

Request for Proposals

March 10, 2017

The ESSPRI grant includes an external competition for ESSPRI affiliates to fund research projects each year. Funding is available for ESSPRI affiliates as Principal Investigators, with other co-authors at the PI's discretion.

Funding amounts and types are available as follows:

- Two or more projects with budgets up to \$75,000 per project, with a total funding cap of \$150,000.
- Two or more exploratory projects with combined "seed" funding of up to \$15,000.

Proposals are due by email (to dpaley@uci.edu) on or before October 31, 2017. Projects will be evaluated by the ESSPRI Executive Committee (David Neumark, Marianne Bitler, and Greg Duncan), with assistance from external reviewers. Award decisions will be announced in December, 2017, with funding available soon after for a period of 12 months.

Proposals should include the following:

- Text or proposal explaining the motivation for the research, its promise for informing policymaking, and technical aspects of the research including data, research design, etc. (Up to 10 pages, double spaced.)
- The main proposal should include a discussion of any contingencies that could impact your ability to carry out the research.
- A statement of your agreement to work with ESSPRI on policy outreach and communications, including possible op-ed writing, travel for legislative testimony or meetings with policymakers, willingness to conduct press interviews, etc. Note that ESSPRI stands ready to assist with identifying opportunities for this outreach and communications work, to provide assistance with the content, and to fund (separately from your budget) travel for hearings, meetings with policymakers, and related policy outreach and communications efforts.
- The main proposal should also note the deliverables and time frame. This should include at least one paper intended for an academic journal, and a brief progress report each quarter after funding commences. You do not need to specify the products for policy outreach and communications in the deliverable since you will be committing to that separately.
- A requested budget. A maximum overhead rate of 9% is allowed on these awards (which will be sub-awards from UCI).
- CVs of the investigators.

All funded projects in the external competition must meet the following criteria:

- Thematic alignment with ESSPRI's research agenda on policies that hold significant promise for helping governments cost-effectively support economic self-sufficiency – meaning, broadly speaking, enhancing the ability of workers to provide an acceptable standard of living from their earnings rather than public support. ESSPRI's research priorities are outlined in the Research Priorities description below.

- A central goal of ESSPRI is to help researchers use their research to support evidence-based policy advice and, where appropriate, policy reform and implementation. Thus, a key criterion for funding will be willingness to participate in policy outreach and communications to translate research into policy impact, via modes such as op-ed writing, legislative testimony, and meetings with policymakers and their staffs.

In addition, the following criteria are very important. Projects must meet at least some of them, although most projects will not meet all of them.

- Focus on lasting effects on economic self-sufficiency, including utilization of long-term longitudinal data sources.
- Experimental and innovative research projects that evaluate new policies and programs, and that evaluate existing policies in ways that have not been done before. This priority on innovation will be particularly important in research on policies where there is already a great deal of research occurring absent ESSPRI's funding (e.g., the minimum wage).
- Projects that compare and contrast benefits and costs of alternative policies designed to support economic self-sufficiency.
- In due course, evaluation of new policies with respect to measurable improvements in outcomes and return on investment.

Finally, it is suggested that researchers proposing experimental, quasi-experimental, or observational studies follow the Arnold Foundation's guidelines for transparent and reproducible research, as good research practice. These guidelines are available here: <http://www.arnoldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/Guidelines-for-Investments-in-Research.pdf>. Your proposal should make this commitment explicit.

Note: Affiliates with strong research ideas related to ESSPRI's research agenda that either (1) require higher levels of funding than this Request for Proposals allows, or (2) do not fit clearly into ESSPRI's research priorities but hold substantial promise on one or more dimensions (e.g., scalability, easier or more local implementation), should contact David Neumark to discuss working with ESSPRI and the Laura and John Arnold Foundation to secure additional funding.

ESSPRI Research Priorities

To guide ESSPRI affiliates in developing research proposals, this document provides guidance as to what kinds of projects are the most important and valuable to fund, given ESSPRI's goals. The following list presents, in descending order, the priorities for research that ESSPRI will fund. This list is not intended to be absolute, and funding decisions will weigh the research priority along with the quality of the research proposed and the potential value of the intervention studied.

1. Policy interventions that affect people at or near working age with many years of potentially gainful employment in future years, with data that provide evidence on longer-run, income-related outcomes that can be directly linked to economic self-sufficiency. This includes research on local economic development incentives that can generate longer-run outcomes at the local/community level, not necessarily just the individual level. There is particular interest in projects evaluating tradeoffs between short-term distributional impacts and effects on economic self-sufficiency in the longer run.
2. Policy interventions that, for people at or near working age with many years of potentially gainful employment in future years, affect outcomes plausibly related to longer-run economic self-sufficiency, for which the research design does not necessarily permit evaluation of longer-run outcomes, but the evidence is rigorous. The type of project that best fits this criterion is an RCT of an intervention intended to increase job retention, employability, job quality, wages, etc., even if a long-run follow-up is not feasible in the funding period (although building in the capacity for long-run follow-up would be an important advantage). Non-experimental studies could also fit this criterion, although such studies, if based on existing data, would be more likely to enable longer-run estimates. In both cases, evidence on low-cost, easily scalable interventions is of particular interest.
3. Policy interventions that occur at somewhat earlier ages, which have a close theoretical link and a strong research basis tying the intervention to longer-run economic self-sufficiency, even if the research design does not permit evaluation of longer-run outcomes, but the evidence is rigorous. The type of project that best fits this criterion is an RCT intervention intended to increase the connection between education (and other interventions leading to skill accumulation) and good jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency (like school-to-work, career and technical education, etc.). Again, even if long-run follow-up is beyond the funding period, building in the capacity for this follow-up would be an important advantage. Non-experimental studies of these kinds of interventions are less likely to be funded, unless they present compelling new evidence on promising interventions about which there is less prior research.

ESSPRI's research inventory may provide additional guidance for understanding ESSPRI's research priorities. It is available at <http://www.esspri.uci.edu/files/docs/2016/2016%20ESSPRI%20Preliminary%20Research%20Inventory.pdf>