CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: PILOT AND FEASIBILITY PROGRAM

Applications due by 02/16/2024 (midnight)

OVERVIEW

The overarching goal of the Healthy Weight Research Network (HWRN) is to build research capacity to improve our understanding of the health-related behavior of children and youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental disabilities (DD), and to develop responsive interventions that aim to help this population achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

The funding is intended to support a **pilot study** to evaluate feasibility, acceptability, and/or preliminary efficacy for the purpose of informing a larger study.

Applications that use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approaches are welcome.

Health behaviors linked with healthy weight and associated research topics of interest include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Eating patterns, eating behaviors, and family practices around food/mealtimes
- Physical activity and sedentary and screen time behavior patterns and their relation to weight status
- Sleep and its association with eating behaviors and weight status
- The influence of school and community-based organizations on children's food intake and physical activity
- Prevention or intervention programs and/or systems of care that can be developed, adapted, and delivered to yield the most positive outcomes possible
- The characteristics, experiences, and/or priorities of individuals with ASD/DD and their families, and how these factors may intersect with race/ethnicity, gender, poverty, or other historically marginalized characteristics to influence/inform the maintenance of a healthy weight
- Impact of food insecurity on weight status
- The development and/or assessment of dietary, physical activity, and other relevant weight-related measures

For examples of previously funded pilots: [Previously funded pilot projects](#)

In order to facilitate future research studies in these areas, the HWRN's Pilot & Feasibility program will provide funding (direct costs only) for 1- or 2-year pilot research projects. Applicants may apply for either one year (up to $35,000) or two years of funding (up to $25,000/year, for a total of $50,000) pending availability of funds.

Funding Period:

Funding will begin on July 1, 2024 and projects must be completed by June 30, 2025 for one-year projects.
Two-year projects will begin on July 1, 2024 and must be completed by June 30, 2026.

Eligibility:
We anticipate making 2 to 3 awards. Early-stage investigators are encouraged to apply and will be given priority, especially if they have a senior researcher as part of the research team or as a mentor. Early-stage investigators include those who are early in their training or who have not received R01 or an equivalent level of funding.

The HWRN is eager to support pilot studies that: 1) include youth and families from diverse backgrounds; 2) focus on underserved populations; 3) advance health equity and/or 4) are led by a researcher(s) from underrepresented backgrounds as defined by NIH. NIH's definition of underrepresented backgrounds

Awards can be made to institutions in the U.S. only. Eligible applicants must be a Member or Associate Member of the HWRN. To apply to be an Associate Member, send your resume/CV to hwrn@umassmed.edu.

Key dates:
- **2/16/2024 –** Full application due by midnight
- **4/16/2024 –** Applicants notified of Award Decisions
- **7/1/2024 –** Approximate award start date contingent upon receipt of IRB approval

EVALUATION CRITERIA
Applications will be reviewed by a review committee and will be evaluated according to the criteria below:

Significance/Merit:
- The proposed line of research addresses the HWRN priority area(s).
- The proposal addresses an important gap in the field.
- The proposed project has significant potential to improve the health of children and adolescents with ASD/DD.
- Plans for future funds are delineated. Investigators should include in their application how these pilot funds will be used to secure external funding for research in the HWRN's target areas.

Methodology/Approach:
- The project can be accomplished within the proposed timelines (12 months for one year of funding or 24 months for 2 years of funding).
- The results of the project, if successful, will likely lead to other grant applications/external funding.
- The study design is appropriate for a pilot study.
- The proposed data to be collected is appropriate for the study question(s).
- The key variables are clearly defined.
- The analytic methods are clearly specified and appropriate.
- Any potential human subjects' concerns have been identified.

Investigators:
- The PI and other key personnel are qualified to carry out the study.
- The roles of the PI and other investigators are clearly defined and described.
- If a senior researcher is included in the application in the role of a mentor, the plan for the guidance and support of the early-stage investigator is required.

For more information go to the HWRN website

How to Apply:

(1) Complete the application cover page form found on the next page or download the application cover page form from the HWRN website

(2) Submit the completed application including the cover page form via email to HWRN@umassmed.edu, no later than **02/16/2024**, midnight. Please note that communications via email are not secure. There is a possibility that information you include in an email can be intercepted and read by someone other than the intended recipient. Please secure your email before sending it.

(3) Applicants are encouraged to contact us with any questions, or to get feedback on the alignment of their proposed project with the HWRN's research agenda and priorities. Please email us at HWRN@umassmed.edu.

Due Date:

o Applications must be submitted by **February 16, 2024, midnight** via email to HWRN@umassmed.edu.

APPLICATION FORM

SECTION 1. COVER PAGE

Project Title: _____

Total Budget Request: $ _____

Applicant Name and Degree(s): _____

Current Academic and/or Institutional Title: _____

Institution: _____

Department/Division: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Do you qualify as an early-stage investigator? ____ Yes ____ No

Are human subjects involved in the research? ____ Yes ____ No

Projects that involve human subjects will require IRB approval by the applicant's institution. Documentation of IRB approval must be provided prior to disbursement of funds.

APPLICANT ASSURANCE:

I agree to accept responsibility for the scientific conduct of this project, to provide a final report and periodic reports (relative to future funding), as requested. I also agree to acknowledge HWRN support in all publications and presentations that result from this project.

Applicant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Department Chair or Institutional Signing Authority (as required by your institution):

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Title: _____

For more information go to the HWRN website

SECTION 2. PROJECT ABSTRACT
Please limit to ½ page. Be sure to include a statement indicating how this project meets at least one of the research priorities of the HWRN.

SECTION 3. RESEARCH PLAN
NOTE: THE RESEARCH PLAN (including the Specific Aims) MUST NOT EXCEED 6 PAGES.

Formatting Instructions:
Single spaced; margins set at ½ inch for all sides of the page
- o   Text should be typed in Arial 11 font. Tables and figures may be in Arial 10.
- o   The Principal Investigator's name (one name) should be entered in the header of all pages.
- o   Applications should be paginated

Include the following sections in your Research Plan:

1. Specific Aims (*One Page Maximum*)
- Should state directional hypothesis, if applicable.
- Should include clear and measurable outcomes.

2. Background & Significance (*Two Pages Maximum*)
- Include a clear description as to how the research is relevant to the HWRN research agenda.
- Reference prior work of the investigator or investigative team, if applicable.

3. Research Design & Methods (*Two Pages Maximum*)
This section should describe the following:
- Study design (e.g. descriptive, cross-sectional, randomized)
- Population and setting
- Data collection procedures and measures to be used
- Data analysis plan
- Timeline and discussion of the feasibility of completing the work within the proposed time

4. Priority Areas (*One Page Maximum*)
- Please address whether and how you believe your application meets one or more of the priority areas:
    1) includes youth and families from diverse backgrounds;
    2) reaches underserved populations;
    3) advances health equity and/or
    4) is led by a researcher(s) from underrepresented backgrounds as defined by NIH
       NIH's definition of underrepresented backgrounds

5. Human Subjects
- Include a clear plan for addressing research ethics (e.g., human subjects)

6. References Cited: (*One Page Maximum*)
Please include full reference citations

For more information go to the HWRN website

SECTION 4. BUDGET & BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Please indicate the length of your proposed project:

_____ One (1) year project (up to $35,000)
_____ Two (2) year project (up to $25,000 year for a total of $50,000)

Note: Indirect and overhead costs are <u>not</u> allowable costs. Other unallowable costs include:
- o   Computers, laptops, other electronics
- o   Graduate program tuition, stipends, or fees
- o   Meals or hospitality (including alcohol)
- o   Membership dues or professional fees
- o   Travel

YEAR 1 DIRECT COSTS

Personnel			
NAME	**ROLE ON PROJECT**	**FTE**	**SALARY & FRINGE REQUESTED**
SUBTOTAL:			
EQUIPMENT *(Itemize)*			
SUPPLIES *(Itemize by category)*			
OTHER EXPENSES *(Itemize by category)*			
TOTAL COSTS FOR YEAR 1 BUDGET PERIOD			

YEAR 2 DIRECT COSTS (if applicable)

Personnel			
NAME	**ROLE ON PROJECT**	**FTE**	**SALARY & FRINGE REQUESTED**
SUBTOTAL:			
EQUIPMENT *(Itemize)*			
SUPPLIES *(Itemize by category)*			
OTHER EXPENSES *(Itemize by category)*			
TOTAL COSTS FOR YEAR 2 BUDGET PERIOD			

TOTAL FUNDS REQUESTED (Years 1 and 2 as applicable): _____

For more information go to the HWRN website

Budget Justification

- Identify all costs that are ***necessary*** and ***reasonable*** to complete the work described in your proposal. In a clear, concise manner, please justify each budget item using the following as a guide:

    o *Personnel Justification:* Include the name, role, and FTE (%) for each person named on the project. The responsibilities of each person on the project, whether they receive funding, should be described.

    o *Supplies, Equipment, and Other Expenses:* Provide an item-by-item description of supplies, equipment, and/or other expenses, and how they will be integral to the conduct of the proposed project.

- Project periods can be up to 12 or 24 months. Disbursement of funds will be contingent upon receipt of IRB approval from the applicant's institution.

- As with any application, please ensure that your institution's administration has been notified of your intent to respond to this funding opportunity, per your institution's guidelines and policies.

SECTION 5. BIOSKETCHES

Applicants should use the NIH form for all named investigators. Biosketches should not exceed 5 pages maximum per investigator.

SECTION 6. LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Letters of support are only required if the research involves the use of resources of another institution, agency, or entity and the resources are critical and integral to the project. Letters of support should indicate the organization's or agency's agreement to collaborate in the research and make their resources available to the investigative team. If the PI is a post-doctoral student, a letter of support from the mentor is required.

For more information go to the HWRN website