California Firefighter Cancer Prevention and Research Program

Frequently Asked Questions
Updated 6/7/2024

Letter of Intent due date – **February 29, 2024, 12 noon Pacific Time**
Application due date – **June 13, 2024, 12 noon Pacific Time**

See [RFP](#) for additional instructions.

General

How many applications will be funded?

There is not a pre-determined number of awards overall or in each category. This Request for Proposals (RFP) invites applications from teams of CA-based firefighters and UC academics for research awards in two categories: California Firefighter Cancer Prevention Pilot Grants and California Firefighter Cancer Prevention Full Grants. There is approximately $5.9 million available for all awards (including direct and indirect costs). The total number of awards in each category will depend on the results of the application, review, and award selection process.

Technical Assistance

What is the best way to find a Co-PI for possible research programs, if we do not already have one identified?

Fire service organizations and UCs are eligible for technical support in finding a project partner, and with other aspects of the application. To request support applicants can send an email to the California Firefighter Cancer Prevention and Research Program at firefighter-cancer@ucop.edu. The program will review technical assistance requests and schedule one-on-one technical assistance consultation calls with applicant teams. Applicants can also complete and submit an LOI with one Co-PI named, and in the space where the second Co-PI would be named in the LOI, note that they are requesting technical support with finding a partner.

Letter of Intent Submission

Does the Letter of Intent (LOI) submission require institutional Sponsored Projects and Contracts and Grants review and approval?

The LOI does not require an authorized institutional representative signature or the submission of a detailed budget. However, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the submission to that office meets local submission timelines in advance of the SmartSimple deadline. Invited applications are required to be submitted through the applicant institution's Sponsored Projects Office or Contracts & Grants office.

How will the LOI submission be reviewed?

LOI submissions will be reviewed for eligibility, completeness, and compliance with program requirements. The LOI is also an opportunity for applicants to request technical assistance to help find an appropriate partner Co-PI.

I am planning to be a Co-PI on an application, and my partner Co-PI is submitting the LOI. How do I get access to the proposal in SmartSimple?

At the LOI stage, only the initiating/applicant Co-PI will have access to the application in SmartSimple. Access for other Co-PIs will be granted at the invited application stage.

How many Co-PIs are required for the LOI submission?

The LOI submission requires contact information for at least one Co-Principal Investigator. The LOI will ideally include two Co-PIs, one from a Fire Service organization, and one from the University of California. However, an LOI can be submitted with just one Co-PI for those who have not found a partner Co-PI and would like technical assistance in finding one. When a Co-PI requests technical assistance with finding a partner Co-PI at the LOI stage, an additional Co-PI will be named at the invited application stage.

Can additional Co-PIs be added at the invited proposal stage?

Yes, if the LOI was submitted with only one Co-PI, another Co-PI will be required for the invited proposal. Additional Co-PIs can also be added. In addition, the invited application requires contact information and effort for Key Personnel and Other Significant Contributors on your project including the Co-Principal Investigator, Co-Investigators, consultant(s), and support personnel.

Can we make changes to our application after our LOI is approved?

Yes, changes between the submitted LOI and the invited application are permitted as long as award eligibility requirements continue to be met.

Invited Application Submission

Can I serve as a Co-PI on multiple invited application submissions?

An individual may not serve as a Co-PI on two proposals for the same award type, such as two pilot award applications or two full award applications. However, they can serve as a Co-PI on one pilot award application and one full award application. There is no restriction on serving as a Co-I or in other roles on multiple awards or if you are already a Co-PI.

Note that it is not appropriate to submit duplicate, highly overlapping, or substantially similar applications for concurrent review (e.g. submitting a full award application that encompasses the aims/activities of a pilot award application that you are also submitting). Two proposals may not have highly overlapping aims or content, scope, and/or outcome measures that are the same or significantly and substantially similar. In such cases, proposals may be declined without undergoing peer review.

Is a NIH style biosketch acceptable?

An NIH style biosketch is acceptable. Specific guidance is provided in the application instructions, but there is not a specific template required.

Budget

Are there indirect costs associated with these grants?

UC campuses receive a maximum institutional F&A of 35% MTDC (25% for off-campus projects). All other institutions are eligible for indirect costs of up to 25% MTDC or the rate established for the institution through a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (or another similarly established rate), whichever is higher.

Are there budget distribution requirements between academic institutions and fire service institutions?

The proposed costs, including distribution across applicant institutions, will need to be informed by input from both PIs and defined by the project scope and activities. Budgets should be equitable and reflect the work that is taking place at each organization by the project Co-PIs and the study team.

Each institution that is a partner in the project must complete a budget. This means the Fire Service Co-PI and the Academic Co-PI will each have their own budget. Each budget must be accompanied by line-item budget justifications in relation to the activities. Budgets should be well justified and reflect the efficient use of resources. Additionally, a 10% minimum effort is required for each Co-PI. Budgets will be carefully evaluated for appropriateness to the work proposed.

How does our team ensure that a budget for each Co-PI/organization is created in our application?

When an application is initiated in the SmartSimple system a budget is automatically created for the applicant (or submitting Co-PI). The submitting co-PI must use the "invite personnel" function to invite their Co-PI to the application. That will generate the budget for the Co-PI and their organization.

Can my fire service organization apply with a fiscal sponsor?

Fire service partners may choose to work with a fiscal sponsor rather than manage the grant funds themselves. Please indicate in your collaborative agreement that the fire service organization will apply with a fiscal sponsor (and whether you have the fiscal sponsor already in place or are still making arrangements). If you have a fiscal sponsor in place, please name the fiscal sponsor and include a letter of support from them in the appendix.

Can the program provide any organizations that could serve as a fiscal sponsor?

The program does not make fiscal sponsor recommendations, and applicants needing a fiscal sponsor are encouraged to find an organization that suits their needs. One organization that has indicated its willingness to serve as a fiscal sponsor for fire service applicants is the California Fire Foundation (Contact: Joslyn Beile, Deputy Director, Program & Operations for CFF, jbeile@cpf.org, 279-895-9096).

What type of expenses should we include in the fire service partner's budget?

The budget should be informed by input, discussion, agreement from both Co-PIs, and it should be defined by project scope, activities, and the work that is taking place at each organization. The following are some types of costs that might be included. This list is provided as an example, and it should not be considered prescriptive or comprehensive:

- Carefully anticipate the time commitments of staff or community members involved in the project. Consider if staff need additional training to play a role in research teams and carry out study activities. Individuals should not be expected to volunteer their time. People who are adding to their responsibilities should be compensated.
- If you will be using the organization's space or seeking space in the community to conduct the research, it will be important to factor in rental and/or custodial costs.
- Fire service research budgets might include funds that pay for the quantification of exposures/associated biological effects at core lab facilities traditionally used by researchers and funds that support the development/implementation/study of exposure reducing interventions for firefighters. Examples include but are not limited to:
  - Phlebotomy supplies/personnel for blood draws (e.g. venipuncture kits, vacuum tubes, tourniquets, etc.)
  - Instrumentation for environmental sampling/monitoring (e.g. low flow sampling pumps/sorbent tubes, electronic air monitoring devices)
  - Funds for the use of scientific core lab facilities (e.g. If analyses will be done at a core facility such as a genomics/bioinformatics core or an analytic chemistry core, where the academic co-PI traditionally pays for the service rather than conduct the analyses in their lab, the service can be paid for from the fire service budget.)
  - Freezers/refrigerators for short term storage of biological/environmental samples (e.g. -20 freezer for urine samples, refrigerator for sorbent tubes)
  - Materials for firefighter training (e.g. wood/supplies for live fire training, development of online or in person educational material, hosting seminars/conferences to disseminate research findings)
  - PPE for exposure reduction (e.g. respiratory protection, development of novel PPE)
  - Materials/equipment for firefighter decon/other exposure reducing interventions (e.g. soaps, wipes, PPE cleaning products, extractors (washing machine), PPE drying cabinets, etc.)
  - Funds for PPE cleaning services

Applicant and Project Eligibility

What UC locations are eligible to apply?

Eligible UC system locations include the 10 UC campuses, UC academic medical centers, UC-affiliated national laboratories, and UC Agriculture and Natural Resources. Please inquire with the program if you have any questions about eligibility.

Can non-UC investigators be involved in the study team?

As a program requirement, a project team must be led by at least one University of California (UC) academic Co-Principal Investigator and at least one California-based Fire Service Co-Principal Investigator. Individuals from other California-based universities or other organizations in California are eligible to be Co-Investigators on the project.

Does the UC Co-PI have to be a tenure-track faculty member?

All applicants must have Principal Investigator status at their organizational affiliation. Please confirm with your UC location whether you have Principal Investigator status.

University of California applicants: Per RPAC Contracts & Grants Manual Chapter 1-530, the following individuals automatically qualify to serve as Principal Investigator for a research, training or public service project: (a) Members of the Academic Senate, including emeriti; (b) Appointees in the Agronomist series, including emeriti; and (c) Appointees at 50 percent or more of full time in the Adjunct Professor series; Health Sciences Clinical Professor series; Professional Research series; and/or Specialists in Cooperative Extension series. All other University employees seeking to serve as a Principal Investigator must obtain approval for an exceptional PI status by the applicant institution's Contracts and Grants or Sponsored Programs office.

Can the research project scope extend beyond California?

No. Research activities must take place in California, costs are expected to be incurred in California, and the research population must be from CA. Further, Co-PIs and their organizations must be in CA. Research must generate measurable, tangible outcomes with potential to contribute to the well-being of California's firefighters. In very limited instances, the broader project team may include institutions from outside of California, but only if well justified. Before including non-CA organizations as part of the invited application, please email the California Firefighter Cancer Prevention and Research Program at firefighter-cancer@ucop.edu to discuss.

Do the funding priorities include work with animal models?

All proposals must address the priority area of engaging in community-based participatory research model of research. Thus, academic applicant organizations must co-develop applications in collaboration with fire service partners. Animal studies that are studying materials or routes of exposure that directly relate to firefighter cancer can be responsive to the RFP.

Can the project focus on social factors (e.g., firefighters' culture)?

Yes, projects that focus on social factors can be responsive to the priorities of the program. The program supports research to prevent and reduce cancer among California firefighters by examining the hallmarks of cancer and key characteristics of carcinogens related to firefighters' occupational exposures, characterizing biomarkers of cancer susceptibility or risk in firefighters, understanding carcinogenic exposures among firefighters, and informing intervention strategies to lower risks of developing cancer in firefighters. Academic applicant organizations must co-develop applications in collaboration with fire service partners. This may include social factors and determinants relevant to cancer in firefighters that are of importance to the Fire Service partner(s).

Considering that firefighters are exposed to a complex mixture of carcinogens, does the program require projects to assess different classes of carcinogens? Are projects expected to focus on one class of carcinogen?

The program seeks to better understand the nature of occupational exposures that lead to cancer in firefighters. Both the study of a single class of carcinogen and/or a mixture of carcinogens can be responsive to the RFP.

Are projects that collect samples from firefighters or have them take surveys eligible?

Yes, human subjects research is eligible.

Is an IRB from the UC automatically the IRB of record for the project?

The partners will need to discuss potential options for IRB oversight. All projects with human participants research and/or animal research are required to have their protocol reviewed and approved by an IRB. The UC IRB is eligible to be the IRB of record. However, it should not be assumed that the UC IRB will automatically be the IRB of record. With two Co-PIs, and two organizations, an instance may arise where there are two options for an IRB of record. In this instance, the Co-PIs will need to discuss and decide whether there is one IRB of record (and which one it is) or whether they will send the proposal through both of the IRBs. More detailed instructions are provided to funded partnered awards in the pre-funding stage.

Does the IRB protocol need to be in place when the application is submitted?

IRB review and approval is not required at the application stage. However, if the project is funded, IRB approval is required before beginning any human participants and/or animal work.

Peer Review

For the nomination of external peer reviewers, how do you plan to avoid biased review / conflicts of interest?

The Research Grants Program Office (RGPO) in the UC Office of Research & Innovation will manage the competitive peer review, scoring, and ranking of proposals based on the criteria and requirements outlined in this RFP and the application instructions. The LOI offers the opportunity for applicants to nominate potential academic and fire service peer reviewers from outside California, but RGPO will select the reviewer, carefully reviewing for potential conflicts of interest in the process. To avoid conflicts of interest during the peer-review process, staff examine personnel involved in applications and cross-check the list of potential reviewers to avoid inviting reviewers with COIs. Further, all reviewers are required to declare conflicts of interest. All applications will be evaluated by a peer-review committee comprised of individuals from outside of California. The committee will be composed of academics from relevant disciplines, including those who are experts in community-based or participatory research, and fire service representatives. For additional information, please review the RGPO Conflict of Interest and Professional Activities Policy.