrated experience leading a research or educational project and will be responsible and accountable for leading and advancing the project as specified in the Memorandum of Understanding.

The project may have one or two Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PI) and may include a number of Collaborators consistent with the scope of the project. The Co-PIs will be expected to contribute to project oversight as well as drafting of manuscripts and progress reports. Collaborators typically contribute specialized expertise to the project and have more narrowly defined roles than the PI and the Co-PIs. Co-PIs and Collaborators may have an appointment, for example, at any UW System campus, Marshfield Clinic, Gundersen Health System, Medical College of Wisconsin, state and local government agencies or community organizations.

**Funding Scope and Duration**

The maximum award is $200,000 over one or two years. For one-year grants, the maximum award is 100,000. The level of effort of the PI and Co-PIs individually should be between five and 30 percent of full-time equivalent (FTE) compensation and must be fully justified in the budget narrative. The PERC anticipates funding up to six grants.

**Note:** PERC reserves the right to limit initial grant funding to a period of up to 3 months during which the grantee must demonstrate substantive progress toward first-quarter benchmarks before the remaining funds are released.

**Submission and Review Dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Request for Proposals released</td>
<td>March 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letters of intent due</td>
<td>April 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letters of Intent reviewed</td>
<td>April-May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invite full applications</td>
<td>May 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full applications due*</td>
<td>June 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full applications reviewed</td>
<td>June-July</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invite finalists for interviews</td>
<td>July 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>PERC interviews finalists*</td>
<td>July 12, 5-7:30 pm via UW-Madison Zoom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notify finalists of award decisions</td>
<td>July 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anticipated start date</td>
<td>August 1</td>
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*By invitation only

**Letter of Intent Guidelines**

A Letter of Intent is required and is due by 11:59 pm April 8, 2021. Applicants will receive notification of status and learn whether they are invited to submit a full application to PERC on May 11, 2021.


If you've already started a Letter of Intent, access it by logging into [https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_5637?SA=AM](https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_5637?SA=AM)
In addition to providing general information about the project, the Letter of Intent includes the following components.

**Letter of Intent**
The Letter of Intent provides an overview of the project, including the primary goal, the broader long-term objectives, specific aims, and a description of how the project advances the goals of the COVID-19 Response Grant Program to lessen the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Wisconsin.

The Letter of Intent must be uploaded as a PDF and cannot exceed two single-spaced pages with one-inch margins and a minimum 11-point Arial font. Footnotes, references and up to three tables and/or figures are not included in the page limit and should be inserted after the Letter of Intent.

**Project Timeline and Metrics**
Using the required Gantt chart template, detail quarterly metrics to benchmark progress toward stated goals and objectives.

**Biographical Statements**
In the relevant text field, provide biographical statements for the Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigators and Collaborators. Biographical statements must include full name, degree, current position and brief personal statement relevant to the proposed project. Each biographical statement is limited to 80 words.

**Designation of Confidential and Proprietary Information**
The Wisconsin Partnership Program is required to operate in accordance with Wisconsin’s public records and open meetings laws. See the Wisconsin Partnership Program terms and conditions for more information.

Indicate whether the Letter of Intent includes proprietary and/or confidential information, and using the form provided, identify and request confidentiality for any trade secrets or proprietary information.

**Full Application Guidelines**
**Only applicants invited by the PERC may submit a full application.** The Principal Investigator will receive a link to the full application in the invitation. Full applications are due by 11:59 pm on June 3, 2021.

Applicants invited to make a virtual presentation to PERC will be notified on July 2, 2021.

In addition to providing general information about the project, the full application includes the following components.

**Abstract**
The abstract, which is limited to one single-spaced page with one-inch margins using a minimum 11 point Arial font, is a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work when separated from the application. State the application’s broader long-term objectives and specific aims, making reference to how the project advances the goals of the COVID-19 Response Grant Program. Describe concisely the design and methods for achieving the stated goals. The abstract should be informative to other persons working in the same or related fields and understandable to a scientifically or technically literate reader. Avoid describing past accomplishments and the use of the first person.

The abstract must conclude with an impact statement that should describe how outcomes of this project lessen the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular in the state of Wisconsin, and include details
on scope and significance. As part of this statement, include a brief synopsis of the project in succinct and plain language and without scientific and medical terminology.

**Narrative**

The narrative should describe the project’s specific aims, significance, approaches and expected outcomes. This should include details of data analysis that address rigor and reproducibility. The narrative must be uploaded as a PDF not exceeding five single-spaced pages with one-inch margins and a minimum 11-point Arial font. Footnotes, references and up to three tables and/or figures are not included in the page limit and should be inserted after the narrative.

**Project Timeline and Metrics**

Using the required Gantt chart template, detail quarterly metrics to benchmark progress toward stated goals and objectives.

**Project Budget**

Using the required [budget template](#), the project budget should clearly indicate how the grant funds will be spent. Expenditures must:

- be fully justified, reasonable to complete the project’s goals;
- reflect the activities listed in the proposal; and
- explain the sources and amounts of any cash-match or cost-sharing funds.

Requests should be made by expense type (salary and fringe benefits, services, travel, supplies, etc.) and should provide sufficient detail for individuals unfamiliar with the project.

**Budget Justification**

A budget justification is required for purposes of describing in detail the major budget line items: salary and fringe benefits, travel, services, and supplies and other expenses. The narrative should provide specific information about why an expense is necessary to achieve the project’s goals and objectives. It must also describe the roles and responsibilities of the Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigators and Collaborators, even if uncompensated. The budget narrative must be uploaded as a PDF with one-inch margins and a minimum 11-point Arial font.

**Use of Funds**

[Guidelines for allowable/unallowable expenses](#) are available for review on the Wisconsin Partnership Program website.

The budget should include at least five percent of the Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigator’s full-time equivalent (FTE) compensation, but it may not include more than 30 percent. If cash-match or cost-share funding is being used to cover PI or Co-PI salary and fringe benefits, details about the funding sources and amount are required.

Funds must be used for project-related costs:

- PI and Co-PI salary support not to exceed NIH salary limitations
- Support staff expenses, such as salaries and fringe benefits or graduate student tuition
- Travel
- Services, such as consultant and contractual services
- Supplies and other expenses, such as participant support costs and equipment. Equipment is defined as items costing more than $5,000 with more than two years useful life. The maximum amount allowed for equipment is $50,000.
Funds may not be used for:
- Pre-award costs
- Indirect overhead and administrative costs
- Lobbying
- IRB fees
- Supplanting (on page 6)

**Biographical Information**
Full applications must include a biographical sketch for the Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigators and Collaborators in NIH format, including a personal statement, positions and honors, contributions to science, and ongoing and relevant concluded research support. Co-PIs and Collaborators from state and local government agencies or community organizations may submit a resume of up to five pages in lieu of a biographical sketch. Biographical sketches and resumes, each up to five pages in length, must be uploaded as a single PDF.

**Letters of Commitment**
Letters of commitment from the Co-Principal Investigators and Collaborators are required and must show evidence of the collaboration with specific details about how they or their organizations will be involved in the project. Letters of support may also be provided. The letters must be uploaded as a single PDF.

**Nonsupplanting Questionnaire**
Supplanting means to replace, to take the place of, or to supersede. The Wisconsin Partnership Program prohibits any funds from being awarded that will supplant funds or resources otherwise available to applicants from other sources for the proposed project. See the Wisconsin Partnership Program terms and conditions for more information.

Applicants are required to complete the nonsupplanting questionnaire as part of the application process. The Principal Investigator and Co-PIs must complete and sign the Nonsupplanting Questionnaire, then upload as a PDF.

**Compliance**
Indicate whether the project requires approval by the Animal Care and Use Committee, the Madison Campus Biological Safety Committee, UW-Madison Institutional Review Board, and/or the University Radiation Safety Committee. See the Wisconsin Partnership Program terms and conditions for more information.

**Designation of Confidential and Proprietary Information**
The Wisconsin Partnership Program is required to operate in accordance with Wisconsin’s public records and open meetings laws. See the Wisconsin Partnership Program terms and conditions for more information.

Indicate whether the full application includes proprietary and/or confidential information, and using the form provided, identify and request confidentiality for any trade secrets or proprietary information.

**Optional Materials**
Reprints or other materials, such as consent forms or laboratory methods, may be submitted for use by the reviewers at their discretion. Optional materials should not be used to circumvent the narrative page limits. These materials must be uploaded as a single PDF.
**Review Process**

**Letter of Intent**

**Technical Review**
Partnership Program staff will review each Letter of Intent to ensure that all requirements, including eligibility, are met. Letters of Intent that do not comply with the submission requirements will not be reviewed, and the applicant will be notified.

**Content Review**
The PERC Executive Committee, which is advisory to the full committee, and ad hoc reviewers with expertise relevant to the proposals will review the Letters of Intent. Two or three reviewers will independently review each Letter of Intent to determine whether it warrants further development as a full application. This review will be based on alignment with the goals of the COVID-19 Response Grant Program, project feasibility, and proposed quarterly progress benchmarks.

The PERC Executive Committee and ad hoc reviewers will meet to discuss the Letters of Intent and will provide the results to PERC for review and approval. Applicants invited to submit full applications will be notified on **May 11, 2021**. The committee’s decisions are final and cannot be appealed. For proposals that are not advanced to the full application stage, notification will include a brief explanation from the Executive Committee. More extensive comments are provided at the full application stage.

**Full Application**

**Technical Review**
Partnership Program staff will review each full application to ensure that all application requirements, including nonsupplanting, are met. Applications that do not comply with the submission requirements will not be reviewed, and the applicant will be notified.

**Content Review**
The PERC Executive Committee, which is advisory to the full committee, and ad hoc reviewers with expertise relevant to the proposals will review the full applications. Each full application will be reviewed by two or three reviewers who independently score the assigned proposals based on the evaluation criteria on page 2.

The PERC Executive Committee and ad hoc reviewers will meet to discuss and rank the proposals, and will select the top-ranked applicants for finalist interviews. Applicants invited to present their proposals to the PERC will be notified on **July 2, 2021**. A summary of the de-identified reviewers’ comments will be provided to each applicant.

**PERC Review**
The top-ranked candidates will make virtual presentations to the PERC on **July 12, 2021**. The presentations typically take place between 5 and 7:30 pm. **No exceptions will be made.**

Applicants selected by the PERC Executive Committee for finalist interviews are required to provide a detailed list of the PI and the Co-PI active grants (typically from WISER) and pending proposals (typically from WISPER) for review by the WPP staff to confirm nonsupplanting.
The PERC will make a final determination of awards based on rank and alignment with the goals of the COVID-19 Response Grant Program. Applicants will be notified of whether they are selected for a grant award on July 16, 2021. The committee’s decisions are final and cannot be appealed.

**Technical Assistance**

For more information or assistance, please contact:

Tonya Mathison, Administrative Manager  Jon Thomas, Assistant Director for Finance
tonya.mathison@wisc.edu • 608-265-6688  thomas38@wisc.edu • 608-265-2284

**Terms and Conditions**

By applying for a Wisconsin Partnership Program grant, applicants agree to the Partnership Program’s terms and conditions.