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Small Study Grant Guidelines

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CPWR – The Center for Construction Research and Training is the research and training arm of the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO, and is uniquely situated to serve workers, contractors, and the scientific community. CPWR's overriding goal is to improve safety and health in the construction industry in the United States. The CPWR Small Study program is funded under cooperative agreement (U54 OH008307) from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

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This version of the guidelines replaces all previous versions.

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Overview

An Introduction to CPWR Small Studies – and What We Seek

CPWR – The Center for Construction Research and Training provides funding to approximately six (6) small studies of up to \$30,000 annually. As CPWR is funded through a cooperative agreement with the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), our work focuses solely on safety and health issue facing construction workers.

In years past, Small Studies involved collection and analysis of surveillance data, intervention research to prevent health and/or safety problems from occurring, and translation projects to move research into practice on the job.

CPWR seeks to fund projects focused on:

- **The NORA Construction Sector Goals.**
Established through stakeholder groups assembled by NIOSH and CPWR, the NORA Construction Goals include 15 different topics. Go to <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/programs/const/noragoals/> for details.
- **The National Academies 2008 Program Improvement Recommendations.**
This report gives specific advice to NIOSH and to the National Construction Center on how to expand research, disseminate findings, and tackle subjects that need attention. Find out more at (http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12530#toc).
- **Emerging Issues in Construction**
Potential projects could examine topics such as construction/maintenance of cell phone towers and wind farms, “green construction” and health concerns (such as silica and manganese) or recently identified nanoparticles in construction materials. Many others exist.
- **Tracking and Dissemination**
Injury, illness, and fatality tracking and the collection and analysis of data sets, is crucial to identifying and monitoring trends within the industry. Dissemination, or the spread of safety and health information, needs research to determine the best means of reaching workers. Use of social networking or new media to reach young workers is encouraged and other underserved populations, such as small employers.

Background

CPWR-NIOSH Cooperative Agreements

In 1990, CPWR began a series of cooperative agreements with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) focusing on occupational safety and health in construction. The intention was to build an industry-wide “safety culture” that would make working conditions better while lowering long-term costs and improving industry productivity. To do this, CPWR committed itself to fostering a national consortium of experts at leading universities, government agencies, unions, and corporations including project owners, contractors, and insurers. In 2009, more than 50 organizations participate in the consortium including scientists from a wide array of disciplines such as epidemiology, toxicology, industrial hygiene, biostatistics, ergonomics, and more.

From Surveillance to R2P

In the first years of the CPWR consortium, the research consisted of statistical analyses as well as observations in the field and interviews with stakeholders. CPWR emphasized gathering data to identify the most pressing hazards and outcomes in the form of illnesses, injuries, deaths, and related costs. Cost data show the financial burden on contractors and workers, as well as, personal stresses connected to demands of the work, such as the industry’s typical on-and-off employment and burdens on injured or ill workers’ families and the larger society, which must provide support through workers’ compensation and social programs. As an outgrowth of the statistical surveillance, CPWR produced *The Construction Chart Book* in 1997. Now in its fourth edition released in 2008, the book presents the most complete data available on all facets of the U.S. construction industry; economic, demographic, employment/income, education/training, and safety and health issues.

When examining costs issues, it became clear that investigation into economic drivers was needed. CPWR established the Construction Economics Research Network in 1995, to encourage economists to generate knowledge about the economic structure and functions of the construction industry. This network now includes 31 labor and health economists. To shorten its learning curve, CPWR initiated collaboration with labor-management organizations and researchers in other industrialized nations with more experience in addressing construction safety and health, particularly in the area of ergonomics, than the United States.

Over the years, as the issues were better defined, the emphasis has shifted from identifying problems and determining its magnitude and trends to solutions using interventions (lab and field research) and evaluation. Consortium participants work closely with construction contractors and workers to develop practical solutions for concerns ranging from fall hazards to contact dermatitis. Proposed new approaches are continually field tested and refined to develop best practices in engineering controls, education regulations and economically feasible solutions. Findings are presented at conferences, in union meetings, in publications such as technical reports, in pocket cards for workers and contractors, and on the Internet. Where applicable, findings are incorporated into training materials, disseminated through construction safety trainers. Online resources have been developed to enable rapid access to a database of information and solutions to construction hazards workers face.

Safety and Health in Construction

The work of the CPWR consortium is essential because of the magnitude of injury and illness in the construction sector compared with other industries in the United States and with construction industries in other industrial nations. Due to high employment levels and high injury and death rates, more workers are killed by work-related injuries in construction (approximately 1,200 each year) than in any other industry in the United States. The levels of lung diseases and cancers from exposures to silica, asbestos, solvents, and other toxics are believed to be high as well, but have been difficult to document because of the time lag from exposure to the appearance of symptoms.

The lack of information on worker health is particularly difficult to overcome in an industry where workers often must move around a given worksite, thus hindering efforts to determine accurate exposures in a given day. Those same workers may have several employers in one year, unlike workers in the manufacturing sector. Reaching the more than one million contracting companies in the United States is no simple task, due to high turnover and a lack of inclusive employer associations.

CPWR Research Goals

During the past 20 years CPWR has planned, developed, and operated a National Center for Construction Safety and Health (Construction Center) dedicated to improving safety and health performance in the industry. Over this period of time it has become recognized world-wide as a pre-eminent institution in this field as a result of (1) having built a truly multi-disciplinary, integrated research team, (2) being an integral part of the construction industry, and (3) having an extensive record of major achievements. As a result, the Center enjoys a high degree of credibility both with the research community and the industry.

CPWR's programs include the following goals for the period 2009-2014:

- **Mission Statement.** CPWR's mission is to enable workers in the construction industry to do more, feel better, and enjoy longer and more productive lives by reducing safety and health risks, improving the knowledge and skills of workers, and enhancing the quality of the construction industry work environment. CPWR seeks to accomplish this through research on interventions and ways to expedite their adoption by the industry, continuous identification of emerging needs or opportunities, building awareness of construction safety and health issues, tracking of industry characteristics, monitoring performance, maintaining an inventory of current best practices and disseminating them to the industry, CPWR will enable workers in the construction industry to do more, feel better and enjoy longer and more productive lives by reducing safety and health risks, improving the knowledge and skills of workers and enhancing the quality of the construction industry work environment.
- **Objectives.** To continue to reduce injuries and illnesses in the construction industry by: (1) building on our current base of knowledge and intensifying and accelerating the identification and adoption of evidence-based best practices throughout the industry; (2) responding to the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) Construction Sector Council Goals and the recommendations made by the National Academy of Sciences in its review of the NIOSH construction sector ; (3) focusing more on Research to Practice;

(4) tracking changes in the industry and evaluating changes in safety and health outcomes; and (5) responding rapidly to emerging issues.

Priority Areas.

- **Hypothesis Testing Research:** Test and evaluate risk-reduction strategies that prevent injuries and illnesses.
- **Research to Practice:** Coordinate and promote research to speed up the adoption of best practices; evaluate impact of diffusion and continuously improve on diffusion strategies and tactics; and identify and overcome barriers to the diffusion and adoption of best practices.
- **Emerging Issues:** Continuously identify new safety and health risks or opportunities for prevention, and respond rapidly to them.
- **Tracking and Dissemination:** Track changes in industry characteristics and safety and health outcomes; maintain and continuously update an inventory of evidence-based best practices to prevent injury and illness hazards; and promote the adoption of evidence-based best practices by workers, employers and industry-wide organizations.

Special Emphasis Areas.

- Getting best practices adopted. This is reflected in three program areas: R2P Research; Emerging Issues; and Dissemination. This will be coordinated through an ongoing R2P planning process.
- Addressing emerging issues. We will add new projects through annual supplements that are developed in the out-years of the cooperative agreement, having a dedicated focus to tracking and addressing emerging issues/trends and opportunities and making this a special focus of our pilot/Small Studies program. This will be coordinated through an ongoing Emerging Issues planning process.
- Preparing and effectively disseminating safety and health communication tools and information for three different groups of users: workers, contactors, and safety and health professionals and evaluating their impact.
- Reaching high risk sectors: small employers, vulnerable workers and residential and light commercial construction.

The Role of the Small Studies Program

CPWR seeks partnerships between researchers and people working the construction industry, whether they are unions, workers, contractors, academia or other stakeholders.

NIOSH has supported the Small Studies program since 1993 to help define problems and identify needed policy changes or potential interventions. In the 16 years of its operation, the Small Studies program has received more than 140 letters of intent and funded 70 studies. The funded projects have provided an impressive diversity in terms of scientific aims, applicant organizations, and geographic representation. Many new investigators have entered the field of construction safety and health research, and innovative prevention measures have been explored through the program. These pilot studies can be used in some cases to determine whether a large-scale investigation is warranted.

Each study is expected to last one year and is funded at a maximum of \$30,000. Table 1 identifies a sample of studies that have been funded.

The Small Studies program is intended to generate projects focused on:

- The National Construction Agenda goals (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nora/>).
- The National Academies 2008 Program Improvement Recommendations (http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12530#toc).
- Emerging issues in construction.
- Tracking and dissemination.

Small Studies can include, but are not limited to:

1. Providing initial support for investigators to develop new or innovative approaches/lines of investigation especially addressing NORA construction agenda goals, emerging issues, and R2P;
2. Exploring innovative or new directions representing a significant departure from ongoing funded projects in construction sciences; and
3. Encouraging investigators from other fields of study to apply their expertise to construction safety and health issues and NORA national goals e.g., psychology, “consumer” marketing/sciences, economics, applied computer sciences, work organization, communication sciences.

Table 1. Examples of Small Studies, 1995-2009.

Surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Analysis of Surface Slip Resistance of Steel Erection Working/Walking Surface</i>, Iron Workers International Union .• <i>Lyme Disease Prevalence among Construction Workers on Long Island</i>, New York, State University of New York at Stony Brook; Building and Construction Trades Council, Nassau and Suffolk Counties, NY .• <i>Asthma in Heavy and Highway Construction Workers Exposed to Silica</i>, Occupational Health Initiatives, Brookline, Mass.• <i>Nail Gun Injuries Treated in Emergency Rooms</i>, Duke Univ. Medical Center, Durham, NC.
Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Ready Mixed Concrete Truck Drivers: Work-Related Hazards and Recommendations for Controls</i>. Mount Sinai School of Medicine, NY.• <i>Strategies to Prevent Trenching-Related Injuries and Deaths</i>, University of California, Berkeley.• <i>Genetic Testing for Beryllium: Worker Knowledge, Beliefs and Attitudes</i>, East Tennessee State University.• <i>Development of Design Interventions for Preventing Falls</i>, University of Michigan.• <i>Green School Construction</i>, Tufts University School of Medicine.
Translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>A Case Study of a Water Induction Nozzle as a Dust Control for Abrasive Blasting</i>, University of Iowa.• <i>Development and Testing of a Compliance Checklist for the Model Specification for the Protection of Workers from Lead on Steel Structures</i>, Allegheny University Hospitals, Philadelphia, PA

Priorities for the Small Studies Program

In line with the larger goals of the CPWR, the Small Studies program encourages researchers to make major contributions to improve construction worker health and safety as evidenced by well-accepted intermediate outcomes (e.g. evidence that research led to improved policies, procedures, training, tools, consensus standards, etc.) leading ultimately to improved end outcomes (e.g. reduced injuries, fatalities, exposures, or illnesses). CPWR efforts focus on improving upon prior construction research and prevention activities, and on the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) research and practice goals developed by the NORA Construction Sector Council. In addition to research, CPWR has an emphasis on appropriate, expeditious transfer activities for completed projects and research results to ensure that they are transferred to construction practice. Objectives for a CPWR include:

- 1) Serve as a national leader for the advancement of knowledge and impact in construction safety and health;
- 2) Generate, facilitate, and manage hypothesis-driven research and feasibility/pilot projects that address three construction research topic areas: A) NORA National Construction Agenda goals, B) Emerging issues; and C) Tracking and Dissemination.
- 3) Forge strong working relationships with a broad cross-section of construction stakeholders through partnership development, involvement of stakeholders in research projects and strategic collaboration to achieve end outcomes;
- 4) Provide national leadership and coordination on r2p efforts (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/r2p/>) to effectively transfer research findings to construction stakeholders;
- 5) Support and coordinate collaboration among researchers and construction stakeholders to implement and achieve NORA National Construction Agenda goals for the nation; and
- 6) Maintain and expand tracking of national construction sector characteristics and injury and illness outcomes and generate reports and resources that can be used by construction stakeholders and researchers to a) understand emerging trends, b) track overall industry performance (i.e., multi- and single-year morbidity and mortality rates, number of conditions or events, and leading mechanisms of death or injury and illness), and c) track progress towards NORA goals and performance measures.

Research Program Addressing National Construction Sector Agenda/NORA and National Academies 2008 Recommendations for NIOSH Construction Research

NORA is a partnership program to stimulate innovative research and improved workplace practices. The program entered its second decade in 2006 with a new industry sector-based structure to better move research-to-practice (r2p) into workplaces. The National Occupational

Research Agenda for Construction contains seven goals that address *Outcome topics* – types of injuries, fatalities, exposures, illnesses, and disorders in construction workers. The remaining eight goals address *Contributing Factors* - important influences impacting the likelihood that prevention and control measures and actions are taken on a construction job.

Another of these goals addresses improving surveillance of hazards and health outcomes. In total there are **69 NORA Construction Intermediate Goals** and it is important that applicants and researchers review and attribute Intermediate goals and performance measures in developing their small study proposals. An intermediate goal is a goal secondary to a strategic goal that reflects activities that organizations and individuals can take with research output to move towards a strategic goal. A performance measure is a metric that allows tracking of progress towards a strategic or intermediate goal.

The National Academies 2008 Report emphasized the importance of r2p and identified two critical questions to be in the forefront of r2p and research efforts: 1) How can the program get vital information to the worker “in the trench” or “on the steel” and 2) How does the program persuade contractors and workers to effectively use the interventions that are developed through research? [http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12530].

Encouraging Innovation

Small Studies encourage development of innovative work practices and technologies – including training, equipment, and tools. But the CPWR Small Studies program also seeks to encourage innovation by asking (and addressing) questions such as these: What are the cultural and logistical barriers or incentives for change? How can organizations or individuals produce innovation in construction?

Developing Interventions

Whenever possible, the research should produce a usable technique or product, in cooperation with workers and managers in the field.

Using and Improving Data

Although extensive data are available from the federal government and other sources, the data sets are inadequate. There are not reliable statistical data on some aspects of construction work or the industry. The shortfall provides a research opportunity to move beyond anecdotal or questionable information. But, at the same time, some aspects of construction, such as productivity levels, may be impossible to gauge. CPWR is interested in studies that address questions such as these: How can data be more effectively collected and used? What can be gleaned from existing data sets such as national health surveys? Are there benefits to producing new sets of uniform information on given aspects of construction work from worksites or companies?

Evaluating Effectiveness

Dependable assessments of programs are difficult to produce, but are needed, in response to these basic questions: Does a change – including safety training – produce measurable long-term results in construction work and, if so, what are they? What is needed to maintain continuous improvement at the level of the industry or worksite?

Disseminating Information

Improved strategies for disseminating information about construction safety and health must be developed and evaluated.

How to Apply for Funding

Small Study funding is available to staff of hospitals, universities, and other public- and private-sector institutions and organizations, such as construction unions and employer groups. A study may be proposed at any time as it's operated on a rolling admissions cycle. CPWR will fund pilot and opportunistic studies. Application requirements are included in table 2.

Opportunistic studies. These awards will take advantage of unforeseen or hard-to-predict opportunities to investigate a suspected safety or health problem. They will usually require a rapid implementation because of the limited time frame of the problem. Such studies can extend from a few days to a few months and will be funded at a maximum of \$30,000 each.

Pilot studies. These studies are designed to help define a problem and point up possible innovative interventions. The studies are expected to last for one year and are eligible to receive funding of up to \$30,000. The results of some pilot studies may justify expansion to longer, applied projects.

Table 2. Application procedures.

	Opportunistic Study	Pilot Study
<i>Letter of Intent</i>	Required	Required
<i>Letter of Intent review</i>	CPWR	CPWR
<i>PHS 398 forms</i>	PHS 398 application	PHS 398 application
<i>PHS 398 review</i>	CPWR, NIOSH, CPWR TAB member and/or subject matter expert	CPWR, NIOSH, CPWR TAB member and/or subject matter expert

*TAB= Technical Advisory Board, CPWR

The Letter of Intent

To propose a small study, the principal investigator should send CPWR a letter of intent of four pages or less. The person sending the project idea should consider him or herself the “principal investigator.” The letter should cover the following issues:

- Statement of the problem.
 - List the primary NORA Construction Sector Goal or National Academy report finding.
 - List any secondary NORA Construction Sector Goals or National Academy report findings.
- The proposed study, including its objectives, methods, and design and a few selected references showing how this study contributes to knowledge.
 - How the outcomes will be measured.
 - What the investigator expects to find.
 - Expected outcomes/products.
 - Plans for using or disseminating any findings.

- A proposed timetable and estimated budget.
- The investigators' credentials.
- Demonstrated partnerships and plans to obtain access to workers/worksites (if needed).
- Human subjects' protection.
- The name and contact information for the main contact person.

CPWR may ask the main contact to revise the letter of intent. In such a case, the applicant must deliver the revision to CPWR within 30 days of CPWR's request. A letter of intent usually will be reviewed within 25 to 30 working days, unless there is an imminent situation whereas the letter will be reviewed within 10 working days. When CPWR considers the final letter acceptable and the applicant wishes to proceed with a formal proposal, it must be submitted to CPWR within 45 days.

Research Assistance for Industry Stakeholders Pursuing a Study

CPWR understands that industry stakeholders, such as unions and employers, can be unique in their ability to identify strong candidates for studies but they may not have the experience or research skills necessary to conduct a full investigation to meet CPWR's funding requirements. To solve this problem, CPWR can assist in partnering such stakeholders with researchers who will aid in conducting the research, from completing the proposal needs and following accepted research guidelines, as well as specifications to writing final study reports. Stakeholders that demonstrate a viable study concept in the letter of intent will be contacted by CPWR.

The Formal Proposal

CPWR uses the U.S. Public Health Service grant application 398 forms to evaluate small study proposals. These forms are available on-line at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>.

Limitations of Funding

Overhead costs may not exceed 25 percent of total personnel costs (salaries and fringe benefits). Funding may not cover capital expenditures.

Protection of Research Subjects

Human subject documentation must be included with the PHS 398 proposal. If CPWR approves a small study proposal that will involve workers or use data with personally identified data, the investigators must obtain clearance from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) before CPWR will release funds. The IRB approval letter and researches human subject training certificate are required along with the PHS 398. The review may be conducted by any institutional review board (IRB) recognized by the Office of Human Research Protections, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In situations where the applicant organization doesn't have access to an IRB, the investigator may request a review by the CPWR IRB, which is an IRB recognized by the Office of Human Research Protections, HHS.

The Review of the Application

A proposal for a pilot/opportunistic study will be given to a scientific panel comprising of CPWR, NIOSH, and/or subject matter expert(s) and to at least one member of CPWR's Technical Advisory Board, supplemented by other reviewers who are subject matter experts, depending on the topic.

The Review Criteria

The following review criteria are considered:

1. Significance/need:
 - a. Does this research project address an important problem?
 - b. Are the applicable NORA Construction Sector goal(s) clearly defined and are they relevant to CPWR's overall objectives?
 - c. Have any stakeholders, such as labor-management organizations, expressed a need for research on the proposed topic? How/where is this need documented?
 - d. Are the proposed core component functions clearly defined and essential for achieving the program project goals and supporting individual research projects?
 - e. If the applicant achieves the aims of the application, how much will it advance scientific knowledge of and impact public health systems capabilities?
2. Approach:
 - a. To what extent are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well-integrated, well-reasoned, and appropriate to the aims of the project?
 - b. If a data set is to be analyzed, is that set likely to produce the information sought; is that set the best source for the questions posed? Does the applicant understand and discuss likely problem areas?
 - c. Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?
3. Innovation:
 - a. Does the proposal challenge existing thinking or offer a new approach?
 - b. Is the proposal original and innovative?
4. Investigators:
 - a. Is the applicant well qualified through academic and practical experience to examine the topic?
 - b. Is it likely that he or she will complete the study in a timely manner in accordance with the procedures presented in the application?
 - c. Does the investigative team bring complementary and integrated expertise to the project?

5. Environment:
 - a. How well does the scientific environment in which the applicant will do the work contribute to the probability of success?
 - b. Is the commitment of the institution evident and adequate to support the program project in terms of space, resources, or administrative authority?
 - c. Does the location of the program project within the applicant organization provide the authority to facilitate multidisciplinary worker for investigators across departmental lines or across schools in the university environment?
 - d. Are partners from public and private organization engaged? Do these organizations provide letters of support that describe their role and the extent of their participation?

6. Balance.
 - a. How does the proposed study fit with other research? Does it relate to one of CPWR's current goals or priorities? Does it fit with NIOSH NORA Sector Goals? Which one?

If the review determines that more information is needed, the applicant(s) will have one opportunity to revise and resubmit the 398 proposal within 30 days of receipt of a notification letter from CPWR.

The Final Decision

After final CPWR review, proposals recommended for funding are submitted to NIOSH for funding approval.

Progress Review and Reporting Requirements

Onsite visits by CPWR staff or consultants may occasionally be warranted. It is expected, however, that most monitoring can be based on written progress reports submitted periodically to CPWR.

Progress Reports

Short, written progress reports are required, with frequency determined in the funding letter. Payments will depend on submission of satisfactory progress reports.

Each progress report should be written in language readily understandable to a scientist who does not specialize in the field of the research. Abbreviations and language that may not be widely known to the broader scientific community should be avoided or - if essential - be clearly defined. The report should ***not*** be more than three pages. It should cover:

- Objectives, noting if they have changes from the original application.
- Accomplishments.
- Problems that result in deviation from the methods or time schedule.
- Any change in plans or methods.

- Interim results, including their relevance and practical application, and any problem encountered or anticipated.
- Any publication or presentation about the study. Researchers are encouraged to cooperate with CPWR to actively disseminate findings from the study, at meetings, conferences, in scholarly journals and trade magazines, in technical reports, on the Internet, and through materials tailored to contractors and workers.

The Final Report

This report, which is similar to a progress report in outline but more detailed, is due within 30 days of the conclusion of the study. It should include a short abstract and any relevant photographs or figures. It should also include the top 5 key findings of the study, in order of importance. The final report, abstract, and photographs should be provided in hard copy and also be sent electronically (in MS-Word). If the findings appear to justify expansion of the research, the investigator(s) is asked to indicate plans for such research and possible sources of additional funding. Failure to submit an acceptable final report will delay the final study payment and may disqualify an investigator from further funding by CPWR.

A list of presentations and publications should be submitted to CPWR along with the final report. CPWR will also periodically ask the investigator to submit updates on presentations and publications that take place after the study has concluded.

Dissemination of Findings

The investigator(s) is encouraged to present findings at conferences and to submit findings for publication in scholarly journals and the trade press. Any published report must credit the CPWR Small Studies program and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health as funder. CPWR can provide appropriate wording on request.

CPWR will post the final report to its web page and will notify the investigator whether the report will be published as a CPWR monograph. CPWR will not withhold information or delay publication solely to accommodate a journal's requirement that there be no prior publication of the results. No report is issued without the author's approval of the accuracy of the final version.

CPWR, in collaboration with the PI, will assist with identifying appropriate target audiences and stakeholders so that research findings can be disseminated to appropriate groups.

For More Information

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