Opportunity Grants Program
Application Guidelines

October 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 UW School of Medicine and Public Health through a gift from Blue Cross Blue Shield United of Wisconsin as a result of the company’s 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.

**Goal and Description**

Through the Opportunity Grants Program –designed to be strategic, flexible and timely– the Partnership Education and Research Committee (PERC) provides start-up funding in support of high-profile, high-impact, state-of-the art education and research projects benefiting the health of the people of Wisconsin.

Opportunity Grants support groundbreaking research and education projects that fulfill two or more of the following criteria:
- have the potential to transform a field of study
- represent a novel application of an established idea or approach
- challenge traditional thought and practice
- engage perspectives and approaches from nontraditional partners such as underserved or vulnerable populations
- benefit from an influx of funds to quickly advance the area in significant ways

Proposals must be highly innovative with potential to leverage additional funding sources and align with the desired outcomes of the Wisconsin Partnership Program’s 2019-2024 Five-Year Plan. Additionally, proposals must address specific knowledge gaps or scientific opportunities, advance novel research methods, or enhance the education of the future health workforce while paving the way to create healthier communities and advancing health equity. Proposals should describe not only how the project will improve the health of the people of Wisconsin, but also explain the path to translate discovery to application in the clinical setting and/or in communities.

Applicants must also address why applying to the PERC New Investigator or Collaborative Health Sciences programs is not feasible.

**Review Criteria**

Opportunity grants are typically $100,000 to $200,000 over two years. Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria.

The project:
- Shows innovation and has outstanding merit
- Advances the Wisconsin Partnership Program’s 2019-2024 Five-Year Plan framework
- Appears feasible with high likelihood for acquisition or application of useful data
- Includes an explicit plan for evaluating and disseminating research outcomes or project results
- Has a leveraging potential and is likely to lead to extramural grant support that will ultimately make the project self-sustaining
- Describes community engagement efforts if it is a central component of the overall project goal
- Describes the process by which successful execution of this project will be translated into improved health, health care, and/or health equity in Wisconsin
As appropriate, develops or improves infrastructure support to enhance the research and/or education missions of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health

As appropriate, enhances interdisciplinary research or education, and fosters collaboration

The Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigators:

- Have an established record of independent scholarship or have experience developing, administering or evaluating research, education or community programs

**Eligibility**

A **Principal Investigator (PI)** is required and must be a UW School of Medicine and Public Health professor, associate professor, or senior or distinguished scientist. Assistant Professors are eligible if they are three or more years past their appointment start-date. The PI must have a salaried appointment of at least 50 percent in the School of Medicine and Public Health.

The project may include one or two **Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PI)** and a number of **Collaborators** consistent with the scope of the project. The Co-PIs and Collaborators may have an appointment at any UW System campus, Marshfield Clinic, Gundersen Health System, the Medical College of Wisconsin, Aurora Health Care, state and local government agencies or community organizations. 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.

**Funding Scope and Duration**

Awards are typically $100,000 to $200,000 over two years. In exceptional cases, awards may be renewed once. The level of effort of the PI and Co-PIs individually should be between five and 20 percent of full-time equivalent (FTE) compensation and must be fully justified in the budget narrative. No more than three grants will be awarded each year.

**Preliminary Application Guidelines**

Interested applicants must first consult with Partnership Program staff to address eligibility criteria, specific aims and approach and alignment with Wisconsin Partnership Program goals and with the objectives of the Opportunity Grants Program. Please email Tonya Mathison (tonya.mathison@wisc.edu) to schedule a consultation.

Following the consultation, if there is mutual agreement to proceed with submission of a preliminary application, Partnership Program staff will email the Principal Investigator a link to the preliminary application forms.

The preliminary application is required and will be considered by the PERC Executive Committee for further development as a full application. Preliminary applications may be submitted at any time; however, the PERC reserves the right to defer review for up to 120 days.

In addition to providing general information on the project, the preliminary application includes the following components.

**Project Abstract**

The project abstract provides an overview of the project, including the primary goal, the broader long-term objectives, specific aims, relevance and potential impact, and a description of how the project advances the goals of the Opportunity Grants Program. In addition, the project abstract must contain a statement on why applying to the PERC **New Investigator** or **Collaborative Health Sciences** programs is not feasible.
The project abstract must be uploaded as a PDF and cannot exceed two single-spaced pages with one-inch margins and a minimum 11-point font. Footnotes, references and up to three tables and/or figures are not included in the page limit and should be inserted after the project abstract.

**Biographical Information**

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

**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 preliminary application 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**

Applicants invited by the PERC to submit a full application will receive a link to the application forms from the Wisconsin Partnership Program along with the submission timeline and requirements. In addition to providing general information on the project, the full application includes the following components.

**Project Summary**

Describe in 125 words or less the overall goal and potential impact of the project in plain language without scientific and medical terminology that can be understood by a general, lay audience (enter in online application text field).

**Abstract**

The abstract is a succinct and accurate description of the proposed project. The abstract must state the application’s broad, long-term objectives and specific aims, design and methods for achieving the stated project goals, and alignment with the goals of the Opportunity Grants Program. The abstract should be informative to other people 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 be uploaded as a PDF not exceeding one single-spaced page with one-inch margins and a minimum 11-point font.

**Impact**

The impact statement describes how the outcomes of the project will lead to improvements in health, health care and/or health equity, particularly in the state of Wisconsin. This section should include details on the scope and significance of the health issue being addressed. Applicants must provide a brief synopsis of the project in succinct and plain language without scientific and medical terminology that can be understood by a general, lay audience. The impact statement must be uploaded as a PDF not exceeding one single-spaced page with one-inch margins and a minimum 11-point font.

**Narrative**

The narrative describes the project’s specific aims, significance, approaches and expected outcomes. This should include details of data analysis that address rigor and reproducibility and specific metrics to benchmark progress toward the stated goals and objectives. The narrative must be uploaded as a PDF not exceeding five single-spaced pages with one-inch margins and a minimum 11-point font. Footnotes, references and up to three tables and/or figures are not included in the page limit. Tables and figures should be inserted after the narrative.
Project Timeline and Metrics
Using the required Gantt chart template, list each project aim and related activities to benchmark progress toward stated goals and objectives.

Proposal Review Criteria
Prepare a statement addressing the review criteria on pages 2 and 3. This statement must be uploaded as a PDF not exceeding two single-spaced pages with one-inch margins and a minimum 11-point font.

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 and clearly related to the project’s goals
- reflect the activities listed in the proposal
- 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 PI, Co-PIs and Collaborators, even if uncompensated. The budget justification must be uploaded as a PDF with one-inch margins and a minimum 11-point font.

Guidelines for Allowable and Unallowable Expenses
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’s full-time equivalent (FTE) compensation, but it may not include more than 20 percent. If cash-match or cost-share funding is being used to cover the Principal Investigator’s salary and fringe benefits, details about the funding sources and amount are required.

Funds must be used for project-related costs:
- Principal Investigator salary support not to exceed NIH salary limitations
- Support staff expenses, such as salaries and benefits or graduate student tuition
- Travel
- Services, such as consultant or 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 of useful life. The maximum amount allowed for equipment is $50,000.

Funds may not be used for:
- Institutional Review Board fees
- Pre-award costs
- Indirect overhead and administrative costs
- Lobbying
- Supplanting (more information on page 7)
Biographical Information
Full applications must include a biographical sketch for the Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigators and Collaborators in the new NIH format, including a personal statement, positions, scientific appointments and honors, and contributions to science. Collaborators from state and local government agencies or community organizations may submit a resume 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.

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 are limited to no more than 10 pages and should not be used to circumvent the narrative page limits. These materials must be uploaded as a single 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.

Nonsupplanting Questionnaire
Complete the nonsupplanting questionnaire by responding to the questions and providing explanations as necessary. See page 7 for more information on supplanting.

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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.

Review Process

Preliminary Application

Technical Review
Partnership Program staff will review each preliminary application to ensure that the application requirements are met. Preliminary applications that do not comply with the submission requirements will not be reviewed and the applicant will be so notified.

Content Review
The PERC Executive Committee, which is advisory to the full committee and includes PERC members, will review the content of each preliminary application to determine if it warrants further development as a full application. The review is based on scientific or educational merit, feasibility, alignment with the goals of the Opportunity Grants Program, qualifications of the PI and Co-PIs, and opportunities for leveraging. The PERC Executive Committee will make the final decision on invitations to submit full applications.
Full Application

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

Content Review
As part of its review, the PERC may consult with one or two content experts within the University of Wisconsin and, if applicable, a community representative. Members of the PERC will meet to discuss the full application and make the final award decision based on the project’s alignment with the goals of the Opportunity Grants Program and the review criteria on pages 2 and 3. Additional information may be requested of the applicants who may also be required to personally present the proposal to the committee. Decisions of the PERC are final and cannot be appealed.

Supplanting Review
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.

PERC’s award decisions are conditional on a review of nonsupplanting by the Wisconsin Partnership Program Assistant Director for Finance in consultation with the UW School of Medicine and Public Health Senior Associate Dean for Finance and the Wisconsin Partnership Program Director. If a determination is made that supplanting will occur, the Principal Investigator and the PERC will be notified. At that time, PERC will decide whether to modify or to revoke the award. The committee’s decisions are final and cannot be appealed.

Grant recipients are required to provide the following information for review by the Wisconsin Partnership Program:
- Nonsupplanting questionnaire (required component of the full application)
- Principal Investigator’s Other Support information in the new NIH format with the following sections: Project/Proposals by status: Active, Pending and Completed; In-Kind Contributions; and Overlap. (required only from PI’s selected for awards)

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

Technical Assistance
For more information or assistance, please contact:

Tonya Mathison, Administrative Manager  Jon Thomas, Assistant Director for Finance
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608-265-6688  608-265-2284