



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Preventing Suicide and Overdose Fatalities in Construction

Introduction

CPWR - The Center for Construction Research and Training (cpwr.com) is a non-profit 501(c)3 research, development, service and training institution with an organizational mission to advance construction worker safety and health. Created by North America's Building Trades Unions, CPWR has an over 30-year track record in the construction industry and is recognized nationally and internationally as a leading institution in the field. CPWR has partnered with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) since 1990; serving as the NIOSH-funded National Construction Research Center; partners and is supported through a cooperative agreement with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) to provide hazardous waste, safety and health, and minority worker training programs; serves as an Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) authorized National Resource Center; and administers a medical screening program through an agreement with the Department of Energy (DOE) for construction workers throughout DOE's nuclear weapons complex, which now includes a cohort of 28,000 workers.

With such a well-established and highly regarded program in place, CPWR has been asked by its Corporate Officers to help, to the extent we can with resources available, address the crisis of opioid overdose and suicide in the U.S. construction industry. This solicitation, which has been made possible by a contribution from the pharmaceutical industry, is part of our efforts.

Background

Despite widespread public concern about suicide and opioid overdose deaths and their effects on communities across the country, the public is much less familiar with the relationship between certain types of work—such as construction—and these preventable outcomes.

The construction workforce has a suicide rate double that of all other major industries and four times higher than the general population, though most suicides do not occur at work. It's only when death certificates of those of working age are examined do we see that the construction industry rises to the top. While there is no single cause for suicide, it's known that work-related factors common in construction, such as seasonal or inconsistent work, demanding schedules

away from families, work-related injuries and chronic pain, and lack of paid leave can lead to substance use, suicidal thoughts, and death.

Opioid use disorder, which often develops because of prescriptions for pain management following injuries at work and chronic pain, adds to the suicide epidemic and has contributed to its own national tragedy of accidental overdose fatalities. Researchers who have examined death certificates at the state level have consistently found construction workers have the highest rate of opioid-related overdose deaths among working adults.

The entire U.S. construction industry must take advantage of available resources and implement new credible practices to prioritize the mental and physical health of its workers. Suicide and opioid overdose fatalities are a national problem, and rates are rising. Addressing them within the construction industry will contribute to reducing these preventable deaths in communities throughout the U.S.

Request

CPWR seeks proposals for research projects or initiatives of 12-months or less that look upstream to prevent suicide and opioid-related deaths, with a priority focus on the evaluation of new or existing programs and interventions for efficiency and scalability. We anticipate funding 5-7 projects in the range of \$30,000 to \$50,000 each in early 2023.

Examples of projects or initiatives that may be a good fit include research to:

- Characterize how construction work and the workplace affect the issue.
- Determine whether changes in construction employer practices improve mental health.
- Assess the impact of new policies or programs (e.g., state laws that require paid sick leave for workers).
- Explore dissemination strategies for proven interventions.
- Replicate prior studies of interventions using samples of additional types of construction employers (e.g., contractors with <20 employees, residential contractors) to better understand whether outcomes differ for different groups.

Because some approaches to disrupting the status quo and stigma surrounding mental health issues are in early stages of development or trial, we will also consider other types of research that can inform action to prevent suicide and opioid overdose deaths, which may include:

- Research to identify viable policy or programmatic responses to construction employer and worker needs and priorities.
- Pilot studies to demonstrate proof of concept or feasibility of promising novel initiatives and/or provide early estimates of effectiveness.

- Implementation studies to improve the acceptability, sustainability, or scalability of initiatives that promote good mental health.
- Case studies of construction programs related to peer support, training, and stigma reduction efforts.
- Development and validation of new workplace measures of suicide and opioid overdose risk that can be used to guide and monitor progress toward prevention goals.

These examples are intended to provide context and stimulate thinking, not to serve as rigid guidelines or restrictions. Investigators are encouraged to submit innovative proposals using any appropriate combination of research designs and methods. We encourage studies that take advantage of natural experiments with construction employers, unions, insurers, or other influential groups.

Applicants are highly encouraged to review CPWR’s Opioids and Mental Health [webpages](#) and view at least one of the many webinars we have conducted on the issue to understand our approach to primary and secondary prevention. An example was sponsored by CIDCI and can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_d0W5e0cwA.

Given the program’s focus on systemic and structural causes of suicide and opioid overdose deaths, applicants should note that studies of interventions that encourage workers to modify their personal behavior in the absence of upstream work environment changes are not a fit. Further, while downstream research on how the workplace might better support workers in recovery is important overall, it is not the focus of this funding opportunity. Other examples of research that are not a good fit are:

- Projects that focus on describing the existence and/or scope of the problem.
- Literature reviews.
- Studies of treatment approaches or harm reduction strategies for opioid use disorder.

Proposal Content (4 pages max)

1. **Applicant Organization’s** Legal Name, Employer Identification Number, and DUNS Number.
2. **Title** of the proposed study.
3. **Principal Investigator’s** Legal Name, Credentials, and Contact Information.
4. **Names of co-investigators** and/or other key study participants.
5. **Rationale:** Introduce the population and in a few sentences, describe the ways in which this research will contribute to preventing suicide and opioid overdose in the construction industry. Describe the context under which the research question and study were

developed. Who are the workers, unions, or employers that will be most impacted by this research, and what input have they provided? Why was this particular population chosen for the study? Avoid a long summary of existing evidence; instead, be concise about the specific problem, who's affected, and any contextual factors that justify why the research, not the issue, is important.

6. **Description:** Provide a brief outline of what the study entails and why it is expected to have an impact on this specific problem. If applicable, describe the theory of change, logic model, or other depiction of how it is theorized to work, including drivers or other intermediaries through which it operates. If you are proposing a pilot trial or implementation study, clearly describe what is already known about the intervention or approach, and what gaps your research would fill. Be explicit about the population(s) and contexts to which the research findings will apply — for example, members of a specific subsector in construction and size or sophistication of employers; workers in a certain union or trade; geographic location; participants already in an existing program.
7. **Implications of Findings:** Explain how the research findings will be used in the real world. Be sure to go beyond theoretical implications, and state the specific audiences, communities, or decision-makers that would be able to act because of the research. Specify the types of policies, programs, practices, mindsets, norms, etc., that will be influenced by findings.
8. **Team:** Briefly describe how your core project team was formed. In what ways is the team qualified to understand this issue, conduct this research, and/or ensure that findings will be actionable? Describe any relevant skills or expertise not represented in the resumes, including those related to research methods, implementation, dissemination, subject matter, or other lived experiences. (Include CVs/resumes for core team members. These will not be counted in the page limit restriction.)
9. **Budget:** Provide a detailed budget and justification by line item of all requested funds. Indicate how costs will be tracked within your organization. (Budget pages will not be counted in the page limit restriction.)

Other Requirements

Funding recipients must agree to participate in a virtual meeting hosted by CPWR shortly after awards are made with CPWR researchers and other funded investigators to identify potential shared measurement opportunities and common indicators across all funded projects, which will be tracked and made visible by CPWR through an online dashboard. Recipient's approved costs will be invoiced on a reimbursement basis. An interim progress report and final progress report will be required.

Dates

February 10, 2023: Proposals due by email to CPWR at pquinn@cpwr.com. Proposals received after this date will not be considered.

Within about a month, CPWR will contact all submitters with initial funding decisions (tentative yes or no). Responses to those with a tentative yes will include clarifying questions which must be answered within one week. We aim to make final funding decisions by the end of March.

Review

All submissions will be reviewed by a panel of experts comprised of members of CPWR's Technical Advisory Board (TAB), CPWR research directors, and other subject matter experts identified based on their experience and knowledge of the applicant's area of focus.