



**Date:** November 21, 2017

**To:** Ph.D.-Holding U.S. Poverty Scholars at All Career Stages

**From:** Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin–Madison

**Re:** Call for Proposals for IRP Extramural Research Funding for 2018–2019: Research to Inform Child Support Policies and Programs

## **PURPOSE**

The Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) at the University of Wisconsin–Madison seeks to fund research to improve child support operations and policies, a key area of interest identified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE). Proposals are invited from Ph.D.-holding scholars at all career stages, from postdoctoral fellows to senior faculty, and from all disciplines. IRP anticipates funding four to eight projects, with total funding (including direct and indirect costs) ranging from \$10,000 to \$25,000 each. The award period is from March 1, 2018, to February 28, 2019. **The proposal deadline is January 2, 2018.**

## **BACKGROUND**

IRP is a center for interdisciplinary research into the causes and consequences of poverty and inequality and the impact of related policies and programs. As the National Poverty Research Center sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, IRP coordinates the [U.S. Collaborative of Poverty Centers \(CPC\)](#) in an integrated set of activities with the ultimate goal of improving the effectiveness of public policies to reduce poverty and inequality and their impacts on the well-being of the American people.

IRP has established this small grants program to support timely secondary analyses of data to address emerging policy-relevant research questions and to provide seed funding for preliminary and pilot work that is likely to lead to high-impact research. The program is administered by IRP Director Lawrence Berger.

## **2018-2019 FOCAL THEME**

About half of all American children will spend at least part of their childhood living in a single-parent, most frequently single-mother, family. Single-parent families with minor children are particularly economically vulnerable. The child support enforcement program plays a critical role in facilitating private income transfers from noncustodial parents to their nonresident children. Although the program serves a majority of custodial families and transfers a substantial amount of support, less than half of all custodial parents have a child support order and, among those with an order, only about half receive full payment. Nonetheless, child support is an important resource for

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those children who receive it. Estimates indicate the receipt of child support reduced poverty among individuals by 6.3 percentage points, and lifted about 500,000 children out of poverty. Prior research has also shown that child support receipt promotes self-sufficiency and results in decreases in the use of public benefits programs such as TANF, food assistance, SSI, and housing assistance.

IRP seeks to support research that informs child support policies and programs. Projects may utilize a variety of analytic methods and may focus on a specific policy, program, or intervention (e.g., in-hospital strategies to increase paternity establishment; order determination or arrears-related policies or programs; fatherhood programs; co-parenting programs; employment programs for noncustodial parents), or on broader social and economic factors (e.g., impacts of child support as income source for low-income children; leveraging data in support of research and analysis; operational issues in the implementation of federally established child support guidelines). However, projects must be designed to generate potential policy and/or programmatic implications for the child support enforcement program at the federal, state, or local level.

## **AREAS OF INTEREST**

We particularly invite research proposals that consider:

1. The effects of child support enforcement actions, such as license suspension, on child support compliance and collections.
2. Promising state and local child support policies and practices for improving compliance and collections.
3. Whether child support transfers have similar or different associations with custodial and noncustodial parent self-sufficiency and child well-being than income received through means-tested benefits.
4. How amounts and regularity of child support receipt may be associated with family self-sufficiency.
5. The methods by which child support programs assess noncustodial parents' abilities to pay and how resulting order amounts are associated with subsequent work, earnings, and child support payment.
6. Characteristics of contemporary child support populations, including both IV-D and non-IV-D payers and recipients, and which specific services may be most effective for encouraging support and from which populations.
7. Whether child support receipt and/or participation in the child support enforcement program is associated with child health and well-being over the long term, with attention to comparisons between children participating in the child support enforcement program and eligible children who are not participating.
8. How child support programs attempt to balance uniform, efficient practices with the flexibility to customize establishment, enforcement, and other services for families to best meet the needs of particular children.
9. The ways in which parenting time and physical custody arrangements may influence childcare needs.

## TERMS

1. Individuals not associated with an institution (domestic or foreign) and foreign entities are ineligible for awards made under this announcement.
2. The Principal Investigator must hold a doctorate or the highest degree appropriate for their discipline.
3. University of Wisconsin–Madison faculty and postdoctoral fellows are ineligible for funding.
4. The grant contract period will be from March 1, 2018, to February 28, 2019.
5. Grants may not exceed \$25,000. This amount includes indirect costs at the applicant's institution, if required (see item 4 under *Application Instructions* below).
6. Receipt of a grant from IRP will require a commitment to:
  - a. submit brief quarterly progress reports ( $\leq$  150 words) of work accomplished during the preceding three months on June 8, 2018; September 7, 2018; December 7, 2018; and March 8, 2019.
  - b. submit to IRP Director Lawrence Berger ([lmberger@wisc.edu](mailto:lmberger@wisc.edu)) a draft paper for review and comments by October 14, 2018;
  - c. submit a revised draft by February 14, 2019, and participate in a videoconferencing session at which grantees will receive feedback;
  - d. present the paper at a seminar, workshop, or other mutually agreed upon public event sponsored by IRP;
  - e. agree to have the work summarized in an IRP publication (*Focus*; *Fast Focus*), webinar, and/or podcast; and
  - f. submit a final paper for academic publication no later than October 15, 2019.
7. All publications associated with the grant should acknowledge the support of IRP and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE).
8. Support is subject to the availability of funds. Nothing in this description of applications should be construed as committing IRP to dividing available funds among all qualified applicants.

## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Applicants should submit their proposal via the [online application form](https://irpwisc.formstack.com/forms/external_small_grants_20182019) ([https://irpwisc.formstack.com/forms/external\\_small\\_grants\\_20182019](https://irpwisc.formstack.com/forms/external_small_grants_20182019)) by January 2, 2018. Fax submissions will not be accepted. Proposal receipt will be acknowledged. The application must contain as a single file the following components in the order as listed:

1. A cover sheet giving the title of the proposed research, applicant's name, date of Ph.D., institutional affiliation with full address and telephone number, e-mail address, and home address.
2. A one-page (double-spaced) abstract, describing research objectives, data, and methods.
3. Description of the applicant's proposed research, not to exceed eight double-spaced pages in 12-point type with one-inch margins all around, exclusive of references or appendixes. The proposal should carefully describe the issue(s) to be examined, hypotheses to be evaluated, methodology proposed, data sources to be used, and anticipated results of the research, including their potential implications for public policy.

4. An itemized budget showing the researcher's time, research assistant's time, travel costs, computer services, supplies, and indirect costs if required. Note that the awards will be issued in two increments corresponding to the IRP parent award. As such, the itemized budget should be presented into two periods: from March 1, 2018, to September 29, 2018, and September 30, 2018, to February 28, 2019. Note also that the University of Wisconsin–Madison is not collecting indirect costs on these subawards from the prime grant; applicants are encouraged to request that their home institution forego or charge minimal indirect costs.
5. Curriculum vitae for all investigators.
6. A letter from the office of research and sponsored programs of the applicant's institution confirming administrative approval of the proposal.
7. A timely plan for obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval or exemption for human subjects research (typically, secondary data analysis is eligible for exemption approval; consult your institution's IRB office). The University of Wisconsin will not execute subcontracts without documentation of IRB exemption or approval.

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

IRP will evaluate proposals in collaboration with affiliated scholars and ASPE staff. Award notifications will be made on January 31, 2018. Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. The relevance of the topic to IRP's focal theme of Improving Child Support Policies and Programs (as discussed above).
2. The potential usefulness of the proposed research for the advancement of scientific knowledge and the development and implementation of public policy.
3. Clarity of stated objectives, methods, and anticipated results.
4. The appropriateness and soundness of the research design, including choice of data, methods of analysis, and other procedures. The reasonableness of estimated cost and time commitments in relation to anticipated results.
5. The qualifications and experience of personnel, including demonstrated familiarity with the literature and data to be used.

## **FEEDBACK**

Written feedback on each of the winning proposals will be delivered to the authors with the award decision.

## **QUESTIONS**

Proposers may direct process-related questions to Deborah Johnson ([deborah.johnson@wisc.edu](mailto:deborah.johnson@wisc.edu)) and budget-related questions to Sylvia Kmiec ([sylvia.kmiec@wisc.edu](mailto:sylvia.kmiec@wisc.edu)). Research-related questions should be directed to Lawrence (Lonnie) Berger ([lmberger@wisc.edu](mailto:lmberger@wisc.edu)).

## **TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT DATES**

Deadline for proposal receipt	January 2, 2018
Notification of award	January 31, 2018
Contract begins	March 1, 2018
Quarterly progress reports due	June 8, 2018; September 7, 2018; December 7, 2018; and March 8, 2019
Complete initial draft paper due	October 14, 2018
Revised draft paper due	February 14, 2019
Contract ends	February 28, 2019