

Analyzing Relationships Between Disability, Rehabilitation and Work (ARDRAW)

Small Grant Program for Graduate-Level Research

2017-2018 Request for Applications (RFA) and Application Instructions

Program Description

The objective of the ARDRAW Small Grant Program is to foster new analysis of work, rehabilitation, and disability issues, which may develop innovative and fresh perspectives on disability by providing research stipends to a broad spectrum of graduate students. ARDRAW replaces the 5-year grant called the [Disability Determination Process Small Grant Program](#), **with a new focus on** research relevant to SSA's work incentives and employment support - specifically rehabilitation, work and the disability program.

SSA may provide guidance on issues that might be fruitful areas for research. Potential research areas of inquiry include, but are not limited to:

- Working conditions of SSA beneficiaries
- Work accommodations and needs of SSA beneficiaries
- Non-competitive employment for SSA beneficiaries
- Vocational and other types of service use by SSA beneficiaries
- Non-SSA assistance provided to SSA beneficiaries

Applicant Eligibility

- Applicants must be masters, doctoral, or post-doctoral-level part-time or full-time graduate students pursuing studies in accredited programs at the time of the award (Fall semester of 2017) with an academic emphasis in topics of interest to disability programs, including, but not limited to, public health, social work, economics, occupational medicine, vocational and rehabilitation counseling, public policy and administration, sociology, psychology, education, medicine, employment and law.
- At the time of stipend award, selected graduate student researchers must be citizens or non-citizen nationals of the United States, or must have been lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence. Members of minority and historically disadvantaged groups are encouraged to apply.
- Students who are **not** eligible for the stipend award:
 - Individuals on temporary or student visas
 - Employees of SSA (including DDS)
 - Students receiving funds from multiple SSA sources (like the Disability Research Consortium) at the time of applying for an ARDRAW stipend
- Students are required to list any other federal funding for their research.
- Applicants may submit more than one proposal for consideration per year, but can receive only one stipend award per year.

Amount and Disbursement of Award

Students will receive a stipend of \$10,000 for the one-year program: stipends may be subject to tax withholding. The stipend may be added to other financial support the graduate student receives from his or her university/research organization. The stipend is not provided as a condition of employment either with the federal government or PRI.

Payments will be disbursed directly to awardees in two installments: (1) after submission and approval of research paper work plan (4-6 weeks following notification of the award) and (2) upon completion of the final research product and other deliverables as specified below.

Application Procedures

1. **Read** this RFA for complete details and requirements of the program.
2. **Familiarize** yourself with the SSA Red Book (<https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/>) and view the Suggested Research Projects below to ensure that your proposal meets the goals of this program. As a further resource, you may read some of our previously funded research projects from the DDP Small Grant Program. <http://ddp.policyresearchinc.org/completed-projects/>.
3. **Attend an informational call on January 31, 2017 at 3:30 pm (ET) or February 8, 2017 at 2:00 pm (ET).** These calls are designed to provide an overview of a successful application. Potential applicants and their faculty mentors are strongly encouraged to attend. **Please go to the following links to register:**
 - **January 31st, 2017 at 3:30pm (ET):** <http://bit.ly/2hRT0Cy>
 - **February 8th, 2017 at 2:00 pm (ET):** <http://bit.ly/2hoTa7F>
4. **Complete** the online application at <http://ardraw.policyresearchinc.org/apply-online/> and attach the following materials **by 5:00 pm (ET) on Thursday, March 2nd, 2017:**
 - a. **An abstract and five (5) page research proposal written in APA style**, excluding references, tables, and figures (12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins, single-spaced). Please see Evaluation Criteria below for further guidance.
 - b. **Proof of Access to Data.** If secondary data is being used (data not collected by the applicant), a letter from the agency or organization clearly approving access to and use of data is required.
 - c. **IRB Approval Plan and Timeframe.** Projects must be reviewed by your academic institution's IRB. Please address how this will be accomplished.
 - d. **A resume or curriculum vitae.** (12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, single-spaced)
5. **Two (2) Letters of Recommendation** must be e-mailed directly by the referrers to ardraw@policyresearchinc.org **by 5:00 pm (ET) on Thursday, March 2nd, 2017:**
 - a. One (1) from the Faculty Mentor for this project clearly stating support of your proposed research as feasible and potentially impactful to the field, as well as a willingness to provide consistent supervision and guidance throughout the project. This includes participation in quarterly calls and the review of all deliverables prior to submission.
 - b. One (1) from an academic or professional contact who can comment on the qualities that make you an effective researcher and your potential for success with independent research.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will initially be screened for completeness and relevance to the research goals of the ARDRAW Small Grant Program. If judged complete and relevant, the application will be further evaluated by a panel of scholars. Your application will be evaluated **based on the following criteria:**

1. Statement of Problem and Literature Review (20%)
 - a. Clear statement of the problem
 - b. Specific and relevant research questions designed to explore/strengthen relationships between work, rehabilitation, and disability issues. Comprehensive literature review - your review should identify strengths and weaknesses of existing research and identify areas of further exploration
2. Understanding and Methodology (30%)
 - a. Demonstration of researcher's understanding of the current relationships between work, rehabilitation and disability
 - b. Appropriateness and soundness of methodology, including research design, choice of data, methods of analysis, and other procedures
 - c. Explanation of how your proposed research might develop innovative and fresh perspectives on the relationships between work, rehabilitation and disability
3. Outcomes and Implications (25%)
 - a. Anticipated outcomes
 - b. Statement of policy or programmatic implications
4. Project Feasibility (20%)
 - a. Feasibility of completing project within a 1-year timeframe (reasonableness of time commitment related to data collection, analysis, and other procedures)
 - b. Statement of how this fits into your academic career (e.g. part of dissertation)
5. Strength of Letters of Recommendation (5%)
 - a. Faculty Mentor: Support of your proposed research as feasible and potentially impactful to the field, as well as a willingness to provide consistent supervision and guidance throughout the project
 - b. Academic or professional contact: Confidence in your abilities as an effective researcher and your potential for success with independent research

Award decisions are expected **by Monday, May 1, 2017.**

Deliverables

If selected for this grant, each award recipient is expected to:

1. Participate in a welcome teleconference with grant recipients, faculty mentors, PRI, and SSA
2. Submit a detailed work plan indicating objectives, activities, and timeframes
3. Submit a letter of approval from his/her academic institution's IRB
4. Submit quarterly progress reports summarizing status of research activities
5. Participate in quarterly conference calls with his/her faculty mentor and PRI
6. Submit a draft research product by **Friday, May 18, 2018**
7. Submit a 15-page final written research product by **Friday, June 29, 2018**

For more information visit <http://ardraw.policyresearchinc.org> or contact us at ardraw@policyresearchinc.org.

Priority Topics

Research priorities and questions for ARDRAW include the following:

Disability

- There is a wide range of impairments among individuals receiving disability payments from Social Security. Are some impairments associated with dramatically higher levels of return to work?
- What are the most common services used by beneficiaries with psychiatric conditions compared to those with physical or cognitive impairments? How does the use of employment services differ across these groups?
- Social Security benefits are modest (roughly \$1,200 per month). What role does a person's pre-disability financial situation play in efforts to return to work following disability onset? For example, would individuals with high pre-disability earnings/income or high household expenses (children in college) be more likely to seek a return to work in order to maintain his or her pre-disability standard of living?

SSA Work Incentive Programs

- SSA supports services provided by vocational rehabilitation agencies and employment networks under the Ticket to Work (TTW) program. To what extent are beneficiaries getting employment services from other sources such as a private employment agency, a medical/vocational rehabilitation center, or vocational services through a State welfare agency? How did beneficiaries who used their Ticket become aware of the program? Of those that used their ticket and returned to work, to what kind of work did they return and what services were the most helpful in their return to work?

Workplace Accommodations

- SSA beneficiaries receive both cash and in-kind assistance from a variety of sources. How much do these supports add to the well-being of SSA beneficiaries? Can we estimate the dollar value of in-kind supports? How do these other supports vary by disability type and by sociodemographic characteristics?
- How do job accommodations differ by disability or by occupation or industry types?
- What are the job characteristics in terms of wages, hours, and job benefits among beneficiaries working in sheltered workshops?
- How do work goals and expectations and use of vocational services differ for those working in sheltered workshops as compared to other beneficiaries?

Other Factors Affecting Return to Work

- Has health insurance coverage by SSA beneficiaries changed since the implementation of the Affordable Care Act?
- How does age affect the ability to work of individuals with specified impairments, such as musculoskeletal impairments or affective disorders?
- How does education affect the ability to work among persons with health impairments?
 - Does "when" a worker earned a degree impact employability/career change?
 - Does higher education always provide a competitive advantage for a worker, or does this advantage decrease over time?

- Have there been structural changes in the economy, policy environments, or workplace cultures that make employers more or less likely to engage individuals with health impairments, different levels of education, or different types of past work experience? For example, in the U.S., over time, has the culture, sociology, or economics of the workplace become more or less accommodating of individuals with limited education or advanced age?